SHATTERED GLASS AND BROKEN DREAMS: UTILIZING THE WORKS OF MICHEL DE CERTEAU TO ANALYZE COPING MECHANISMS AND OVERT FORMS OF RESISTANCE AMONG GLASS WORKERS IN HUNTINGTON, WEST VIRGINIA

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ABSTRACT

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This dissertation examines the process of deindustrialization in an urban Appalachian community from a cultural perspective. Many initial studies concerning the effects of deindustrialization on Appalachian communities concluded that these communities were ultimately devastated. Appalachian culture was too brittle, culturally backwards, and therefore unable to withstand the shock of such an economic disaster. These studies failed to consider what subtle forms of coping mechanisms existed in the workplace before deindustrialization, and what overt forms of resistance were utilized by economically dispossessed workers after the deindustrialization process.

In the 1980s, the Owens-Illinois Glass manufacturing plant in Huntington, West Virginia was significantly downsized, and in the early 1990s the glass manufacturing plant was permanently closed due to the deindustrialization process. This dissertation challenges the notion that Owens-Illinois workers in Huntington, West Virginia were “culturally backward,” and therefore ultimately defeated by the deindustrialization process. Utilizing the works of Michel de Certeau, and analyzing a series of oral histories of deindustrialized Owens-Illinois glass workers in Huntington, West Virginia, this paper proposes that former glass workers in Huntington, West Virginia creatively coped with their often tedious work environments during full employment, and later developed overt forms of resistance to the deindustrialization process.
DEDICATION

First and foremost, this dissertation is dedicated to my loving wife Julie. A research project of this size can never be solely the product of one individual. I could not have completed this with study without her. Additionally, I would also like to dedicate this dissertation to my mother and father who always taught me through their work and diligence in rearing our family to reach for the stars, but to keep my feet on the ground. This dissertation is dedicated to all those who for many years lived in Huntington, West Virginia and worked for the old Owens-Illinois glass factory. It is my hope that through this dissertation their lives and stories will not be forgotten. Moreover, I would like to dedicate this dissertation to those loved and lost, Dr. William Westbrook who taught me to always question so as to fully understand and Dr. Steve Winn who taught me to appreciate the power of sociological theory and always appreciated the way I think. In closing, I would like to dedicate this dissertation to my father William Shope. My father taught me the meaning of work and its rewards. He worked every day of his adult life in factories. I hope that he would have been proud of the results of his arduous labor.
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INTRODUCTION

Historically, the Appalachian region and its inhabitants have served as an aberrant and often baffling construct in American scholarship and literature. Initially, Appalachia was characterized in fictional accounts as a rustic backwoods region, hidden within the interior of the United States. The Appalachian population was described as a culturally backwards people living in total isolation. These stories were often distributed by major U.S. publishing houses whose readership resided in the Northeastern region of the U.S. The major distribution of such exaggerated Appalachian stories resulted in a wide-spread stereotypes of Appalachia as a place that socially lagged behind the rest of the U.S. Many of these stereotypes persist today and may influence the scholarship and social policy on deindustrialization. The research presented in this dissertation, which is based on a series of oral histories, refutes these stereotypes.

Appalachian Scholarship and the Culture of Backwardness

Early scholars who were interested in studying Appalachia inadequately contended that a bucolic, yet socially retarded nature typified the majority of the population that resided in the region. As early as 1898, George Vincent authored an article published in *The American Journal of Sociology* that described the people of Appalachia as residing in pools of isolation where a “retarded” frontier mentality survived the ascending Industrial Revolution. This analysis incorrectly created a picture of Appalachian people as incapable of producing forms of coping mechanisms to deal with social strife or conflict. This kind of analysis also convinced readers that as a
socially retarded population, Appalachians were faced with living in a fragile culture that could easily be shattered during times of social upheaval. According to Vincent’s analysis, Appalachians were unaware of modern coping mechanisms. To cope with distortions in their “backwards” social organization, Appalachians resorted to deleterious cultural practices such as violence, alcoholism, depression, or suicide. Therefore, Appalachian populations, with little in the way of cultural competency, were destined to be destroyed during great social re-configurations like the Industrial Revolution.

In fact, Appalachia provided an important piece in the completion of the nation’s industrial puzzle. Without the natural resources that existed in Appalachia, namely the southern coal fields and timber forests, and a large readily available Appalachian workforce, massive industrialization in the U.S. would not have taken place so rapidly. This study argues that not only was Appalachia a part of the nation’s developing industrial complex, Appalachians were essential to U.S. industrial development. Therefore, Appalachians developed ways to cope with the nation’s changing employment structure activated by industrialization.

By the middle of the 19th century, various Appalachian cities located along the Ohio River and its tributaries emerged as urban industrial centers that provided many goods and services needed in the industrialization process. In the beginning of the 20th century, Appalachians in search of employment migrated from rural areas to Appalachian cities, which were escalating in population. These new Appalachian industrial workers were included in the swelling U.S. industrial manufacturing base.

Ken Fones-Wolf (2007) noted in *Glass Towns: Industry, Labor, and Political Economy in Appalachia, 1890-1930s* that in 1909, the state of West Virginia was praised...
in the *Commoner and Glassworker*, which was a weekly journal for workers in the glass industry due to its natural resources which made the state a great storehouse of natural wealth. The article continued by stating that the state of West Virginia was the richest state, in terms of natural resources, of any state in the union and that economic development would bring its natural resources to the markets of the world. Wolf additionally noted that although the use of West Virginia's reserves of coal, oil, natural gas, lumber, and other resources was already underway by 1909, the state was still far from reaching its economic potential. Despite its natural advantages, according to Wolf, state politics and the late timing of industrialization allowed the state to remain economically underdeveloped.\(^iv\)

This study pointed out that when West Virginia separated from Virginia in 1863, many of the state’s political leaders decided that the best path to rapid industrialization would be to model the state’s economy after industrialized northern state economies and its Midwest neighbor Ohio. This model of industrialization was affected by what Fones-Wolf referred to as dominance in the county courthouses by ‘buckskin elites’ who ruled economically undeveloped counties in West Virginia with a system of patron-client relationships.\(^v\)

Other scholars, while acknowledging that slow industrial development was in part due to the persistence of corrupt political systems in the state of West Virginia, argued that there existed more reasons for the state's industrial underdevelopment. Fones-Wolf pointed out, until 1863 banking policies in the state of Virginia and later the rest of the United States, left West Virginia with little in the way of capital resources for rapid economic development. Additionally, Fones-Wolf suggested that antiquated tax policies
within the State of West Virginia had a negative impact on the state's ability to build the
necessary infrastructure for rapid industrialization and economic development. vi

By the 1880s, railroads were widespread throughout the state of West Virginia
and barge traffic on the Ohio River was in great use. By the end of the 1800s, the state of
West Virginia's economy was transformed. The state quickly state became industrialized
contributing to the nation's industrial complex. The problem with this kind of economic
development was that much of it was controlled by those who did not reside in the state
of West Virginia. According to Fones-Wolf, Appalachian scholarship in the 1960s and
1970s by authors such as Ronald Eller, Helen Lewis, and John Alexander, suggested that
the state of West Virginia was negatively impacted by absentee ownership of the region’s
resources resulting in the development of a colonial political economy. vii

A later group of scholars refined this argument, which dominated Appalachian
scholarship until the early 1980s. It was argued by later Appalachian scholars that this
analysis of outside ownership in West Virginia and the entire Appalachian region did not
encompass the diversity found in the state of West Virginia and Appalachia as a whole.
The emergent Appalachian scholarship argued that focusing solely on absentee
ownership associated with the coal and timber industries left Appalachian scholars with a
colonial model framework. Individuals residing in Appalachia were pictured as helpless
victims. This sort of geographical determinism, according to Fones-Wolf, lacked the
analysis of complex social relationships within West Virginia and the Appalachian region
as a whole. Also ignored was the fact that Appalachians developed coping mechanisms
and sometimes overt resistance to the nature of their underdeveloped industrial economy.
Eventually, the state of West Virginia was inserted into the United States manufacturing hierarchy. Many Appalachians moved to the newly emerging industrial cities in search of employment. By the late 1970s and 1980s, West Virginia and much of industrialized Appalachian regions would suffer deindustrialization.

Scholarly works that analyzed Appalachian industrial workforces and their eventual deindustrialization typically focused on the coal and timber industries, which were dominated by a predominately white, male workforce. Recent scholarly studies of Appalachian industrial workers failed to analyze industries that contained large numbers of women and ethnic minority industrial workers. This study proposes to analyze the rise and the eventual closure of the glass manufacturing industry in Huntington, West Virginia, which employed large numbers of Appalachian women and eventually African-American workers.

Scholarship that continues to define Appalachia as an entirely rustic rural region of the U.S. is problematic for several reasons. Appalachia can no longer be typified as an area that suffers from complete isolation from the rest of the nation’s populace, a retarded region populated by a peculiar people who reside in a socially brittle culture that is socially backward. Nor can its workforce be defined as only white and male.

This study will explore the ability of Appalachians to create and deploy coping mechanisms to meet residents’ needs to counter great economic and social upheavals, as well as demonstrate more dramatic forms of overt resistance among Huntington's glass workers that were activated by extraordinary social and political changes that occurred in the U.S. beginning in the 1940s. Examples of such dramatic social change that enabled several of Huntington's glass workers to create displays of overt resistance included the
organization of Huntington’s glass workers into national labor unions that began in the late 1940s, and continued through the late 1950s. Unionization, coupled with the passage of Civil Rights legislation in 1963, allowed certain individuals within Huntington’s glass factory to counter the Owens-Illinois Glass Company. These social changes made it possible for Huntington’s glass workers to directly oppose Owens-Illinois management and their often unfair employment practices. Huntington glass workers began to address certain workplace inequalities, such as the unfair hiring practices by Huntington's Owens-Illinois glass factory in terms of race and gender. This creative resistance ran counter to historic accounts of Appalachian communities clashing with large industrial companies whose owners and national management resided outside of Appalachia. Early studies of Appalachian communities created Appalachian stereotypes that indicated that Appalachians were unable to resist powerful social forces, and therefore Appalachian communities were forced into a pattern of behavior that was earlier defined by scholars as a “Culture of Poverty.”

**From the Culture of Poverty to a Poverty of Culture**

Oscar Lewis’s *La Vida: A Puerto Rican Family in the Culture of Poverty-San Juan and New York* was first published in 1965. Lewis’s scholarship introduced to a wider audience cultural theory that connected persistent poverty among the under-privileged to various cultural practices that were passed on from one generation to the next creating a never-ending spiral of impoverishment. Lewis’s book had far-reaching, effects on subsequent scholarship that attempted to better understand the supposed cultural connection to poverty experienced by under-privileged groups who continually
suffered enduring economic deprivation within a nation of relative monetary affluence.\textsuperscript{ix} For Lewis, poverty was likened to a social lesson passed on to their youth by elder members of impoverished groups.

Though Oscar Lewis’s \textit{La Vida} was widely recognized as the progenitor of the theory entitled “Culture of Poverty,” he was not the first to suggest that under-privileged classes developed and maintained impoverished conditions due to the absence of cultural mechanisms that would end their persistent poverty. As early as 1946 in \textit{Industry and Society} \textsuperscript{x} Allison Davis suggested that underprivileged U.S. industrial workers possessed a different attitude toward work than their culturally superior managers.\textsuperscript{xi} Davis was suggesting that heredity was not sufficient in understanding a worker’s ability to follow a manager’s orders, do good work, and ultimately avoid poverty. Instead, Davis suggested that until environmental conditions among various cultural groups become equalized, heredity alone would not explain differences in attitudes among impoverished workers and their levels of persistent poverty.\textsuperscript{xii} She argued that once social environments become equal among different cultural groups, a sounder judgment may be made in terms of the connection of heredity to workers’ attitudes and subsequent poverty.

Davis’s analysis proposed that poor worker attitudes were culturally learned, not racially inherited. Davis, like Jennings’ earlier suggestions, agreed that under-privileged workers possessed improper attitudes toward work due to poor training in their youth at the hands of their elders and their surrounding under-privileged cultural environment. Managers were middle-class, and had learned middle-class attitudes toward work, and therefore valued work more than under-privileged workers.
According to Davis:

“As a rule, management has the attitudes, habits, and values of middle-class groups. Their attitudes toward, and standards for, work behavior are a part of their middle-class indoctrination.” (Davis, 1946:85)

Davis suggested that the attitudes that were learned by managers became part of their individual psyche, so much so that the individual would fail to recognize that these attitudes had been unconsciously learned. Instead, the manager regarded these attitudes toward work as a biologically-inherited behavior. Therefore, the manager’s response to work appears a natural response. Davis continued her assertion with regard to managers and administrators learning a different cultural lesson concerning the value of work:

“The foreman’s and the administrator’s emphasis upon punctuality, responsibility, and the desire and drive to get ahead in life is part of their culture. They have learned all these traits. Not one of them has been inherited-through the foreman’s or the vice-president’s family, or his race, or his nationality.” (Davis, 1946:85)

Davis argued that the cultural lessons learned concerning work are very different among under-privileged workers than among workers who were reared in middle-class families. In fact, the cultural indoctrination of impoverished workers is so different it is quite startling to the uninitiated onlooker. According to Davis, the values of under-privileged workers are so dissimilar from those in the middle-class they stand in stark opposition to each other causing communication problems between workers who bear different class distinctions in dealing with confrontations while working with each other. Davis reiterates her earlier assertions, but adds a racial component to her argument:

“Just as the members of the higher skilled working class and of management act in response to their culture, to their system of social and economic rewards, so do the under-privileged workers act in accord with their culture. The habits of “shiftlessness,” “irresponsibility,” lack of “ambition,” absenteeism, and of quitting the job, which management usually regards as a result of the “innate” perversity of underprivileged white and Negro workers are in fact normal
responses that the worker has learned from his physical and social environment.” (Davis, 1946:86)

Davis’s analysis encouraged a number of other scholars working under the same theoretical premise, to focus on cultural conditions that were not under the control of under-privileged workers as the central cause of their continual poverty.xiii In The Paradox of Poverty in America, published in 1969, Kenneth Davis, editor of the book quotes Yale University psychologist Ira Goldenberg:

“Poverty is a psychological process which destroys the young before they can live in the age before they die.” “It is a pattern of hopelessness and helplessness, a view of the world and oneself as static, limited and irredeemably expendable. Poverty, in short, is a condition of being in which one's past and future meet in the present- and go no further.” (K. Davis, 1969:64)

In short, according to Davis, the cultural practice of hopelessness and helplessness is learned in one’s youth and passed on to future generations among under-privileged segments of society. Hopelessness is an outcome of the fact that no coping mechanisms are culturally available to the under-privileged. Therefore, under-privileged workers recognized their sense of helplessness, which originally created a lack of ways to cope with poverty; this sense of hopelessness is continually passed on by those who suffer persistent poverty. Their cultural inheritance directed their attitudes toward work which was very different from the attitudes taught to middle-class workers.

Attitudes toward everyday life and work vary from class to class, according to Edward Banfield in The Unheavenly City Revisited, published in 1968 as a revision of his earlier book The Unheavenly City. Banfield noted that those residing in the under-privileged classes are not future-oriented, which was opposed to the middle-class who often planned for their future. He stressed:
“The lower-class person lives from moment to moment, he is either unable more unwilling to take account of the future or to control his impulses. Improvidence and irresponsibility are direct consequences of this failure to take the future into account (which is not to say that these traits may have other causes as well), and these consequences have further consequences: being improvident an irresponsible, he is likely also to be unskilled, to move frequently from one dead-end job to another, to be a poor husband and father…”

Banfield indicated that a difference of attitudes existed between lower classes and working classes. He suggested that working classes were indeed better suited to provide for their future than under-privileged classes. He asked, “Would not the former under-privileged citizen turned worker still possess the same attitudes toward work as they had when they were members of the under-privileged classes?”

To tackle this question, Banfield suggested a hierarchy of attitudes. The attitudes in the under-privileged classes are the complete opposite of those who reside in the upper-class. According to Banfield’s analysis, those in the upper-class spend the most time thinking extensively about their economic future. Therefore, their jobs and economic futures are foremost in their minds, while the middle-class is less future-oriented. The working class seldom thinks about their futures, while the under-privileged class is never future-oriented. This theory perfectly described the under-privileged working class in Appalachia that many scholars believed possessed a sense of helplessness and hopelessness, never thinking about their economic future, only living in the present. 

Adding to the misunderstandings of the ability that Appalachian workers possessed to cope with outside social forces without direct confrontation was the publication of several important books in the 1960s that addressed economic and social inequalities in Appalachia. These studies included Harry Caudill’s *Night Comes to the
Cumberlands: A Biography of a Depressed Area, published in 1962, and Jack Weller’s book Yesterday's People published in 1965. Even though Caudill and Weller intended their respective studies to represent Appalachia as a region within the United States that was economically and socially depressed, the “germ” of a theory as to why this region economically and socially lagged behind the rest of the U.S. eventually emerged. The theory was called the “Culture of Poverty.” Culture of poverty models imply that Appalachian people learned to accept that their culture was historically embedded in poverty, which was out of their control. Therefore, living a life of poverty became naturalized, and was accepted as inevitable by large segments of the population residing in Appalachia. The culture was underdeveloped and lacked the social mechanisms to cope with a disastrous event.

Several national programs that were created to address economic and political inequalities in Appalachia were informed by Caudill and Weller’s books. These studies of Appalachian communities were originally written to inform the U.S. population (including national and state policymakers) of the impoverished economic and social conditions in Appalachia. National programs informed by these early studies of Appalachia included the War on Poverty enacted by President Lyndon Johnson in 1964, and Volunteers in Service to America (VISTA) authorized by the U.S. government in 1965. According to Alan Banks, Dwight Billings, and Karen Tice’s article published in Stephen Fisher’s book Fighting Back In Appalachia (1993), ministers, social workers, and social activists armed with Caudill and Weller’s books came to Appalachia to work with socially and economically impoverished people, who were envisioned by the American mainstream as a people without the ability to address their social inequalities,
and ills that were originally placed upon them by outside social forces. This scholarship also led to several subsequent “Culture of Poverty” studies of Appalachia which indicated that Appalachian workers were economically defeated at the hands of large industrial companies that were owned by individual people, or groups of stockholders, who resided outside of Appalachia. Both Harry M. Caudill’s *Night Comes to the Cumberlands: A Biography of a Depressed Area* published in 1963, and Jack Weller’s *Yesterday's People: Life in Contemporary Appalachia* published in 1965 agree with the idea that outside ownership of companies in Appalachian states like West Virginia ultimately defeated workers.

Perhaps the best known study these subsequent studies within a “Culture of Poverty” framework is Kai Erickson’s influential book *Everything In Its Path: The Destruction of Community*, published in 1976. This study analyzed the Appalachian community in Buffalo Creek, West Virginia that had been devastated by a flood in 1972, which was in part caused by negligent maintenance of a dam created by the Pittston Coal Company. Erickson, a social psychologist from Yale University, who was admittedly ignorant of Appalachian sub-cultures, developed a lengthy section in his book that appeared to be an Appalachian ethnography. This section repeated a medley of widely-held stereotypes and beliefs about Appalachians. It argued that Appalachian people were culturally backward or primitive, socially retarded, and cut-off from the rest of mainstream American culture. Erickson concluded that the Buffalo Creek community responded to the devastating flood in a backward manner, and therefore became victims bound by outside cultural forces that controlled them. Ultimately, Erickson’s analysis of the 1972 Buffalo Creek flood concluded that Buffalo Creek was a socially brittle
community unable to withstand the shock of the disaster. Erickson’s analysis of Buffalo Creek created a stereotype of a defeated Appalachian community with little prognosis for recovery. Erickson’s summation of the 1972 Buffalo Creek disaster found much purchase among scholars, social and political activists, and politicians interested in the Appalachian region.

Subsequent to Erickson’s study, John Gaventa’s 1980 book *Power and Powerlessness: Quiescence and Rebellion in an Appalachian Valley* theorized the processes of gaining and maintaining power within Appalachian communities. Upon close inspection, Erickson’s analysis of the Buffalo Creek disaster fell into what Gaventa had earlier identified as the “One-Dimensional Approach of Power.”

This dimension of power is defined as the ability of actor A to force the less powerful actor B to do the bidding of actor A. Gaventa continued his critique of the one-dimensional approach of power by summarizing its three main components: a) people only act upon recognized grievances, b) participants act in an open system, and c) participants act for themselves or through recognized leaders. Scholars such as Erickson utilized a One-Dimensional approach to power, which added to the “Culture of Poverty” Appalachian stereotype. This approach failed to recognize forms of resistance in Appalachian communities.

More than two decades later, in response to Erickson’s 1976 analysis of the Buffalo Creek disaster, Lynda Ann Ewen and Julia Lewis’s 1999 article “Revisiting Buffalo Creek and Everything In Its Path: Deconstructing an Outsider’s Stereotypes,” challenged these long-held assumptions that unrecoverable disasters within Appalachian communities were due to the lack of cultural coping mechanisms. Ewen and Lewis argued that cultural networking mechanisms were in place in Buffalo Creek, West
Virginia to cope with the devastating effects of an environmental catastrophe caused by outside forces.

Ewen and Lewis argued that Appalachian communities have the ability to subtly resist various types of outside oppression by creating coping mechanisms to counter opposing social forces. They argue that Buffalo Creek residents helped other members of the community in various ways during and following the flood. In their article, Ewen and Lewis demonstrated that members of Buffalo Creek less affected by the flood waters donated food and other necessary goods to those in need. Buffalo Creek residents were not culturally unable to cope with the catastrophe as Erikson had originally surmised. The community coped by pulling together and ultimately coped with the environmental disaster.

**An Appalachian Counter-Narrative**

This dissertation argues that the massive loss of the Owens-Illinois glass manufacturing jobs is similar to the environmental disaster experienced by Buffalo Creek, West Virginia in that both events provided profound shocks to the cultural norms and everyday life of the two communities. The massive economic loss experienced by the former Owens-Illinois Glass workers was in a sense similar to the environmental disaster experienced by the residents of Buffalo Creek. Former glass workers, much like those affected by the Buffalo Creek flood, had to develop tactics in the practice of their everyday lives to cope with the cultural strain activated by devastating outside forces, in this case deindustrialization.
This dissertation also challenges the notion that Appalachian glass workers in Huntington, West Virginia glass were “culturally backward,” and therefore ultimately defeated by deindustrialization. Instead, it will suggest the deindustrialized workers at Owens-Illinois were quite resilient, continually involved in organizing their daily lives before, during, and especially after the deindustrialization process. It will also examine forms of resistance and various coping mechanisms deployed by Owens-Illinois glass workers before, during, and after deindustrialization.

To understand how an economic disaster such as deindustrialization affected Huntington’s glass workers, one must understand life in transition from industrialization to post-industrialization, which affected Huntington’s glass workers’ responses to their changing economic and social environment. This study proposes that during the deindustrialization that occurred from the early 1980s through the early 1990s, Huntington’s glass workers were in a “liminal” state. The term “liminal” is a concept pioneered by Victor Turner. It is often used in the fields of sociology and anthropology, and is often defined as being betwixt and between various social situations, a time out of time, or a juxtaposition of social circumstances.

At the time of Huntington’s Owens-Illinois glass plant closure, Huntington’s glass workers were reacting to their sense of suspended time. They were simultaneously experiencing both industrialization and deindustrialization processes. Owens-Illinois glass workers were caught between their traditional lives as industrial workers and deindustrialization. Huntington’s glass workers were participating in neither modernity nor postmodernity: they were between and betwixt both social milieus. This liminal state activated a variety of glass worker responses. To deal with their changing environment,
deindustrialized glass workers developed a variety of coping mechanisms to adjust to their changing economic and social environments. This “liminal” period, the transition from industrialism to deindustrialization, activated various glass worker responses, whether economically and socially advantageous, or detrimental, to their changed cultural circumstances. According to Sharon Zukin’s study of deindustrialized workers in Detroit, an understanding of the transition from an industrial to a post-industrial economy is necessary to understand how urban workers involved in such a great social transformation reacted to their changing employment conditions and how they activated coping mechanisms to deal with such deleterious social conditions. Similar to Zukin’s study of deindustrialized workers, this study will demonstrate how Huntington’s glass workers also coped with their ever-changing working environments.xxiv

This dissertation will examine the everyday working lives of former Owens-Illinois glass workers in much the same way the French cultural theorist Michel de Certeau examined everyday life in his book *The Practice of Everyday Life*. This dissertation, much like de Certeau’s examination of everyday life, breaks with the binary logic of polarizing language contained in traditional social science frames of reference. Breaking away from structural analyses, he saw the practice of everyday life as full of tactics generating everyday creativity and resistance. De Certeau likens this to a form of resistance that disrupts the flow of domination, not one that stands in direct opposition. Rather, it is what resists representation. From this one sees de Certeau’s vision of everyday life as stubborn, inventing subtle deviations as one travels through the everyday. Additionally, de Certeau cataloged artifacts of everyday life as possessing a cultural breadth suggesting forms of cultural unconsciousness. For de Certeau, the
practice of everyday life is full of subtle stokes of genius, remarking on the past while recognizing the present. De Certeau’s approach and the adaptation of it in this study will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 2.

To accomplish these goals, this study will analyze a series of oral histories of former Owens-Illinois glass workers who manufactured glass containers in Huntington, West Virginia from the early 1900s through the early 1990s. Most workers at the Owens-Illinois plant came around the turn of the twentieth century were from the Huntington community, or they were from the greater tri-state region. Huntington’s glass workers lost their jobs when the glass factory officially ceased operations in December, 1992. The Owens-Illinois glass container factory had played a major role in creating Huntington’s industrial manufacturing character with nearly 100 years of glass container production. The glass factory provided thousands of Appalachian glass workers with stable employment. Huntington’s glass workers were a well-known cultural resource to Huntington residents as they frequently participated in a variety of social events. When the factory terminated glass production, hundreds of Huntington glass workers were displaced, and were faced with the dilemma of trying to find work elsewhere, or suffer economic disaster. How Appalachian glass factory workers coped with such deleterious social conditions is central to understanding urban Appalachian culture and its resiliency in various adverse social conditions.

This study will also analyze how gender and ethnicity played a part in the way Appalachian industrial workers developed various coping mechanisms in times of economic feast and famine, and how these social locations affected their working environment. This is an important aspect of Appalachian life that generally has gone
unnoticed. The study will also explore the coping mechanisms developed by Appalachian industrial workers as they, like many industrial workers residing within the well-known “rustbelt” located in the mid-west and northeast sections of the U.S., entered into an era referred to as deindustrialization - and suffered massive job losses.

The oral histories examined in this study were collected under the guidance of Dr. Barbara Ellen Smith with the help of several Sociology graduate students who worked for the Oral History of Appalachia located in the Department of Sociology and Anthropology Department at Marshall University. The oral histories were tape recorded and later transcribed into oral history manuscripts. The oral histories are open-ended, which allowed for the interviewees to fully tell their life histories. Thirty-six oral histories were collected from 1993 to 1994. The oral histories of former Owens-Illinois glass workers were then placed in the Special Collections section of Marshall University’s library. I first read through all of the oral histories, placing each one in a separate written file. I particularly focused on coping mechanisms utilized by what appeared to be marginalized groups (women and African-American glass workers). These oral histories are unique. Other Appalachian cities experiencing deindustrialization were not included in this collection.

The Structure of This Study

The overall structure of this dissertation follows in chronological order the events that took place during Huntington’s glass factory’s era of massive industrialization through the deindustrialization period. Consequently, Chapter 1 provides this dissertation with its historical framework. This chapter traces the chain of events that impacted the
lives of Huntington’s glass workers demonstrating how they dealt with the many challenges that occurred over the nearly 100 years of the glass factory’s operation.

Chapter 2 utilizes the work of De Certeau to generate sociological theory that aids in the understanding of the complexity of the social relationships that Huntington’s glass workers developed to live out their daily lives in the face of rapid social changes and economic disaster. This chapter suggests that subtle forms of resistance were often activated in the midst of abrupt social changes that generated a variety of “coping mechanisms,” which enabled Huntington’s glass workers to endure adverse social environments that impacted the way their work was conducted in the glass factory. This chapter also examines how Huntington’s glass workers developed forms of “overt resistance” when the social playing field gave them an advantage to counter powerful social forces that attempted to disrupt their economic and social lives.

Chapters 3 and 4 are focused on the experiences of two particularly marginalized groups of workers at the Huntington plant—women and African Americans. As marginalized groups within an overall marginalized Appalachian culture, the lives of women and African Americans have been seen as particularly “disorganized” and “backwards” in the culture of poverty literature. In this study, which focuses on processes of cultural resistance among marginalized Appalachian workers, the experiences of these two groups thus seem especially significant to scrutinize for signs of resistance.

Accordingly, chapter 3 is an analysis of the role that female glass workers had in the development of Huntington’s Owens-Illinois glass factory. It chronicles unfair hiring practices and the development of “coping mechanisms” that female glass workers utilized
to counter unfair labor practices. This chapter also examines the effects that Civil Rights Legislation passed in 1963 had upon women glass workers and how their male glass coworkers responded to such changes in labor law.

Chapter 4 continues with the examination of the passage of Civil Rights Legislation and the effect it had upon the hiring of African-American glass workers. Included in this section is the comparison of the experiences of male African-American glass workers to female African-American glass workers. Also analyzed in this chapter is the response by many white glass workers who, for the first time in their lives, shared their workspace with African-Americans.

Chapter 5 is a study of the experiences of Opal Mann and her legal battles to gain workplace equality at Owens-Illinois glass in Huntington, West Virginia. The quality of her experiences working at Huntington’s glass factory exemplify the central theme of this dissertation; the ability of Appalachian workers to develop a variety of “coping mechanisms” and to “overtly resist” when the social playing field is leveled by outside social forces. For these reasons, Opal Mann deserves a chapter dedicated to the examination of her struggles.

Chapter 6 examines the reactions of Huntington’s glass workers to deindustrialization. This chapter analyzes coping mechanisms that were developed to counter the economically destructive tendencies connected to deindustrialization. This chapter demonstrates that Appalachian workers were not culturally unable to re-create their economies. They became economic and cultural survivors.

The Conclusion completes the analysis of the social web of cooperation among workers. It demonstrates that Appalachian culture is not “backwards,” but is quite
sophisticated in its ability to create and deploy both “coping mechanisms” and forms of “overt resistance” to counteract the strain that disastrous events such as the deindustrialization process placed upon Huntington’s glass workers and the community.

This chapter also calls upon future researchers of Appalachian industrial workers to examine the everyday lives of workers who successfully coped with economic deprivation due to the deindustrialization process, ultimately suggesting that Appalachians will continue to fight back against powerful social forces that threaten communities such as Huntington, West Virginia.

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1 Exciting and exotic stories about romance, murder, intrigue, and violence located within Appalachia were widely distributed in monthly magazines such as Scribner’s, The Atlantic Monthly, and Century.


8 Lewis’s work introduced the “Culture of Poverty” model to a wide audience that was eager to dismiss earlier arguments which suggested poverty could be traced to a biological inheritance. In essence, Lewis’s work dissuaded those who had earlier argued that poverty was the outcome of poor genes as opposed to environmental social and/or cultural conditions. His “Culture of Poverty” model had profound effects on subsequent environment versus heredity theories.


11 It is important to note that Allison Davis’s chapter “The Motivation of the Under-Privileged Worker” was also an attempt to dissuade scholars that poverty was connected to heredity. Davis was correct that a worker’s individual heredity was not connected to poverty. However, in doing so, Davis created the notion that poverty could be linked to cultural teachings and practices.

12 Davis points out that in Biological Basis of Human Nature (1930), the famous geneticist H.S. Jennings had already stated that the attitudes of workers could not be judged scientifically, with regard to the
comparative hereditary abilities, until their obvious unequal social environments were equal to those of the middle-class. Jennings, H. S., 1930. The Biological Basis of Human Nature. London: Faber and Faber. 


Ira Goldenberg, Yale University psychologist suggested a connection of continual poverty to a culture which fosters such attitudes in an individual’s youth.

Banfield, Edward, The Unheavenly City Revisited. 1968: 54.


Polsby stated one can understand power in any social situation by discovering who gains power, who loses power, and who prevails in the decision-making.


Gaventa, John. 1980. Power and Powerlessness: Quiescence and Rebellion in an Appalachian Valley. University of Illinois Press: Urbana, Chicago, London. Gaventa continued his historiography of the analysis of power in Power and Powerlessness by describing the Two-Dimensional Approach. This approach, according to Gaventa, was largely influenced by E. E. Schattschneider’s book The Semi-Sovereign People: A Realist’s View of Democracy in America published in 1960. In this book, Schattschneider declared that the responsibility for nonparticipation can be wholly attributed to ignorance, indifference, and shiftless of the people. The Two-Dimensional approach was an addition to the One-Dimensional approach that clearly bifurcated acts of participation or nonparticipation, defined as homo politicus or homo civicus respectively. In this examination of power, homo politicus either actively counters actor A’s wishes, or becomes homo civicus, who decides that political action against the more powerful actor A is ultimately less efficient than working at a job, earning extra money, joining civic clubs and organizations, and going on vacations. This approach failed to recognize that what often appeared as nonparticipation by citizens was often laden with subtle forms of resistance which were acted out in the process of living an everyday life. Subtle forms of resistance brushed up against actor A without directly opposing the wishes of actor A. The lack of direct opposition to the wishes of actor A are not due to shiftlessness or laziness, but are designed and activated as coping mechanisms that enabled the less powerful actor B a degree of agency within a power hierarchy. Coping mechanisms are deployed by those less powerful due to their recognition of power inequalities. According to Gaventa, the most insidious form of power maintenance is when actor B fails to recognize that an inequitable power relationship exists.

Gaventa continued in Power and Powerlessness by discussing the Three-Dimensional approach to power. This analysis of power went beyond the first two dimensions of power. In the One-Dimensional approach, power was described as the ability of actor A to coerce actor B to behave according to actor A’s wishes. In the Two-Dimensional approach actor B had the ability to directly oppose the wishes of actor A, or could go along with the wishes of actor A. In the Three-Dimensional approach, Gaventa states that actor A not only coerces actor B into behaving in a desired manner, but also manufactures the needs and wants for actor B. Gaventa remarked that this was the most insidious form of power, the power that is hidden.

The third dimension of power described by Gaventa was the least developed at the time of the publication of Power and Powerlessness. However, Gaventa speculated that this dimension of power would include the means through which possibilities and strategies to challenge power arose. He continued his line of reasoning and suggested that the study of myths, language, and symbols used by both the powerful and the powerless
would demonstrate how social fields change allowing for subtle forms of resistance to be deployed by those opposing those with more social power.


xxiii The Huntington tri-state region includes the northwest corner of West Virginia, the upper eastern corner of Kentucky, and the southeast corner of Ohio. All of these locations are from within the region today identified as Appalachia. Kentucky’s Appalachian region includes the entire eastern and southeastern portions of the state. The south and southwest sections of Ohio, much of which is located on the Ohio River, is also considered part of the Appalachian region. The entire state of West Virginia is considered to be in the Appalachian region.
CHAPTER I

HUNTINGTON, WEST VIRGINIA’S GLASS MAKING HISTORY

Business entrepreneur Charles Bolt, from Cincinnati, Ohio, had been searching for a city with already established transportation connections (river and rail) and natural industrial assets such as nearby coal reserves with an available low-skilled workforce. Huntington, West Virginia, situated in the Appalachian region on the southern banks of the Ohio River, already had excellent water transportation and a highly structured railroad system, which met the increasing needs of industrial production. This location fit nicely with Bolt’s production needs, and was chosen as the home for the Charles Bolt Glass Company. Huntington, West Virginia officially entered the glass container making industry in 1913 with the opening of the Charles Bolt Glass Company, and by 1914, a three furnace glass container factory was in operation in the west end of Huntington. In 1917, the glass company added another furnace, and by 1918, the Charles Bolt Glass Company had five furnaces in full production.

Owens-Illinois Glass

The company’s quick success drew interest from other U.S. glass-making companies. In 1926, the Owens Bottle Company reorganized its license agreement, allowing the Charles Bolt Glass Company to use the “Owens Machine.” As a compromise between the two companies, the reorganization opened the door for the Owens Glass Company to purchase controlling shares of stock in the Charles Bolt Glass Company, ultimately controlling all glass production in the factory. From that time on, the Huntington plant would always have the name Owens attached to it. During the
decade of the 1930s, the Huntington plant greatly expanded, producing over 800,000 glass products per year emanating from a physical plant covering nearly 20 acres, with one building covering one half million square feet of glass production space. Owens Glass Company was growing and began searching for ways to increase its production capabilities.iii In 1931, Owens Glass Company acquired the assets of Illinois Glass Company, merging operations to become the Owens-Illinois Glass Company.iv

In the same year (1931), the country’s first glass decorating department was founded in the Huntington glass factory. The Huntington glass plant developed a process by which glass bottles could be adorned with other materials, yielding a highly ornamented glass bottle. The Huntington glass plant pioneered the process by which porcelain was attached to glass bottle facings, making decorated bottles a much sought after product.v Huntington’s glass container innovations only strengthened its position as a well respected company which resulted in increased community loyalty and pride.

As Huntington’s Owens-Illinois glass plant expanded, it became not only a place of employment for Huntington residents, but also a source of social organization for community events and a social network for surrounding city residents. Community events included blood drives, dances, community bazaars, and factory-sponsored sports teams. However, the community not only depended on factory workers for leisure and entertainment, it also looked to factory workers in times of trouble. One such instance occurred during the 1937 flood. For days rains soaked the Ohio River Valley, forcing many Ohio River communities to evacuate their homes and businesses. Transportation routes were shut down and many local drinking wells and reservoirs became
contaminated with overflowing river water. Huntington glass workers organized to battle the ravages of the 1937 flood.

Owens-Illinois glass workers, fittingly named “OnIzers,” organized to help those families who had been flooded out by the rising flood waters. To meet the needs of their workers, the Owens-Illinois management arranged for glass workers to clear extra space in unused glass plant buildings. This extra space was made available to glass workers to store personal belongings they were able to rescue before the rising flood waters washed them away. Cots were also erected in the plant for Owens-Illinois workers to use when they could find time to get a little sleep between rescue efforts. vi

The glass plant, situated a few feet higher than most companies in Huntington, was slightly above the flooding Ohio River waters. One of the few uncontaminated natural springs in Huntington was located on the glass plant’s property. vii This was one of only a few local sources of clean water during the 1937 flood. Glass workers, in an effort to distribute potable water to Huntington residents, decided to fill factory produced glass bottles with clean drinking water from the factory’s uncontaminated natural spring. However, glass workers needed a way to get the water bottles to Huntington residents. Realizing this, dozens of the glass plant’s men turned the maintenance shop into a makeshift boat manufacturing facility. With a ready supply of commercially produced Owens-Illinois glass bottles, a source of uncontaminated drinking water, and newly fashioned boats to carry out their rescue missions, many Huntington glass workers began distributing Owens-Illinois bottled water via barge or rowboat to Huntington residents in need. viii
Heating Huntington homes during the 1937 flood was also a problem addressed by the “OnIzed” workers. “OnIzed” men delivered food, stoves, and other supplies by barge to many flood refugees cooped up in Huntington homes or public housing. From its own supply, the Owens-Illinois plant also distributed kerosene to many flood sufferers. Fearing an outbreak of typhoid, state organizations dropped serum by plane. Once received, two Owens-Illinois nurses immediately began giving injections of the serum free-of-charge to its employees and anyone else who asked.\textsuperscript{ix}

During WWII, U.S. manufacturing plants operated at all-time highs to meet the wartime needs of the nation. Much of the glass plant’s production was for medical glass containers. The war had a great effect on Huntington’s Owens-Illinois glass plant as it grappled to meet increased demands. Many women took jobs in the glass factory to fill-in for men who were drafted. However, glass factory management often convinced draft boards that many men already employed in the plant could better serve their country by staying at home working in the glass factory than fighting overseas. In observance of plant workers called away to serve in U.S. war efforts, the plant newspaper published many stories about Owens-Illinois workers fighting overseas. Unfortunately, some of these stories ended as obituaries.

When the war ended, new glass factories were opened in various countries in Western Europe. Due to an increased demand for glass containers, the Huntington plant expanded its production to include fruit jars and other household, chemical, and cosmetic ware. Huntington’s glass decorating department again led the nation in glass container innovation. They developed a process allowing glass bottles to be decorated with
colored lettering. Commercial bottles produced in the U.S. would never look the same due to this Huntington glass making development.

Before WW II, only a few glass making jobs, which were considered highly skilled, were organized under the aegis of the Knights of Labor. Many Huntington glass workers reported that they hadn’t felt a need for unionization because Owens-Illinois Glass Company management had always fostered a family-like atmosphere. After all, many of the management positions were filled by former hourly workers, family, friends, and neighbors who had worked their way up from the ground floor at the plant before taking on management jobs.

In the late 1940s, many industries in the U.S. underwent a unionization trend. It was at this time that the Owens-Illinois Glass Company reported a lack of business interest from unionized liquor manufacturers. These unionized liquor producers wouldn’t do business with Huntington’s glass factory until it was unionized. Pressure by liquor manufacturers to unionize the Huntington glass plant was so great Owens-Illinois management began encouraging the Huntington glass workers to find themselves a national union to join. It wasn’t until the end of the 1940s, coupled with a strong national unionization drive, that the Huntington glass factory became unionized.

Attached to unionization was another glass manufacturing development: the hiring of black workers in the glass plant. Due to the lack of white male employees during WWII, Huntington’s glass plant management agreed to begin hiring African-American workers. By the mid 1940s, only a few black workers were hired in Huntington’s glass plant. The jobs offered to black glass workers, like those of women glass workers, were few. These positions were considered unskilled labor. In the
following decade more women and black workers would be hired to take these less
skilled glass manufacturing jobs. Several decades later, many African-American men
and women would be hired by glass factory management in jobs other than low-skill
positions.\textsuperscript{xiii}

At the end of the decade, the production machinery at the Huntington plant was
converted to a newer and faster production method. The Owens glass bottle machines
were converted to a gravity-fed process. In this system, molten glass is fed to the
forming process by gravity, as opposed to the earlier Owens vacuum feed system. This
system increased the speed of glass container production as more glass containers could
be made per hour with fewer workers. This development allowed operators to be free
from the worries of pushing glass container material through the process by allowing
gravity to do the job. Even though this technological glass production development
would eventually lead to increased glass container production, the Owens-Illinois Glass
Company was reporting financial losses, which led to many lay-offs among glass
workers. Near the end of the 1940’s Owens-Illinois reported losses and laid-off many
workers. This was however, a temporary setback. Eventually the gravity-fed glass
container production process would pay-off and lead to increased glass container
production and a re-hiring of the laid-off glass workers.

In the 1950s, the glass company enjoyed an increase in glass production. At this
time, the company’s pay structure and benefits package usually provided a livable wage
for its workers, and many glass workers had a sense of job security. Many workers
reported they were satisfied with their wages and benefits packages at the Huntington
glass plant. They felt they were part of a team that was always expanding, giving them a
sense of job security. However, the work was sometimes deafening, and often required monotonous labor. Glass workers, recognizing that most glass manufacturing jobs in the Huntington factory required tedious, repetitive work, wished to offset these maladies. As a way to cope with these work-related nuisances, the glass workers organized themselves to provide much in the way of leisure activities away from the glass plant via the “O-I-nize Club.” An example of such “O-I-nized” activities included a rod and gun club located in nearby rural Wayne County. The club hosted weekend and holiday picnics or fish fries. Owens-Illinois workers, family, and friends could swim, boat, and fish in a lake located on the property, or they could hunt in the surrounding woods. The family atmosphere that developed was amply evidenced by the large number of Owens-Illinois workers many families could boast.

By the middle of the 1950s, the plant’s ranks swelled to over 3,000 employees producing over 93,000,000 glass containers per year.\textsuperscript{xiv} It was becoming evident that Owens-Illinois Glass Company jobs were responsible for great economic and social stability in Huntington, West Virginia, and these jobs were considered a permanent fixture of the city that helped define Huntington’s character. Again, many workers reported a feeling of solid job security at Huntington’s glass factory.\textsuperscript{xv}

On the surface, many glass workers were reportedly satisfied with working conditions and job security at Huntington’s glass plant, and they reported being excited about the growth of Owens-Illinois glass plants at home and abroad. The 1950s were not, however, without a sense of fear and suspicion of the possibility of losing glass jobs on the part of those who wrote editorials and produced cartoons for the plant’s newspaper \textit{The Huntingtonizer}. Often the editorial pages in the glass plant’s newspaper printed
articles which resonated with a fear of global communism. On September 18, 1953, the plant’s newspaper ran an editorial earlier written by J. Edgar Hoover that first appeared in Boston University’s newspaper The Boston Campus entitled, “Be Aware Of Danger Of Communism.” The plant newspaper also printed a cartoon depicting an unemployed Soviet worker out in the streets looking for something to eat with a caption saying, “People in the U.S.S.R. wish they had a union meeting to go to!” These examples reflected a union policy of strident anticommunism.

From the late 1940s to the mid 1950s, technological innovations in commercial glass container production had advanced to a point where a few machines could do the work of hundreds of glass workers. Therefore, many glass manufacturing jobs (mostly low-skilled and semi-skilled) were lost. This had been the trajectory of the commercial glass industry for some time. More profit was available to Owens-Illinois if advanced glass manufacturing machines were put into production displacing workers.

By the end of the decade, Owens-Illinois workers began questioning the glass factory’s hiring policies. There were rumors about women in the plant sleeping their way to better jobs, or some men constantly hitting on the women who worked at the glass plant. Black glass workers reported incidents of racist comments made to them while working at the plant, or reported a sense of separation from white workers once their shift ended, leaving the plant in silence. Additional comments were being made about the lack of job opportunities within the plant for both women and black glass workers. These critiques of the Owens-Illinois Glass Company’s hiring practices would ultimately be supported by the following decade’s social, political, and economic upheavals.
In the 1960s, many traditionally held values were questioned by the American youths. Members of the newly emerging post-World War II baby boom generation began expressing their dissatisfaction with long-standing social institutional beliefs and practices by experimenting with religious, social, and political structures. The reduction of discrimination with regard to gender and race was at the forefront in American politics, the workplace, and social events. The Huntington glass plant workers were affected by this national movement. Black and women workers made up only twenty percent of all new hires at the Huntington glass plant, and the jobs these minorities could hold were still drastically limited. These hiring practices were challenged in the mid 1960s. Huntington was the setting for a groundbreaking legal battle, which set a workers’ rights precedent for the entire nation.xviii

Opal Mann challenged Owens-Illinois management when she brought a Federal suit against the company alleging the company allowed certain jobs to be filled by men only. Even if a female glass plant worker was fully qualified for a position, she was not allowed to bid on the job. According to Mann, the only job a woman could get in the plant, other than secretarial work, was in sorting and packing bottles. Higher paying glass jobs in the plant were out of reach for women. In the early 1960s, a Quality Chief Inspector’s job came open and Opal Mann bid on it. At the time, the president of Mann’s union local was a woman. The union president, as did others in the glass plant, agreed with Owens-Illinois management that Chief Quality Inspector jobs were the sole province of men. Therefore, Opal Mann didn’t qualify. Mann decided to take the matter beyond the scope of the local union.xix
Eventually Mann received a letter from the Office of Equal Opportunity (OEO) in Washington, D.C., directing her to take the matter to a federal court, which would cost her nothing, since the Federal government would cover any debt incurred by the court case. The (OEO) also promised Mann that any reprisals generated by Owens-Illinois management or coworkers would be staved-off by the federal government watchdogs. Mann reportedly still felt threatened by glass plant management and by her coworkers and realized although she had been guaranteed job safety, the federal government could not fully prevent any later retaliation at the hands of Owens-Illinois management or fellow coworkers. She also feared the national attention this lawsuit would produce. Mann, self-admittedly scared of such national attention, decided to go before a federal judge to see if she had a chance of winning the case. She was directed to appear before a local federal judge in Huntington for an initial hearing. At this hearing, the judge sarcastically reminded Opal Mann she wasn’t a young woman anymore, and asked if she was afraid of losing her job at the glass plant, which would hurt members of her family. Mann replied the only person that could be hurt was herself. Obviously, reprisals in the symbolic form had already begun. After hearing Mann’s statement, the judge suggested she get the counsel of a lawyer before proceeding.xx

Opal Mann decided to ask one of her brother’s drinking buddies, Ken Fisher, who happened to be a local Huntington attorney to represent her in the case, Mann warned Fisher not to take the job if he didn’t want to, but Fisher agreed to take her workplace sex discrimination case. In the first case of its kind in the United States, Opal Mann won her case against Owens-Illinois Glass Company, ultimately forcing the company to change its gender segregated job bidding policy and hiring practices, and was granted the position of
Quality Inspector in the Huntington Plant. This legal battle set a precedent for a nation in search of equality of gender in the workplace. No longer could companies in the U.S. deny women the ability to bid upon and work a job traditionally held in reserve for men. Fisher reported that taking this case was his proudest moment in his legal career.\textsuperscript{xxi}

Gender discrimination, however, was still a problem at the Owens-Illinois glass plant, as well as around the nation. Often women were fired at the glass plant if they were found to be the bearers of illegitimate children. The fathers of these children, often Owens-Illinois glass workers were, however, allowed to keep their jobs. According to many Owens-Illinois glass workers, job discrimination also occurred in terms of black workers wanting to bid on certain jobs or trying to pick up extra hours of work. In other words, minorities were the last chosen either for certain jobs, or to receive overtime hours.\textsuperscript{xxii}

In 1965, the corporate name was changed to Owens-Illinois, Incorporated. Toledo-based company leaders wished their official name to reflect the company’s broader scope of operations. This name change was also a reflection of a stage being set for a change in U.S. manufacturing industries.\textsuperscript{xxiii} Many U.S. industries were being faced with the challenge of the development of a global capitalist market. Throughout the 1960s, articles in the \textit{Huntingtonizer} announced to its workers the success of opening more Owens-Illinois glass manufacturing plants in other countries. In 1960, Owens-Illinois started a new glass container production plant near Bogota, Columbia, which was the second Owens-Illinois glass production facility in South America. In 1967, Owens-Illinois and Sasaki Glass formed a joint operation to make high quality, machine-made glass stemware in Tokyo, Japan. In the same year, Owens-Illinois Inc. purchased the
controlling interest in the Bunder Glass Company, a West German manufacturer of glass and plastic items for the pharmaceutical, cosmetic, chemical, and food industries. xxiv This was a sign of the crossroads in Huntington’s glass plant’s history. Glass making jobs were being created outside the United States. This represents a significant shift in U.S. glass container production. Glass factories had been opened in other countries by Owens-Illinois when WWII ended. However, those plants were not competing on the global market with Huntington’s or any other U.S. based glass factory. The effects of globalization in the glass manufacturing industry were finally being felt by American glass workers.

The 1970s was an important turning point for Owens-Illinois Glass. Articles began to appear regularly in the Huntingtonizer complaining of increased international competition in glass production. xxv Plastic containers were also becoming increasingly popular as a substitute for glass bottles. With the development of U.S. chemical plants, came a push to use plastic bottles rather than glass bottles. Plastic bottle production had been possible for the Owens-Illinois Glass Company since the 1930s when they merged with the Illinois Glass Company. However, Owens-Illinois, Inc. never fully developed plastic container production. Although plastic containers were cheaper to produce and cost less to ship, since they weighed less than glass containers, and plastic producers boasted a lower error ratio in production than glass producers.

The rise of plastic containers was to be the main challenge to Huntington glass plant’s survival. Plastic container production, combined with the global economy’s challenge to the United States’ domination of the world’s capitalist market, produced a problem for Owens-Illinois, Inc. U.S. glass container companies were failing to
adequately compete with foreign glass container companies. To offset this dilemma, Owens-Illinois entered into a period of downsizing glass producing plants around the nation, rather than focus on plastic container production. Again, Huntington would feel the pinch of a national trend to export jobs overseas where cheaper workforces were available.

The Impact of Deindustrialization

In their oral histories, many former Owens-Illinois glass workers talked about the joy of working in a factory with the close-knit employee circle that occurred from the 1930s through the 1980s. Frequently, glass workers complained that as the plant became more technologically sophisticated, the family atmosphere, along with many of the better paid skilled positions, gradually disappeared. This led to a continual deskilling of many jobs in the Huntington factory, reflecting a trend throughout the U.S. commercial glass industry. xxvi

Competition in the container market put pressure on Owens-Illinois to contend with other container companies using materials other than glass. The glass container market was decreasing, while the aluminum can and plastic bottle markets were increasing. Increased competition from foreign glass container producers, coupled with increased demand for plastic bottles and aluminum cans, forced Owens-Illinois to technologically change the way they made glass. This increased the amount of automation in Huntington’s glass factory.

According to Current Industrial Reports, U.S. glass container shipments steadily decreased from 1980 to 1992, which was the year Huntington’s glass factory closed. The
following chart (Figure 1) indicates that glass container production was in steady

(Figure 1) GLASS CONTAINER SHIPMENTS, 1980-1992

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Product</th>
<th>Total Shipments (thousands of gross)*</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1980</td>
<td>Glass, containers (Total)</td>
<td>........325,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1981</td>
<td>`</td>
<td>........323,000</td>
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<td>1982</td>
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<td>1992</td>
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<td>........282,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>**Total</td>
<td>........3,512,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

% Change 1980-1985: -16%
% Change 1980-1990: -12.62%
% Change 1980-1992: -13.23%
Absolute Change 1980-1992: -43,000

Source: *Figures in this column were rounded to the nearest whole number

Similarly, according to Current Industrial Reports, from 1972 to 1980, aluminum
can production steadily increased. In 1976, just over 20 billion units were produced. In
1977, nearly 25 billion aluminum cans were produced. In 1978, the 25 billion unit mark
was met. In 1979, over 35 billion aluminum cans were produced, and in 1980, over 40
billion aluminum cans were produced. Overall, from 1972 to 1980, aluminum can
production in the U.S. rose from 11 billion units produced to over 40 billion units, which
is over a 73% increase in total production.
produce than glass containers and were also inexpensive to ship. Glass container manufacturers such as Owens-Illinois were faced with higher costs of production and shipment, which decreased their ability to compete with container companies that utilized new materials in the creation of cheaper and more efficient containers. (Figure 2)

(Figure 2) ALUMINUM CAN SHIPMENTS, 1972-1980

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Product</th>
<th>Total Shipments (Billions of Cans)*</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1972</td>
<td>Aluminum Cans</td>
<td>……..11+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1973</td>
<td>''</td>
<td>……..13+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1974</td>
<td>''</td>
<td>……..16+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1975</td>
<td>''</td>
<td>……..18+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1976</td>
<td>''</td>
<td>……..21+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1977</td>
<td>''</td>
<td>……..24+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1978</td>
<td>''</td>
<td>……..30+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1979</td>
<td>''</td>
<td>……..37+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1980</td>
<td>''</td>
<td>……..41+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>……..211+</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>+31.25%</td>
<td>+54.16%</td>
<td>+73.17%</td>
<td>30+ Billion</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Current Industrial Reports, 1972-1980
* Figures in this column were rounded to the nearest whole number

According to Current Industrial Reports, yearly production of plastic bottles steadily increased from 1977 to 1980. In 1977, a little over 880 million units were produced. The following year, production went over 1 billion units produced, and by 1980 over 1.2 billion units were produced. From 1977 to 1981, plastic container production nearly doubled, with an increase from 880 million units to over 1,500 million units. This is a 70% increase in the production of plastic bottles. The use of plastic to produce containers rose steadily eventually doubling in output. By 1988, production rose
to over 237% of 1977 production. Plastic containers spurred diminishing glass container production thereby reducing the Huntington glass factory’s ability to compete in the container industry. Plastic containers were lighter and therefore cheaper for container companies to ship. This innovation increased the profits for plastic container manufacturers and increased costs for glass container companies like Owens-Illinois.

(Figure 3) PLASTIC BOTTLE PRODUCTION, 1977-1988

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Product</th>
<th>Total Production (Millions of Bottles)*</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1977</td>
<td>Plastic Bottles (Total)</td>
<td>880</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1978</td>
<td>''</td>
<td>1,050</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1979</td>
<td>''</td>
<td>1,130</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1980</td>
<td>''</td>
<td>1,400</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1981</td>
<td>''</td>
<td>1,500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1982</td>
<td>''</td>
<td>1,548</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1983</td>
<td>''</td>
<td>1,640</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1984</td>
<td>''</td>
<td>1,740</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1985</td>
<td>''</td>
<td>2,020</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1986</td>
<td>''</td>
<td>**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1987</td>
<td>''</td>
<td>2,730</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1988</td>
<td>''</td>
<td>2,969</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>21,877</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

% Change

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<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>+70%</td>
<td>+210%</td>
<td>+237%</td>
<td>+2089</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Current Industrial Reports, 1977-1988

* Figures in this column were rounded to the nearest whole number

** Indicates that the data for this year was not available

Technological developments during this period drastically changed the character of commercial glass work. Prior to this, most commercial glass workers at the Huntington plant thought of themselves as highly skilled workers producing a hand-made
product of which they were proud. Newly automated commercial glass-making machinery required less skill and specialization; the majority of the new glass-making machines were run by computers. Huntington’s glass workers were no longer required to possess a great deal of skill in operating the glass container making machines. However, Huntington glass workers were still required to know how to operate the new machines. George Kline recalled some of the technological changes that occurred in Huntington’s glass factory during his tenure as an Owens-Illinois employee.

“Interviewer: Yeah, it’s scary, it’s scary. So a, maybe you can tell me about the changes you saw in the plant during your 30 years?
George: Oh, my gosh! Well…
Interviewer: Start from the beginning and anything you want to tell me, I don’t care.
George: Automation. It just…
Interviewer: Automation?
George: When it started why, it just took over.
Interviewer: Yeah, it’s a monster.
George: Oh yeah. The machine line operators, of course that’s where they made the bottle from the glass went in. It used to be they had to do most of it by hand you know. As far as a…well, you probably wouldn’t know what I was talking about, they’d have to swab the machines, in other words, clean the molds out between drops.
Interviewer: Yeah, after each?
George: They have to do that by their self. Then when it came time to changing the equipment, and believe me they were heavy, they’d have to change their own equipment. Of course sometimes they would have help, sometimes they wouldn’t you know. (Uh-huh) But at last it was all computerized. They just push a button.”
(Oral History #519, Owens-Illinois Project)

The majority of automated glass workers became increasingly regarded as semi-skilled laborers, as opposed to highly-skilled laborers. Commercial glass automation also greatly reduced the number of glass workers needed in production work, and increased the number of glass packing and sorting jobs.

Technological innovations in commercial glass container production had advanced to a point where several machines could substitute for the work of hundreds of
glass workers. Therefore, many glass manufacturing jobs (mostly low-skilled and semi-skilled) were lost due to technological advancements. This had been the trajectory of the commercial glass industry for some since the Owens Machine was put into operation in the early years of Huntington’s glass factory. To compete with the global market’s ability to produce cheaper glass containers and the increased demand for plastic and aluminum containers, Owens-Illinois’s management pushed to develop new streamlined glass-making processes (technological innovations) that would allow for dramatic reduction in their manufacturing labor force. From Owens-Illinois’ point of view, the company market share and profit line could only be protected if the most advanced glass manufacturing machines were put into production.

Many glass manufacturing plants in the U.S. could not compete with the developing world’s challenge to the U.S. domination of the global capitalist market. Eventually Owens-Illinois allowed other foreign companies to buy Owens-Illinois’ glass manufacturing technology, and rented Owens-Illinois’ expertise and management to build and maintain these newly emerging glass manufacturing plants.

At the close of WWII, U.S. industries had developed markets overseas. U.S. domination of the global capitalist market was made possible by the victory of Allied forces over Germany and Japan in Word War II. Rapid shipping and increased transportation capacity developed during World War II also helped American companies erect manufacturing plants overseas to supply previously non-existent markets. Owens-Illinois was at the forefront of this development. Owens-Illinois proudly boasted in the “Owenizer,” Huntington’s glass plant newspaper, of Owens-Illinois employees traveling
overseas after World War II to strike deals with rebuilding European countries in need of glass-making jobs and the commercial containers produced by such factories.

Many of the older glass workers in Huntington’s glass making industry recalled the numerous technological changes the Owens-Illinois glass plant had undergone, which accelerated from the 1950s through the 1990s. Each time a new piece of machinery came into the glass plant, more jobs were lost. Increased automation dramatically changed the way they made commercial glass; with each new transformation, these workers barely recognized the workings of the technologically updated glass plant.

In his oral history, Ralph Clay talked about the changes that took place in Huntington’s glass factory resulting from automation beginning when he started in 1950 until the time he retired in the late 1980s.

“Interviewer: How did, uh, what changes did you see in the factory as time went by?
Ralph: Well when I first went there it was all done by hand and uh when I left uh, they weren’t packing anything buy uh, well I’ll take that back, it was packed by hand, but when I first went there uh, they uh, took the bottles off the lahr, may be five women standing on a lahr, beside the lahr, just reaching over and taking them off, and putting them in a carton and throwing them on a trailer. But as years went by they uh, started running the bottles down a single line, detecting defects in them and they, see the women didn’t have to inspect the bottles on the lahrs, usually the machines done most of the inspecting. (Yeah, that’s amazing) [Laughter] Yeah, and uh, they would run the bottles through all of these machines, and then around through a uh, we call it a CID and it, all you had to do was just go on this machine and punch in a mold number that was, you wasn’t throwing away. (Uh-huh) It had rings on the bottom of each bottle, usually each bottle. And those rings were coated, you know, you could just punch it on the uh, machine and as it went through that machine it would read that mold number and if you had it punched on their it would just throw the bottle away, see so anything you wasn’t throwing away, all you had to punch it in the machine, (Tell it) tell it and it would throw it away. Then it went around to the case packer automatically, uh it would sit there all day at that case packer, packing bottles. Uh, maybe 24 or 48 would run down there and when it would fill up, why it would just drop them down. Now the carton would come under there automatically, and then another one would drop down, so. It was really, went from manual to mechanical, (Yeah) and uh, in all those years.” (Oral History #525, Owens-Illinois Project)
Similarly, in his oral history, George Kline remembered how automation seemed to take over Huntington’s glass plant. He continued by stating that the glass workers, who were once considered operators, were no longer doing the work they had to do in the past. The work had become computerized, and little in the way of skilled work was required of the operators to maintain the manufacturing of glass containers.

“George: But at last it was all computerized. They just push a button.
Interviewer: And they all got cleaned at once.
George: That’s all they done. So I mean, they had the title of a machine operator but they worked.
Interviewer: They didn’t move a machine?
George: They worked. I mean compared to what they was to start with. They weren’t operators. I know my dad was home one time, he lived in Alexander. I keep wanting to say Virginia but Minnesota is what I meant.
Interviewer: Huh, Alexander, Minnesota.
George: Of course he died up there. But he was here one time and I took him to the plant that was before I retired from there. And he just shook his head when he went in there and he said boy there’s nothing like it was when I worked here.
Interviewer: Fascinated.
George: It was all together different. He said it was like turning out a light. (Yeah, yeah) He said why…that you can’t call them operators he said there is no operation to it.
Interviewer: No skill?
George: Only pushing buttons. (Yeah) Of course they had to what button to push and what time. [Laughter]
Interviewer: Yeah, yeah, yeah. Do you think that’s a good thing? Do you think that, I mean do you have any opinion about you know the kind of changes in there? Do you think it is inevitable?
George: Yeah…yeah, oh yeah. It will get worse. I know, take back when I was working in the packing room, I was talking about checking there while ago, you had to go by every know and then and check every lahr, well once an hour, (Yeah) when you was checking, you had to check it once an hour to check the good ware against the bad ware. Way before I retired you didn’t, you didn’t do that. It was all computerized.” (Oral History #519, Owens-Illinois Project)

During the 1970s Huntington’s Owens-Illinois Glass Company experienced its second major lawsuit. Norma Brooks and Erma Haskins complained women and ethnic minorities were the first to be laid off when downsizing trends hit the Huntington glass
plant. The first to go were women, followed by black men. White men were the last to be released from their jobs, even when a woman or black man had more seniority than the white, male workers. Brooks and Haskins eventually won their case. However, this case took over twenty years to settle before a federal judgment was granted on behalf of the plaintiffs. The Federal court ordered that any seniority lost due to this early release practice be re-instated on behalf of the dispossessed workers. Again, national precedent was set by workers in Huntington’s Owens-Illinois glass plant. However, this legal settlement may have been a blow to a shrinking Owens-Illinois, Inc.

The 1980s was a period of capital flight around the nation. In the first year of this decade, 300 workers were laid off at Huntington’s glass plant as part of the Owens-Illinois modernization program. Recycling programs were also begun by the Owens-Illinois Glass Company, reducing the need for many workers in shipping production materials. The cost of maintaining the glass manufacturing industry was rising around the country. The route chosen to cut production expenditures by the Owens-Illinois Glass Company was to cut labor costs. Cutting labor drastically reduced the glass manufacturing work force in Huntington’s glass plant. These labor cuts, coupled with anti-union positions taken by the Reagan and Bush presidential administrations, lessened the assurance of job security among glass workers. Huntington’s glass workers responded by voicing their concerns in union newsletters over possible wage reductions, or job loss. Many additionally complained to Owens-Illinois management and to local residents of the worsening job conditions at the glass plant and that the family-like atmosphere in the factory had all but disappeared. Instead of hiring managers from the pool of experienced Huntington glass workers, the workers complained of new plant
management being hired from outside the state. The workers reported that the new managers had little faith in Huntington’s glass workers. The term “downsizing” quickly became a familiar word among not only national corporate leaders, but Huntington glass workers as well.\textsuperscript{xxxii}

Huntington’s glass plant operated through the rest of the 1980s, but production was increasingly affected by a sequence of these downsizing trends. In February 1987, Owens-Illinois, Incorporated was sold to Kohlberg, Kravis, Roberts, and Company of New York. In a leveraged buyout, this company then merged Owens-Illinois, Inc. with Brockway Glass Company on April 12, 1988. The Huntington plant became known as Owens-Brockway. The Brockway Company was already well known among many Owens-Illinois glass workers as a business designed to quickly dismantle purchased companies by selling off certain lines of its manufacturing processes to streamline its holdings. Workers complained Brockway was not only dismantling the company, which cost hundreds of jobs, but it was also sending in new managers from other states that showed little respect for Huntington glass workers. The glass workers argued the city as a whole had nearly eighty years of glass making experience. The words of the glass workers fell on deaf ears. Glass workers were now complaining the family atmosphere was completely gone as downsizing efforts continued at the Huntington plant. The early 1990s seemed to promise little for a hopeful future for glass manufacturing work in Huntington, West Virginia.\textsuperscript{xxxiii}

On December 11, 1993, Huntington’s glass plant finally closed. What was feared most by the remaining Huntington glass workers had finally come true. After nearly eighty years as a national leader in the glass making industry, the last of Huntington’s
glass furnaces was forever silenced. Although this closing had been long feared, most workers were caught unaware by the suddenness of the shutdown. Many of the glass workers showed up for work that day only to find locked factory doors with signs informing them that the company was closed. A select skeleton crew was allowed to remain working behind barred doors in the plant. They dismantled the various machines once used in the glass manufacturing process.\textsuperscript{xxxiv}

The local newspaper, \textit{The Herald Dispatch}, wrote articles about a stunned workforce and the surrounding community. Huntington’s television and radio stations ran news stories about the shock of the local workforce members being closed out of a job with little notice.\textsuperscript{xxxv} “Downsizing” was now a well-known term to Huntington’s workforce, surrounding residents, and city leaders. Professors in Huntington’s local university, Marshall University, began lecturing about “deindustrialization.” How would these former glass workers cope with such economic upheaval? What would be the effect of the plant closing on Huntington, West Virginia and the surrounding area’s economy?

The glass plant closing forced many former workers, their families, and surrounding community residents to develop coping mechanisms to recreate their daily lives to counter such an economic loss. They both resisted these changes and developed coping mechanisms to better suit their changed everyday lives. No matter the individual level of involvement in these manufacturing jobs, this economic structural transformation (deindustrialization) placed a strain on all residents in Huntington, West Virginia, ultimately affecting everyone.
The next chapter will examine how “culture of poverty” models were developed to try to understand how generational poverty was created in Appalachia and how these models created stereotypes that many U.S. citizens believed to be true about Appalachians. This chapter will also explore how the work of Michel de Certeau can be of great import in the development of sociological theory to examine the variety and type of resistance Appalachian workers developed to cope with events such as the passage of Civil Rights legislation, which changed the way the Owens-Illinois glass factory’s management hired its employees.

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\(^1\) No longer was a skilled workforce necessary for the production of glass bottles. Additionally, glass entrepreneurs such as Charles Bolt realized unorganized, low-skilled glass workers were paid less than highly skilled glass bottle blowers.


\(^4\) http://www.umsl.edu/mercantile/special_collections/directory/smla-1


\(^6\) The Huntingtonizer. July 12, 1974. A special insert from Huntington’s newspaper The Herald Dispatch, which had written a story that covered the 1937 flood, was placed within this issue of The Huntingtonizer.

\(^7\) Ironically, a central concern during massive floods such as the 1937 flood is the availability of potable water. A natural spring was actually located glass plant property, which remained uncontaminated during the 1937 flood.

\(^8\) The Huntingtonizer. July 12, 1974. Special insert of Huntington’s Herald Dispatch newspaper covering the 1937 flood.

\(^9\) Ibid.

\(^10\) According to The Huntingtonizer, June 25, 1948, this process, however, had its dangers. Amber was a very popular color and was often applied to commercially produced bottles. The powder used to create the amber color contained arsenic. If a glass worker was cut with class containing this amber color, the wound often could be hard to heal.


\(^12\) Ibid.

\(^13\) The hiring of blacks at Huntington’s Owens-Illinois glass plant is not clearly stated in any of the historical documents found in Marshall University’s Special Collections located in Morrow Library. The hiring of new black glass workers, however, is indicated when examining the glass plant’s newspaper The Huntingtonizer from the late 1930s to the mid 1940s.


\(^15\) Ibid.
Commercial glass manufacturing is different than hand-blown glass manufacturing. It is an automated process. A portion of commercial glass workers are still considered skilled, depending on the sophistication of the technical knowledge the individual glass worker must possess to perform their job correctly. Even though older commercial glass workers argued that the new machines did away with any skilled labor required to make commercial glass containers, it could also be argued that the newer advanced glass making processes often required sophisticated workers to operate the machines and their maintenance or repair. The remaining commercial glass workers are considered semi-skilled or unskilled laborers.
CHAPTER II
FROM “COPING MECHANISMS” TO “OVERT RESISTANCE”

To develop a different sociological approach to the theorization of processes of industrialization and deindustrialization in Appalachian communities, this study engages the works of the French cultural theorist, Michel de Certeau. De Certeau, writing in the 1960s and 70s in Paris, France, Geneva, Switzerland, and San Diego, California attempted to break away from both structuralist and post-structuralist arguments and the binary language (structure versus human agency) associated with these approaches. De Certeau developed models of resistance that captured both the social behavior of individuals and the practices of larger social institutions caught up in a continual struggle within a competitive social field for limited social power or resources. In this way, de Certeau added to the conflict perspective of sociological theory, contending that individuals are in competition for limited social resources. However, individuals are not completely controlled by these larger, powerful social institutions. De Certeau envisioned individuals, or groups of individuals with similar social horizons, developing various coping mechanisms to counter these powerful institutions within a multitude of social fields, while acknowledging they (individuals) are not always completely under the control of institutional practices, but continue to live out their everyday lives in interesting ways.

The starting point for de Certeau’s social theory, like that of so many French theorists of the post-World War II generation - Henri Lefebvre, Jacques Derrida, Louis Althusser, and Michel Foucault - began with the work of Karl Marx. De Certeau shared Marx’s concerns about the exploitation of the working class, the false consciousness of
workers, the deterministic interests of capital, and the antagonistic nature of a class-based society, but did not share Marx’s proclivity for sociologically structural explanations. The eclectic sets of arguments developed by de Certeau through a series of books and articles are argued through multiple examples of everyday life, which appear to merely roam along like an individual strolling through a city. Fittingly, for de Certeau, that is how he saw everyday life, appearing to be chaotic, often hidden from view to those outside a particular social group. De Certeau’s focus on the material of everyday life offered a fresh approach to the Marxian problematic of social forces and institutions and how individuals respond to these often-repressive structures. De Certeau, like Lefebvre saw the practice of everyday life as full of resistance, but not a resistance that is always in conscious opposition. Rather, it is that which resists representation.ii

De Certeau wrote about how individuals in their everyday lives overcome barriers that were erected by large social institutions. In his analysis, de Certeau likened French society to a playing field where individuals meet the various social demands of their daily lives by coping with a variety of obstructions designed to impede or hinder them. De Certeau’s analysis of French society offers many examples of how every day common people continue living within social circumstances that many would think were impossible to cope with such as poverty, unemployment, class division, and unfulfilled lives. For de Certeau, in coping with the social impediments of their daily lives, individual “brush up” against the blockages of larger social institutions, seeking to evade and find a way around rather than take on the social barriers face-to-face.iii

Occasionally, however, a person could go beyond the social hurdling of obstacles, and confront the institution’s blockade directly so that the institution actually faces a sort
of miniature revolution, changing the institutional practice completely. De Certeau noted that this is only possible, however, when practices within the social playing field have been so drastically altered that an individual gains enough momentum or human agency to affect an entire social system in a way that changes large social institutional practices. One might ask “how can such change take place?” After all, individuals in any social system only have a small amount of human agency allowing them little in the way of social mobility. De Certeau answered this question by suggesting that humans rarely really individually face an entire social institution and its practices and make large-scale changes within those institutional practices. Instead, de Certeau suggests that rather than take on the institution in a face-to-face confrontation, individuals brush up against these institutional practices.iv

The theoretical framework for studying everyday life developed by De Certeau offers this study of Appalachian workers something to hang our theoretical hat upon. Instead of seeing humans merely obeying the wishes of powerful social institutions, de Certeau argues that there are always instances within the evolving social institutions where a great deal of human agency can be effectively deployed in such a way that the social institution is revolutionized, and future individuals can benefit from these changes. This kind of analysis suggests that various levels of human agency are utilized by individuals when the playing field is in a sense leveled, allowing for successful maneuvering, ultimately achieving a series of small revolutions within a social system.

This study utilizes de Certeau’s concepts of “strategies” and “tactics” and somewhat re-defines them. For de Certeau, a strategy is a manipulation of social circumstances - and power relationships that becomes possible when an institution with
power (for instance a city or business) can isolate itself. It doesn’t need the help of others to do so because it possesses social power to act as it wishes. After isolating itself, this powerful social institution begins operating from its own position extending relationships (social power) to an exteriority composed of targets or threats (for instance land surrounding a city or business competitors).

A tactic, however, is a calculated action, which is determined by the absence of formalized social power. It has no proper place or locus of its own creation from which it can operate. Therefore, it must play with the terrain it is given, poaching what it can when the opportunity arises. Being organized by outside social forces, it takes advantage of opportunities, depending on them for its operation. With no locus, it cannot stockpile its winnings, but it poaches using cracks in the social terrain, creating surprises where they are least expected. For de Certeau, it is a ruse. The practice of the individual everyday (tactics) rubs against, rather than directly conflicts.

Individuals who travel through a city or work in manufacturing plants have nothing to offer in the way of direct oppositional resistance. They work with what they are given. For instance, they can slow down their work day by taking short-cuts while at work, or they can steal things from work. They resist, but not always in direct opposition to macro-scale social forces.

For purposes of a greater understanding of types of resistance that can occur, this dissertation proposes that the term “coping mechanisms” be substituted for de Certeau’s term “tactics.” “Tactics” were defined by de Certeau as “social acts” utilized by individuals to defy repressive social institutions that were too powerful to overcome.
However, when the social field changes so much that the social system is permanently changed, the term “overt resistance” will be utilized.

This study will utilize de Certeau’s analysis to look for acts of resistance in the everyday life of glass workers in Huntington, West Virginia. The study will provide the reader with many examples of glass workers who covertly rebelled against “the system,” enabling them to activate their coping mechanisms to co-exist within repressive social environments. This study will also illustrate forms of overt resistance enjoined with robust human agency that were invented and utilized by Huntington’s glass workers. Building on de Certeau’s terminology the term “poaching” is also, for purposes of this study, re-named “coping mechanism” and de Certeau’s concept of “resistance” via robust human agency is now termed “overt resistance.” Overt resistance occurs when various social structures are permanently altered to accommodate changes forced by an individual’s robust level of human agency or a group’s fervent struggle to, in some way, emancipate itself from the yoke of the social structure.

To better understand the differences between coping mechanisms and outright resistance, in this study I will carefully analyze how Huntington's glass workers responded to ever-changing work environments, from times of full employment during World War II, to deindustrialization in the 1980s, and the eventual shutdown of Huntington's glassmaking factory in the 1990s. This study will suggest that a variety of coping mechanisms were deployed by workers who were often faced with unreasonable work environments and changing glass manufacturing conditions. However, as working situations changed- and Huntington's glass workers increasingly felt that they were losing control of their factory and how their work was performed, glass workers began
increasingly to openly resist, ultimately resulting in outright, face-to-face confrontational resistance.

The following chapter will examine the experiences of Appalachian women who worked in the Huntington’s glass factory from very early in its history, and how female glass workers developed “coping mechanisms” to counter many unfair working conditions and hiring traditions, such as those in practice during the Great Depression. This chapter will also examine the effect that the passage of Civil Rights legislation had on female workers and their male glass coworkers as they attempted to shatter the glass ceiling at Huntington’s Owens-Illinois glass factory.

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4 The term Human Agency is used to denote an individual’s social power used to control their surrounding social environment. It is the recognition of using one’s individual ability to defy social institutions or structure of power.
CHAPTER III

APPALACHIAN WOMEN SHATTER THE GLASS CEILING

Historically, women were not part of the early U.S. glass making industry, and Huntington’s glass making plant was no different. During the Great Depression, however, women increasingly came to play an important role in Huntington’s glass manufacturing process. Women were searching for jobs to alleviate financial losses associated with the depression era. By the mid 1930s, Owens Glass understood that particular glass manufacturing jobs, such as selecting and sorting glass containers, required steady hands and nimble fingers. Owens Glass management, buying into widespread gender stereotypes of the time, rationalized that women inherently possessed these necessary qualities. Women were hired into Huntington’s glass plant to work in departments requiring such qualities, such as selecting, sorting, secretarial, and corrugated box assembly positions.

The Great Depression and Hiring Practices

Mabel Adkins recalls her family moving to Huntington, from Williamson, West Virginia in the 1922. She was fourteen years old when she, along with her five other siblings, came to Huntington, where her father found a job as an iron worker. After marrying her late husband in 1930, she went to work in Huntington’s glass factory four years later, where she began packing commercial bottles for the glass factory. In the early 1930’s, bottles were packed into wooden crates. Later, Owens Glass would utilize cardboard crates that they manufactured in their own facility. Owens would name this section of the facility the “corrugated department.”
“Mabel: So anyway, I went to work at Owens, I think, after we were married...a long time after we married in 1930. As easy, as far as I can remember it, it probably was 1933 or 4 (When you started working at Owens) Uh, yeah. And I worked on the lahrs, packed bottles. And my first job that I worked on was gallon jugs, handling gal...taking those off the lahrs (uh-huh) that come through. You have to keep your project going, you know, they keep coming out and you’ve got to pick ’em off. Anyway, we had to pack ’em in wooden crates. And I, we had to stack our own ware half the time. Take ’em off, pack ’em, stack ’em on the, pack ’em, set ’em on the cart over to the side of you. And turn around and get another.” (Oral History #509, Owens-Illinois Project)

During the Great Depression era, Huntington’s glass factory’s hiring practices differed dramatically from today’s hiring standards. Jobs were scarce and highly sought after. Both men and women would gather outside the glass factory gates before daybreak in search of any available work. They stood there until the employment director came out of the factory, waiting to see if they would be chosen to come into the factory and work for the day. If the new employee, man or woman, filled a needed slot and performed well on the job, or was well-liked by fellow workers, they could perhaps work themselves into a permanent position.¹

According to Mabel’s oral history, she was hired in this fashion. She and her sister stood on the street corner in front of the glass factory and she was chosen by a manager who was looking to fill needed glass-packing positions. Her sister wasn’t picked that day to work, but Mabel was able to get Owens to hire her sister the following day.

“Mabel: “The way they hired ‘em back then was during, way back years ago when they hired people for Owens, what you did, you got, you got up of the morning early, and went over to Owens at the gate, sit at the gate, and waited and they come out, pick you out, if you want, if they wanted you to, gonna’ hire you. And Hugh Kramer hired me. He was the man that come to pick out the...my sister and I went over, and was there at seven; that’s when the shift started. So, they hired me the first day I applied. Then the next day I talked ‘em in to hiring her. ‘Cause she really needed the work worse than I did. ‘Cause I was married and she wasn’t. So anyway, she worked there a good many years, too.
Interviewer: You and your sister worked together then, for a long time?
Mabel: Well, we worked at Owens, yeah. But different shifts see. Because they, I think they put her on another shift than me. ‘Cause we worked different eight hour shifts. Anyway, it was hard work, but after you got used to it, you know, you’re young enough to take it, so it wasn’t so bad.” (Oral History #509, Owens-Illinois Project)

Carl Maynard recalled Owens’ hiring practices in the 1930’s. Most new employees were described as country folk. A large portion of the “country folks” that were hired were women.

“Interviewer: I see. Uh…so, how did you hear about the job at Owens? How did you, how did you get the idea to go down there?
Carl: Well, I can’t remember, but I think some of the neighbors or somebody, moved down there, or their children went to work down there and uh, we uh, my, well, my sister didn’t go when I did. But I went down there and we…the way we got a job, we sat out on the street and they just, they needed somebody they came and got us.
Interviewer: Right in front of the plant? You sat out on the street?
Carl: Uh-huh, right out on the curb, right in front of the plant.
Interviewer: Were there a lot of people there? For work? (Uh-huh) Were there a lot of women, or...
Carl: Yes, there were a lot of women and a lot of men. And they was all sort of country folks, like myself. (Yeah) We all grewed up there. (Uh-huh)” (Oral History #538, Owens-Illinois Project)

Geneva Shepard remembered that if men were in charge of hiring, you had to be the “right” person to obtain a job. Much the same as male glass workers, prospective women glass workers used their friends and acquaintances already employed at Owens Glass to gain positions at Owens-Illinois. Networking, such as this, prevented many prospective employees without family or friends currently working for Owens Glass from obtaining employment at Huntington’s glass factory. At the time, however, a woman named Johnnie was in charge of hiring female employees. Geneva was able to convince her to hire her sister’s friend, who was desperate for a job.

“Interviewer: Did you spread the news about Owens, did you encourage any of your friends to go to work there?
Geneva: Yes, I got...I know there is two sisters that I went out and talked with Johnnie and got them a job. They were needing a job, one of them especially was needing a job real bad. (Uh-huh, yeah) And then there was a girl over in Ohio, real young, with three tiny children and her husband died. They thought it was indigestion and they doctored him all day for indigestion and he died with heart attack, young man, you know. And my sister knew he and she called me and said do you think you can help get Eva a job over there, she’s desperate. So I did. I went out and talked to Johnnie and she did the hiring of the women then. I heard them all talk about when the men did the hiring and you had to be the right person to get hired, or know the right person.” (Oral History #518, Owens-Illinois Project)

Potential women workers had to meet a rigid set of criteria concerning marriage, which was established by Owens management. Prior to the middle of the 1940’s, women who sought positions as secretaries, but were already married to hourly Owens Glass workers were not considered as potential job applicants. Additionally, women who were married to men who didn’t work for Owens Glass were also barred from employment. This discriminatory hiring practice was later discontinued due to the increased demand for women workers as the draft during WWII began to take potential male workers away from Huntington and into the armed services. Clara Effingham, who began working in Huntington’s glass factory’s purchasing department in 1944, recalled that, later, both she and her husband were permitted to work for Huntington’s Glass factory.ii

“Interviewer: How did you find out about the plant, why did you go to work there?
Clara: My…I was dating my husband and he worked there. And then when I finished school I tried to get on, but he was an hourly, union employee and I was in the office and they didn’t allow it. (They didn’t allow it) They didn’t allow it…to be married, and one was in the lab and one in the office. (Really)” (Oral History #526, Owens-Illinois Project)

Clara also remembered that most of the employees in her department were men.

“Interviewer: So was it mostly men, mostly women in your department. Who had the jobs?
Clara: Men, mostly. We had a purchase agent, an assistant, and then we had a clerk, and then we had three women. And out in the store room there was all
women, I mean all men except one woman.” (Oral History #526, Owens-Illinois Project)

Women had been part of the glass manufacturing process in Huntington’s glass factory since the early 1930s. Seldom, however, were women workers offered employment outside of secretarial work, the selecting department, or the corrugated department often referred to as the balcony. Usually, the jobs were not permanent and would be only for the day. Luckily, Mabel Adkins was allowed to stay at Owens as long as she liked. Owens Glass Company was fortunate enough to grow during the depression years as a result of increased demand for commercially produced medicine bottles. As the plant’s capability to produce increased, so did the employment opportunities for women seeking glass manufacturing work in Huntington’s commercial glass factory.

Even though the U.S. was in the midst of the Great Depression, Mabel felt her job provided adequate wages. She remembered the glass plant being very busy during the depression, which helped Mabel and her husband to combine their salaries and attain a standard of living many during the 1930s could not achieve. She took care of her husband’s mother and father. By doing so, they enlisted the help of her extended family to take care of the family’s home, giving them the ability to maintain full-time employment status.

“I Interviewer: Now this, the Depression was in the ‘30s. How did that affect your work? Mabel: Well, we were real busy. It was…we were lucky to be working back then. Everybody was, see. (Yeah) And that was good money for back then. We had…we lived good, but my husband was working and I was working. Of course, like I said, we kept his mother and dad. But uh, it went around, the money went around. By taking care of it, but everything was so much cheaper. See, all your groceries and utilities and it didn’t take much to live.” (Oral History #509, Owens-Illinois Project)
Due to the Great Depression, Huntington’s glass factory was able to take advantage of hiring women workers at low salaries. Since jobs in the 1930s were scarce, female workers were glad to accept jobs even at lower rates of pay. To cope with low salaries, the workers pulled together like a big family. As mentioned earlier in this study, the family atmosphere at the Huntington glass factory was part of working for Owens-Illinois. This was evidenced by workers pulling together in times of economic upheaval as experienced during the national depression that continued through the 1930s.

“Interviewer: They found a lot of hard workers, I guess.
Mabel: Yes. Well, yes. They’s glad for the money, and the jobs. And they appreciated ‘em. They appreciated having a job and they were good to ’em. They worked hard, but they uh, enjoyed the benefits of that. And they were more or less like families back years ago, when people were, you know, just like a big family. Like you know most of the people around, especially in your shift you’re working. Then when you work different shifts, you meet different ones, and get to know them. So it’s just like a family affair, and very congenial.” (Oral History #509, Owens-Illinois Project)

Coupled with the scarcity of available jobs, inadequate opportunities for education also existed, making a lower paying job appear tolerable to women glass employees as a steady source of income.

“Interviewer: Oh my, okay. I’ll be taking note, so. Uh, and what made you get a job at Owens?
Carl Maynard: Well, I was, it was during a depression, I guess you’d call it. And we…there wasn’t anything else to do. And I couldn’t go to school ‘cause they was a large family (mm-hmm), and no schools close. And I went to the, I have my 8th grade diploma hanging here on the wall.” (Oral History #538, Owens-Illinois Project)

Opal Mann recalled she took a job at Owens due to the adversity stemming from the effects of the Great Depression. She was working two jobs simultaneously, but with little pay for her services. The combined schedules became deleterious to her health.

“Interviewer: What made you get a job at Owens in the first place? What sent you there?
Opal: Desperation. Uh, it was during the worst part of the Depression. (Mm-hmm) And uh, uh, my mother and my brother and I were...I was, I was working in a little uh, store uh, uh, opening up the store at six o’clock in the morning and work ‘til one. And uh, that, just before that, I had, uh, I’d work ‘til one o’clock of a day, and then at uh, uh, when the uh, around five o’clock in the evening, I’d go to the bowling alley and work down there ‘til closing time. (Wow.) And I got uh, uh, sick, and I couldn’t take, you know, uh...(Those hours)...those hours, and uh, I finally had to quit the bowling alley, but I was still working in that little store. (Uh-huh) Uh, it was just a little uh, just a little store, you know. (Grocery store or...?) Uh-huh. A little grocery store. I had to open up every morning. Up here on 16th Street. I mean, Hal Greer Boulevard. (Uh-huh.) Uh, and uh, uh, then the, the owner, he’d come in and uh...(Oh, at one?)...at one, and, and uh, and I, I’d be free the rest of the day. (Mm-hmm) But I was only making six dollars a week. A dollar a day. (My goodness...Oh God) And uh, uh, my mother, uh, meanwhile, was working uh, at a restaurant making 50 cents a day. And we got most of our meals out there. (Uh-huh.) We were really hard up, but uh, we were always able to pay our rent and, and utilities and...(Mm-hmm)...and uh, things like that, but uh, and I was never hungry.” (Oral History #535, Owens-Illinois Project)

Heavy Labor and Rotating Shifts

The work of packing commercial bottles was heavy, tedious labor that required the packers to stand on their feet for long periods of time. They were only allowed a few breaks during their shifts to use the restroom or to go to lunch. Mabel Adkins added that the pay for women glass workers was lower than the pay men received, but prudent women workers could cope with their lower pay by being frugal with their earnings.

“Interviewer: I won’t take too much more of your time, so you can go play with your grandchildren. (Okay) So you said there were jobs that women weren’t allowed to have at the plant, when you first started, is that right?
Mabel: Well, there wasn’t any jobs for women except office work. Or...(In selecting), uh-huh, in selecting was about the only thing you could do.
Interviewer: That didn’t change at all when you were there? (Uh-huh, no) Did did women get paid the same amount as the men?
Mabel: No, no. (No?) Uh, no. I can’t remember what the men were paid. I think they got more than that. I’m sure of it. Yeah, I’m sure it was a big difference. But I can’t remember it. Well, it, see, back there, like I said, everything was much cheaper. Money went a long way, you know.” (Oral History #509, Owens-Illinois Project)
Mabel also recalled that almost all women glass employees worked in the selecting department. Only a few women were hired into the corrugated department.

“Interviewer: So, did all the women work in the selecting?
Mabel: Uh…most of ‘em. But, some of ‘em worked in uh, making cartons, paper cartons, in the carton department. But the majority of ‘em worked in the selection, on the layers” (Oral History #509, Owens-Illinois Project)

Clarice Mealey was one of the first women hired into the corrugated department. Later she transferred to the selecting department. The transition from corrugated to selecting, or vice-versa, represented little in the way of a financial promotion, but was a normal transition for women employees in Huntington’s glass factory. The transition from one department to another was a coping mechanism to alleviate on-the-job boredom. Clarice left work when her son was born. Due to her training, Clarice later returned to work in the glass manufacturing industry at an Owens glass factory in Charleston, West Virginia. She worked there until 1962, and transferred to an Owens glass factory in Atlanta, Georgia and later retired from Owens Glass in 1972. She continued to reside in Atlanta after her retirement.

“Interviewer: Well, mm-mm…So uh, so when they came and got you, to go in the plant, when you got your job, what did you do first?
Clarice: Uh, I made cartons. (Make cartons)
Interviewer: So they put you in the corrugated department?
Clarice: Yes, in, on the carton assembly. I worked for uh, they called him Hickory Brumfield…let’s see…I can’t remember his name now. But he was over the carton assembly.
Interviewer: Uh-huh. What was, oh, I’m sorry…(Beg your pardon) Go ahead.
Clarice: He was over the carton assembly and I worked there for quite a while, then I worked in selecting some. (Uh-huh) And uh, I got married in ‘34 and uh, uh, after my son was born, uh… I went to the Charleston plant to work. (Oh, I see) And I worked up there until it went down in ‘62, and I was transferred down here. And I retired down here in 1972. (1972)” (Oral History #538, Owens-Illinois Project)
To maintain their employment, women also had to work a swing shift schedule that required them to cope with the care of their families in diverse ways. The women developed several mechanisms to cope with the monotony of working in the selecting department.

“Interviewer: How many children did you have?
Mabel: I just had the one daughter. (One daughter) Uh-huh. I had a son that’s dead…would have been older than her. He was close to five when he died. The croup…
Interviewer: So, was it hard to work and raise children at the same time?
Mabel: No, my…we lived with his mother and dad, my husband and I did, for years. Uh, so she kept Nila when she was little (Oh), and then when I moved out…we moved out, why, I always had baby sitters, girls that worked for…I had several girls from up at the country, up at East Lynn in Wayne County, to come and live with me…look after her. So, I was lucky back…”
Interviewer: Yeah, the shift work must have been, made your schedule very odd?
Mabel: Mm-hmm, oh, yes, yes, it did. See, when you work like we was talking about the midnight shift, graveyard shifts, that’s from 11 to 7 the next morning, well, you have to come…see, it changes your whole system. Your eating habits, your stomach, your sleeping habits, everything. So, you have to sleep in the daytime, when you work nights, all night. So…and I left like I said, when I bought my first home, I lived over on Adams and they had a plant next to us there. And they run machinery or something, and you know, it’s amazing, I never was much of a sound sleeper, but I learned to sleep in the daytime with that thing just a going, buzzin’. And everybody wanted to know about it. And I said, well, you just get accustomed to it, I guess. (Yeah) Why, I was tired…you know…”
(Oral History #509, Owens-Illinois Project)

Geneva Shepard remembered that moving from day shift, to evening shift, to night shift was difficult. Rotating shifts exacerbated her health problems. She had trouble sleeping during the daytime, which caused her health to deteriorate. Geneva, however, felt she could not afford to miss work. She went to work when she should have stayed at home.

“Interviewer: You worked a swing shift, you worked rotating shifts work right? How did that affect your family you home life?
Geneva: Well, it affected my body, I could hardly sleep at all in the daytime. I never did get use to it. You just get use to sleeping some hours and then you had to stay awake them hours and sleep another time. (Right, right) And I…I didn’t
know I had developed some heart problems that I didn’t really realize what it was, and the last year or two I’d miss night on half of the time, I never missed work I couldn’t afford to. And I’m the kind of person, I don’t know if it done you much good, but I felt that some one was depending on me, I needed to be there. (Sure) (You’ve got to be responsible) Not everybody has. (All the time at least)” (Oral History #518, Owens-Illinois Project)

Eventually, Geneva Shepard became too ill to continue working. She continued her oral history, stating that she worried about her health problems and her inability to work. Due to her poor health, Owens Glass had denied her wishes to continue working, yet would not authorize her disability claim, or award her a full retirement. Geneva thought this situation contributed to her eventual poor health.

“Interviewer: Oh, really, well, you’ve been gone a long time. What have you done in the last 20-30 years, are you enjoying your retirement?
Geneva: Well not that much, I wound up with a real massive heart attack. (Oh yeah) Only the bottom 3rd of my heart works, they said. (Must be scary) I have always felt that the strain of not getting to work; and it made me mad, it wasn’t right. Probably helped that along. (Getting mad about what now?) Well they wouldn’t let me work and they wouldn’t retire me, they wouldn’t give me a disability, (Yeah, right) you know it just had to be one or the other. (Yes, I’m sure it worried you to no end, that’s your future)

Selecting work was not only heavy, it was also very tedious. Geneva hated the tedious work of locating imperfections in glass containers. She could not recall exactly what she thought of as she worked, but remembered disliking her job.

Mabel Adkins recalled the weariness caused by working in the selecting department. Women were often asked to work double shifts, which made an eight hour day into a sixteen hour day. This posed a difficult situation if a woman worker had to come back to work within eight hours, or if they had to begin an entirely different shift the following day. They became very tired while working, especially if they were not properly rested. Mabel remembered falling asleep on her shift due to the arduous physical demands required of those working in the selecting department.
“Interviewer: That was heavy work then?
Mabel: Hard, heavy work, very hard. And I think I went to work probably for 25 cents an hour. (Wow) Never had a union all the time I was there. (Oh, they didn’t?) No, never, never worked under a union. (Wow) See, ‘cause I quit, I quit after well, Darla, my daughter, was born after, while I was working there. And uh, so, I quit Owens in I guess, after that, some time after that. Eight hours. And a lot of the girls they’d come and ask you if you wanted to work a double shift; that meant 16 hours standing on your feet packing bottles. And I, actually I went to sleep one time standing (Did you really) packing bottles. It sounds impossible, but I did. (You were just exhausted) Yes, and I’d lost sleep. Probably been out and didn’t get caught up on my next days sleep. So we changed shifts, so, we worked eight hours. Every week we changed shifts. We worked what they call the graveyard shift. It’s midnight ‘til seven the next morning. And then the day shift is seven in the morning ‘til three. Then three to eleven was the best shift. But uh, I worked fourteen years doing the same thing.” (Oral History #509, Owens-Illinois Project)

A few women were hired into the corrugated department. Mary Carmichael was hired directly into the corrugated department in 1943 at the age of 21. She described the work in the corrugated department as “difficult.” As a corrugated department worker, she had to stand for long periods on a cement floor, which deleteriously affected her feet.

The work of making cardboard boxes was also considered dirty work due to the dust created by forming, cutting, and folding the cardboard containers.

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The work of making cardboard boxes was also considered dirty work due to the dust created by forming, cutting, and folding the cardboard containers.

“Interviewer: So you had to stand all the time that you were working?
Mary: Oh yes. I had to stand on concrete all the time.
Interviewer: Was that hard on your…legs and feet?
Mary: That was hard on my feet. You better believe. I always had to wear real, real, real expensive sporting shoes. Now some of them would come out there uh, in good looking little old sandals and things to make them look uh, neat, you know. But I was one that couldn’t do it on account of my feet. And uh, when I went, when I was hired in, I had to wear a uniform, and they were blue, buttoned up and down the front and had a white collar on them. And uh, they issued you so many. And I’d come in and I’d wash my uniform every shift I got off of. I’d wash my uniform, and every shift I went on, I’d go out with a, a brand, clean, ironed uniform. But the dust in the corrugated department just covered you up and they had a hose on a, on a post that uh, you could take and it had electric, you know, and you could take that hose and blow the most of that there urn, uh, dust off of you, you know. (I see) But uh, in the summer time when you perspired, it didn’t blow off very good. (Laugh)
Interviewer: So it was a real dirty kind of job too sometimes?
Mary: Yes, it was. It was real dirty, and you sure did have to take a bath and clean up when you got home. Course, you didn’t want to wear your uniform when you got home anyway. You wanted to go into your regular clothes.

Interviewer: Do you still have problems with your feet because of that?

Mary: Oh yes, I, I have problems and uh, I had to buy expensive shoes and uh, I go to the foot doctor quite often. It’s been about two months since I went. And my heel hurts and he gave me a cortisone shot in it, and boy it really helped it. I haven’t had to go back. It’s been a little bit over two months now. (Hmm)

(Oral History #511, Owens-Illinois Project)

Rotating shifts were especially difficult for women. The city of Huntington had a midnight curfew. It isn’t clear if this curfew applied to men as well as women. What is clear is that, concerning women out after midnight, it was enforced. The only way women under 21 years of age could be out after midnight was to obtain an official city document with parental signatures that declared the possessor of such papers held a job that required them to be out after the city’s curfew. Polly Brown was a married woman with a child and had to work the swing shift schedule. She was humiliated when her husband was required to sign her city document giving her the right to go to work after the city’s curfew. Polly was further humiliated due to the fact that she was trying to get divorced from the man who had to sign her city permission document.

“Polly: And the other thing I remember about going there, we worked shift work. We worked three different shifts. And at the time, this was January of ’54, we had a curfew in Huntington. That unless you were 21, you couldn’t be out after midnight.

Interviewer: For anyone, or for women?

Polly: For the whole city. (The whole city) I guess that was boys and girls. I know it was for girls. That was in January, and six weeks later, I would have been 21. And they wouldn’t let me work. I would have had to work one week, one five-day week of midnight shift. That was 11 to 7. And I couldn’t work after midnight that week without going and getting a permit, a working permit from the Board of Education, and I’m one of the few women that remembers this. I remember this so plain. I went and got a working permit, and I was getting a divorce, but I hadn’t got a divorce. So I didn’t live at home. And I had to have somebody to sign it, so the man I was getting a divorce from signed it.

Interviewer: He had to sign your paper for you?
Polly: Since I didn’t live with my mom and dad, and I was still married to this guy, he had to sign that paper for me. Now isn’t that discrimination? (Laugh)

Interviewer: You’re old enough to have a job, a child, and you’re married and getting divorced, but you can’t be out on the streets after midnight. (Laugh)
Polly: After midnight, I had to get a permit in order to work that one week. Before I was 21. See, I’d a been 21 before the second midnight shift came around. But, anyway that’s some of the things that I remember. And another thing I remember about discrimination, I thought I’d add this because this has been really on my mind. If a girl had two illegitimate children, she was automatically fired.” (Owens-Illinois Project, Oral History #504)

Polly Brown explained that if an Owens woman employee had two “illegitimate” children, she was fired from Owens Glass. Men, however, could father children outside of wedlock without affecting their job status. This was another layer of discrimination suffered by women at Huntington’s glass factory. Polly also recalled that a woman she knew was fired for having two children too close together.

“Polly: We had a case I remember real well. The man that fathered both of them illegitimate children did not get fired. The man was still there when the factory closed. He later married her. But she had two babies and wasn’t married by the same man. That’s the man there.

Interviewer: Well, how did, why did the factory keep, why did it keep such close tabs on the personal lives like that?
Polly: Well, that was the way it was back then. You know, if you’re past 60 years old like I am, that’s the way life was back then. And in fact, one time, they fired one girl that was married. And she took off to have a baby, and you had to take off when you was six months because see, I had my daughter after I went to work there. My daughter was born in ‘57. October of ‘57, and I went there January of ‘54. This girl had had one baby, she was married. And by the time she came back from her pregnancy leave, like three months later, she was pregnant again. Even though she was married, they still fired her.” (Oral History #504, Owens-Illinois Project)

Dr. Virginia Plumley orally reconstructed the various methods that placated her weariness long enough to complete the tasks that her job required. To offset the dullness of her job, she secretly took short breaks from the monotony by talking to other coworkers about issues unrelated to her job, or she would sneak off to grab a bite to eat. Owens-Illinois had strict rules that the unions agreed upon concerning breaks, but to cope
with the incessant noise and tedious work, Dr. Plumley resisted in covert ways by taking short breaks when the management was not looking. To cope with the constant clinking and chiming of glass containers created by the bottles bumping into each other, in her mind- Dr. Plumley often arranged the polyphony of noises generated by the glass making machines into orchestral pieces.

“Interviewer: Yeah, sure, burn out is a problem in a lot of fields…(Yeah, it is) Just like when you were doing the selecting department. I have a hard time understanding, comprehending these women’s lives, you know, all these long years at this one monotonous job. What did you think about, what did you do to amuse yourself?

Virginia: Oh, hey, I orchestrated some of the greatest concertos that could ever be put down. (Really) Absolutely! I was into my own head. Now if I were working on a conveyor, I’d talk to the neighbor next to me or we could, in those days we could get something to eat, like get a package of potato chips and put it on this conveyor, go around, around and around and I’d just stick it right in the middle and I’d…something to drink over here, and I’d amuse myself or you’re supposed to pack so much ware and I’d get myself worked back so I could go take a break. Or I’d go talk to somebody ‘cause I’ve always been a social person. But when I was sitting under a light and watching those bottles go by and go by and go by, it’s just mesmerizing. And then you hear, the machines, you can hear machines dropping the bottles. Pssh, pssh, and then you could hear the clink, clink, clink, clink, over here, of the bottles hitting each other and then you’d hear some other noise of the cartons coming down the chute, pssh. I would just orchestrate. If I were writing music in those days, I could have had some beautiful symphonies. Just the sounds, two senses involved, the sense of sight sitting there looking for anything that goes that was a defect and the hearing. And the synthesizing of all of that, the sounds into a symphony. (Yeah, sounds beautiful) I don’t know what the others did; that’s what I did. I guess I assumed everyone done that.” (Oral History #515, Owens-Illinois Project)

Virginia Plumley also remembered that there were problems associated with workers sleeping while in the selecting department. Workers in the selecting department often reported that the repetition of work in this department often caused workers to dose off. To attempt to offset malaise associated with selecting department workers, supervisors developed small tests to check on workers to see if they were paying attention to what they were doing.
“Virginia: Oh, sometimes you go asleep. If you went to sleep, you were fired. And what would happen is… (No questions asked) No questions asked. Like the boss would come up and put a piece of paper, ‘cause sometimes when you’re looking down you can’t tell when you’re standing up here if the person’s eyes are closed or not, ‘cause you’re looking down at these glasses, bottles, so they put a piece of paper down and when it comes through, if you go “snap of fingers,” if you didn’t do that and it went by you you’re out of there. (Wow, I never heard of that) Yeah, oh, yeah, I can understand that because you’re looking for a lot of things. Usually like the Gerber baby food bottles, that jar that was something like, you’d sit one and all you did was look at the finish of it as it is, goes through, every bottle just going through, going through. And there would be someone else sittin’ down here in another light that was looking at the baby of the bottle as it went through. (Oh, wow…I didn’t know you divided it into parts like that) Oh, yeah, you would that particular one because of the product. And then you would have someone down at the bottom picking it up, looking at the bottom of it and giving it a whirl and then throwing it in the box.” (Oral History #515, Owens-Illinois Project)

According to Mabel Adkins, women glass workers comprised a large portion of the glass plant’s employees when the factory was running at full manufacturing capacity.

“Interviewer: How many women were on your shift?
Mabel: Well, I don’t…every…I don’t know how many…if we had all the tanks going, I can’t remember how many tanks…that was the whole place, hot tanks and lahrs, the whole thing…I can’t remember how many it would be. I mean…’cause it, when I worked there, all of ‘em, the lahrs were runnin’, so that would mean clear the, the whole building full of women. I can’t remember, but we had a big shift.” (Oral History #509. Owens-Illinois Project)

Paul Niday, a long-time male glass manufacturing employee, suggested in his oral history that the plant depended on women workers sorting and packing the bottles as they came down the conveyor belts. Many men avoided such jobs. Paul also thought that selecting and packing bottles was a difficult job that many men would have had trouble accomplishing. Women, however, were seldom recognized for this contribution to the glass plant’s overall productive capability.

“Paul: But women…I just…they always felt that they could do as good a job as the men. And I can’t argue with that. You know. I, I’m not into that. But uh, they did do good jobs. And I used to think that actually, I don’t know if I should say it, but I used to think that women actually made the place. Without them, I
mean, those women probably, as far in my opinion, now this is just my opinion, but in my opinion those women worked harder you know, than anybody in the plant. And that’s true. Because see they were isolated right there to their, to you know, that particular lahr that they were working on, and getting the defect out of them. Plus the pressure, shipping the bad bottle to the customer (Right), it was all on their shoulders. You see what I mean? And they just, you know, they just kept coming right at ‘em. You never stopped. And it was, and uh, they worked, they worked hard. And then they had a balcony where they made the box, you know, the cardboard box. My goodness, them women! No, really, they really, they worked hard. And they worked harder than, in my opinion, than you know. In my opinion they worked hard as anybody in that plant. And I always thought that without them we’d be in, we’d be hurting. Now that’s just my opinion. Of course, a lot of people differ with that.” (Oral History #534, Owens-Illinois Project)

Charles Day, who was hired by Owens Glass in 1953, remembered in his oral history that a few women tried to work jobs outside of the selecting department, but he struggled to understand why a woman would want to hold such a dirty, greasy job such as in the machine shops or in the maintenance department. The “hot end” of the factory is where the molten glass was poured and created a superheated atmosphere around the glass making machines. Women who took “hot end” jobs either didn’t pan out, or eventually quit due to the extreme heat.

“Interviewer: Well, in the plant when you were working there, uh, did men and women have different jobs?
Charles: Oh, yeah, yeah. The women, yeah, the women worked in the selecting, they were our selectors. And we worked back there, now a few times, once or twice they tried but that kind of work just wasn’t for a woman back there where I worked because it was dirty, greasy, hot and some woman there that worked out of machine repair, different departments, she worked there right on the line. And I used to think I’d see her up there in those pants, she had beautiful auburn hair, good working gal, and she’d get there and work in there. For the life of me I couldn’t understand why, why she’d be up there working in that...Finally, but some of them just didn’t pan out, they worked or tried it, it was just too hot and they quit it.” (Oral History #510, Owens-Illinois Project)
Charles admitted that “hot end” jobs, which were dominated by men, were the best paying hourly jobs in the plant. Women workers, however, were seldom offered the chance to work these better paying jobs.

“Interviewer: Did you get paid more in the other jobs though?
Charles: Oh, yeah, yeah, you had that type of job, yeah. Our department was probably, the forming department, was probably the best paying department there; dirtiest, hottest. And the one thing about it too, is outside of that one year I worked under maintenance and so forth. I spent about all that 35 years spent right there in forming. And also, uh, I worked the swing shift. It swunged from 7 to 3, 3 to 11, 11 to 7 (Right), see. And you work that, work that for that many years and boy, when you get ready out on a midnight, you get a, whether you been eating bad food or not, you’ll still get a queasy feeling in your stomach. I know…I did. And I still get my days and nights mixed up.” (Oral History #510, Owens-Illinois Project)

Frederick Bledsoe, who was also hired by Owens Glass in 1953, recalled the lack of women working in the “hot end” of the plant. A few women eventually bid on these jobs, but didn’t stay long. According to Frederick, the working conditions were too extreme for women to handle.

“Frederick: Yeah, they came back, you know, when we had openings in the summer time, they would hire…they would hire people, uh, they put up a bid list and if we had some women out in the [balcony] room the worked in the [balcony] room that wanted to come back to the hot end, you know, but none of them ever stuck it out, you know, they never…just to hot of work for them. Now other factories, they have, they have women operators other factories do, not that many but they have some. I think Zanesville, Ohio has some and uh, one or two up there, and I’m not really sure what other factories, but I’m sure some of them have it, cause out of 22 or 23 factories, you know, their gonna’ have some…some place. (Right)” (Oral History #527, Owens-Illinois Project)

Even though packing and sorting jobs were considered to be entry level positions within the glass factory, many men who worked there found the job of packing and sorting bottles to be difficult work that required a high degree of manual dexterity, skill, and concentration. However, the women employees who did this hard, tedious work
could not advance to other higher paying managerial jobs within the plant. For women glass workers, opportunities for job promotions with increased pay were few.

“Interviewer: What kind of opportunities did you have to advance, to get any promotions or anything like that?
Mabel Adkins: There wasn’t anything, except office work. (Oh) Yeah. Few, very few girls, you know, worked in the office. And otherwise, it…uh, because each shift had a boss on each lahr, in other words. On my lahr I had a boss, and each lahr had different bosses. And they ran that lahr. And then they had an office staff…. and overhead that could go, the hallway going across the overhead over us, and they could look down and watch us work. And if we loafed, and didn’t do our job, they could oversee it. But we didn’t have any trouble.
Interviewer: You couldn’t work your way up to being (No) No. You just had the one position? You always had to stay in that position?
Mabel: Yeah, one position. And like I say, just pack glass or uh, work in the cartons, making cartons. And they had a restaurant. We had…buy our food at the restaurant, coffee and doughnuts and other things. And we, I think they give us about a half an hour to get our food and go in there and sit down and eat, for an 8 hour shift. And we got to go to the restroom once or twice during the 8 hours.”
Interviewer: What about raises…pay raises? Did you get those regularly?
Mabel: I don’t remember getting very many pay raises. I don’t really believe we did. See, we didn’t have a union. And I think I made a little more than that when I quit. But I can’t remember how much. Uh…I don’t think we did. See no union. They didn’t have to raise you.” (Oral History #509, Owens-Illinois Project)

Geneva Shepard added that men were given preferential treatment when other Owens Glass factories needed their help. Men were permitted to travel to various glass factories in other locations to supervise subsidiary glass workers, while women glass workers were never asked to take on such assignments. The men who received these traveling assignments were paid above company average salaries and were, according to Geneva’s memory, allowed to take their time accomplishing such company assignments. All their expenses were paid by Owens Glass. They were placed in hotels while they supervised the other glass plant workers. Geneva added that the groups of men Owens Glass sent on these missions had never inspected bottles before and were therefore
unqualified to do so. Geneva thought that some women eventually got to go on such working excursions.

“Geneva: Yeah…and the other thing that was very noticeable, they had…they would ship out somewhere and somebody didn’t want it, instead of bringing it back in there to go through or make more, (Yeah-huh) they would send a bunch of people maybe to New York or just any place, or 5, or 6 or 7 or something to go through that and throw out what they didn’t want and let them keep what suited them. All these men went, men went who never inspected a bottle, see. (That’s what they mean when they talk about men getting on the planes and going?) Uh-huh, that was good pay, you know, they paid all their expenses and I’m sure they took their [jolly], ole good time doing it. (Yeah, why sure, put them up in a hotel) Never a woman got to go. Now I think in the later years about the time I had quit some women got to go. (Oh wow, yeah)

Interviewer: So the men got to go and do selecting jobs?

Geneva: Yeah-huh, whether they could...(Go to another town) whether they could select or not. (Yeah)” (Oral History #518, Owens-Illinois Project)

Polly Brown recalled that there was a lot of discrimination against women when she was first hired by Owens Glass. She was a single parent and was in need of employment. She commented that she was thankful to get a job due to her circumstances.

“Polly: But first of all, what I want to say was I was, uh, very thankful to get the job at Owens, but because I was a single parent at the time. I was getting a divorce, and I had a baby, and I was less than 21 years old. And I had a little boy that was like 10 months old when I went to work there. And back then, discrimination was really bad. It was bad against women, very bad against women. I was listening to some things my husband said. Of course, that’s a man’s view point of it also. (Right) You know. And of course, I wasn’t married to this husband when I went to work at Owens because I went there. I actually was hired exactly 40 years to the day it closed.” (Oral History #504, Owens-Illinois Project)

As a youngster, Polly was taught that the world belonged to and was controlled by men. She had been taught that married women did not pursue a vocation outside of the home.

PB was a single parent who had shattered this traditional arrangement. She was hired in 1953 into the selecting department at Owens Glass, and that is where she remained
throughout her career. A few women, however, were hired into the “corrugated
department” referred to as the “balcony” where cardboard boxes were assembled, but
were not allowed to have other jobs that were reserved for men. Box construction was
mainly reserved for men.

“Polly: I retired the first of last June, so I had over 39 years seniority. But I
remember, see, my generation of women got caught in the middle of uh, women’s
rights, women not having any rights. See, when I was a little girl, we were taught
that it was a man’s world. Women didn’t have any rights. So when I grew up and
went to work at Owens, then it was kindly that’s the way it’s supposed to be. But
yet, I got caught in the generation that working mothers started working. (Right) I
used to kind of laugh and say it this way, “When I was the youngest girl at the
fact-, youngest person at the factory, I had to sweep, and then when I got to be the
oldest one, I had to sweep.” It reversed it. So I kindly felt like that’s what
happened with my generation because see, mothers didn’t work out. In fact, our
mothers didn’t drive cars and stuff like that. But, so then we just believed it really
was a man’s world. And that’s really the way it was at Owens too. We were
hired in selecting. That was where we selected and packed the bottles.

Interviewer: That’s where all the women were?
Polly: Well, some of them worked in the balcony. That’s where they would put
the cartons together and send them down to us. And then they would work uh,
some of them worked in corrugated department which made the cartons. Now
see, we wasn’t allowed to have these other jobs. In fact, we weren’t allowed to
have these other jobs ‘til the early ‘60s, and that was through a lawsuit. One of
the women, or some of the women, had decided, hey, this isn’t fair. And so, they
had a lawsuit against Owens for not letting us have these other jobs. They
wouldn’t let us have them.” (Oral History #504, Owens-Illinois Project)

Polly Brown also recalled that her first application was turned down by Owens.

Her baby was only nine months old, and the woman in charge of hiring felt that women
with babies under one year of age missed too much work. It was Owens’ policy to only
allow currently employed women with children under the age of one to return to work.

“Polly: In the early ‘60s, I can’t remember, maybe ’63 or ’64, I think it was
around ‘64, something like that. There was a lawsuit to let us have these jobs
because, and the work that we did was very hard. It was very hard. Now men
didn’t work on the lahrs. And that’s what our job was called working on the lahr.
L-A-H-R. Lahr, and, that’s where we picked the bottles up off of the lahr. It was
a big conveyor thing and you pick the bottles up. Now the men didn’t work on
there. But that was a job that kept you right on the job. You couldn’t leave it
unless someone else took your place. And these other jobs, I mean, it was just like we accepted that because we knew, we didn’t know any better. (Right) We just thought that’s the way life is and, and we took it. And, I remember when I was hired there. We had two locals for the same department. One was men, one was women. We had a woman that hired the women and a man that hired the men. And discrimination, I remember, I went down in September of ‘53 and my baby was eight or nine months old, and she wouldn’t hire me because she said my baby was under a year old and she wouldn’t hire me. She said, “We take our own girls back when their babies are younger, but,” said, “I don’t want to hire any with a baby less than a year old because they miss too much work.” She said, “I’ll keep your, your name in mind and your application, and I’ll call you the next time I hire.” (Oral History #504, Owens-Illinois Project)

After Polly Brown’s child was beyond its first year of age, she was eligible to be hired by Owens Glass if she met certain physical, mental, and educational requirements. She met the minimum requirements concerning her mental and physical condition. She, however, was challenged by Owens’ physician during her eye examination. She wore glasses due to nearsightedness, but with them on, she had perfect vision. Polly believed the physician was discriminating against her. Polly stated she was desperate for a job and subsequently countered the physician’s diagnosis with a diagnosis of the physician’s physical detriments.

“Interviewer: So when did you get hired?
Polly: So, between Christmas and New Year’s then of ‘53, which was a few months later, but that put a lot of girls ahead of me that I would have had more time, you know. (Right) And she called me and asked me how old my baby was. And I went to work the fourth of January, 1954…and my baby was a year old in February of ‘54. And another part that I remember when I went there discrimination was, we had to have uh, a physical…had to take a physical. You couldn’t be too short, and they wanted you weighed within a certain range. They didn’t want you to be, I mean, real short girls they wouldn’t hardly hire them. They said they couldn’t reach the things they had to pack. And they would hire you if you had two years high school. You didn’t have to be a high school graduate. You had to have two years of high school. And really you didn’t need any high school to do the work if you were going to work on the lahrs because you just needed good common sense. (Mm-hmm) But I remember when I was taking my physical, I was near-sighted and I wore glasses and I had 20/20 vision with the glasses on I had 20/20. And this doctor, when I went for my physical, he was, the factory doctor, and his name was Dr. Daniels, the old Dr. Daniels. He
still has sons that are doctors now. And he was crippled. The old Dr. Daniels was crippled. He walked like he was going to fall forward. And I was desperate. I was desperate for a job. Here I had this baby and, and getting a divorce. And it really meant whether I was going to keep my baby. I mean, that’s really what it meant to me. And so, I passed my physical weight-wise and height-wise and health-wise, but when it got to my eyes, he told the nurse to check my eyes without my glasses. And I said, “But I can’t see without my glasses.” And he said, “Check her eyes without her glasses.” And so naturally, I couldn’t pass the eye exam without my glasses. So he wasn’t gonna’ hire me. He said, “Little girl, I’d be doing you more harm than good to let you go in there with eyes as bad as yours.” Well, I’d already had kindly a rough time, you know, having a baby and getting a divorce. And so, my reaction got me my job because I said to him, “What if you’d...they’d tell you, you couldn’t be a doctor because you don’t walk straight like I do?” And he said, “I never thought of that.” He said to the nurse, he said, “Never check her eyes without her glasses again.” (Oral History #504, Owens-Illinois Project)

Unfair Treatment of Women Glass Workers

Women endured this gendered-based job discrimination and, like Mabel Adkins, rationalized their inferior job status with arguments that many folks in the region were out of work and that their jobs provided steady work with good pay. Mabel worked at the glass plant for years, only taking time off to have her second child before returning to work several years later. Because of the break in her employment she never received any pension or benefits after she retired. This was the common pattern that many women endured if they wished to have children.

“Interviewer: Did you get any benefits when you left the plant? Mabel: No, I don’t believe so. Uh-huh, I didn’t get anything. Like I said, the only money I remember is that money I had in the, the savings account over there (Is that the credit union) the credit union. I don’t think I did. I don’t remember.” (Oral History #509, Owens-Illinois Project)

Once hired, job trainers in the glass factory treated women much differently than their male coworkers. When women were first hired, they received little training, which made their jobs quite difficult. They were afraid they were going to be fired for
performing poorly. This poor performance was directly connected to inadequate training, which often required a great deal of negotiation by the female workers in the form of covert resistance to overcome such obstacles. When Opal Mann first started working at the glass factory, she broke down and cried. She did not receive the proper training for her job and did not understand the directions given to her by the men who were supervising her.

“Opal: They didn’t give us any training, you know. (Yeah) I mean, it, they put us on there and told us “Look for brown spots.” And, and uh, uh, I was just looking and looking and looking, you know, and them things was piling up and this little man walked up and he had on a suit and tie and, you know, was real business-looking. (Yeah) And he said, uh, I was just standing there just crying. And he said, “Little girl, what’s the matter?” [Laugh] And I said, “They told me to look for brown spots and I don’t know what a brown spot is.” [Laugh] (Oh dear) And come to find out, it was the plant manager. (Oh my goodness…Oh, that’s wonderful) So from then on, he always stopped by and talked to me, you know. (Did he…) And uh, uh, short, not too long after that they started uh, uh, you know, having classes and training people to what, what the different defects were. (Sure.) But when I first went to work…(Look for the brown spots…oh…did you find any…were you finding any) No, I didn’t even know what they were. They were kind of a, an oily looking uh, spot that, uh, probably was oil...(Uh-huh.)…in the glass. (Yeah) Uh, but uh, anyway, uh, I’ll tell you, it was really, really rough uh, you know, getting started.” (Oral History #535, Owens-Illinois Project)

Geneva Shepard, who was hired by Owens Glass in 1942, remembered little training when she started in the selecting department. When asked how comfortable she was upon first arriving in the factory, she recalled feeling comfortable with her coworkers, but could not recollect receiving any training enabling her to do her job well. The supervisors, whom she called “small bosses,” challenged her, saying they could pack a larger amount of bottles in a shorter time. The “small boss” did not allow her to see him selecting and packing the glass containers, but did allow her to see the boxes once they were packed.
“Interviewer: How long did it take you before you felt comfortable...you felt like you had lots of friends there in the plant?
Geneva: Oh, I always felt comfortable around people I didn’t...Ed and I did know quite a few people. (I guess he did) It didn’t bother me a bit. And I remember the first day that I worked, I think it might have been a mayonnaise jar or something like that, the boss told the foremen, they had three or four little bosses on down, you know, told me that he could pack so many of them an hour or something and I said, well you could not and (Yeah) [Laughter] I couldn’t see how he possibly could, of course, the idea was you looked at them and he threw the bad ones away and then you put the good ones in the carton, so he got over and showed me how fast he...of course I didn’t get to look and see, I didn’t know what the defects would have been or how they look, (Sure, sure) but he did pack even more than what he had told me and I thought that was interesting, because after about a month I knew he could do it. [Laughter] (Yeah)” (Oral History #518, Owens-Illinois Project)

Geneva recalled another example of the lack of training women glass workers received when she was asked to shift to another department. Even though Geneva never wanted to work in the corrugated department, she was not given any instruction when she arrived to relieve another woman worker who could not work that day. Geneva pretended to know how to assemble cartons until her supervisors noted her inability to do so. When she returned from her lunch break, she learned that a supervisor had found another worker to replace her.

“Interviewer: When you are talking about the boxes are you talking about the corrugated department or the assembly?
Geneva: Yes, well, the corrugated department, but I wasn’t in there very much, but the, up in where we called the balcony, I guess that was where they put a lot of the paper together and made the cartons there and then they put them down in chutes to us according to what we were working on, see (Sure, sure) and I worked part of the day up there on day [Laughter] (Yeah, you didn’t like it, huh) They didn’t have their regular girl that did a lot of the relieving and to go eat and they sent me up there and I pretended I thought I was finishing, you know and I went and ate [laughter] and they had to find somebody else. [Laughter] So I guess they thought well there ain’t no use in sending me up there anymore, I didn’t know what I was doing. [Laughter] (Yeah, well goodness)” (Oral History #518, Owens-Illinois Project)
Geneva Shepard also revealed that the unfair treatment of women workers went beyond the women receiving poor training. Management treated men and women glass workers differently in many ways, including allowing men to join in social activities that were not related to their jobs, such as listening to sporting events broadcast via radio. In her oral history, Geneva indicated that often men working at the plant brought radios to work with them so they could listen to sporting or social events. Women glass coworkers, however, were not allowed to participate in this leisure activity. Women glass workers were pressed by their male supervisors to do additional work if glass container production became sluggish. Men with less experience on particular jobs, who were trained by women coworkers, were promoted to supervisory positions, while women workers with more experience remained in their customary selecting positions. Women coped with this situation by secretly taking a few extra minutes on their breaks, or by performing on the job in such a way that their male supervisors looked like inept employees to the plant manager. Geneva remembered purposely packing defective bottles to demonstrate her new male supervisor’s inability to detect imperfections in the glass bottles. To further demonstrate her supervisor’s ineptitude as a supervisor, Geneva responded to his questions about the possible imperfections in a kidding manner when she claimed the bottles would not have been packed if they were bad bottles. The new supervisor believed her and went on with his routine. This verified Geneva Shepard’s concerns. He was not qualified to supervise the women workers who initially had trained him. He did not have the proper job experience, and he lacked the skill of his women coworkers, but still had been promoted to a supervisory position.

“Geneva: The thing I think about mostly besides some of the funny things and some of the nice people…is the difference that was made in the men and women.
The men, if there was a special ballgame on they would stand around with their little radios and listen and if they saw a women had time to wipe her nose or get a deep breath they would say grab that broom and sweep...clean that glass up over there or she her over there, she needs some help, swing over there every so often and help her catch up. (Right, right, not every moment wasn’t like that) Uh-huh, and it keep some of us so we took the extra moment or two, we managed to go in the room and smoke, the ones who did. (Yeah, you just had to take it) Yeah, uh-huh. And we had 30 minutes and 20 minutes and we’d stay over...and a situation like that three or four minutes was a big help (Yeah) to stay over. But we had to ring our cards, it showed but they didn’t they weren’t quite able to stop it. (Yeah, yeah) Also they’d bring men in there would clean the floors and haul the glass and empty the cullet, and the first thing you knew they were made an inspector or something making more money then us...over us women who knew what company would take what and all, but they were inspector. For instance, one time we had a wine bottle they were real particular with and it was running so bad they didn’t really give you time to inspect them, (Yeah) you would learn to recognize a lot of things as you picked them up, and then your hands would go which ever way they needed to go. So they made this fellow who had [swept] around and fooled around the inspector...he didn’t know so much as any of us about packing the glass, he didn’t know anything, I don’t guess, they might have showed him a few things or something. (Yeah) So it was so bad I had...the tops of them had a lot of things bad and I had to hold them up because the bottom had a lot of things bad and they had great big marks on them (Mm-hmm) yeah, glass being made gets that, I don’t know why, so he brought a couple of them over to me and he said GS, are these all I have...I meant to be kidding. I said oh sure, if they had have been I wouldn’t have packed them. Well they had wine all over that, I just hadn’t seen them (Hadn’t seen em’) so he said ok and put them back down in the carton and went on. [Laughter]” (Oral History #518, Owens-Illinois Project)

**On-The-Job Sexual Harassment**

Opal Mann also complained of intimidating treatment initiated by a male coworker. She remembered a series of incidents of sexual harassment that had occurred when she was seventeen or eighteen years old. She never complained to management, afraid of possible retributions by men coworkers. She was also afraid management would fire her. Her husband later admonished Opal Mann’s boss for directing such remarks towards his wife.

“Opal: I never will forget they was one of the bosses that I had that loved to talk dirty to me. (Laugh) And I, I...(Oh dear)...I, I had been used to that. (Mm-
mm…you had or you hadn’t) Hadn’t. (Hadn’t, yeah, sure) Uh, and uh, oh, it used to just embarrass me to death, and I, you know, I’ve thought about that woman, uh, that Hill woman, when she was talking about uh…Clarence Thomas?…Clarence…(Mm-hmm.)…Thomas. I thought…I remembered all that. And it, it, you know, it can’t uh, it was awful. Uh, I had to stand there and take it because I was scared to death to sass him or anything. Afraid…(Right.)…Afraid I’d lose my job. And I was desperate, you know. We, we were, you know. (Sure, sure) [Inaudible] Everybody was having a hard time back then, you know. (Yeah, sure) And a job at Owens was nothing to be uh…(Uh-huh) Yeah, it was, it paid better than, than most other places. And uh, so you just, you, you just stood there and took it…whatever they dished out. (Was he uh, like a little boss or a big boss or) Well, he was a, what they call a crew leader. (A crew leader) Mm-hmm. (How long did that go on) Oh I don’t, it didn’t last too long, you know, but uh, it was just the embarrassment.

Opal: I never will forget how embarrassed I would get, you know. (Yeah.) And uh, I had been married when I, uh, see, I got married when I was seventeen. And uh, uh, my husband and I separated in two years. And uh…(Oh goodness)...so uh, uh, you’d think that it wouldn’t embarrass so much but he would, you know, I remember one time when we were going on a trip with his sister and her husband. Uh…(Your husband or) My husband and, and, and his sister and her husband. (Uh-huh) And Red was, he was saying so-, some kind of smutty little things, you know. And uh, my husband called him down for it because, you know, he, he, he knew how…(It bothered you.)…how embarrassed I, it, it made me, you know. And uh, of course, now, man, I, I cuss like a sailor. (Laugh) And you couldn’t embarrass me with anything, I don’t think. After all those years at, at…(Certainly, certainly) But uh, I never will forget how…(That’s hard…that’s hard.) Mm-hmm. (That’s real hard…I don’t know.) But uh, uh,…” (Oral History #535, Owens-Illinois Project)

Dr. Virginia Plumley disliked the men who felt women coworkers were “fair game.” Many men viewed women glass workers as potential romantic partners.

According to Virginia, a few women workers accepted the men’s amorous proposals, especially passionate propositions advanced by their bosses. Dr. Plumley additionally recalled that the male managers would often come down onto the main floor of the glass plant where the selecting department was located, and proposition women. She referred to the selecting department as “the selecting farm.” Dr. Plumley recalled that Owens-Illinois male managers and supervisors promoted the availability of women to potential male glass workers. According to Dr. Plumley’s oral history, male managers and
supervisors would also indicate to the new male glass workers that there wasn’t enough time to sleep with all the women in the glass plant. In her oral history, Dr. Plumley expressed that this type of sexual harassment angered her.

“Interviewer: How do you deal with anger like that?
Virginia: Oh, I hated it! Oh, I hated it! Oh, I absolutely, and then those guys would become the shift foreman. I really, got a really bad taste for, I was a little bit of an optimist. I kept thinking things will get better if I get into the office, things would be different. I saw what was happening in the selection room. And I hated it so much and the guys would hit on the women, too. They kind of thought that was fair game. And it was fair game. Some women would take them up on it and some of the women would sleep with the bosses. I guess thinking that would help them in some way. For whatever reason. Some of the guys in management would come down and hit on the women, you know. (The selecting farm) Yeah. I remember this guy and we won’t mention his name (Okay). He said that he always told the men who came to work for him, there’s a bunch of women here and don’t even try to sleep with them all, I have tried it. Meaning that he had been successful but there just wasn’t enough time in a day to sleep with all of the women there. I did not believe that. I don’t believe that, but those men, I think they gave the women a bad rap. I think you know, one time I heard the expression when somebody asked me where I worked, and I said Owens-Illinois, they said, oh, that’s the only whorehouse in town with a whistle on it. And I was furious about that. (Yeah) I mean, we had just as many loose women and men, and men at this university, proportionately as we did at Owens-Illinois. That always just really upset me. I was so naive and so innocent that I couldn’t even say the word shit. I’d get angry over being discriminated against and I’d remember when I learned to begin to say some, because that was the language I learned down there, see, that is how they expressed themselves. So that is how I expressed myself. I began to express some concern about the double standards, the double standards between the men and the women. So I thought it would be different in the offices. So when I got a job in the office, hell, it wasn’t any different there than what it was out on the line. So then when I finished my degree and I thought, gee, I graduated with honors and I got a degree in Business Management with minors both in Economics and Accounting. I know Owens had a training program for their managers. Do you know, I’ll show you how dumb I was. I didn’t know that women weren’t in it. I didn’t know.

Interviewer: The whole time you were studying and finishing this up, and making your plans.” (Oral History #515, Owens-Illinois Project)

A rumor spread throughout the glass plant that Owens’ supervisors often gave easier jobs to women glass workers who were considered to be more sexually appealing. When asked about the validity of such rumors, Opal Mann recalled that some women
were given easier jobs based on their physical appeal. Such unfair practices generated a set of new policies instituted by Owens Glass management.

“Interviewer: Did you see, I’ve heard that some women were hired down there because of their looks, because of uh, because men wanted them, that they selected like prettier women to work.

Opal: Well, they might have, I don’t know. But uh, uh, after, not too long after I went to work there, they did set up some rules, you know, to go by. You had to have uh, a high school education and I don’t know why because that’s stupid work. (Yeah, you needn’t know how to read to do that, huh) Uh, but anyway, uh, uh, they uh, uh, they had, uh, rules, you know. (Mm-hmm) Of course, you know, uh, I think any place that uh, if you knew somebody that, a boss or something, why you might could get in. I don’t know, I mean, I never was much aware of that. But some, uh, but uh, a lot of the women that, that uh, was pretty and all, they got the better jobs, you know. I mean easier jobs. (Yeah, yeah) Uh, and uh…(Easier on them as a whole too probably) I never was the boss’ favorite. [laugh]”  (Oral History #535, Owens-Illinois Project)

Geneva Shepard thought that when Owens Glass placed men in charge of hiring, they preferred to hire women they considered “prettier girls.” Job applications filed by women considered to be less physically appealing were often neglected. Once hired, the “prettier girls” were given many favors by their male supervisors.

“Interviewer: Do you think they hired… I heard things like the prettier girls got a lot of favors or got hired easier, do you think that is true?

Geneva: I’m sure that’s true when the men did the hiring, now it wasn’t true when Johnnie did the hiring. (Yeah) [Cough] (My goodness) She’s dead now. You know everyone who was a foreman over there when I worked is dead now. (Oh really, uh-huh) Uh-huh.”  (Oral History #518, Owens-Illinois Project)

Another Owens-Illinois glass worker also named Charles Day was hired by Owens Glass in 1962. He recalled that at the time, women were working in jobs outside of the selecting or corrugated departments. Some of the women worked in the maintenance department. They were called “matrons.” Matrons were maintenance department workers that cleaned-up after the rest of the department. He remembered that
a few men occasionally worked as matrons, but his oral history indicates that this position and title was held in reserve for women.

“Interviewer: Uh…were there mostly men in your department or were there some women?
Charles: We had four or five women I think. (In maintenance) Yeah, and the rest of ‘em was men.
Interviewer: What kind of work did they do? Was it different?
Charles: Matrons.
Interviewer: What is that?
Charles: They take care of all the janitor work, the women. Then some of our guys had to do janitor work, too.
Interviewer: Were those women there when you started? Or were they hired after?
Charles: Yeah, they was there when I went there.
Interviewer: They were? Yeah. Were you friends with them?
Charles: Yeah. (Yeah) Everybody got along real good.” (Oral History #536, Owens-Illinois Project)

Dr. Virginia Plumley coped with gender discrimination at Owens by attending classes at Huntington’s local college, Marshall University. She completed her degree with honors. Her education at Marshall University taught her to question the hiring practices at Owens based on gender. In a public setting in 1969, Virginia tore up a job application in symbolic defiance of Owens’ Management and their discriminatory hiring practices. She overtly resisted Owens-Illinois management.

“Virginia: I didn’t know. I just assumed I was going to retire from Owens-Illinois. I got an interview with Ezra Midkiff, he was personnel director then, and he was here on campus and I went on an interview with him and he said, “Well, you know, we just don’t take women.” He said, “You don’t have the qualifications.” That’s what it was. I said, “Oh, come on, Ezra, I…qualifications I graduated with honors.” “Well, you’re a woman, Jenny. You’re a woman. Now, you can have your old job back any time you want.” Well, I was beyond mad. But he could get by with that. Those were the days, too, and I borrowed Bob Alexander to task on this. He was director of Placement here on campus in those days. We had a lot of companies coming in and interviewing students and I mean, God, it was more of a demand than they were a supply. They could say women need not apply. And it was always for the management jobs, I could not, nobody would interview me.
Interviewer: What time period is this?
Virginia: It is 1969. (1969) Nobody...well, the only job that we have up there that a woman is the supervisor of is over the secretaries. He said, “Now, if you want to come in as a secretary, you can work your way up to that.” And he was really kind of demeaning, too.

Interviewer: Yeah. How did you keep from getting so discouraged?

Virginia: I tore up the application and threw it at him on my way out. So, I knew what I was going to do to him. I got him. (Oh, did you) Oh, I got him. So I went back and they were two guys from Inco and I’ve since forgotten their names. And I said, you know, I rehearsed this in my mind for a long time before I did it. I said, “Inco has a really good name in this community.” I said, “You employee a lot of people. People have a very positive image of you.” And I went on and on. But I said, “You got one negative in your company up there.” And I told them what happened to me. Oh, they were furious because by that time I had proven myself to them (In the classroom and in the studies), right, so they fired him. They got rid of him. And they told me they did. They told me they did. This is interesting, a bit of irony. Now, I’m in the field of communications. They were setting up a communications department at that time. And they offered that job to me. Why, I couldn’t even turn on a recorder, I didn’t know anything about it!”

(Oral History #515, Owens-Illinois Project)

The shattering of the glass ceiling for women was a gradual process. In the 1960s there were moments of upheaval when many women were hired in a short span of time. However, the period when women entered Huntington’s glass plant in the 1930s and 1940s, was for the most part, a plodding process. Women workers could only gain employment in unskilled positions. They were not allowed to work in skilled positions. They mostly gained jobs in secretarial positions, or began working in sorting and packing bottles in the “cold end” of the glass manufacturing plant. Owens management, and many of the men and women working at Huntington’s glass plant, thought some glass-making jobs were physically too tough or dirty for women employees to handle.

From the 1930s through the 1960s, Owens-Illinois management recognized that sorting and packing bottles required nimble fingers that could quickly grab semi-warm bottles, throwing out the bottles with imperfections, and pack the superior bottles into boxes that were stacked and eventually shipped to commercial bottle customers. The job
of packing bottles also required a quick eye to notice slight imperfections in many of the bottles coming down the conveyer belt. Owens-Illinois management thought that women glass workers best possessed the skills needed to accomplish this job. If the sorters and packers overlooked too many imperfections, flawed bottles were shipped to customers resulting in complaints from customers and lost business.

Women were increasingly hired into the selecting or corrugated departments, but were not allowed to take leadership roles among their male coworkers. They worked alongside men in inferior positions, unable to obtain promotions. Women, however, continued to gain better paying jobs traditionally reserved for men. They argued that they could do many of the glass plant’s jobs with equal fortitude, but were not permitted this kind of opportunity until they were granted a voice in hourly worker’s affairs, which was initiated by a unionization drive in 1946. Glass plant unionization, combined with the passage of civil rights legislation in the 1960s, gave women the power to question Owens-Illinois’ unfair hiring and labor practices. As a collective unit, women began to fight for equal pay, and the right to bid on jobs that were formerly unavailable to them. Women often took leadership roles for workplace equality via unionization, and newly permitted grievance procedures that went beyond the scope of Owens-Illinois management or union wishes. They were eventually permitted to file lawsuits in federal courts in lieu of following only plant-observed grievance procedures. Their complaint about employment inequality and on-the-job harassment was eventually heard by federal court officials with significant jurisdiction over Owens-Illinois Glass.

Women were victimized by the unfair hiring practices of the nineteenth century at Owens-Illinois, and were sexually harassed in the plant by both Owens-Illinois
management and many male glass workers. Had Owens-Illinois originally hired women
glass workers into unionized jobs within Huntington’s glass factory, they possibly would
have been given the opportunity to attain jobs with elevated pay rates with job protection.
Many women might have attained a steady source of income with better retirement
packages. They also would have had opportunities to bid on supervisory positions within
the glass factory, which would have allowed women to be recognized by managers,
coworkers, and the surrounding community as a vital part of Huntington’s glass container
production history.

The next chapter will examine the process that was instituted by Huntington’s
Owens-Illinois glass management who were forced, due to the passage of Civil Rights
legislation in 1963, to hire African-American glass workers. This chapter will also
compare the hiring of female African-American employees to male African-American
employees. Additionally, this chapter will chronicle the events that led up to the eventual
closing of Huntington’s glass factory and analyze how this event affected African-
Americans.

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i This was not an uncommon practice (hiring right off the street’s curb) in many industrial settings during
the Great Depression. Often the person chosen to work for the day was chosen simply because the hirer
liked the way the person looked.
ii The purchasing department was considered a secretarial position by Owens Glass. Women were allowed
to be hired into these positions, yet most of these jobs were held by men.
iii The corrugated department assembled cardboard boxes to be used to pack glass containers. This
department was referred to by workers as “the balcony.” The name is fitting since it was located on a
second floor of the glass plant overlooking other departments.
iv The term “small bosses” was a localized term often used to describe middle management, salaried
employees, and hourly supervisors.
v Historically, many women were hired by the glass plant in Huntington. However, they had to work in
selecting or secretarial positions, which was where every new hire started and represented the lowest
salaries in the glass plant.
CHAPTER IV

AFRICAN-AMERICANS BREAK THE COLOR LINE

By the late 1950s several African-Americans had filed applications for work at Owens-Illinois, but were never hired. However, African-American workers from Huntington persisted in applying for jobs at the Owens Illinois Glass factory. Owens-Illinois management ignored their applications. Through the end of the 1950s, Owens-Illinois did not hire African-Americans, but national reconciliation trends via the Civil Rights movement pressured Owens-Illinois to consider African-Americans as potential employees. Although African-Americans were one of the first groups to benefit from the passage of Civil Rights legislation by obtaining employment with Huntington’s glass factory, they often grappled with discriminatory practices emanating from their co-workers and from Owens-Illinois managers. They also struggled to remain employed or to bid on high paying, high status jobs that were held in reserve for white men. John W. Page Jr. recalled being hired by Owens-Illinois.

“Interviewer: Well, also um, just I was just thinking, that you said they didn’t hire black workers ‘til about ‘63 or ‘64.
John: Well, see, when I got hired, I put in for a application and that was in uh, ‘59. And uh, they, they overlooked it. I don’t know what they done or did. After I come out of the service, and I was working in like washing dishes. And then this guy said this man said he didn’t think I wanted to wash dishes for the rest of my life, so he told me to go see lawyer Henison. At that time, the, he, they was sending like 10 blacks down there to (Oh.) take a test and see, try to get a job.”

(Oral History #505, Owens-Illinois Project)

John, unable to find steady employment in Huntington, joined the Army and was stationed in France for three years. After he was discharged from the service in 1963, he returned to Huntington and was employed at a local restaurant as a dish washer. He was urged to again apply to Owens-Illinois Glass. The following decade, beginning in 1963,
John and other African-Americans were hired by Huntington’s glass factory. Civil Rights legislation forced Huntington’s glass management to end their restrictions concerning the hiring of African-Americans. John was first hired as a temporary worker to help the glass factory rebuild a furnace that had to be shut down. John, however, continued working in the maintenance department for Owens-Illinois after the furnace rebuild was completed. He was one of the first full-time African-American workers in Huntington’s glass plant.

“Interviewer: So when did you start at Owens?
John: Well, Owens, I started in Owens in 1964, August the 12th.
Interviewer: Now ‘64 was the first year they started hiring blacks?
John: Yeah. That’s the first...(Is that right?)...Well, that’s the first time, they, well, it was a little before that, you know. It was some in there, there was a couple people in there before I got in there. (Oh, there were?) Yeah. (So you weren’t…) Yeah, I think it started in, I don’t know if it’s ‘63. And they might have started while I was in the service. (Okay.) But when I went there, one guy named War-, Warner Griffin...
BACKGROUND NOISE
John: …he was there before I got there anyway.
Interviewer: He’s the only person you know of that was there that was black?
John: At the time. (Really?) Yes.
Interviewer: So you were a little outnumbered?
John: Yeah. And see, I worked when uh, when I went there in ‘64, uh, I started out in the maintenance department. And they had something like a, they called it a rebuild, rebuild the tanks. (Right.) And when I went there, they told me I’d probably be there 60 to 90 days. And uh, I was there 29 years, almost 30 years.
Interviewer: So they hired you on a temporary basis?
John: Yeah, it was just for about 90 days.
Interviewer: So what happened after the rebuild? Did they transfer you to a different job?
John: Ye-, well, I stayed in the, I stayed in the same department. (Okay.) And uh, and I been there, I stayed in that one department all that time.

The political climate within the U.S. changed after the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission was established to enforce Title VII of the Civil Rights Act, which was signed into law in 1964. This act made it illegal to prevent an individual from
gaining employment based on race, color, religion, sex, or national origin. Title VII of
the Civil Rights Acts forced Owens-Illinois to hire African-Americans.

Polly Brown recalled in her oral history the era in which Owens-Illinois began
hiring African-Americans at Huntington’s glass factory.

“Interviewer: Well, also, in regards to the political climate uh, the blacks started
getting a lot of jobs (oh, yeah).
Polly: Yeah, the blacks started (do you remember at Owens when that happened?)
Oh, yeah, oh, yeah. They uh…I think when that uh, something, you know, you
remember the EEOC, Equal Opportunity uh…come into play, you know, (mm-
hmm), they, the black people started getting jobs at Owens, uh-huh.. I think that,
wasn’t that in around the ‘70s, or something like that? (yeah) I think it was in the
‘70’s. And yeah, they started getting, started working at Owens. And…(was that
like problems at first, but.. .you remember?) Not, not, not too much. I don’t…uh,
we you know, we had uh…one in the maintenance, I think. But several black
people started working at Owens. I don’t remember any big problems, no. Like
you know…now you had, it’s, but it wasn’t any different than the whites. You
understand what I mean? The ones you had problems wasn’t because they were
black, no, no. Or what I heard of. (mm-hmm) No, I don’t think of any incidences,
but you know, you hear of everything, you know, and I wouldn’t…I’m not up on
that…on that racial issue, I’m, you know (yeah), I’m not… (Oral History #534,
Owens-Illinois Project)

According to Paul Niday, a white glass worker, the Equal Employment
Opportunity Commission (EEOC) was instrumental in pressuring Owens-Illinois to hire
more African-Americans in the 1970s. Paul remembered that African-Americans were
good glass workers, but represented a small fraction of the glass plant’s workforce. He
stated that the problems encountered by African-American employees were no different
than the problems of white employees. He, however, only worked with one black man
while working at Owens-Illinois. Most black employees were not in his department; they
were in the selecting department where wages were the lowest and promotions the
fewest.

“Interviewer: You only worked with one black man?
Paul: Well, in the, in the, in the…well, I worked with several, you know. But I…we had uh, let’s see…John Page. Now he was a, he was a mechanic in the auto shop. (mm-hmm) He worked there for years. Great guy. I mean, you couldn’t ask for a better…his wife worked there. She’s a great person. She was a black lady. She was a, when I left there, she, they had uh, gotten married you know, I think he’d been married. But she worked, she was a nice lady. I remember her real well. But there was several, several black people there that I knew real well, you know, and they were good employees, good employees. Worked as hard as…Now you have, but like I say, I think the problems that they had, they were no different than what the white folks has had, you know. (yeah) None whatsoever…that I saw. Now I wasn’t, you know, I wasn’t in that area where they had the, had them in the selecting and forming, you know (mm-hmm), in those areas more so than they did in our area.” (Oral History #534, Owens-Illinois Project)

According to several oral histories analyzed for this study, the first African-Americans hired were considered to be excellent workers. Charles L. Surbaugh, another white worker, reported that there were very few problems among workers due to racial conflict. The first black men hired were considered by some white workers to be among the finest employees the glass factory had hired due to their excellent job performance and their willingness to try to get along with white coworkers. These new African-American employees were considered by Charles to be “model minorities.” Charles also thought that the new black workers continued to perform well throughout their careers, leading the way for more African-American men and women to later be hired.

“Interviewer: (laugh) Umm, also was there a period, urn, a time period when the plant started hiring more blacks or more umm, I don’t know, younger or older people, anything, I-, maybe because of the war or something?
Charles: Uh, when the uh, for years, when I worked at the plant, the work force was predominantly white. I think maybe one person down through those years that might have been of black descent. But during my four years, starting in ‘59 to 1962, I took the first two black men that came into the plant, and I laid the groundwork for good relations. And of course, the black men that were sent to us were outstanding…upstanding black men that was sure to make a go of it. So they led the way. And they made a good beginning that led to both male and female in a reasonably percentage of whites and blacks within the plant. And the blacks continued to perform well.” (Oral History #502, Owens-Illinois Project)
Of the first blacks that were hired, all were men. They reported tensions between black and white coworkers as the new black workers slowly took jobs in what had formerly been an all-white factory. John W. Page Jr. was one of the first African-Americans hired by Owens-Illinois, and was fortunate to be hired into the maintenance department. Most new male employees started in selecting department. The selecting department was where bottles were hand-sorted for imperfections. It was not considered a prestigious position, unless one reached the level of managing the department. With only a few black employees working at Huntington’s glass plant, new black employees like John felt outnumbered. The new African-American employees felt that the physical environment of the glass factory was dominated by white, male professionals. It was a patriarchal ordering where white men held the highest paying jobs with the most attached prestige. Next in line were women who had worked at the plant for many years and got along with the male-dominated management and workforce.

“I interviewer: Now ‘64 was the first year they started hiring blacks?
John: Yeah. That’s the first…(Is that right?)…Well, that’s the first time, they, well, it was a little before that, you know. It was some in there, there was a couple people in there before I got in there. (Oh, there were?) Yeah. (So you weren’t…) Yeah, I think it started in, I don’t know if it’s ‘63. And they might have started while I was in the service. (Okay.) But when I went there, one guy named War-, Warner Griffin…
BACKGROUND NOISE
John: He was there before I got there anyway.
Interviewer: He’s the only person you know of that was there that was black?
John: At the time. (Really) Yes.
Interviewer: So you were a little outnumbered?
John: Yeah. And see, I worked when uh, when I went there in ‘64, uh, I started out in the maintenance department. And they had something like a, they called it a rebuild, rebuild the tanks. (Right) And when I went there, they told me I’d probably be there 60 to 90 days. And uh, I was there 29 years, almost 30 years.”
(Oral History #505, Owens-Illinois Project)
Though Owens-Illinois had now begun hiring African-Americans to work at the plant, black workers felt that the total number of African-American workers was restricted by a conscious company policy to hire only a small number of black employees. African-American employees represented only a small percentage of the total number of glass plant workers, regardless of the number of applications placed by African-Americans seeking employment. According to Carl Dial’s oral history, Owens-Illinois would only have a number of African-Americans that approximated their representative percentage within the city of Huntington, roughly ten percent of the total population. Owens-Illinois management felt that in order to comply with federal law they only needed to minimally comply with Title VII of the Civil Rights Act. The company felt that since the African-American population in Huntington equaled roughly ten percent of Huntington’s total population; a ten percent black employee population would be generous enough to satisfy federal law makers and union officials.

“Interviewer: Well, when did they first start hiring blacks? Not in the ‘50s while you was there, right?
Carl: No, no, uh-huh, no, they started bringing them in there about…now, I’m just guessing they probably started bringing them in there about oh, I’d say in the ‘70s, in the ‘70s.
Interviewer: And you said there really wasn’t that many?
Carl: They weren’t that many, no. I was just trying to think uh, we had one guy there by the name of Potts, Potts, or Spotts. He was a black guy. He worked there a little while, and this Whittenberg and this Roosevelt Vines, and just, gee, they just wasn’t too many of them back there. They had a few of them out in selecting, female and male, working out in the selecting, but not all that many, either. So, I don't know what…what the deal was there, whether they just didn’t uh…I’m sure they probably had a lot of applications for them which you take where there is… what is it uh, ten percent of the population, ten percent of the people are, ten percent of them are black (right, right).” (Oral History #510, Owens-Illinois Project)
Over time, Carl got to know several African-American workers, later becoming friends. He stated that once hired, the union protected the rights of African-American workers like anyone else who worked at the glass plant.

“Interviewer: Mm-hmm. What about, uh, did you have people of other races that worked out there?
Carl: Oh, yeah, yeah. We had…two black guys there working back there uh…one fellow, one guy’s name was Roosevelt Vines. Later on he left there, and he’s with the water company, and Bill Whittenberg, you may have heard of him. He was…quite an amateur and professional fighter back there, 15, 20 odd something years ago. He worked back there on the line too, with us. They were real nice guys.
Interviewer: Were they on your shift?
Carl: Yeah. Both of them had worked my shift. Yeah, uh-huh, both of them had worked my shift.
Interviewer: So you got to know them pretty well.
Carl: Oh, yeah, I…I just saw, I call him Rosy, Roosevelt Vines. I just saw him the other day, working on a line. (Oh, really) But Bill, the funniest thing about Bill, I had him to go, invite him to play golf with me one day and we went up to Barboursville to play up there and I had that old car out there then and everybody and their brother was trying to get that car off me. ‘Cause it was getting to be, you know, sort of a classic. We was coming down I-64 and there was a great big old young fellow, black bearded, big heavy beard, coming down there, a pickup. He started hollering at me. Well, after working in that noise up there for over, at that time, for over 25 years, I was about half deaf anyhow, and I couldn’t hear what he was a saying. Old Bill was sitting there beside of me, coming down through there and he still had his good hearing and everything. I said, “Bill, what in the world does that guy want?”, and he said, “He wants to know if you want to see that car, CARL.” And I hollered back to that guy, I said, “No,” I said, “my wife would leave me if I get rid of this car.” Of course, she wouldn’t but, that is the answer I gave him, and he said, “Okay”, and threw up his hand and waved at me, and he went on, which reminds me of another little story she told me here while back, said she had a notion of taking that old car and driving off to the junk yard. I said, “Honey, if you ever decide to do that, give me a little warning and I will climb in that trunk back there and you can dump me with it.”
Interviewer: You’d be buried with your car, huh. (yeah) Well, did you think…for the black workers, did the union do anything for them in particular?
Carl: They gave them the same, as my estimation, they gave them the same protection they did any of the rest of them. There wasn’t any difference whatsoever, they protected them the same as they would us. Otherwise, as far as I know they was no discrimination whatsoever. Most of those guys up there, those black guys, they weren’t that many of them, but we liked them real well. I, as a matter of fact…I wouldn’t have gone up there and played golf with old Bill if I didn’t like him.” (Oral History #510, Owens-Illinois Project)
Carl, however, didn’t recall any African-Americans who advanced into supervisory positions at the plant. The reason for this is that it seldom occurred. Only a few African-American workers received the chance to get into a supervisory position. The vast majority of open supervisory slots were filled by white male workers with many years of seniority.

“Interviewer: Yeah. Well, I was just wondering about, you know, the management part, if pay and opportunities was the same.
Carl: Well, now, coming back to the management, I don’t know about that. They wasn’t…uh…they might have been uh…they might not have been equal there. I don’t know. Cause I know we didn’t have any black supervision back up there.” (Oral History #510, Owens-Illinois Project)

Frederick Bledsoe’s oral history also indicated that there were never any African-American supervisors at the glass plant.

“Interviewer: Were there ever black supervisors?
Frederick: “Uh, no.” (Oral History #527, Owens-Illinois Project)

Frederick’s blunt response to the question about the lack of African-American supervisors is a reminder of the glass plant’s patriarchal structure. It is also a reminder that minimum requirements were being met, but only the minimum requirements. Blacks did not receive any prestigious employment positions until the 1970s and 1980s.

Opinions about working with blacks varied among white glass workers. Many white glass workers felt that work was work, no matter the color of an employee’s skin. Other factory workers felt that blacks had no place working with whites at Owens-Illinois. Several black workers, upon entering the glass factory, reported verbal harassment by white glass workers. The new black workers knew that some of the white workers would not like the idea of rubbing shoulders with them in their new jobs.

“Interviewer: Were there any tensions because of race?
John: Well, when I first, when I first got in maintenance, it was kind of a, a little tension, you know. Umm, it was just a couple, you know, blacks in that department. And at first, it was about 50- some people, something like that and just two blacks, you know, was in there. And uh, we had a little tension like getting raises and stuff like that, and you know, uh, I, I had to...One time, I had to uh, they gave one man a raise which they was supposed to give to me. And they didn’t do it, so I had to end up, in the long run, getting the NAACP on them. And uh, they kind of cleared it up. Then I didn’t have no problems (Well, that’s good) after that, you know.” (Oral History #505, Owens-Illinois Project)

To get promoted, black workers had to prove to their bosses they could do the job.

White coworkers appeared to gain promotions, and concomitant pay raises, with less effort.

“Interviewer: So when you started, did everyone start at the same pay in the department or do you know?
John: No, they had different, they had different rates. See, uh, they had, like uh 9 rate. When I first started, there was like an 8 or 9 rate? Then you work yourself up maybe 12. But when I was getting that raise, I was a 14 rate. And, and that rate was a 16 rate so they didn’t want me to jump from a 14 to a 16 so they had the excuse that I couldn’t do the, I was supposed to have two or more trades. But yet and still I had uh, automotive then I could do a little welding, but they, they, they said, they was trying to say I couldn’t do it. Then I had to prove it to them. (Hmm) So we had, I filed a grievance on them and then they give me a 15 rate, then I go back, I went back and worked. And when I got through working, I had them write on a piece of paper that I get my full rate. And that’s what they done. I, they had a, I signed this piece of paper, and I had it, so when I got through doing what I was supposed to do back there a couple two or three months, then they, they was supposed to give me the rate. Then they wanted me to stay, but I said nope. I’m going back where, you know, automotive shop. But I done the job, you know. (Right) I proved to them that I could do it.” (Oral History #505, Owens-Illinois Project)

Promotions were difficult for African-American workers in Huntington’s glass plant.

John reported he felt he was being held back by management due to his racial classification.

“Interviewer: Well, did you feel umm, I know you told me about that one incident where you got passed over for a raise. (Mm-hmm) Umm, did you feel like you basically had the good opportunities for pay increase and uh, promotion or did you ever feel like you were being held back or...?
John: Well, at that time, I felt like I was, you know, being held back, I was, they was holding me back for some reason, you know. ‘Cause I was doing the work, you know…” (Oral History #505, Owens-Illinois Project)

After working for Owens-Illinois for some time, and after he challenged his promotional status, John felt that, for the most part, he got along with many of his coworkers. John felt that he developed a good working relationship with his fellow white coworkers after they were given time to get to know him. However, he did not get along with everyone in his plant.

“Interviewer: What kind of work did you do in the maintenance department?
John: Well, maintenance department, when I first started out, I was, you know, we done like painting, you know, and then maybe urn, using a jackhammer digging the holes for, you know, for like a sewer, a pipe or something. And then I end up, I was uh, in the automotive shop, and that’s, that’s what I done for, after, when they shut it down, I was in the automotive shop, I was uh, a foreman, I mean, not a foreman but a crew leader. (Crew leader.) Over the, over the whole, say like the equipment they got there. They, they have tow motors, high lifts, you know, and uh, and all. Anything that run, that’s what I worked on. (Okay.)
John: Oh yeah, I got along with them, you know. We, we all got along. They all knew me, so we got along, you know, real good. You know, some people we might not get along with, but most of them I got along with. (Well, that’s good.) Yeah.” (Oral History #505, Owens-Illinois Project)

James Anness recalled that an African-American friend of his was lucky to get a job in maintenance, but complained that he often was on the receiving end of discrimination.

“Interviewer: Yeah. Well, I think that’s all the questions I had. There’s one other thing, I know that political climate has changed a lot, like you said that the women’s movement in the 70s, same happened in 60s with blacks, was there a time when Owens started to hire a lot of blacks, do you remember?
James: Well, yeah. As a matter of fact, one of the, used to be a real good friend of mine, John Page, he was black. And he worked in maintenance. He eventually got in the maintenance department. I think they had to hire…they had to hire so many and John was lucky enough to get into maintenance and a…they discriminated a lot against him.” (Oral History #531, Owens-Illinois Project)
Although black men were hired into Huntington’s glass factory, black women were seldom given employment. Female African-American workers were not hired into jobs until the mid 1960s.

With the help of Affirmative Action, African-American women were hired by Owens-Illinois in 1966. Like all new Owens-Illinois employees, the black women began in the selecting department. They, however, did not progress beyond this department until the 1970s. According to Jan Smith’s oral history, Owens-Illinois’ decision to hire African-Americans into jobs that were more prestigious than Selecting Department jobs was due to the passage of Affirmative Action legislation.

“Interviewer: Umm, why did they, why did they decide to hire blacks? Was that a result of the uh...  
Jan: Affirmative action.”
Jan: I was in the selecting department. Yes.
Interviewer: Did you stay in the selecting department there?
Jan: Uh, yes, the whole time I was there.” (Oral History #517, Owens-Illinois Project)

According to Jan, by the 1970s, the number of new black hires was still only approximately twenty percent of the number of new white hires. In other words, for every ten new jobs filled, a maximum of two jobs would be filled by African-Americans; a large discrepancy thus still existed between the number of new black hires and that of new white hires. Many African-American glass workers, moreover, still felt that Owens-Illinois did not hire black workers fairly. They felt that potential African-American workers were often disregarded because Owens-Illinois had a certain quota of African-Americans they had to hire, and they seldom went beyond this percentage.ii

Sadie Page recalled in her oral history that she felt a sense of equality at Owens-Illinois. She believed that most internal hires for better paying positions were done on
the basis of seniority, not race. However, she mentioned in her interview that the new external hires were never done correctly. Once an African-American was hired into the glass factory, they could bid on better jobs within the plant, but getting hired was difficult, and meeting the training requirements to gain enough seniority to advance to another job was a constant struggle.

“Interviewer: Well, umm, did you feel [noise in the background] like uh, especially being a woman and being black, uh, did you have opportunities the same as other people did, or did you feel like there was any problems with that? Whether it’s from the management, with raises, or I don’t know, any kind of, it doesn’t sound like you had any kind of problems at all in your daily work.
Sadie: I didn’t have any problems because things were done by seniority. Excuse me, and if a job came up for a bid, and you bided on it, usually you got it, unless there was a reason, and usually, they couldn’t hardly find a reason that they couldn’t give it to you, you know what I’m saying? (mm-hmm) I never had no problems in that. (well, that’s good) I can’t, you know, I can’t say I had any racial problems. Uh... I just didn’t feel like at the time, that they, that they hired fairly, as far as hiring people. They never did hire a lot of blacks. It was always, if they hired ten whites, it was always maybe two blacks. I never felt like they done that right, but as far as me working and everything, I felt like you know, I didn’t have any problems. I really didn’t, ‘cause I got along. But I guess that was the procedure in hiring. (mm-hmm) Now at one time they did, maybe I should back that up. One time they did hire a lot of blacks down there. They were hired in the ‘70s, after I got hired. And there was more blacks in there than now, but when they cut back, most of those people were in that cutback, and they didn’t get to come back, see. (I see) For various reasons, they didn’t. You know what I’m saying (right), they didn’t hire them back. But uh, other than that, I never had any problems.”  (Oral History #503, Owens-Illinois Project)

Jan Smith remembered that to qualify as a potential employee, African-American women had to meet a new set of requirements constructed by Owens-Illinois management that exceeded requirements for white female applicants. Potential African-American female employees had to pass written examinations that bore little resemblance to the requisite job skills female employees possessed. Instead, Owns-Illinois management asked potential black employees questions that they thought would detect candidates who had graduated from high school with high marks. Other questions
focused on issues of moral and social responsibility. Yet, several oral histories indicated that Owens-Illinois had hired white women in the past who had not even graduated from high school. Therefore, African-American women were required to meet higher standards than white female coworkers. Jan complained that the employment test given to potential African-American women employees was not relevant to the job for which they were applying. Jan also objected to taking the employment test when so many white women workers were not required to do so. She suggested that Owens-Illinois only sought to hire what management called the “best black women.” To ensure this outcome, African-American female workers had to score high marks on the employee test before being hired by Owens-Illinois. At the time, what Owens-Illinois management meant by the term “best” was unclear. This discrimination in Owens-Illinois’ hiring procedures for new African-American employees also served another goal. If Owens-Illinois hired enough African-American men, eventually one of the new black male employees would wish to be hired into a management position, or into a job that was considered most desirable. These positions had historically been reserved for men. If Owens-Illinois management tried to prevent a black man from receiving a “man’s job,” then they would clearly be in violation of EEOC hiring policies. In an attempt to stay within the EEOC hiring guidelines, Owens-Illinois management decided to meet new EEOC hiring standards by selecting more African-American women to be hired than African-American men. This patriarchal hiring system protected the most desirable jobs, which were outside the Selecting Department were the vast majority of women worked. During this period, African-American women were only hired into the Selecting Department and would seldom advance beyond it.
The term “best black women” referred to the perceptions held by Owens-Illinois management that only “model minorities” from Huntington’s African-American community would make ideal glass plant employees. It is apparent from several oral histories that Owens-Illinois management and many white glass workers believed that the African-American community, which is on the south side of the city, was a high crime, drug-infested neighborhood. To aid Owens-Illinois in their search for respectable African-American employees, they sent messages to local African-American churches informing the black women in attendance of their search for high quality African-American employees. Owens-Illinois management rationalized that African-Americans who attended church would represent the portion of the African-American population in Huntington they wished to hire. Owens-Illinois management thought that church-going African-Americans were less likely to be associated with drug abuse and crime, and were less likely to consort with suspected white drug users who were already working at the glass factory. Even before hiring African-Americans at the glass plant, Owens-Illinois management and senior glass workers suspected that a sizeable portion of the younger glass employees were already drug users. They feared that if white drug users began consorting with black drug users, the plant’s efficiency would be curtailed.

When asked about socializing with African-American coworkers, James Anness, a white glass worker, echoed the glass plant’s management perception of Huntington’s African-American population’s involvement with drugs. In his oral history, James referred to whites who kept company with black drug users as “white trash.” White trash was regarded as the lowest level a white person could attain and still be considered white.
The term “white trash” was used by glass workers as a pejorative to indicate that drug use was an aberrant behavior among whites.iii

“Interviewer: Did you go…said John and you were there…you’re very close friends with him?
James: No, no. I didn’t…it was all at work really. If I see him outside I’d holler at him or he’d holler at me or something like that. You know, I had my thing and John had his, as far going together and going places. I wouldn’t you know, it just never entered my mind you know. I was in the service with them, black people, and it didn’t bother me. But…ah just…you know, John was always busy and ah…we didn’t socialize…we didn’t socialize. But in the factory we was friends…good friends. I taught him how to weld. And John was a good mechanic. I liked the guy. I like him. (laughter). He’s a good guy.
Interviewer: Well good.
James: But as far as you know, as…I wouldn’t want to go up there and live up in the middle of 16th Street you know, because of so much stuff. You can…
Interviewer: Where he lives now?
James: No, he lives over at Burlington or South Point over there. But the way things are just seems like an awful lot of…this dope and stuff is all black related and you get a lot of these…a lot of white trash that gets in with them and they don’t want to work, they want that fast money. All they want to do is…is kill. And you know when I was a teenager, the only thing…dope and stuff like that, it was if somebody knowed somebody that was old enough or whatever, to get a six pack of beer and they’d be 10 people to split that six pack. (yeah) Or maybe be lucky enough to steal a pack of cigarettes from your dad. Well, I never smoked or drink or…I don’t even drink coffee. But that was the big thing. Now look at all of this. You never had all this stuff back then…57 through the first part of 60. And then the sixties the marijuana stuff and it’s gradually went from to marijuana to ah…speed and then speed and then that ain’t strong enough you know. Now look what a…” (Oral History #531, Owens-Illinois Project)

Prospective white workers were never scrutinized in this way. They did not have to represent the “best” of their particular communities. New white glass workers simply had to be able to manage the responsibilities that pertained to their new jobs such as being able to come to work on time and do their job. No examinations were required of white employee applicants. They only had to meet minimum educational and physical qualifications to work in the glass plant. Most white workers simply had to read and
write, and be able to stand for long periods of time, and if their job required a high degree of lifting, they had to be able to lift up to eighty pounds.

“Interviewer: How did you hear about the job opening?
Jan: Well, I heard about it from some of my girlfriends which they heard about it from church. When they wanted to hire the black women, they went to the churches or religious organization to uh…they wanted what they called “their best black women”.
Interviewer: Yes, the good black women. (laugh)
Jan: (laugh) We all had to have our high school graduate, and we had to take tests which was a first. They never had tests before, at least, far as, to my knowledge, this was the first time they had tests, and we all had to pass the tests and had to have high school graduate…and we had to be a high school graduate. And like I said, they come to the churches an-, uh, it was announced in church, and this is where my girlfriends heard it. And when they got hired, I heard it through them. So I just went down to apply.
Interviewer: Mm-hmm.
Jan: And I was called, and I was tested and hired.
Interviewer: What was the test like? Was it on, uh, what could they test you on? (laugh) Like an IQ test or like...
Jan: (laugh) Yeah, it was more like IQ test which had nothing to do with the work in there, believe me, nothing. (laugh)
Interviewer: Yeah, uh-huh, that’s what I wanted to know. Yeah. (laugh)
Jan: Yeah, but uh. Like, I mean, you know, with me bein’ fresh outta’ high school, well, really one year a college, I had no trouble with the test or anything, you know.” (Oral History #517, Owens-Illinois Project)

At the time, potential African-American employees such as Jan Smith did not know that a test of this nature was not required of new white women employees, nor did they know that white women were hired without high school diplomas. Jan added an example of Owens-Illinois’ unfair hiring practices.

“Jan: And then this one girl that was hired in with me, she’s just uh, gettin’ her “GED” since she’s uh, since I’ve worked with her. And this one girl, she made it a point to tell me, she said uh, she said, you kn-, I mean, she was hired in with me the very same day. iv
Interviewer: Hmm. (cough)
Jan: And she told me that she doesn’t have any more than a seventh grade education. I mean, she made it a point to throw this in my face.” (Oral History #517, Owens-Illinois Project)
Jan felt that a few white workers didn’t want African-Americans working in the plant based on racial stereotypes. According to Jan, white coworkers felt it was their responsibility to critique African-American workers concerning their job performance, especially if the African-American worker was new. Jan also reported that she seldom socialized with white workers. She added that white coworkers rarely gave African-American workers credit for a job well-done.

“Interviewer: Um, you mentioned problems. Socializing problems, treatment reception?
Jan: It was uh, well, I didn’t really socialize with any of ‘em. It was more like on-the-job treatment, umm. They were a little unfair. Then there were some that uh, didn’t want to work with you. And umm, I, I, I don’t know what it is, but they always umm, I don’t care how hard we worked, it was always like we wasn’t doin’ enough (laugh) or we wasn’t fast enough or you know.
Interviewer: Sure.
Jan: I mean this was just with some of ‘em. Now some of ‘em were as extremely nice. I can say that.
Interviewer: Yeah, yeah, right, yeah, I know you’re not…
Jan: But uh, I did run across, some of ‘em were a little unfair. They would not give you credit where credit was due. I don’t care how hard you worked or how much you went outta’ your way.
Interviewer: And they took it upon themselves to tell you about your work. I mean, was that common? Did everyone cir-, critique each other? Did they, I mean, uh, would it be common for a, I guess I’m leading you. This is kind of a leading question.
Jan: (laugh)
Interviewer: Would it be, would it be common to hear a white man tell another white man, you know, “you’re not doin’ your job good enough?” I mean workers on, on the same that are doin’ the same job. Are you…
Jan: Common. Well, well, it was fairly common, believe it or not. Becau-, well, if, especially if you were new.” (Oral History #517, Owens-Illinois Project)

According to Jan, white coworkers often criticized African-American female workers more than white supervisors.

“Interviewer: but um, your treatment as a, as a black woman, um, was it different from, was it, did you get different treatment from men uh, as opposed to women? I mean, if you want to talk about, uh, I mean you mentioned discrimination with uh, your supervisors, male supervisors, I take it, telling you that your work, you had to work harder and all that.
Jan: Well, no, it w-, no, not as much the supervisors as my coworkers.” (Oral History #517, Owens-Illinois Project)

The hiring of African-Americans was also a significant event for white workers at Owens-Illinois. Frederick Bledsoe remarked that he did not remember the hiring of African-Americans as a monumental occasion, but qualified his statement saying that prior to this event that nearly all public spaces and events in Huntington had been totally segregated. Civil Rights legislation changed segregation, but the law did not reduce racial tensions.

More incidences of tension between African-American and white workers were brought up Frederick Bledsoe’s oral history. Frederick did not recall any specific examples which indicated extreme racial hostility between these two groups of workers, but remembered that frequently a degrading remark or racial slur would be uttered by a white worker, offending black workers.

“Interviewer: Do you remember when they first hired blacks?
Frederick: Not really, I really don’t. Uh, it just wasn’t a monumental occasion for me to remember, really, we didn’t have none work there, and then all of a sudden they hire them. But we understood it, that there was segregation back then, really. (right)
Interviewer: Did that cause any tensions that you remember?
Frederick: No, not really, it is strange, but it never. Never had any problem with it, no. Somebody might have one time or another let a word go that was commonly spoken, and maybe that was one, but I don’t think any of them took offense to it, or you know, or what ever. There wasn’t nothing meant by it, but there was a way of talking and you know, but there really wasn’t any problems, no.” (Oral History #527, Owens-Illinois Project)

According to Sandra Peterson, by the 1970s, many white coworkers’ attitudes had changed towards African-American workers. On-the-job racial discrimination had somewhat diminished, in part due to new labor rules enforced and regulated by the union and Owens-Illinois management. Sandra reported that by the 1970s, she and her husband
seldom suffered prejudicial incidences due to being an African-American, but said her husband, who started work at Owens-Illinois in the 1960s, had some problems working with white coworkers when he was first hired.

“Interviewer: What happened to your husband?
Sandra: Uh…(I think you were gonna tell me something that you had remembered). Well, let’s see if I can remember him…I think when he was talking about when his rate was, when he was trying to get his rate of pay, what it was, I wasn’t married to him at the time, but we had talked about it. And he had told me that uh, this other guy had came into the department that wasn’t older than him. They gave him the rate right off, and they made him maybe uh, go to school and do a couple of other things before they would pay him. (I see) But that was back in the ‘60’s, see. (right)
Interviewer: But he said when he first got there he had other kind of tension on the job.
Sandra: Well, he had told me that uh, and we’d laugh about it some now, that when he had wanted to go to the electric shop and work, that the guys, a couple of guys told him that they didn’t want him in the electric shop. And when he proceeded to do whatever job he was supposed to do, the guy showed him what to do, and he told him the wire was live, and it was. And that didn’t encourage him too much. So, he didn’t stay in there. But, you know, little things like that. The guy just told him right off, they didn’t want him in there. And when they left that wire live, and told him to hook up something, he knew that they didn’t want him in there. It wasn’t funny at the time, but we got to laugh about it now. (yeah) And then I think he had a supervisor that would tell him to do things, and then when he would do it, he would come back and say, “Well, I didn’t tell you to do that.” And he would, he had him going to the place where he thought that something was wrong with him. He knew it wasn’t anything wrong with him, and he knew he was doing what he was told to do. But later on the guy had a problem, and I guess he retired. Then he called him and apologized to him and told him he was sorry, the way he had treated him. (Wow!) And it was (so I guess things changed a lot) yeah, they changed. This guy, he had a problem I guess with, he thought John was trying to take his job (oh, uh-huh), I think it’s what it was. (oh, I see) And then I think some of the guys teased him and told him he was gonna take his job. And he had a problem with that. (mm) But it worked out. With John, he’s a Christian man, he’s a praying man and he prayed about it, and the guy later on uh, told him he was sorry for the way he had treated him.” (Oral History #503, Owens-Illinois Project)

Jan Smith reported that African-American women workers did not socialize with white managers. She felt that black women employees were all business when they were working in the glass plant, and all conversation with supervisors in the glass factory
pertained to the job. It appears that Jan, like most female African-American workers, seldom talked with white, male supervisors other than communicating with each other about how to correctly do their jobs. Jan indicated that she learned more about her job from her coworkers than from her supervisors.

“Interviewer: Yeah, I guess so. Did you learn more from your coworkers or from your supervisors?
Jan: Probably my coworkers. Wha-, whe-, I said, maybe, like I said, I didn’t have any trouble with the supervisors, maybe it’s because uh, I didn’t get to know them, you know…
Interviewer: Mm.
Jan: I just knew of them. It was, it’s not like they uh, uh, like I said, I knew they were there, but, I mean, it’s not like we talked or socialized. Anything they said to me was strictly pertainin’ to the work or to give me an order or somethin’ like that, you know.
Interviewer: Sure, business...(Right)” (Oral History #517, Owens-Illinois Project)

After ten years of working in the selecting department, Jan was promoted to crew chief, but she reported in her oral history that she had trouble getting white coworkers to follow her directions. Many of the other women in the Selecting Department were scared to bid on the crew chief job, deciding that perhaps a white, male co-worker should lead them. After Jan bid upon and received the leadership position, many of her female coworkers thought that she was not qualified and should never have pursued or received such an authoritative rank. After she became crew chief, her coworkers refused to listen to her directions, dismissing her leadership role as another case of the forced installation of racial minority quotas and/or reverse discrimination.

“Interviewer: Yeah, well, tell me about umm, crew leading. Tell me how you got that and what the bidding was like.
Jan: That was another job you bid on. The first I bid on it, I got back-up. And uh, this was before a lotta the women started. There was some women, you know, some of ‘em still were scared to bid on. A lotta ‘em wouldn’t bid on it, but I bid on it. I only had 10 years service, and I got it. (laugh)
Interviewer: (laugh) Yeah? You got it cheap, so to speak. Yeah?
Jan:Yeah, and everybody was just surprised and uh, I was, they laughed when I got it. Some of ‘em thought, “Oh, she’d never make it.”
Interviewer: Sure.
Jan: You know.
Interviewer: Sure.
Jan: And umm, there was some that absolutely refused to do what I told ‘em to do even after I got the job.” (Oral History #517, Owens-Illinois Project)

James Anness, a white glass worker, remembered that African-American men who were promoted into supervisory positions also had problems getting white employees to follow their directions. James also felt that African-American workers seldom stayed at Owens-Illinois because they did not like the shifting schedules that new glass workers were forced to work. James additionally claimed that African-Americans, especially African-American women liked to “go out and party a lot,” and working a swing shift got in the way of their socializing.

“James: Well, they didn’t want him to…I know here in the last 5 or 6 years, John had enough seniority that he got the crew leaders job and the guys didn’t want to work for him. And he was a good guy, John really was. But overall, now I don’t want to make it sound like I’m a racist or something but, I would say out of the 50 blacks that was hired there, that there was a…most of them was girls and they wouldn’t to keen on working shift work. You know, they liked to go out and party a lot of them did and a…but a…there were several now, I have to say there was several on them that really worked. I know this one she’s…she’s passed away now, Augusta, she was a nice person. She worked and John and several of the other…I’d say out of the 50 that maybe they might have been 6 left that stayed there.” (Oral History #531, Owens-Illinois Project)

James’ comments seem to support Jan’s earlier assumptions held by many white glass workers. These assumptions indicated that African-American workers (mostly female) did not like the hard work associated with their jobs. James indicated that the majority of African-American workers who were hired quickly quit due to the hard labor associated with the job.
As white workers became familiar with African-American coworkers, they began to speak with them on breaks and at company sponsored social functions. While at work, many of the white workers even went out of their way to say “hello” to their African-American coworkers. White workers, however, did not extend this relationship with African-American coworkers to include their families and friends. African-American workers soon discovered that their friendships with white workers did not go beyond the scope of work or plant activities. Outside of the plant, many of the white workers purposely avoided all contact with a black co-worker. This was difficult for Jan to understand and was a hard lesson to learn.

“Jan: Cause once I, once I start like you say, well, socializin’ with ‘em or talkin’ with ‘em and uh, I really thought they were my friends, you know, I really made that mistake with a lotta ‘em.
Interviewer: Mm.
Jan: And then I was proven wrong. (laugh) In fact, when I worked there was the first time in my life that I had ever missed a night’s sleep, I mean, where I could go to bed and couldn’t sleep.
Interviewer: Yeah.
Jan: I’d come home and cry. (laugh)
Interviewer: (laugh) Yes, yes. So these were the first hard times, huh, in your life?
Jan: Yes, yes they were. Yep. I, to this day, they probably don’t know that, wha-, what I went through.
Interviewer: No. How were you proven wrong?
Jan: How was I proven wrong?
Interviewer: I mean, is this too personal?
Jan: I mean...
Interviewer: About your, uh, the friendships you were making?
Jan: Oh, well, because like I said, uh, like in the plant, like when we was on our break, we would socialize or any social functions that the plant had, we would socialize together, and you know, and uh, like I said, I thought they were my friends. But then, they showed their true colors when I would meet ‘em outside the plant with their family or friends and they didn’t know me. (laugh)
Interviewer: Period.
Jan: Yes, I mean, they actually not know me, would not speak. I kid you not. I never, I couldn’t believe it. I just couldn’t believe it, but it uh, they did. And to this day, some of ‘em still do.
Interviewer: That you have known and worked with for years and years and years?
Jan: I’ve had them eatin’ outta my hands.
Interviewer: Yes. (laugh)
Jan: (laugh) And then I’d see ‘em with their family...
Interviewer: Yes.
Jan: I mean, they’d just go outta their way not to speak. And you know what, that’s one thing that I never ask ‘em and a lotta people say I should have. I like to really know why, what difference, I mean, what difference does it make? What’s wrong with sayin’ hello?
Interviewer: Yeah.
Jan: You know? (laugh)
Interviewer: What’s that mean? What’s that mean? What’s it all a—?
Jan: Why is it and the very next day, I would see them in the plant, they were right up in my face again...
Interviewer: Right.
Jan: bein’ real nice.
Interviewer: And not even thinking that they might have offended you very, very deeply.
Jan: Right.
Interviewer: Yeah, that, that must even have been a little more painful, you know, to...?
Jan: That hurt me worse than anything really. But like anything else, I got used to it. I come to expect it.
Interviewer: Yeah.
Jan: Out of certain ones. And there were some that I didn’t even have contact with in the plant, and I could see them out and uh, I mean, you know, sometime I wouldn’t even see them. They would see me first. And they would go outta their way to speak. (laugh)
Interviewer: (laugh)
Jan: But tha-, that’s all right. It’s the ones that I really thought was my friends that hurt.
Interviewer: Yeah.
Jan: You know.
Interviewer: Yeah, what kin-, how long did this process take, this, this umm, epiphany that you had, this the-, uh, you know, this experience? It really, it really took years before it really sunk in. (laugh)
Interviewer: Really, really?
Jan: Yeah. It was years. It had to happen several times before it hit me and not to upset me or bother me because at first it, I mean, it used to just, had me so upset, and I mean, I was just in disbelief.” (Oral History #517, Owens-Illinois Project)

Jan attempted to cope with the white coworkers who would not acknowledge her outside of the glass plant. She finally spoke out in the plant when she aired her
admonishments publicly to white coworkers. Her oral reprimand seemed to cause one white worker to rethink her attitude about socializing with African-American coworkers outside of the glass plant.

“Interviewer: Yeah, and that must’ve made goin’ back to work, you know, so difficult… just seeing these people.
Jan: It did, it really did. ‘Cause uh, and the-, then one day I did make a statement about it. This one lady in particular, her name was Margaret, I’m almost sure that was her name. Now she was supposed to’ve been such a Christian. And it come up one day that, uh, some of the people were usin’ foul language, and they were sayin’, “Well, I don’t say this in front of Margaret and I don’t do this in front of Margaret. Margaret’s a Christian,” this and that. I said, “Well if Margaret’s such a Christian, why is it when she’s out with her family, she can’t speak?” (laugh)
Interviewer: (laugh)
Jan: Well, it got back to Margaret. (laugh)
Interviewer: Yes (laugh). Real quick.
Jan: From then on, she would always speak when we were out.
Interviewer: Oh really?
Jan: Oh yes!
Interviewer: So you chastised her! That’s good.
Jan: (laugh)
Interviewer: That’s cool. That’s interesting. Was she doing this because she was repentant or was she afraid of her Christian reputation?
Jan: I think it was her Christian reputation. I really think that was why.” (Oral History #517, Owens-Illinois Project)

Frederick Bledsoe recalled another example of white and black workers who were friends while in the glass plant, but never socialized with each other beyond the glass plant’s gates. Owens-Illinois glass became a reverse gated community. While at work, Frederick was friendly with several African-American coworkers, but seldom mingled with black workers outside of the glass plant. At outside sporting events, Frederick would be friendly with African-American coworkers, but he never went with them to such activities.

“Interviewer: So were you friends with these men then or did you just work with them?
Frederick: Oh sure, outside of the factory no, I wasn’t that…we was friends. At last I thought I was friends with Wittenburg, especially Bill. He worked my shift
quite a bit, you know. But as far as, no, on the outside, no not-huh. They just
didn’t…one thing. I’d see them different places, like a sporting event or
something like that, but not go with them, no. (right)” (Oral History #527,
Owens-Illinois Project)

Another reported instance of a friendly work relationship between an African-
American and a white worker that did not breach the walls of the glass factory appeared
in James Anness’s oral history. He reported that he was friendly to an African-American
coworker in the plant, and would make an effort to say hello at outside social events, but
this is where the friendship terminated.

“Interviewer: Did you go…said John and you were there…you’re very close
friends with him?
James: No, no. I didn’t…it was all at work really. If I see him outside I’d holler
at him or he’d holler at me or something like that. You know, I had my thing and
John had his, as far going together and going places. I wouldn’t you know, it just
never entered my mind you know. I was in the service with them, black people,
and it didn’t bother me. But…uh, just…you know, John was always busy and
a…we didn’t socialize…we didn’t socialize. But in the factory we was
friends…good friends. I taught him how to weld. And John was a good
mechanic. I liked the guy. I like him. (laughter). He’s a good guy.” (Oral
History #531, Owens-Illinois Project)

Inside the factory’s walls, many white coworkers appeared to enjoy working and
socializing with their African-American coworkers. However, outside the gates of the
glass factory, white and black coworkers re-segregated themselves and continued to
observe racial separation that was devoid of cultural diffusion and assimilation. It
appears that many white glass workers who worked with African-American glass
workers may have succumbed to social pressures outside of work to maintain racial
separation. Huntington, like most cities in the 1960s and 1970s, was informally
segregated. Perhaps these glass workers actually liked each other, but could not maintain
visible signs of their friendships outside of work due to informal social constraints and a
tradition of being separated.\textsuperscript{vi}
Black Glass Workers and Structural Blocks Preventing Full Retirement

In the late 1980s, changing technology, competition from other container sources, and a sagging national economy led to job cutbacks at the glass plant. Owens-Illinois profit shares declined. Attempting to remedy this situation, new management was rotated in and out of Huntington’s factory, but the bottom line for Huntington’s glass plant was its eventual shutdown, which took place in 1993.

Many glass workers and their families were hit hard by the glass factory’s closure, especially those who only needed a few more months to reach full retirement. John Page, an African-American, was one of the workers who could not take full retirement, lacking only a few months to reach his thirty years of service mark, which would make him eligible to receive full retirement benefits.

“Interviewer: So what umm, you just barely missed your 30-year retirement.
John: You know, see my 30, uh, I don’t like it because my 30 years would be August 12th this year. Well, one reason I don’t like it is because uh, they let some people come back in say like January, February, March, April, and get their 30. (Oh. They did?) Yeah. But see, it’s gonna, it makes it difficult when they let them do that, and then they don’t gonna let me do my 30. That don’t seem right to me. (Mm-hmm) You know what I mean? (Yeah) And I got ‘til August, plus they have somebody still working in there in maintenance department. I mean, they’re doing maintenance work and stuff. (Right)
Interviewer: The people that are so close to getting their 30 years...
John: Yeah. See the people in there now, they got 30 years. They got 38 and 40 years. And uh, and they still working.
Interviewer: Now why did they do that?
John: Uh, why did they do…They did, uh, I don’t know. They, I think they done, you know, they done it because they had so many years. And they, they want, they uh, seniority and they let them do it. And they do it, they said they was doing it because of the insurance. (Huh) I was talking to them and asking them.
(Oral History #505, Owens-Illinois Project)

Many workers, both black and white, lost their jobs due to deindustrialization at Owens-Illinois before they reached full retirement. However, all black workers were terminated before they could acquire enough years of service to receive full retirement.
African-Americans weren’t hired into Owens-Illinois until 1963, and most of the black employees hired at Huntington’s glass factory were hired in the late 1960s through the early 1970s. Huntington’s glass factory closed operations in December 1993, and many workers were already laid off before the official shutdown. This meant that no black workers could have worked in the factory for thirty years, which was the amount of time required to receive full retirement benefits.

Closing Huntington’s glass factory was a two-fold strategic move for Owens-Illinois Glass. After the official plant shutdown, those with highest seniority were permitted to remain working in the factory tearing down and boxing up glass making equipment that was eventually sold. Owens-Illinois management rationalized that closing the least profitable glass factory under their control (Huntington’s glass factory was considered the least profitable) would ultimately save the company money. Owens-Illinois could save even more capital if they could avoid paying out additional retirement benefits.

In 1993, many African-American workers were nearing retirement. Closing the factory prior to African-American workers activating their retirement decreased the company’s capital losses by lowering the amount that would have to be spent on Owens-Illinois retiree packages. This was emphasized in the oral histories of several African-American glass workers as a premeditated management decision that would save Owens-Illinois money after Huntington’s glass factory was closed. John Page Jr.’s oral history echoes this sentiment.

“Interviewer: There are other people in your position that were that close?  
John: Mm-hmm, yeah. There was other people. Yeah. My brother, he’s in there too. Uh, in this year, this year would be our, you know, 30 years for all of them. (Hmm)
Interviewer: That seems kind of...(You know)...uh, I mean, they have to know that.
John: They know it.
Interviewer: I mean...
John: I think it’s why they done it. They knew, you know, they know what they was doing.
Interviewer: Did you get any kind of retirement but it just wasn’t the maximum? Or do you get nothing?
John: Well, if I don’t have my 30 when I get 55, it’d be like a 60-40, you know. They get, I just get 40 percent.
Interviewer: So when you turn 55, you’ll get something, but not the maximum?
John: Yeah, not what I’m supposed to. Like I could if I had my 30.
Interviewer: Wow.
John: Then you have to wait until you’re 65 see.
Interviewer: There’s nothing you can do about this?
John: Well, I’m, we’re, I’m gonna find out if there’s nothing to do about it, you know. I’m gonna, I’m gonna find out later. See, I have to talk to somebody and see what I’m gonna be able to do. (Right)
Interviewer: It seems like the company is uh, saving all that money. (Yeah)
John: That’s what it is. They, they knew what they was doing.
Interviewer: By keeping people who’ve already gotten their retirement (Yeah.) and not, not people who are, have yet to get their 30 years.
John: Yeah, they knew all, they knew what they was doing when they shut it down, you know. They had a bunch of lawyers to figure all this out. So. (Hmm)” (Oral History #505, Owens-Illinois Project)

When asked about black women working in various positions in the plant, Sadie Page recalled many other African-American workers who failed to meet the minimum number of years at work to attain full retirement. By 1993, even the African-American workers with the most seniority (29+ years) failed to gain enough years to achieve full retirement. Most black workers did not even have enough seniority to remain working in the glass plant during the shutdown. Sadie Page, however, later noted in her oral history that one African-American worker (her husband) had enough seniority to remain within the plant working during the shutdown, but still was not asked to remain working.

“Interviewer: I see. Were there a lot of black women? (no, no) No? (no)
Sadie: I probably...if I count ‘em on my fingers, no, it wasn’t that many blacks, ‘cause like I said, after they cut back in the ’80’s, there were a lot of blacks down there, but they...they kind of cleaned it out. You know...when they cut back.
The cut back took a lot of ‘em out of there. And another thing, I don’t know if I should bring this to your attention or not. I think what happened in the ‘70’s uh, a lot of the younger people were smoking pot and stuff, and they were bringing it in the plant, and it kind of got in the wind. They kind of cleaned most of it out. They didn’t get it all out, but they kind of cleaned most of the situation up. (wow) With the you know, younger people doing that. No, there wasn’t very many black…I was trying to think of…

Interviewer: Was there anyone you worked with?
Sadie: Yeah, I worked with a girl named Peggy Rogers. And we were good friends. And I worked with her for a long time. But uh, Peggy quit her job in uh, shoot...in ‘89 I believe, and she moved to Louisville. (oh) And she had been there 19 or 20 years. (wow) She got married and she moved to Louisville. And we were close friends. But uh, there was another girl that worked on B shift. Her name was JS Wright, but it’s JS Smith now, ’cause she remarried. We weren’t good friends, but she worked on B shift. And uh, like I say, there were several other black women that did work there, but they were in that lay off and they didn’t get called back, or if they did, they didn’t come back. That worked there. (right) I was trying to think who else that uh...{inaudible}...Oh, Donna Johnson. She worked there...she’s another one that has about 27 or 29 years in like John, (wow), that will not get her.

Interviewer: She got laid off in December then?
Sadie: Mm-hmm. I believe so. And she, Donna’s a real sweet person. She worked up in the balcony. And I believe she would have about as much time as he does. If not, it’s awful close. (mm-hmm) And let me think. Who else? Well, Libby Hayes worked down there. Her name’s not Hayes now, her name is Camp (Camp?) Camp. C-a-m-p, have you talked to her? (no, no) Her and her husband worked there, Roger. But Roger’s working at another plant now, I think in Indiana somewhere. (so he got transferred) No, he just put in applications, and I think he got hired. He worked in the hot end and she worked out front. Libby and Roger. And she worked there, she probably 23, 24, 25 years service down there. (wow) And then there was another girl, Lanita Bailey. She probably didn’t have but maybe 15 years service. And I can’t really think of any more. Th… Edgar Thomas, he worked down there. He’s probably got about 25 years service. Th…he was black. And I can’t really, his friend, Bill Walker, now he would have had 29 years in. But he...(wow)...his date was in August, too. (he got laid off the same. . .?) Yeah. Mm-hmm. But the only thing I was saying about John’s situation was, he worked in uh, automotives. John was the oldest man in automotives. And they laid him off so, right now I was just wondering who was starting the tow motors up when they wouldn’t start, you know.” (Oral History #503, Owens-Illinois Project)

Sadie Page questioned why her husband John was not still working in the plant during the shutdown. If he had been allowed to work in the automotives department, in which she claimed he had the most seniority, he could have completed 30 years of
employment at Owens-Illinois, which would have positioned him to receive full retirement benefits.

“Interviewer: Oh, you mean, he had the most seniority.
Sadie: He had the most seniority in his department in automotives. Now not in maintenance. See what I’m saying? (right) John was in maintenance, but he was in the automotives department, which is a branch of maintenance. John was the oldest man in automotives. (oh) And there was only 2 guys in there now, since they had cut back. John and Mike Newman. And when uh, they laid John off, I was just kind of under the impression that as long as they ran a tow motor in the plant, that John would still have a job working. But it hasn’t panned out that way.
Interviewer: So someone with less seniority has
Sadie: Well, I’m not gonna say someone with less seniority, but I’m gonna say someone with more seniority is in there working, and I just can’t imagine who it could be. The only person I know that is qualified to maybe do mechanical work would be his supervisor. And I wouldn’t think that he was supposed to be doing his job. (right) Because he’s a supervisor. He’s not in the union, is what I’m saying. (oh) So I was just wondering who was starting the tow motors up when they break down. And surely in four months, they’ve had some kind of problems. You know what I’m saying? (yeah, he should look into what he can do about it) Well, he’s going to. He’s going to look into it. But that was the only problem I had with him, you know, gettin’ laid off, that he was as long as he had a tow motor in there runnin’, then I felt like he should have still been working. That was the only thing. (yeah) But no, all the guys that are in there working now, they have at least 40 years.
Interviewer: So they have more seniority but not in his job.
Sadie: Not in his job department. See, they couldn’t come to his department and push him out and take his job, because he was the oldest man on his, in the auto mechanics department. (yeah)
Interviewer: Sounds like he’s....
Sadie: So, we’re just kind of waitin’ to see what they’re doing, and then see what we can do. (right) Because that doesn’t seem right. (no, it doesn’t, it sure doesn’t) Because we were kind of left with the impression that as long as that plant stayed open, that he would have been in there. Not from, from any of the other people, but from experience with someone that worked at another plant, had told him that he felt like he should have worked. So we just...kind of wondered about it. (yeah)” (Oral History #503, Owens-Illinois Project)

Even though a few African-American workers such as John had enough seniority to apply to a department like maintenance, they still could not acquire the necessary number of years of service in the glass plant to obtain full retirement.
Overall, African-American workers had a reduced chance of being promoted into certain departments within the glass plant. Many departments, such as the maintenance department where John Page, the aforementioned African-American employee worked, were crowded with workers who had the lion’s share of seniority. Few African-American glass workers had enough seniority to apply for employment outside of the selecting department.

When asked about how Owens-Illinois decided who would remain working in the glass plant to dismantle the glass making machinery after glass production ceased, Dennis Silvis, the plant supervisor from 1988 to 1993, claimed in his oral history that many of the decisions were made according by seniority, and the decisions were in accord with the union’s contract. Dennis also claimed that many African-Americans had already retired from Owens-Illinois prior to the plant’s closure. He couldn’t remember any specific African-American worker’s names, but continued conflating “retired” with “retiring with full benefits.” The interviewer reminded Dennis that her retirement list did not include any African-Americans, and that she had interviewed one of the first African-American male employees, and he could not receive full retirement benefits. Dennis then resorted to telling the interviewer that she should speak with a former employee who worked in human resources, Sandra Peterson. Sandra would be aware of any African-American retirees. Dennis ultimately suggested that the interviewer contact Owens-Illinois home office in Toledo, Ohio concerning this matter.

“Interviewer: How did you decide who was staying and who wasn’t?
Dennis: Well, the hourly people, they’re the five most senior people left in the plant. (Okay) So they were done by seniority and Charlie, I handpicked him. He’s a local guy, come up through the ranks here, started as an apprentice and became a mechanic and he’s just the salt of the earth. So when I went on, there was probably about 10, 15 people when I left, when I went on this other
They asked who I should put in charge and I picked Charlie. He's very trustworthy. Since he is local and he wasn't interested, he could've moved and been promoted into another plant if he wanted to leave, he's that good as an engineer. But he wanted to stay here. His family's here, his grandkids are here. He is 53 years old. He said it was just too late in life to leave.

Interviewer: There's a lot of people that were very close to getting their 30 years. And a lot of plants have extended and given people extra time, why didn't this plant do that?

Dennis: Well the plant can't. It's a union contract. By that I'm not saying, but the union contract says 30 years you get this or you get that. And anything you do for one you must do for all under a bargaining agreement. There, we worked as many people as we could even after the plant closed to help some people get their 30 years in. See that's, other people don't know that and they say, we worked some people that I wasn't supposed to work just so, I was supposed to have x number of people 'til this date well, I kept ten people extra so they could get their 30 years in. They needed like 2 more months.

Interviewer: Right. Yeah, I talked to a few people who were like less than 6 months away.

Dennis: Yeah. But you got to work them someplace and see, you just can't give it to them.

Interviewer: I think other plants have done that, not Owens I don't mean necessarily but they've extended giving everyone an extra, I don't know, 6 months or a year to make sure the people who were very close to getting...

Dennis: Okay, but if you do that, what about the person then that still needs 6 months. (Right) What you have to do Christina is you have to cut it off. You did an exhaustive study of who needed, who was close to here, here, here, and here. And believe me whatever you do, you're going to treat someone in their mind unfairly and it will be. So, you know you have someone that says I needed 6 more months well, if you moved it out 6 months and gave them then you're going to have someone before that needed a year all of a sudden they only need 6 months. (Right) And we had that, the people that needed a month, the people that needed 2 months, people at 3 months, we extended those out. See, the company did that. The people, even after that, there was some that needed a couple of weeks, some of them that needed a couple of months, I did that myself because we still had some work to do. So, I worked them out of seniority. I told the union, you file a grievance you're going to hurt these people. Because other people said wait a minute, I want to work, why is this person working, they are a junior. Well the reason they are working is they need 2 months to get their 30 years in. (right) So the union helped me on, by help me they helped their own membership, but it's a sad thing to say is that no matter what you do the line's got to be drawn because you're going to keep going out because we have all different levels of people with seniority.

Interviewer: Right. The way the timing worked out, two of the men I talked to that were within like 6 months, apparently blacks weren't hired to early 60s and not one single black received retirement, 30 year retirement.

Dennis: Oh we've had lots of blacks retire from this plant.
Interviewer: The 30 year?

Dennis: Yeah. Maybe not during this reduction but they were black men who retired from the company, here in Huntington.

Interviewer: Really?

Dennis: Oh yeah, yeah.

Interviewer: These people weren’t, in fact one of these men was, said he was one of the first to ever get hired at the plant and he didn’t get his and he was within like 6 months.

Dennis: That could be. I mean he may have been one of the first blacks but he may have been laid off over the years too. But there have been people, black people that have retired. You know, the population in this town is minimum. And quite frankly, this is a very prejudice town in total. And I believe that that was very pervasive in our plant for a long time too. As a matter of fact, one day just rummaging around I found some signs that said, black restroom and white restroom, signs stuck in a corner. It amazed me that it was still going on here in the 60s in Huntington West Virginia.

Interviewer: Well, from what I understand, they were forced to do equally opportunity in this plant.

Dennis: Oh, they were, in this plant. Yeah, they had an effective class females and minorities. And it was just, I think about 10 years ago in the 80’s, and again, it was before my time, but I held different jobs in the company even in Toledo and I think it was in the 80’s sometime when that effective class designation was lifted from the atomic, at that time the atomic energy commission. But yeah, this was an old red-neck plant. It really was. (Yeah) But as far as individuals, there have been blacks actually retire. Now, out of this actual closing, what the gentleman was telling you was probably true, I can’t dispute that.

Interviewer: But in this particular Huntington plant?

Dennis: What’s that?

Interviewer: There have been blacks that have retired from this particular plant, I need to find out some statistics on that cause just because he said he was one of the first ever get hired and he was the most senior person there and he hasn’t gotten his. Of course the 60’s to the 90’s it’s just that 30 years you know, I mean you could barely make your 30 years if you got hired in the early 60s.

Dennis: Well, yeah, the plant closed in 93. And so you know everything was through 93 so you know but again, you got to look what department did he work in, was he laid off, cause when a person is laid off they don’t continue to draw a time, that’s underneath their bargaining agreement. So I can’t answer that but there were, and again I don’t think I’m telling you something wrong, but I’m pretty certain that there have been some black, and I don’t believe females, but I think there have been some black males that worked in other departments that actually retired prior to this closing. (Okay) Okay, that would be pretty easy to check on. I don’t have it with me, but, I’m, the reason I’m saying is, I tell you what the retiree group could give you the best, you know, Ike or somebody, because they keep excellent records and all the retirees join their retirement group.

Interviewer: Yeah. But on our list of retirees they weren’t any blacks.
Dennis: Not, just recent retirees or are you going back in time?
Interviewer: No. Back in time, but the people who actually got their 30 year retirement. I don’t mean people that retired early or left early. But you know like I said it is very difficult, it’s been very difficult to try and get a complete list of people, I mean it has been hard.” (Oral History #530, Owens-Illinois Project)

Thirty years of work was required for an Owens-Illinois worker to qualify for full retirement. Since the glass plant shutdown in 1993, it wasn’t possible for African-American workers to qualify for full retirement due to the fact that Owens-Illinois did not hire blacks until 1963. In fact, the majority of African-American workers weren’t hired into the plant until the mid 1970s. Thus, given the short amount of time that African-Americans worked at the plant, no black workers had enough seniority to qualify for full retirement. Had African-Americans been hired at Owens-Illinois prior to 1963, of course, many might have been eligible for full retirement. The consequence for all African-American Owens-Illinois workers was that they could only receive a partial retirement, rather than the 100 percent retirement benefit possible among many white coworkers. Deindustrialized African-American glass workers had to look elsewhere for manufacturing jobs, or go back to school to be retrained for other work, while trying to survive on their modest retirement packages.

African-Americans were doubly victimized by Owens-Illinois’ racist hiring practices of the first half of the twentieth century. If Owens-Illinois Glass had hired African-Americans prior to the 1960s, many African-American glass workers would have had a steady source of income. They also would have had the opportunity to receive full retirement benefits when the glass plant closed in 1993. However, African-American workers received little in the way of compensation for their many years of service in Huntington’s glass factory.
The next chapter is dedicated to the legacy that Opal Mann left to those interested in the possibility of successfully developing “coping mechanisms” and instances of “overt resistance.” Opal Mann often developed subtle forms of resistance, but when social change occurred, she overtly resisted powerful social structures. Ultimately, Opal Mann’s work experiences serve as an archetypal model of “robust human agency” made possible by the quintessential Appalachian industrial worker that fought back.

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1 Often Owens-Illinois had to rebuild blast furnaces. Once a furnace was shut down, a rebuild was required if the glass factory decided to start the furnace again. The reasons for rebuilding furnaces, however, ranged from glass container orders being less than the number of furnaces required to produce the current order, or that a particular furnace was beginning to degrade due to its age making it less efficient. In the latter case, a rebuild would ultimately save the glass company money. Temporary employees were often hired on a 90-day basis to assist in rebuilding a furnace.

2 Between ten and twenty percent of new employees hired by Owens-Illinois were African-Americans.

3 The term “white trash” was in widespread use by the 1830s. It was intended to humiliate whites who participated in behaviors associated with non-whites. Novelist and short story writer Sherwood Anderson also used the term “white trash” in his 1920 novel *Poor White*. Others who have crafted the term into their literary work are Margaret Mitchell’s 1936 novel *Gone With The Wind*, and Harper Lee’s 1960 novel *To Kill A Mockingbird*.

4 GED means Graduate Equivalent Degree. The standardized exam is equivalent to a high school diploma.

5 The “term rotating shifts” refers to ever changing schedules new employees worked. The first week was day shift, the second week was evening shift, and the third shift was night shift.

CHAPTER V
JOB DISCRIMINATION AND OPAL MANN’S LEGAL BATTLE

The Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s triggered responses by Owens-Illinois glass workers to challenge the tradition of employing only whites in the factory. African-Americans were the first group of minority workers to benefit from the passage of the Act. They were hired into jobs traditionally held in reserve for white male workers at Huntington’s Owens-Illinois glass factory. The second major confrontation in regard to workplace equality in Huntington’s glass factory was brought on behalf of female glass workers, and the unions within Huntington’s glass plant were the battleground where these disputes took place. Women, though unionized, were only allowed to work in certain departments, and were not allowed to obtain permanent supervisory positions. Opal Mann’s fight for workplace equality questioned the established job bidding process and gender discrimination at the glass factory.

In her career at Owens-Illinois, Opal Mann utilized both “coping mechanisms” and “overt resistance” to offset gender-based inequalities. Mann demonstrated “overt resistance” when she challenged Owens-Illinois management in a federal lawsuit against the company alleging the company allowed certain jobs to be filled by men only. Mann argued that even if a female glass plant worker was fully qualified for a particular position, she was not allowed to bid on the job. Certain jobs were held in reserve for male glass workers. According to Mann, the only jobs a woman could obtain in the plant other than secretarial work were sorting and packing bottles or working in the corrugated department. These jobs represented the lower end of the hourly wage scale within the glass plant. Higher paying glass jobs were out of reach for women.
In the mid 1960s, a Quality Chief Inspector’s job came up for bid. Mann activated her overt resistance- and decided to bid on it. At the time, the president of Mann’s union local was a woman. She, as well as others in the glass plant, agreed with the claim made by Owens-Illinois management that certain jobs, such as the Chief Quality Inspector position, was the sole province of men. Therefore, Opal Mann didn’t qualify. Mann decided to take the matter beyond the scope of the local union. Mann spoke with her union local representative informing her that she was thinking of taking the matter before a Federal judge. She was informed to write to the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) in Washington, D.C. for recommendations on how to proceed with her job discrimination case. She was not quiet about proceeding with the job discrimination case against Owens-Illinois. In her oral history, Mann remembered that she was very open with both fellow workers and Owens-Illinois management about proceeding with the lawsuit. She decided that the time was right for her to begin to openly fight back (activate overt resistance) against Owens-Illinois’ unfair gender biases when hiring glass workers for certain jobs.

Eventually, Mann received a letter from the EEOC directing her to take the matter to federal court, which would cost her nothing since the Federal government promised Mann that the Federal government would pay for any debts incurred by her eventual court case. Mann was also guaranteed by EEOC staff that she would be protected by the Federal government from any later reprisals by Owens-Illinois management or coworkers, although they never responded as to how the EEOC could give Mann any “real” job protection. Mann, self-admittedly scared of such national attention, decided
to go before a federal judge to see if she had a chance of winning the case. She was
directed to appear before a local federal judge in Huntington for an initial hearing.

“Interviewer: Now did the plant, did the, did the management know you were
going through all these channels? I mean… was there ever a point when they
found out everything that was going on? Did you carry out any of this umm,
secretly, quietly or was this open?
Opal: No way, I, I wasn’t, I wasn’t uh, being quiet about it. [Laugh] Uh, uh,
anyway, uh, they had uh, they, they sent uh, I, I tried to call her. She was an
investigator, but they sent conciliators in here, you know, to try to get the corn...
They sent people in here from Toledo and everywhere, you know, to try to get the
two unions to agree, you know. (Mm-hmm) Uh, I mean, uh, unions to agree and
so on, and they couldn’t get, get any agreement uh, with the company and the
union, so uh, uh, finally they sent me a letter from uh, the office of e… equal
opportunity that umm, uh, it seemed that we couldn’t get, get a concilia…, you
know, any concilia… (Conciliatory action…yeah) And, and uh, so they said that
uh, I would have to sue through the uh, federal court. And it would, at no charge
to me, and uh, no cost. (At no charge to you) Uh-huh. (They were gonna’ foot the
bill) No cost. (The EOE was gonna’ foot the bill) Uh-huh. Uh-huh. Uh, no cost
to me and uh, and that the company couldn’t do anything to uh, uh, you know,
with me. They couldn’t fire me or anything for it. (Mm-hmm, mm-hmm, you
were protected) Uh-huh. So you know, it scared me, you know. (Whew, yeah)
Oh, to think about having to go to federal court. (Yeah) And Judge Christie was
the judge, you know, here in Huntington. He was the federal judge. (Oh) And uh,
I went down to Judge Christie’s office after I…I thought about it for several days
before I went, but I… I… I was determined, you know. (Yeah, yes… you were in
it) [Laugh] So I went down, I went down, and you know that son-of-a-gun, that’s
a polite name for him. (Yes, yes… What did he say to you) He said, “Young
lady,” he says, he says uh, “You’re not a, a young lady anymore.” He said, uh,
“Aren’t you afraid of losing your job?” A judge… It’s a man’s world. (Oh, it sure
is) Uh...(It sure is) And he was trying to scare me. (Yes he was) And I went to uh,
I told him, I said, “Well, judge,” I said, “It’s like this.” I said, “I’ve had someone
to, I’ve had to take care of all my life up until now.” (Yeah) And I said, “There’s
nobody gonna’ starve if I lose my job except me.” (Yeah) And I said, “This is one
thing I’m willing to starve for.” And uh, so he saw I was determined, and uh, he
said, “Well, do you know any lawyers?” And I, I said, “Well, I don’t know.” I
said, “Uh, I’ll think about it.” He said, “Well,” he said, “uh, you pick you out a
lawyer and I’ll appoint him.” And uh, so I went over and talked to Lafe…uh, he
was, he had done some work for the union. (Uh-huh, what was his first name)
take, wouldn’t touch it. (Huh) And uh, so my brother, meanwhile, had a drinking
buddy, uh, that was a lawyer. Uh, and uh, Ken Fisher, uh, and uh, Ken had been
to my house and everything. And I, when Lafe turned it down, I hated to ask uh,
uh, uh, Ken. (Mm-hmm) But I thought well, uh, he can uh, he can turn me down
if he wants to, you know. (Sure, yeah) So I, I, I called him and I said, “Ken,” I
said, “I’ve got a, a case against Owens-Illinois for discrimination.” And I said, “One lawyer’s already turned me down.” I said, “I-, if you want to turn me down, now I’m not gonna’ be mad at you.” [Laugh] (Yeah) And uh, he said, “I’d be delighted to take it.” (Cool) So uh, Ken uh, was my lawyer, and bless his heart, uh, he told me one time, he said, “Opal,” he said, “you know, we do things in our life time that we are ashamed of, and we do things that we are proud of.” And he said, “The proudest thing I’ve ever done was to take your case.” (That’s great) He said, uh, that we would be in law books from now on. (Yeah) We, I know that we were the first suit that was ever filed in this area. I don’t know but what it was the first suit that was ever filed. (It was certainly one of the very first, if not the very first) Uh, I’ll tell, uh, uh, one of the men that came in from Washington, you know, like I said, they just kept trying to get by with stuff, you know. (Yeah) Uh, and uh, I know Marg-, uh, Margaret Daly and uh, uh, two or three of them had uh, filed charges, uh, grievances and charges and things. (Mm-hmm)…’til they uh, finally decided that they wasn’t gonna’ get by. And uh, so anyway they uh, uh, this man came in from Washington and they sent for me to come up in the office. (Mm-hmm) And I thought what have I done now? (Oh goodness, yeah, it must have been a scary time working there then) And uh, here it was this guy from uh, o-, office of equal opportunity. He said, uh, “I wanted to meet you.” I, he said, “I, I, I, I told them that I wanted to talk to you.” He said, “You know,” he said, uh, “I, I am so proud to meet you.” He said, “Because we’ve settled cases all over this country…” (Yeah) “with the precedents set by your suit.” (Yeah) He said, uh, he said, “Your name was the first name that I heard when I went to work for the office of equal opportunity.” (Wow, wow, wow…that must make you feel so good) And uh…(That’s wonderful)…so uh, you know, I, I was happy, you know, that, that I made a difference. (Yeah, yeah) Fact is…I’ve got, I’ve got a whole lot of junk over there to prove it. (Oh, you sure do, don’t you, lots of …) [Laugh]” (Oral History #535, Owens-Illinois Project)

During Opal Mann’s first hearing with a Federal judge in Huntington, the judge sarcastically reminded Mann that she wasn’t a young woman anymore, and asked if she was afraid of losing her job at the glass plant, which would hurt members of her family. Mann, coping with the judge’s remarks, replied the only person that could be hurt was herself. After hearing Mann’s statement, the judge suggested she get the counsel of a lawyer before proceeding.iii

Mann decided to ask one of her brother’s drinking buddies, Ken Fisher, who happened to be a local Huntington attorney, to represent her in the case. Mann’s lawsuit was the first in the U.S. to argue that the gender of an individual should have no bearing
on the types of jobs workers could bid upon. Mann warned Fisher not to take the job if he did not want to, but Fisher agreed to take her workplace discrimination case. Mann reported in her oral history that the union met with Owens-Illinois central management in Toledo, Ohio, but a settlement was never reached. Therefore, Mann’s only recourse was to carry through with her job discrimination lawsuit. Initially, the Federal judge tried to talk Mann out of proceeding with her lawsuit against Owens-Illinois. When she refused, Mann’s lawsuit was quickly decided by the Federal judge with little in the way of litigation. Mann also remembered that she was not required to testify in her job discrimination lawsuit.

“I interviewed: So um, so anyway…so I, I like the way you were telling me about it, uh, this narrative. So uh, Ken Fisher takes your case, agrees to be your lawyer, uh, and then what? So then you’re in court, right?

Opal: Yeah, uh, well, uh, uh, there wasn’t anything to it after it went to court. (Really) Uh-huh. (It wasn’t in litigation hardly at all) No. (It just) It just uh, after it went, aft-, after it went to the judge. (And what) Judge Christie. (And, and he) Uh, they, uh, it was settled right, right now after the, after it got the judge uh, after the judge so they couldn’t talk me out of it. [Laugh] (No way to get around it, huh…Trying to strong arm you, that’s interesting} So it just went like that. It was a proving case, yeah. (Mm-hmm) But we had, I don’t know how many meetings, you know, uh… (Hmm)…to try, with the, with the big, big shots from uh, Toledo and, and uh, and uh, the union, all the union officers and uh, people uh, you know, meeting. But they…they never…we never could get a settle peaceably so uh, uh, it had to go to court. But when it did get to court, why it was over in no time flat. I didn’t even have to testify. (Really) Uh-huh.

Interviewer: Really? Um, okay, let me, let me back track a little bit. What was the original grievance that you, that, that you filed that led into…was…was it about the way you…

Opal: They wouldn’t give women the right to bid on higher paid jobs. (All right) They just kept, we, we couldn’t bid on anything uh…uh…the only job we could work on was uh, packing those bottles.

Interviewer: And how did they justify that? Did they, did they try to justify that? Did they try to give you reasons why?

Opal: No, I tell you uh, one of the times that we filed a grievance uh, uh, you know, about the uh, uh, bidding on higher paid jobs uh, uh, the uh, uh, selecting supervisor said, uh, “You women,” he said, “we couldn’t, we couldn’t do without you.” He said, uh, “But we’re not gonna’ give up our right to uh, uh, to…to work you where we want to.” (Yeah) I showed him. [Laugh]”
In the first job discrimination law suit of its kind in the United States, Opal Mann won her case against Owens-Illinois Glass Company, ultimately forcing the company to change its gender segregated job bidding policy and hiring practices, and was granted the position of Quality Inspector in the Huntington glass plant. This legal battle set a precedent for a nation in search of equality of gender in the workplace. No longer could companies in the U.S. deny women the ability to bid upon and work a job traditionally held in reserve for men. Fisher reported that taking this case was his proudest moment in his legal career. iv

Geneva Shepard recalled in her oral history that even though Mann was well liked by many coworkers, Mann’s law suit caused friction in the glass plant. She remembered an occasion when she was speaking to Mann in the plant, and was later questioned by the Women’s Personnel Director who saw her speaking with Mann. The Women’s Personnel Director asked Geneva why she was conversing with Mann. Geneva answered saying that she considered Mann to be a friend.

“Interviewer: So you know Opal Mann real well. How did the others…was she pretty much liked well liked in the plant?
Geneva: She was real well liked, but now there was a lot of stupid women who thought it would be to their advantage to pretend they didn’t approve of her suing the plant and things, and didn’t stick to her like we should have. (Yeah, yeah I see) The Women Personnel Director, that’s what Johnnie Arnson was, that’s I was trying to think of. (Yeah, ok) And I was…I know I was out in the front office for some reason and Opal Mann was out there and we stopped to talk a while, and then I talked to Johnnie and she said…and she’d always been real nice to me and come to my house and I considered her a friend, (Uh-huh) and she said what are you doing talking to Opal Mann, that was right after she had sued the company, and I said I was talking to her because she was a real good friend of mine. [Laughter] That was the end of that. [Laughter] (I imagine so, I imagine so)”
(Oral History #518, Owens-Illinois Project)
Mann won her discrimination law suit, but in her oral history she recalled that winning her case was just the beginning of the difficult task of creating workplace equality for women. Several women received some back-pay due to Mann’s lawsuit, but other than this, Mann did not personally collect any immediate benefits due to her success in winning her legal battle with Owens-Illinois. In her oral history, Mann recalled the challenging mission of establishing equal rights for women workers. The passage of law to enact equality in the workplace was not a guarantee that social change would soon follow. In his book, *Discrimination, Jobs, and Politics: The Struggle for Equal Employment Opportunities in the United States since the New Deal* published in 1985, Paul Bernstein argued that the passage of federal laws to create an equitable workplace was no guarantee of sweeping social changes. In fact, Bernstein argued that laws were only one step in the process of ending workplace discrimination based on gender or race. A workplace free of discriminatory practices would be based upon how the law was enacted and the ability of a social institution to forestall changes in the way it conducted its business. In accordance with Bernstein’s analysis, Mann noted a great deal of open defiance from both male and female coworkers concerning the right of women to bid on jobs that earlier were defined as “men’s jobs.” Mann could not receive any protection by the EEOC, only a promise to monitor how Owens-Illinois or glass coworkers reacted after Mann won her lawsuit and women began bidding on “men’s jobs.”

At one point in her career, Mann was the vice-president of the women’s union local and was required to sit in on a grievance hearing before the plant manager that challenged the practice of not posting all supervisory jobs. Without posting of
management positions, women were not aware that such jobs were available to them. Forcing managers to post such positions activated women glass workers’ awareness of such jobs allowing them the opportunity to bid on these positions. Mann recalled that initially, the selecting and shipping supervisor jumped to his feet and declared that he did not have to sit in the meeting and take such challenges from women workers. Using a stern tone of voice, the plant manager immediately reprimanded the selecting and shipping supervisor instructing him to sit down and listen or face being fired. The plant manager continued the meeting and admonished the man in charge of the selecting and shipping departments for failing to post an inventory position that was available. The plant manager reminded the head of selecting and shipping departments that the glass plant was going to abide by the new interpretation of the law based on Mann’s case. After the grievance hearing, the selecting and shipping manager spoke with Mann, indicating that in the future he would make sure he was correct in his hiring practices prior to another grievance hearing. He knew Mann would make sure that he abided by the newly implemented hiring procedures, or he would face losing his job.

“Interviewer: Really? So that was real, real quick…jumped on it. Well, that’s, that’s exactly what it was there for. Um, how were the changes implemented? How were the chan-, how did, how did they start making up for lost time? I mean, what did, what was it like afterwards?
Opal: Uh, I think they was one or two women got some back pay, but uh, I, I didn’t get anything out of it, you know. (Yeah) I just uh, all I was fighting for was the right to, to bid on a job, you know. (Sure) Uh, and uh, I remember one time, uh, this friend of mine, Ruth, uh, uh, Ruth Black, she was a fighter too. And uh, uh, Ruth asked me if I would uh, set up a meeting with the plant manager. See, uh, Jane, uh, the president of our union that beat my sister-in-law, (Mm-hmm) she was company, uh, and fact is I’ve got a tape over there where one of the women went to arbitration with her, and she was telling all about going out uh, about uh, Jane going out with the, with the, the uh, plant managers [Laugh] and all this stuff, you know. (Uh-huh, Uh-huh) And she, she taped this all. She’s dead now, but uh, I’ve got that tape over there. Uh, and uh, uh, she uh, uh, but uh, uh, Jane would agree with the company ev-, every time, you know. But I was the vice
And I sat, had to sit in, I sat in on all the meetings. So uh, I remember this one time, uh, uh, Ruth asked me to set up a meeting with uh, the plant manager because uh, one, the, the uh, selecting uh, supervisors had uh, said that he wasn’t gonna’ post uh, one of the jobs uh, that uh, I forget what they called that job now. But it was a job that, keeping track of the amount of ware that was uh, uh, produced and so on.

And uh, uh, he wasn’t gonna’ post that job anymore and uh, so uh…sh-, she uh, asked me to set up a meeting with the plant manager. So I did. And uh, that plant manager happened to like me. You know, I mean, I wasn’t dating him or anything like that. But he seemed like he, he, he…(You could get along with him)…he was, he was a nice guy. And uh, so I called him and uh, I made an appointment and Ruth and I went in. And so boy, the minute we hit the door, she started laying it out to him. And uh, I didn’t have to say a word.

And he said, “Now quiet down.” He said, “I, I’m gonna’ get these guys in here.” He got Sandy and uh, and uh, a other guy that was concerned. I can’t remember what his name was, but I can see him, you know. Uh, but anyway, he got them both in there and uh, that was uh, bosses. And uh, she lit in on them. (Yeah) And so one, this one that was over, over the shipping and the selecting both, you know, he jumps up and he says, “I don’t have to sit here and listen to this stuff.” And uh, the plant manager pointed his finger at him and he says, “You sit down there.” He said, “You will listen to it or you’ll go out the door.” He said, “Ten years ago, we wouldn’t have dreamed that we would have women back on the machine line sweeping.” “Or uh, working on, in any of these jobs that they’re working on now.” But he says, “It’s the law and you’re going to abide by the law or you’re gonna’ leave here.”

Mann’s legal victory did not satisfy all Owens-Illinois workers. Many Huntington glass workers thought her law suit was unnecessary, and would later cause increased friction between men and women coworkers. Many of Mann’s female coworkers agreed with Owens-Illinois management that men were genuinely better suited for some jobs within the glass factory. These jobs (usually in the “hot end” of the glass
plant) were considered heavy, dirty work. Many male glass workers were perplexed as to why a woman was interested in performing such duties which required heavy lifting in a filthy environment. In his oral history, Charles Day recalled being baffled over women wishing to have a chance to work in such an environment.

“Interviewer: Did you say at one time you did have one woman who worked in your department? Charles: Yeah, well, she worked out of machine repair. Her name was...what was her name, Margaret? Uh, Juanita...Muncy...Muncy...Juanita Muncy. And she worked out in machine repair, and she did upkeep work on the feeders and so forth. Over a period of time we had 1 or 2 women that I can recall who came back there that worked and they just gave up on it ‘cause it was such a hot, hard, greasy job (Mm-hmm). Of course, men would do all they could to help those women along, but it was, it was just too rough. I think there is certain work that women shouldn’t do, you know. I don’t mean to be...I think there is some jobs that are just...well, maybe I’m wrong to say that, but I think there are some jobs that are just too heavy, you know, too dirty, too heavy. But that is the reason I couldn’t understand that young woman with a beautiful head of hair like she had, getting up there in that old grease, you know.” (Oral History #510, Owens-Illinois Project)

Many men in the glass plant thought that allowing women to bid on jobs traditionally held in reserve for men threatened male workers’ financial security. Men argued that they were trying to feed their families, and women gaining their jobs endangered a man’s ability to provide for his family. Men professed that there should be a distinction made between male and female workers and reasoned that most of the female workers were not the main “breadwinners” for their families. The men envisioned most women in Huntington’s glass factory as working for a supplemental paycheck to help offset their family’s financial burdens.

Mann’s opinion was different than most of her male and female coworkers. Mann disagreed with the men who held these opinions. She argued that there should be no distinction between men and women glass workers due to the fact that female workers
worked as intensely as male workers in Huntington’s glass factory. When asked why Opal Mann appeared to be different from other women in the glass factory, Mann’s co-worker Mabel Adkins answered in her oral history that she thought the fact that Opal Mann’s father had abandoned her family when Opal was very young instilled within her a commitment to be as much a source of financial security as any man could be to his family.

Opal Mann was different from many women who worked at Owens-Illinois. She was taught early in her life to openly struggle with unfair economic and social conditions. In her youth, Mann learned to cope with difficult personal situations. Opal also learned that if the social conditions were right, overt resistance was sometimes necessary to achieve certain goals. The lessons Opal learned concerning “fighting back” obviously run counter to the culture of poverty models used to explain why workers often failed to resist unfair labor decisions.

Opal Mann recalled an incident concerning this topic when she asked a former union president who was speaking on the threat to jobs that women posed, what he thought women workers were attempting to do in the plant. She reminded him that they also had family members to support. She further questioned the union president as to what a woman was to do if her spouse abandoned his family, leaving his wife as the main source of income for her family. Opal Mann also commented on the situation of the female-headed household.

“Interviewer: So what do you think, I mean, there were so many women that uh, uh, di-, m-, I mean, didn’t help, and like you said, petitions and voting for men continuously. What, what, what do you think made you different? Why do you think you were different from those women?
Opal: Well, I, I suppose, uh, I’ll tell you why I believe. You know, uh, I think that down deep, my resentment of my father walking off and leaving us…(Mm-
mm)...and my mother with a sixth grade education trying to raise us uh, and we, you know, I, I, I think that uh, that probably had a lot to do with my uh, uh, feeling about men, you know. [Inaudible] Uh, I remember one of the guys uh, uh, that was president of the union uh, at the time of the men’s union. Uh, when we were having those uh, uh, conciliators in. (Mm-hmm) He said, uh, “I’ve got a family to keep.” (Mm-hmm) I said, excuse my language, but I said, “Who in the hell do you think keeps these uh, children where these men walk off and leave their wives to take care of them by their self?” (Yeah) I said, “Who takes care of them?” (Yeah) I said, “These women need their jobs the same as you do.” (Certainly, absolutely…Yeah, yeah, that’s true…absolutely true) And you know, he lost his [Inaudible] before it was over with. [Laugh] I mean, not, not anyway, he went on up into management, you know. (Oh) He got, he got to be a big shot down there. (Yeah) And then he got in trouble, and uh, I heard some of those women talking about uh, how sorry they was for uh, John Perry. And I thought, sorry for John Perry, I not, I wasn’t a darned bit sorry for him. [Laugh] I wasn’t sorry for any of those men down there because boy, the w-, I’ll tell you, they really tried to give me a rough time.” (Oral History #535, Owens-Illinois Project)

Mann continued her oral history by remembering that she argued again with the same male supervisor about the discrepancy between female and male workers and what could be expected if women glass workers began taking men’s jobs in the factory. Often managers would demand that female glass workers perform duties that were not supposed to be included in the performance of their jobs. Mann argued that often more was expected of women workers while doing their jobs than was asked of male coworkers, such as not taking breaks as often or standing on their feet while working for longer periods of time.

Mann remembered an occasion when a manager physically and verbally harassed her after she questioned whether the job of Chief Quality Inspector could be effectively accomplished by a woman. According to Mann, this hazing incident was instigated by a supervisor who asked Mann and another female coworker to come with him to an area of the glass plant where wooden pallets were stored. The pallets were stacked upon each in columns, some reaching several stories tall. The supervisor asked Mann and her
coworker to climb to the top of the pallets to check them for stability. When Mann and her coworker reached the top of one of the stacked columns of pallets, he asked the two women if they were afraid they might fall, and said that this was enough reason that only men should participate in such labor. Not only was the manager harassing Mann and her female co-worker, but he also endangered their physical safety. Several men who worked in the stacking department were amused by the manager’s attempts to frighten Mann and her female coworker. The men who normally stacked the pallets of finished glassware jokingly told Mann that they hadn’t seen the supervisor work that hard in years, and that he would probably have to take a few days off of work to rest after such hard labor. The men watching were amused that the manager was not able to frighten the women. The men watching this event also encouraged the women by telling them the job was not really as hard as the manager wanted them to think it was and laughed at the manager who was wearing himself out trying to tire out the women.

“Interviewer: Yeah. So tell me about that. What kind of uh, what kind of harassment did you get because of your actions?
Opal: One time there um, there was a job they called chief quality inspector. Uh, and it was uh, you know, quality inspector. It was uh, uh, a higher paid job. And then chief quality inspector was a higher paid job yet. And uh, so I never did see those chief quality inspectors a doing any work that I didn’t think a woman could do. (Right) Uh, now I, I, I believe this, I believe that uh, you oughta’ be able to do every phase of a job that you are bidding on before you bid on it. (Yeah, sure) Uh, I don’t feel like that a woman should uh, if a job’s heavy and she has to lift something too heavy, uh, she shouldn’t uh, bid on that job. (Right, if she can’t do it) Uh, and uh, so anyway, uh, but this chief quality inspector job came up and uh, and uh, they was arguing about it in uh, uh, in uh, with management. Uh, and uh, management was saying that it wasn’t a job for a woman. (Mm, mm-hmm) And so Ann Fowler and I, we, we were both on the uh, committee, business committee, and uh, uh, we were arguing that it was. And our president was agreeing with the company. (Your president, your plant manager, your…) The president of our union. (Oh, oh, I see) She was agreeing with the company. (And this is Jane McComas) Uh-huh, Jane McComas. And uh, so uh, finally they said, “Well,” they said, “I’ll tell you what, we’ll let you and Ann uh, work with uh, uh…” Can’t, I can’t remember names as you well see. [Inaudible] “Uh, this uh,
chief quality inspector... (Uh-huh) ...uh, all day one day, and see if you still think
it’s a, a job for a woman.” (Yeah) So we said okay. (Okay) [Laugh] So we go in
the next day and we get with him and uh, he takes out immediately out to the
warehouse. And he made us climb, these, they stack that, those cartons clear to
the ceiling in that warehouse. (Right) I don’t know whether you’ve ever seen what
the inside looked like. (Pictures) [Laugh] Uh, well, it’s, they’ve…it’s, they’re
stacked higher than this room uh, uh, an duh, he made us climb up on the cartons.
One carton after another...to the top of that stack of ware. (Mm-hmm) Uh, and
uh, we was sitting out, and I was sitting up on top there, and he was over there,
you know, pretending to be gauging the ware, you know. (Huh...right) And he
said, “Can you feel these stacks shaking?” I says, “I sure can.” I said, “It
wouldn’t take much of that to put me to sleep.” I said, “I didn’t get much sleep
last night.” And uh, so uh, Ann was, she wasn’t as tall as I was. And [Laugh] she
was having a worse time climbing those stacks than I was. But uh... (Yeah)...but
she climbed them. (Yeah) We both did. (Yeah) And uh, so uh, uh, when we came
down off of there, they was about, uh, two or three guys standing over there that
worked out in the shipping, and they was just dying laughing. And uh, uh, they
called us over there and they said, “Stay right in there with him.” He said, he s-,
he hasn’t worked this hard in all the years he’s been on that job. [laugh] Said,
“He’ll have to take two weeks off to rest up.” [Laugh] So... (You all right)
[PAUSE]
Opal: And they’d ride with him and uh, uh, we went around on another stack and,
and uh, they was uh, one of these uh, fork lifts. (Yeah) Uh, trucks there. And uh,
he made us ride those forks and uh, the guy that was operating the, the fork lift, he
s-, he uh, uh, he uh, wanted to put a palate...you know what a palate is? (Mm-
hmm) It’s a... (Yeah) ...a...(Bunch of boxes)...He wanted to put a palate on it.
(Mm-hmm) And he, uh, he wouldn’t let him. He wouldn’t let him put a palate on
it. They was one laying right there. (Uh-huh) He wouldn’t let him put it on there.
He said, “There might not be one.” So he made us ride those forks up the top of
that stack. (You were sitting on this tow motor being lifted up) Yeah, being lifted
up to the top of the... (Oh my goodness)...yeah, one of us on each one of the
swings. [Laugh] (What a sight) [Laugh] And so uh, we stayed u-, right with him,
you know. So when the shift was over that day, uh, uh, Louie came up to me and
he said, “Opal,” he said, “you surely don’t think that’s a job for a woman.” I said,
“Louie, they not a damned thing about that job that a woman can’t do.” I said, I
said, “We did it.” I said, “It sure is a good job for a woman.” (Yeah) [Laugh] (All
right, what did he say to that) Uh, he, he, he couldn’t say anything. (Uh-huh) And
so anyway, uh, old Tom...uh, uh...(What’s that last name) Moning. (M-O-N-I-N-
G or...) M-O-N-I-N-G, I believe it is. Uh, uh, anyway, he was uh, he was chief
quality inspector, and he hollered at me to come over there and uh, this was at the
end of the shift. (Mm-hmm) And he looked at me and he s-, he was a somebody,
you know. And uh, I always have thought he was a queer. (Yeah) Anyway, Tom
said, “You surely don’t think that you are qualified for a quality inspector?” I
said, uh, I said, “Well, the only trouble with you, Tom, is that you are just scared
to death a woman’s gonna’ get a, a, some kind of a break.” I said... (Yeah) ...”You darned men,” I said, “You just think that you own the
world.” (Yeah, yeah) And they pretty well do. [Inaudible] (Well, yeah, yeah.) But uh, anyway uh, we just, we had to just keep fighting them, and fighting, and fighting. And we was still fighting them when I left. (Yeah, so you just went through this all...) [Inaudible] Shortly before I left, uh, uh, I was uh, working on, as back up quality inspector, uh, ‘cause like I told you, they was a lot of those women had more seniority than I had because my was broken. (Right, right) And uh, so uh, uh, I, I didn’t even get a, a steady job out of it, you know. I got nothing only, but satisfaction, you know. (Yeah, yeah) And so uh, uh, I uh, uh, I uh, was uh, working down there in the hole and uh, uh, Ruth told me, said that there was a little old lahr attendant that was trying to make her put a, put a trailer when she pulled one out, you know. (Uh-huh) If uh, you know, if we, we inspected so many bottles off of each trailer. (Mm-hmm) And uh, then uh, if we had to hold it up, we had to pull that trailer out our self. (Yeah) And uh, so they, they uh, those men would help each other pull those trailers out. (Yeah) But the-, but we had to pull them out by our self, you know. (Yeah, yeah) Uh, they, they, nobody offered to help us. And uh, uh, I know they was one guy that, that uh, you know, acted like he wanted to help me but uh, you know, they, you know, stayed on his back. (Yeah) ’til he wouldn’t, he wouldn’t help, you know. (Pressed him) Uh-huh. And uh, so anyway, uh, uh, this one uh, guy, he, he was trying to make her put her trailer back in. And I said, “Don’t you do it Ruth.” (Mm) I said, “I’ve read the job description.” (Yeah) I says, “All it says is to pull the trailer out.” Uh, and I said, “It doesn’t say to put, put a trailer back in.” [Laugh] Because if we’d a had to put the trailer back in, we’d a had to put uh, hunted up pallets to put on them and, and...(Yeah)...all that, you know. Been a whole lot more work for us. (Yeah) And uh, so anyway, I, I dared her to, to...(Leave it out)...uh, to, to put her trailer back in. So it wasn’t long after that ‘til they put that little old guy down there on my lahr. So I held him a load of ware up, you know, and I pulled it out and...(Yeah)...and uh, uh, went on about my business and uh, so uh, I happened to look over there and the, the chute was piling up, you know. I mean, he wasn’t, hadn’t put a trailer back in. (Mm-hmm) And directly here came the, uh, I don’t know what it was, I, Louie was off or something. (Mm-hmm) Anyway, uh, we had another uh, shift foreman, uh, that day. And uh, oh, it was Emmett. Emmett Osborne. And uh, Emmett came down there and he said, uh, “Opal,” said, “put that trailer back in there.” I said, “I’m not gonna’ do it.” That was the wrong thing to say, but uh, uh, (Hmm)...uh, I, he, he said, “Why?” I said, “You go upstairs and look at my job description.” I said, “Now if you can show me where I, where I’m supposed to put that trailer back in there, I’ll do it.” (Mm-hmm, Yeah) That was the last I saw of Emmett. And, and directly, that boy, but I picked up my pocketbook and went on to eat. (Mm-hmm) And uh, that boy, when I came back, he was loading. (Yeah, yeah) But you know, they just, they would do everything they could to make it hard on you. (Yeah, yeah, yeah…and there weren’t, and there were some then that wanted to help you, but they were pressured not to) Mm-hmm. (Yeah, that’s a shame…that must have been really difficult) (Oral History #535, Owens-Illinois Project)
Opal Mann recalled another incident of being harassed by a male coworker after she filed her lawsuit. The Equal Pay Amendment (EPA) passed in 1964 extended job protection to pregnant women making it illegal for Owens-Illinois management to terminate a female glass worker due to pregnancy or what Owens-Illinois management considered an illegitimate pregnancy. Mann knew that the EPA’s new rules concerning unfair termination practices against female workers who became pregnant was related to her lawsuit. Mann said that she was not afraid of her male coworker’s threats. Mann also recalled being threatened by a fellow union worker she had originally trained. While undergoing training, this male coworker was congenial with Mann. After he completed his training and became involved with the union, he often physically threatened Mann. Although this is the only coworker who ever went to such extremes, it is still a remarkable series of life-threatening incidences.

“Opal: One guy…one of the, one guy, when, when I filed that suit, you know, I told you, all those women met over there. (Yeah) Well, somebody told that, told there was one in from Washington that uh, that this guy got this woman pregnant and they was uh, trying to, they fired her before uh, having an illegitimate pregnancy. (Oh. Yeah) Uh, and he’s still working. (Yeah) You know, I mean, they was…(Oh God, that makes me mad)…that, that was in my suit, you know. (That was in your suit) Yeah. Mm-hmm. (Stuff like that) Yeah. Yeah. Uh, that was uh, some of them uh, in uh, so anyway uh, that guy got…he’s the one that I trained. That, that g-, that p-, that, that, that took the job and p-, and they put me back on the lahr, you know. (Uh-huh) That time, and uh, so uh, while I was training, you know, we got along great, you know. [Laugh] (Yeah, sure) But, but uh, after that why, uh, he uh, every time uh, he was, he got active in the union and uh, uh, we’d be up in Charleston to uh, state meetings, you know. And…(Mm hmm)...and uh, if he’d seen me uh, uh, if he could get close to me if we’s at the, in the uh, hospitality room or somewhere and he’d see me, he’d, he’d saddle up to me and he’d say, “I hate you, you old bitch you.” [Laugh] He said, “I’ll be glad when you’re dead. (Oh my goodness) And he told me one time, he said, “If I ever catch you up at our galley, I’ll kill you.” (Good Lord) [Laugh] (Good night, did you get a lot of that or was that…) No, he was the only one that was ever that… (That)…that bad. (Yeah, yeah…were you ever scared) No, I wasn’t scared of him.” (Oral History #535, Owens-Illinois Project)
Geneva Shepard recalled in her oral history that the Mann lawsuit had far-reaching effects on the female workforce in Huntington’s glass factory. From 1946 until 1966, women glass workers were organized in a separate union local than male glass workers. Many workers reasoned that since men rarely worked alongside women, and vice-versa, separate union locals made a great deal of sense. After Mann’s suit, however, many men were forced into the selecting department, where women constituted the majority of workers. Women had been forced to work these jobs without the ability to bid on other jobs in the factory. Mann’s law suit forced men with less seniority than women into the selecting department. After the implementation of allowing women to bid on jobs previously held in reserve for men, women and men worked side-by-side. This triggered a response from the two separate union locals to join together to form one union local.

When asked about the merger of the men’s and women’s union locals, Geneva remembered that a woman coworker thought that men were better suited than women to be leaders. Geneva was upset with the condescending comment her fellow female coworker had made about women’s lack of leadership abilities. She also recalled the move to join the two union locals subsequent to Mann’s law suit. Ultimately, Geneva saw the merger of the two union locals as a loss of power for women in union affairs.

“Interviewer: Were you active in the union?
Geneva: Mm-huh, well I wasn’t in office or anything, but I took part and went to union meetings.
Interviewer: Won’t you tell me about the women’s local. What that was like?
Geneva: Well…[Laughter] with year?
Interviewer: Well uh, you know start from the beginning I guess.
Geneva: Well, from the time I new it was…first knew about it, it was a real strong union. (Uh-huh) We had some mighty dedicated people working. Later it got, it wasn’t so strong, and well the president of the union over there she wasn’t much president. She was looking out more for herself then she was anyone else. Then
they joined the men and women’s union and the men got the offices. (Um-huh, yeah)

Interviewer: Was there a lot of bad feeling between the people and the two locals that signed the merger?

Geneva: Well, not that I know, that it would show that much.

Interviewer: Didn’t some women just hate the idea, about combining them?

Geneva: I don’t think woman stand together very well, like men maybe do. (Yeah) Who was the woman who ran for vice-president a few years back, or are you old enough?

Interviewer: You mean of the country?

Geneva: Yeah.

Interviewer: Geraldine Ferraro, is that her name?

Geneva: I believe it was. (Yeah) I said, all men will be well, and all the women will vote cause of her. (Yeah) It didn’t turn out that way at all. (Yeah) I had a woman tell me, I don’t think I would ever vote for a woman for president, because I don’t think women are smart enough.

Interviewer: Yeah, yeah I just wonder how women can say that.

Geneva: I was in the basement; I have a phone in every room in the house and this one I take to the basement, but that time I had forgotten to take it and I hurried up the stairs as much as I could to answer the phone and I’ve known this woman for. I bet since we were, I was 25. I’m a little older than she is. And I said, “damn you don’t you ever bring me up that basement to answer, and say anything like that to me, women are just as smart as men and most of them smarter.”

Interviewer: Absolutely…absolutely. It just hurts to hear stuff like that, you know. (Yeah) It just hurts to hear things like that. I don’t blame you. Do you know why they organized separately, two separate unions in the first place? Is that just because of the jobs?

Geneva: Na-uh, it was organized that way when I went out there. And I never thought about it any other way ‘til next thing I knew it was a long time, I mean it was quite a few years when they merged. As far as I was concerned, that was the end of the women’s union. (Yeah) Well I imagine that was after Opal sued them and (Yeah) the men started working on the layers and the women started getting jobs that men had always had. (Right)

Interviewer: So you’re saying that in the beginning the fact that the females had their own union that helped them, that it made them stronger.


Interviewer: Cause it is really unusual. (Yeah) A union split by gender like that.

Geneva: Well see, they didn’t work much together, (Yeah-huh, right) The men worked the machine line and back there and the women worked in the packing. (Yeah) A few women worked in the core gates and a few men worked in the core gates too, but I think it was mostly women. (Yeah)” (Oral History # 518, Owens-Illinois Project)

Many female glass workers continued to argue in their oral histories that, when

Huntington’s glass factory unions were separated according to gender- the union was
more effective for women when than after they merged with the men’s union. Many of the female glass workers believed that they would have little in the way of representation in the form of union officers after they merged with the men. They were uncertain that the male-dominated union officers would listen to the concerns of female union members.

The Creation of “Affected Class” Workers: Long-Term Effects of Mann’s Law Suit

As a direct result of Mann’s lawsuit a new category of female glass worker was created entitled “Affected Class.” Kenny E. Partlow, who eventually became a union local president in the 1980s, recalled in his oral history that the creation of a new class of female workers in the glass factory called “Affected Class” generated confusion and fear among male glass workers. The term “Affected Class” was based on an agreement resulting from Mann’s lawsuit. The new agreement joined both male and female union locals into one local, and allowed women to use their total plant seniority in any department in the glass factory. This process was developed to fast-track female workers into better paying jobs or supervisory positions that they had previously been unable to attain. The intention was to compensate women for the loss of the seniority they would have established had they not been discriminated against in the bidding process. In his oral history, Kenny explained how this process worked and the distress it caused many male glass workers.

“Kenny: Well, in 1967 if you wanted to work overtime, they all signed a list, and females signed a list, and there wasn’t any blacks when I came to work in ‘54 or ‘55. And there wasn’t up until around ‘61 or ’62, we started getting some blacks in the factory. And uh, very few that went on with the male/female situation and
uh, Opal Mann filed a suit in the federal courts, in Judge Christy’s court, (Was that a local court) federal court. And after hearing all the testimony, both sides agreed to resolve it by merging the locals and merging the seniority list and all these things. (Mm-hmm) So the judge didn’t actually rule upon the case. Everybody agreed, (It was) it was kind of a cleansing process, lets work towards doing this and let the judge approve it, which it was. So, from that time, the seniority list emerged and some of the females who had been denied jobs, for example, by your virtue of being a female, you could not have bid on a job that I could, even though you were senior to me. (Mm-hmm) So, in order to correct that, right, wrong or indifferent, the female president and the new, the male president got together, now, they were both co-presidents of a new union. (Uh-huh) And how they agreed to handle these problems that had been for over all the years, they decided when a job came open now, uh, a woman, female, like you say a woman, a female bids on that job; then if she gets it she will take all of her seniority with her to that new job. (Mm-hmm, mm-hmm) That way it would make up, if it could ever be made up, (Right) for the discrimination. Now, what happens, uh, she comes into my department, I have been in the plant longer than a lot of guys but I just recently bid into this department (Right)

Interviewer: So there’s departmental seniority in the plant. (Yes)

Kenny: Now, here comes a female who bid in behind me, (Mm-hmm) and she had more seniority than me and other ones. (Mm-hmm) So, she gets a job, brings in all of her seniority. So then all the males get upset. Next contract, next time we negotiate they tell what their problems are. So the international are trying to make it a more fair method, they said, “Alright, here’s what we’ll do. When a female comes in, she brings all of her seniority into that department.” (Mm-hmm) Now that whole department goes plant seniority. (I see…that’s affected class?) Mm-hmm. (I understand now, but go on, go on) Alright now, what that did, that offended guys who had only been in the plant 10 years, 9 years in that department. (Yeah) So that didn’t help, (No) it caused more problems. So then, as that went on, the company was supposed to keep accurate records...they was entitled to three bids, three opportunities. (Okay) We had some females who had probably ten or fifteen opportunities, and no one had ever monitored or kept the amount that they were offered (You mean before the, the...) well, no, after these, the 1967 agreement was reached, every female who felt they had been discriminated against, signed a master list, (I see) and that list contained all the names. Some girls said I don’t want any part of it, (Right) but I think there was around four or five hundred girls had signed it. So each one of those girls were entitled to three different job bids, and for the opportunities. Now, a lot of times she had the opportunities, she didn’t even bid, (Right, right) so that was an opportunity. But no one kept any history of any of it. (I see, I see) And as the years went by, in the late ‘70’s some guys came to me, and wanted to know why this particular girl was getting so many jobs. Hell, she’s been here, here and here, (Mm-hmm) and I said well, I don’t know. Well, they said she only got 3 opportunities, and she’s done had a dozen. (Yeah) No one really took care of that. (That’s crazy) It got out of hand. (Yeah) So then, you had various departments inside our plant. We had I think, 11 departments. Only 4 of ‘em, I believe, did
not have females that were still department seniority. And bidding was by plant seniority. You bid on jobs by plant seniority, and then when layoffs came, you were reduced by your department or plant. That only took place when you had a female in there. It really got confusing, and a lot of people to this day don’t understand it. (Mm-hmm) Really have trouble with it.

Interviewer: I talked to Mr. Maynard about it. I talked and talked…(Still confused) still confused. And it’s certainly no reflection on him, it’s me.

Kenny: Well, it’s just as simple as this. If you were in the affected class, and another female right with you had not signed that, she went in, it didn’t change anything (Uh-huh), because she was not an affected class female. (Yeah) You, on the other hand, had signed [Both talking simultaneously] [Inaudible]…you were on that list, and when you went into that department, you were an affected class member and the whole department changed. (I see)

Interviewer: That must have caused a lot of dissension. (Mm-hmm, boy you saw...)

Kenny: My mother raised me…my father died when I was real young, and I have a different makeup than possibly a lot of other males. I believe that I would I hate it for my mother to come home and say, “Some guy took my job because I’m a female.” My mother worked hard to raise me. (Yeah) And so I didn’t have the makeup, I didn’t have to…” (Oral History #537, Owens-Illinois Project)

Charles Day recalled in his oral history that Mann’s law suit had long-term effects on workers at Owens-Illinois. The opportunity for women to compete for a wider variety of jobs based on seniority was a direct result of Mann’s lawsuit. The outcome of Mann’s suit agitated senior glass workers due to the possibility of losing seniority they had gained in particular departments. He also thought that men were better-suited than women for certain jobs in the plant. Charles recalled that Mann’s law suit took matters too far in terms of what jobs women could bid on. He thought that Mann never intended for the unions to use her law suit as a foundation for the creation of a special class of workers that were given the ability to use their seniority in one department to bid on a job in a department in which they had no seniority.” This new grade of workers was called “Affected Class.”

“Interviewer: Well, this brings up the uh, the, the subject of the recall rights and the layoffs. The Opal Mann suit, uh, which we’re interested in researching. Are you familiar with that?
Charles: Oh, who, Opal Mann? (Mm-hmm) Oh yes, she’s a swell person. I just talked to her the other day on the telephone for about an hour.

Interviewer: Oh yeah, we’re, we’re interviewing her. Could, could you tell me about the, the suit, I…from your point of view? What, how it affected things?

Charles: Well, it…it didn’t, in, in my point of view, I was probably one of the few males that probably uh, seen their side of the story. Or their side of the situation at the time, you know. (Objectively, uh-huh) Now I felt like if they went too far with it...(With the...)...with, with the, the suit, you know, they didn’t, I don’t think that their intent at the time was for it to, how can I say this? Go through what it, what it, what really, uh, become out of it. (Mm-hmm) See, they was, what it was at the time, when, when Opal and them first uh, filed the suit and uh, we, we refer to it as the uh, Atlanta settlement, when they went to Atlanta and settled it. And uh, they uh, they was, women was just a hung on, uh, you know, uh, we had two different locals at that time. The men had, a local and the women had a local. And they was limited uh, to what they could do. I mean, uh, their job under their locals didn’t have the jobs our local, with the men’s local had all the higher paying jobs. (Yeah) Women was stuck on maybe selecting and uh, uh, Q&S and uh, and uh, oh uh, a few of the other little small jobs in selecting department. They, they couldn’t be crew leaders. Uh…or uh, uh, different things that paid more money in the selecting department. They was stuck on, on the lower paying jobs. And they had women in there that was uh, definitely uh, as qualified to do those jobs as men were. (Mm-hmm) And, and, and could do the jobs, but then you got out, you got some, you know, you’re gonna’ get it regardless of where you’re going that got out of the selecting department into skilled labor departments and other departments, but where they didn’t belong and they couldn’t do the job. (Mm-hmm…and that gave everything a...) Well, that kindly, you know, put it back, but by, by uh, seniority and uh, and everything, they had that opportunity, and they uh, they went, went for it and uh, and got it, you know. And, and, and some of them uh, stayed on jobs that uh, longer than they should have stayed on them...(Mm)...because it just wasn’t women’s work. You know, it was uh, uh, some of if they could do and some of it they couldn’t do, you know. (You’re talking about more of the heavy work) Well, yeah, heavy type and, you know, uh, tow-motor work and uh, when I, I think when the plant closed, they might’ve had uh, a half a dozen women in shipping and the corrugated department that was uh, running uh, some source of type of equipment, either a tow-motor or tractor driving or something like that that they didn’t back in those days they couldn’t do those, you know, they didn’t have the opportunity to go on those jobs. And they was a lot of women that went on them that never could catch on to it. (Yeah, yeah) On these jobs. (They didn’t get enough training) Well, it was just, it just jobs that was hard for women to do was all I can…you know, the best thing to do. Just, it was men’s work, you know, just like we had a lady come out in batch and furnace department that would shovel and get in uh, raw material and uh, and this old dust and, and sweat and just uh, her eyes where she’d wipe around her eyes from wearing glasses and stuff would be all over her face and in her hair, and, and have to wear coveralls and get in that stuff and uh, it was just like walking in powdered snow. Uh, you step in it and it just come all around you. (Yeah) And
uh, work in, in places like that. I’d just, you know, I mean, uh, my own personal opinion. I just don’t think that was women’s work. (Certainly) Uh, you know, and, but they was, uh, they was a lotta’ jobs that I felt that they should have been able to have that when they filed their lawsuit to get, but…and I don’t think that was especially Opal and few of the older women…(Mm-hmm)…that was wanting was, was their intent to get in these other departments…(Yeah)…and these other jobs, you know. (It was primarily…) They was more or less in the selecting department where they was a limited. But once they won their lawsuit and by the guidelines by it, then they had the right to bid anywhere, and then you got into what they call the affected class. (The affected class?) Yes. Uh, we had, we went through that and we had just, well, we had never completely phased it out when the plant closed. But it was just about, uh, phased out. It. was if, you had women, and they was supposed to have three opportunities. (Mm-hmm) Okay. Then, but that was the guidelines for them to have three opportunities to bid…(Mm-hmm)…for another job.” (Oral History #510, Owens-Illinois Project)

Kenny E. Partlow was the union president when Owens-Illinois Glass discontinued operating the glass factory in Huntington. He also knew Opal Mann and defended her on many occasions. In his oral history, Kenny commented on the harsh treatment Opal Mann endured after she won her law suit. He said that he knew Mann well, and declared that he appreciated her actions to equalize job opportunities for women in the glass factory. Kenny also mentioned that he and Mann shared a wonderful working relationship. Owens-Illinois’ decision to specifically design jobs for women employees, Kenny Partlow indicated, was the main source of many harsh comments directed at Mann by other coworkers.

“Interviewer: How was Opal Mann treated?
Kenny: Opal Mann was mistreated by a lot of people, not me. And she and I had one disagreement in the, in the suit that she filed, and we had a wonderful relationship. And my argument was to the government. I had no problem puttin’ a female on the job, but what you’re doing, you’re fashioning the job to fit the female. (Mm, yeah, that’s no good) She should take all responsibilities. And she and I talked up front. We are the best of friends today. I love the lady. She’s a sweet lady. And uh, but that was the only problem I had with it fashioning the job to fit the female.
Interviewer: Yeah. So how, how were they doing that? How were they fashioning these jobs?
Kenny: Well, a crew leader job upstairs, when I was crew leader prior to females coming on, we had to do physical things that when the females started taking the jobs. They hired a millwright, added a millwright to the shift to do those various physical duties, (Heavy) because the girls couldn’t climb, couldn’t run the floor, couldn’t carry the things that most men could, (Mm-hmm) and, and so they just added a millwright, a maintenance man (Uh-huh) on the shift, doing those things, (A mule) yeah, uh-huh, a mule. And…and that did offend me, because I felt like I’ve got no problem being fair, but you’re going to extremes now. You’re saying to me that I have, for example, as a checker, as a quality inspector, part of my job as a quality inspector was to back down, in the event of emergencies, and be a lahr attendant, all physical, hard work. (Sure) And I cannot get a quality job or a crew leader job unless I was a lahr attendant and progressed up the ladder, I could never get these 2 jobs. Females could not do these jobs, (Yes) and they automatically came over to it. Well, I can, still don’t, don’t understand that. (Yeah, yeah) But when they came over to the crew leader job of quality, and it came that somebody was off work and someone had to back down, I’m senior to a female, but because she being a female, she didn’t have to back down and do the job, and I did. (Yeah) So those kinds of things were sore spots.

Interviewer: Yeah, yeah. It’s a difficult issue because there are, you know, I mean, whether its genetic or not, certainly it’s cultural differences between male and female muscular development. I don’t think there’s any question that you could train a bunch of women to do much lifting as a man, but…you know. Kenny: Well, my personal thoughts are, [Interviewer’s Name Omitted] is we have a lot of girls in the plant. We did have a lot of girls in the plant that could do the work as well as some of our guys, but I believe when you require of a female, with her physical structures, to perform as a male, day in and day out, I think that will eventually take a toll on her. And I really believe that. (Yeah) It’s not that I disagree in females taking a job. (No, you’re talking about biology here) But I believe that in the long run, it would age the girl and break them down. Because many times I couldn’t even wash my car before going to work because I didn’t feel like I could do my job. (You had to save it all) Save it all. And uh, that was the good ole days when uh, when you got time for a break, you was too nervous to eat, you’d smoke a cigarette and drink coffee. It was that demanding. Work, work, work, work. And you’d come home, you hurry home, and you’re all keyed up and teed up, and you come home your eyes all wide awake on the 3-11, you can’t sleep ‘cause you’ve worked so hard. And…and I don’t think, well, actually it was too much work for a male, to start with. But if you put a female on there, you’re only adding to her destruction.” (Oral History #537, Owens-Illinois Project)

Kenny E. Partlow’s oral history vindicates Mann’s position from a union administrator’s perspective. Kenny’s oral history indicated that Mann’s decision to go forward with her lawsuit had far-reaching effects that many workers failed to realize.
Although many glass workers regularly participated in union meetings, Kenny felt that
many glass workers failed to realize the gravity of what Mann’s lawsuit had done to
make Huntington’s glass factory more equitable.

The leadership of each union local reasoned that with the development of
“Affected Class” helped women to become shift supervisors, or work in areas of the plant
that were historically controlled by men. The union leadership reasoned that women
would be doing the same jobs as men, and therefore women would have similar job
concerns and issues. In light of this, the men’s and women’s union local leadership
bodies decided that there was no longer a reason to have separate union locals for men
and women. Therefore, the union locals merged to form one union.

“Affected Class” also changed the way in which women could bid on jobs, and
gave them the ability to use their years of plant-wide seniority when bidding into another
department. The change in the bidding process afforded women the opportunity to
become shift supervisors, or to engage in work that had traditionally been reserved for
men. However, the new rules concerning seniority also generated harsh reactions by men
who felt their jobs were compromised.

Mann’s lawsuit and the creation an “Affected Class” did not solve all problems
within the union. Women and African-Americans were still discriminated against in
terms of lay-offs. Minorities complained that they were the first to be laid-off in times of
furnace teardowns or in periods of labor downsizing. This problem would not be
addressed until the 1970s, and would not be fully adjudicated until the 1990s.
Unionized Women Workers Again Face Job Discrimination

Opal Mann’s legacy was one of further overt resistance to job discrimination. Mann’s lawsuit set a precedent for other workers who felt they had been discriminated against due to gender. During the 1970s, Huntington’s Owens-Illinois Glass Company experienced its second major lawsuit. Norma Brooks and Erma Haskins complained that women and ethnic minorities were the first to be laid off when downsizing trends hit the Huntington glass plant. The first glass workers that were laid off in these moments of downsizing were women, followed by African-American men. White men were the last to be released from their jobs, even when a woman or black man had more seniority than the white, male coworkers. Brooks and Haskins eventually won their case; this case took over twenty years to settle before a federal judgment was granted on behalf of the plaintiffs. The Federal court ordered that any seniority lost due to this early release practice was re-instated on behalf of the dispossessed workers. Such a long period to settle this lawsuit seems quite ironic. Although Brooks and Haskins won their lawsuit, it appeared ironic because all workers would soon lose their jobs.

When asked about how the working environment changed for women after Opal Mann’s lawsuit, Sandra Peterson recalled that she was not employed by Owens-Illinois at the time of the suit, but remembered that the Brooks and Haskins law suit against Owens-Illinois took over twenty years to settle. Much like Mann’s lawsuit, the second major lawsuit also had far reaching effects on women workers in the glass factory. At the time of the settlement, Sandra Peterson was working in the personnel department. She and other workers in the personnel department had to go back over all of the women’s
employee payment records for the last twenty years to adjudicate the proper monetary compensation to which many women were now entitled.

“Sandra: That had all actually um, that had already started when I went to umm, personnel. Yes, I do remember about it. I know, uh, probably in 1984, 85, I hadn’t been in personnel very long, and there was another suit, um, the um, Norma Brooks um, Brooks-Haskins, I think, suit came up at, had been in, in oh, it’d been in the courts for like 20 years where, you know, they felt that women weren’t given the same opportunity as men to work shut downs and that type thing. And that suit came um, what was settled probably the second or third year after I went to personnel, and it was settled in favor of the uh, plaintiffs. So um, we had to go back over every female who had ever worked at Owens-Illinois. Can you believe it? Uh, we went back through every record we had and checked to see whether or not they would uh, have some time coming to them. And for the people who were still working, some of them may have gotten two, three, four years of seniority. We had to make all those kinds. We brought a gal in during the summer. We hired her from Manpower. In fact, her husband was one of the uh, um coaches uh, for the football team at Marshall, John Tanuta, his wife, Dory, came in and worked through the summer. And um, uh, she was a teacher, so she, she taught in the fall, but she worked the entire summer with me on that project. It was just, oh, it was horrendous, (Mm)...job to do, but that, I, I very much remember that, that one…but the Opal Mann, that was before I went to personnel.” (Oral History # 521, Owens-Illinois Project)

Owens-Illinois was forced to go over the payments made to workers for a twenty year period to account for the underpayment of women and African-American glass workers. Women and African-American glass workers won their second major job discrimination legal battle against Owens-Illinois, but it took twenty years for their success to manifest. The justice of correcting the underpayment of women and ethnic minorities became a reality; however, the eventual shut down overshadowed attempts to repay underpaid glass workers (the “Affected Class”). Many glass workers blamed the shut down of Huntington’s Owens-Illinois glass factory on the EEOC’s new ruling concerning wage discrimination based on gender and race, which was first tried in Federal Court with Opal Mann’s lawsuit and the development of “Affected Class” workers. According to many glass workers who were interviewed after Owens-Illinois
shut down the Huntington glass factory, the added to the financial costs of repaying this debt increased the financial stress that lead to the glass factory’s shutdown. This accusation on the part of many glass workers was equivalent to a concept described by William Ryan in his book, *Blaming the Victim* (1971). Ryan’s book was a brutal critique of Daniel Patrick Moynihan’s earlier book, *The Negro Family: The Case for National Action* published earlier in 1965. Ryan’s concept, “blaming the victim” was an analysis of how “culture of poverty” models are connected to many available stereotypes about women, the poor, or African-Americans that gave credence to culpability on the part of those who claimed that they were treated unfairly. Blaming Opal Mann’s lawsuit, which led to the development of “Affected Class” workers, for bringing about the eventual shut down of Huntington’s glass factory, was synonymous with Ryan’s “blaming the victim.”

When Opal Mann decided that an opening in the social structure of hiring practices was wide enough to begin to openly defy Owens-Illinois’ unfair hiring practices, overt resistance was activated to pursue equality. At an earlier time in her career at Owens-Illinois, Mann utilized a series of coping mechanisms to subtly demonstrate her dissatisfaction with coworkers. Coping in such a way allowed her to still maintain her employment in the glass factory. However, when the structure of hiring practices at Owens-Illinois was changed to a wide enough degree by the passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and Title VII, Mann activated overt resistance to unfair hiring practices based on gender, and made an indelible mark upon unfair gender-biased attitudes fueled by wide-spread stereotypes that kept women out of certain jobs and
upheld the patriarchal system of protecting men’s jobs while defining lower paying jobs with less status and authority as “women’s work.” ix

Chapter 6 examines the attitudes of Owens-Illinois workers toward their jobs and life in the plant. It discusses the efforts made by workers to create a personally meaningful social space around their work, so much so that many came to look at the Huntington glass factory as a home away from home. The coping activities engaged in by these workers softened and humanized the otherwise oppressive character of everyday life in the Huntington plant. This chapter demonstrates that the deindustrialization process, while tragic, did not completely crush the glass workers who lost their jobs at the glass factory. This chapter continues with the theoretical premise that Appalachians, much like many industrial workers in the U.S., found ways to cope with the economic losses the glass factory’s closure presented. This chapter ends with a note of caution to those who still believe in stereotypes about Appalachians. This chapter concludes that Huntington’s glass workers, whether black or white, female or male, young or old, developed “coping mechanisms” to deal with their economic losses. Appalachian workers are not backwards and their culture is not so brittle that it cannot withstand economic deprivation.

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ii The Civil Rights Act of 1964 made it illegal to practice hiring discrimination due to race, ethnicity, and religion in public education; public accommodations; voting; and federal assistance. Title IV of the Act additionally offered the equal opportunity standard to employment and openly mentioned sex as a protected group.


iv Ibid.

v Opal Mann’s lawsuit was a test case the Federal courts to enforce new employment rules associated with the 1964 Civil Rights Act.

vi The term “Affected Class” refers to any group which continues to endure the effects of previous discriminatory practices.
Smith, Barbara. “Shattered Glass: The Story of an American Factory.” Radio program aired on Marshall University’s radio station WMUL as part of a weekly program entitled *Aircheck*

The term “blaming the victim” is equivalent to accusing one who believes that they have been the recipient of an unjust action as being the central cause of the perceived “unfair” treatment. Whether a crime or an accident, the individuals who asserted that they were unjustly affected were ultimately considered to be in part or in whole responsible for that which occurred to them.

According to Tomaskovic-Devey, Donald and Kevin Stainback’s article “Discrimination and Desegregation: Equal Opportunity Progress in U.S. Private Sector Workplaces since the Civil Rights Act,” published in *The Annals Of The American Academy of Political and Social Science*, Volume 609, Issue 1, January 2007, p.49-84, in a patriarchal structure when the stakes are high (white men losing high paying craft jobs to women and ethnic minorities) “social closure” is expected around, what they referred to as, “desirable jobs.” When stakes are low (losing a few jobs that are on the low end of the pay scale or are lower status jobs) “social closure” is less likely to occur.
CHAPTER VI

THE PRACTICE OF EVERYDAY LIFE

The purpose of this chapter is to demonstrate how Owens-Illinois glass workers manipulated social circumstances in such a way as to constantly remake their everyday lives to cope with their tedious work schedules while maintaining a degree of human agency found in the way glass workers utilized their free time after work such as joining company sponsored athletic teams or attending athletic events as a group. Workers worked hard and also played hard for their company sponsored teams. It gave glass workers a stage to present another side of their personalities. These events occurring outside the factory also allowed workers to join together creating bonds outside the walls of the factory. The bonds created by such events allowed glass workers to network with each other and proved useful in times of feast and famine. The creation of these social ties among individual glass workers who participated in such activities was an essential tool that was later used to develop future coping mechanisms. This chapter will also illustrate the subtle strokes of genius found in the everyday creativity of workers who subtly resisted unfair working schedules and working conditions without direct confrontation, ultimately coping with the deindustrialization process in creative ways.

This study suggests that prior to the dramatic social changes of the 1960s, Huntington's glass workers primarily coped with Owens-Illinois management by brushing up against, rather than directly confronting the inequalities and indignities imposed by their managers. This type of resistance was accomplished through various forms of social action that developed in the everyday lives of Huntington’s glass workers. To analyze the emergence of social activism among Huntington glass workers, this study
utilizes the theoretical discussion of everyday life. It explores coping mechanisms and forms of overt resistance discussed in the works of Michel de Certeau. De Certeau’s theory of resistance broke with the binary logic of polarizing language in traditional political theory, envisioning the practice of everyday life as containing many forms and degrees of resistance. These are not necessarily forms of resistance that are in conscious opposition. Instead, they are coping mechanisms that gradually emerged, enabling workers to deal with the challenges posed by their working conditions. For De Certeau, the practice of everyday life is full of tactics generating everyday creativity and resistance.

Examples of instances of subtle resistance found in this chapter include working a variety of swing shift schedules to accommodate changes in a glass worker’s family structure (having children), on-the-job celebrations, participation in work-related sporting clubs and events, and the building of a union hall that was used by Huntington's glass workers for not only work-related celebrations and union events, but also for individual celebrations such as wedding receptions, birthday and graduation parties, and holiday celebrations. From a de Certeauian perspective, such practices created a family atmosphere at work and produced a sense of solidarity among workers. Glass workers made accommodations that enabled them to cope with their tedious jobs while managing their everyday lives. Glass workers used what was socially available to them to brush up against the wishes of Owens-Illinois managers, rather than directly confront them in outright opposition.

According to the oral histories previously analyzed, various groups of glass workers remembered diverse ways they resisted the ever-changing working conditions
and the deteriorating position of Huntington’s glass factory’s workforce. The oral histories of glass workers indicated that differing groups of workers (women, African-Americans, white men) responded to changing work conditions in various ways. A close inspection of these oral histories utilizing Michel de Certeau’s concept of resistance in everyday life demonstrates how Huntington’s glass workers activated various coping mechanisms to counter changing working conditions, and how these coping mechanisms enabled glass workers to manage their everyday lives from periods of full employment through the shutdown of the glass factory.

Coping With Swing Shift Schedules

To produce commercial glass containers, Huntington's glass factory operated a series of large blast furnaces that generated intense heat. The heat from commercial glass factory blast furnaces was equal to the heat endured by glass workers in the hand-blown glass industry. At the height of glass container production in Huntington's glass factory, which occurred from the 1940s through the 1950s, the glass factory operated eight furnaces simultaneously. This generated intense heat throughout the “hot end” of the glass factory. Temperatures within the hot end of the glass factory often rose above 130 degrees Fahrenheit. According to many of the oral histories analyzed in this study, the temperature within the glass factory was often so intense that workers would walk over to the cold end of the glass factory to lay face-down on the cement floors to cool their faces and the fronts of their bodies. Commercial glass factories maintained glass container production around the clock, unless a shutdown and rebuild of a single furnace was required. Huntington's glass factory produced glass containers twenty-four hours a day, requiring glass workers to maintain production continuously. To sustain a continuous
stream of glass container production, and due to the high cost of shutting down and re-starting a blast furnace, Huntington's glass workers were required to work in shifts that constantly rotated.

The work schedule in Huntington's glass factory was conducted in swing shifts that included a day shift, afternoon shift, and night shift. One week a glass worker would work day shift, followed by a week on afternoon shift, followed by a week on night shift. Swing shifts experienced by Huntington's glass workers resulted in the deployment of forms of coping mechanisms and resistance to counter these work schedules. Huntington's glass workers developed a variety of coping mechanisms to help their families adjust to their ever-changing work schedules by sharing the responsibilities of household maintenance and childcare.

In his oral history, James Anness reported that a glass worker’s social life was seriously altered due to the swing shifts in Huntington's glass plant. James remembered that Huntington glass workers, who were commonly working a swing shift schedule, could seldom go out of town due to the possibility of being called back to work between their shifts. Even though James reported how he spent little time with other glass workers who worked with him on the same shift schedule, other glass workers reported that they spent much of their leisure time with those who worked the same shifts. Socializing with glass coworkers who worked the same shifts was commonplace due to glass workers experiencing the same hours of labor and leisure time.

“Interviewer: What kind of social life can you have when you’re working shifts?
James: Well, you can’t have much. (Laughter)
Interviewer: Did you end up spending your free time with other people that were on your same shift because they had the same time off or…?
James: Well, not really. Whenever you had some time off…working shift work is like being a…like a poor dog with a chain around his neck, chained to a tree. You
know you never could go very far. You couldn’t do nothing really. And by me being in the maintenance department, whenever they would have a breakdown, even on my day off, or maybe I’d work 16 hours that day and come home and go to bed, I might get a phone call at 4:00 in the morning to say there was an elevator in the hole and they’d want us to come out and work. And that’s happened, a many of many of times. Probably, while I worked over there, it probably happened to me 500 times. There is so much to tell, golly. It’d take forever, I could…but I’ve seen so much over there and everything. And ah like I said, I went and took the job as a…I went up back and worked regular day shift, but you know after a while you get used to your own boss when you’re working evening shift and midnight shift. And ah that way you don’t have to be bothered with trying to look out for…all you do is look for your own self instead of everybody else. And there is always a bunch running around you know, in the supervision that’s wanting to move up too, and they’re always looking to see if they could see somebody doing this or that and they said yes, well if this person has so much time you know, let’s make something else for him to do, you know. So, you could go out there and kill yourself just about, working like a dog and…” (Oral History #531, Owens-Illinois Project)

Because Mary Carmichael and her husband, who also worked in Huntington's glass factory, worked different shifts, they would have seen little of each other in their free time away from the glass factory. Mary remembered in her oral history that she and her husband often worked the same shift in order to spend their days off together.

“Interviewer: How did you feel about working in the same department as your husband?
Mary: Oh, I loved it. I loved it because when we had days off, we could go places, you know, and we loved ball games, and we’d go to Cincinnati and see the Reds play. And…” (Oral History #511, Owens-Illinois Project)

When Mary and her husband could not work the same shift, they coped with the situation by altering their free time at home. Mary also reported that she would prepare meals for her husband, leaving them in the refrigerator so he would find them ready for him when he returned home from a different shift. She additionally left notes for her husband informing him of current family events or certain local news that transpired during his shift.
Stella Gene Hanley recalled in her oral history that she and her husband both worked for Owens-Illinois at the same time. Stella and her husband coped with the rearing of their children by working complementary shifts, allowing one of the parents to always be home with their children. In this way, she and her husband coped with the lack of suitable babysitters. After the birth of her first set of twins, Stella quit working for Owens-Illinois and remained at home to care for the children.

"Interviewer: Okay. Uh, well, since you and your husband were both working shift work, uh, was it hard to balance home and work?
Stella: Yes. We had uh, a couple of real good babysitters. One especially was Nandra Watts. And when she stayed with us, we had no problem. But after she left, I believe she either went back to school, or got a job, I can’t remember. But uh, we had a hard time getting a suitable babysitter. So, I worked one shift and he worked another. And we would uh, just have to have a babysitter in the change of shifts, which was like an hour, hour and a half. But it was still hard. And then when I got pregnant the third time, we had twin boys, so we had a four year old, two year old and twins. So he asked me to quit work and stay home and raise them. So that’s what I did." (Oral History #506, Owens-Illinois Project)

Stella also recalled that her husband wanted her to stay at home with the children while he worked in the glass factory. This is an example of the combination of a male-dominated workplace and the wish for a male-dominated family structure, where the man is considered the traditional breadwinner for the family. Stella also stated that once the children were old enough, she returned to work at Huntington's glass factory. This was in part due to Stella’s earlier experience as a glass worker, and in part due to the networking she did with her husband as he continued to work for Owens-Illinois. She made connections with people through his relationships with them. When a position was posted, Stella quickly applied for the job and was back to work in the Huntington glass factory within weeks.

"Interviewer: Well, how did he feel about you working, when you were working?
Stella: I don’t really remember so much. He just rather I didn’t work. But he didn’t care when I went back, though, because our children was raised and…” (Oral History #506, Owens-Illinois Project)

According to Paul Niday’s oral history, when both spouses worked the same shifts, they developed coping mechanisms to accommodate the spatial separation from their children. The glass workers often counted on other family members to watch their children while both parents moved through the swing shift schedule. Former Owens Glass employees commented on how spouses coped with swing shift work.

“Interviewer: Because I was wondering how the shift work, and just work in general affected trying to take care of the house and the children and all that.
Paul: Well, yeah, it’s, well, but I’ve heard those people talk. It’s pretty hard. You know…the ladies talked. But of course, when she left she didn’t, she didn’t go back. But uh, they, you know, had the baby sitters and their members of their family helped them, (Yeah) you know, their mom or grandmother.” (Oral History #534, Owens-Illinois Project)

In his oral history, Donald Brown commented on difficulties faced as a consequence of both spouses working separate shifts in Huntington's glass plant and rearing children. Donald added that their Christian faith, and their personal sacrifices, helped both him and his wife through the difficult times of working separate shifts while rearing their children.

“Interviewer: Did the shift work and the traveling, did that, was that hard on you, as far as your home life? I mean, did you feel like you weren’t here very much, or…?
Donald: Well, then…really…me and my wife understood what we had to do, you know. We didn’t have too much. I mean, it was, it was a hard situation, don’t get me wrong. ‘Cause when I get off, I, she’s coming in, or I’m getting off and she’s going in, you know. And if I was working 3 to 11, and she was working day shift, when I got off at 11, she’d be in bed. And I expected that. She had to get up early. She’d get up at 5:00 to go to work. So, I’d go in and sit down for about an hour and relax. If I got off at 11, before I went to bed, then she gets up at 5, and she goes to work. So I’m, I’m here during the day. Then when I get ready to go in, she’s gettin’ off. So, we won’t, we had to raise a family, so.
Interviewer: You took care of the children during the day, while she was at work. How many children do you have?
Donald: I got, we got four. (Four boys or girls) We got uh, we got 2 boys and uh, 2 girls. But one of my, one of ‘em got killed in a wreck. He got paralyzed. And he lived about a year after that. He…he was in a car wreck. He was 26. So, we only got 3 now, but two of ‘em lives in Florida, and one of ‘em lives in North Carolina. And uh, we, it was, it was kind of tough for us, but uh, I think it makes a better person out of you, really. It gives you responsibilities, you know, and…Interviewer: You got a chance to spend the days with your children, then? When they weren’t in school?” (Oral History #528, Owens-Illinois Project)

Ultimately, married glass worker couples with children coped with the deleterious effects that shift work placed on their home life. However, their subtle strokes of resistance often required that a sacrifice that had to be made in order for the household to be economically stable. Put differently, Huntington glass workers who were married and had children would often work a variety of swing shifts to accommodate their changing family lives, while maintaining full employment with Owens-Illinois glass. To maintain full-time employment with Owens-Illinois, glass workers were forced to work rotating shifts. Working a variety of swing shifts while rearing children required that various coping mechanisms were deployed by glass workers to resist Owens-Illinois’ system of swing shifts. In De Certeau’s terms, these coping mechanisms were created by Huntington's glass workers adjust to their constantly changing schedules. When glass workers were unable to coordinate their schedules to allow them to have time with their children, they depended on their spouses who worked a different swing shift and/or their extended families to take care of their children, clean the house or prepare family meals.

Appalachian Family and Community at Work

A strong sense of the importance of the family at work frequently appears as a major theme in the oral histories analyzed in this study. Many of the workers hired in Huntington’s Owens-Illinois glass factory got their jobs via family connections. Owens-
Illinois’ hiring practices often included word-of-mouth from current employees who were relatives or friends of those seeking to be hired. This resulted in a type of networking that benefited both glass workers and Owens-Illinois managers. This is a networking mechanism that was used to improve a family member’s economic status within the Huntington community. Glass workers who were aware of good working conditions, coupled with higher rates of pay and stable employment, notified relatives or close friends of upcoming employment opportunities with Owens-Illinois. Newman Maynard recalled in his oral history that it was not too difficult to get hired by Owens-Illinois if the job applicant possessed a modicum of manufacturing work experience and was related to a glass worker already employed by Owens-Illinois who would vouch for the new job applicant.

“Interviewer: Was it difficult to get hired in there?
Newman: Not at that time.
Interviewer: Not at that time, if you had the experience?
Newman: Yes.
Interviewer: Did it depend on who you knew? Was it informal? Did it, was it. I mean could you get a job there just by walking up and going hey I can do this, this, and this but I don’t know anybody in this town. You know, I have heard so many people say that they got a job there because of so and so and so and so. That is the reason for the excellence of the plant for so long because it did hire through family.
Newman: Yeah, well they…they done a good bit of that. Of course, my brother worked there and he was the cause, he was the cause of me getting a job there at that time. And a so through him, he gave me the information when there when there are going to hire, (Right) hire some more men because they was starting up another furnace. And they usually have to have more help. So I happened to be here at the right time, and he says they are going to hire some men down at Owens and so I went down and applied and got the job.” (Oral History #520, Owens-Illinois Project)

Not only were fellow family members often recruited into new jobs, many of Huntington’s glass workers met their spouses at the plant. Roy Hicks remembered in his oral history how he met his wife, who was working as a secretary, in Huntington's glass
factory. At the time of the recording of his oral history, his marriage had lasted over 49 years.

“Interviewer: When did you get married? Were you married before you started working at the plant?
Roy: You say married? (Mm-hmm) No. I uh, went in there and got me a job, see. So they had a room, and she was the secretary up there. So I had to go in and talk pretty often. So there she was, up there. (So you met your wife at the plant) Yeah. (Oh, I didn’t know she had worked there) Yeah, so there she was. So I run into her and that’s it. Forty-eight years and still going strong. (That’s wonderful) Forty-nine years. (Forty-nine years) Yeah.”
Roy: Yeah, Owens was a good place to work and uh, I loved every bit of it. I went up there and went and found me a job, and found me a wife. That was the most important thing.” (Oral History #529, Owens-Illinois Project)

Another account of a marriage fostered at the plant came from a man who started working for Owens-Illinois in 1952 right out of high school. Paul Niday recalled that both he and his wife worked the same shift.

“Interviewer: Now you said your wife was a selector there. (Right) So she was on shifts.
Paul: Right. She worked, she sure did. She worked uh, she double worked there from ‘52 to uh, ‘57, I believe. Five years. (And you met her there) Mm-hmm, right, yeah, I did. We worked B shift together, mm-hmm.” (Oral History #534, Owens-Illinois Project)

Workers who utilized the glass plant as a place to meet suitable dating and marriage partners were engaged in a general coping mechanism. Glass workers who became serious dating partners could arrange their shift schedules to allow for more social time together after working hours were over. If they married another Owens-Illinois glass worker, they could arrange their schedules to maximize the time they spent together. When they went to work, both worked at the same time. When they were off work, both glass workers spent their leisure time together. Ultimately, in addition to the networking previously mentioned, this fostered a family atmosphere within Huntington's glass factory. In fact, many of Huntington's glass workers who married other Owens-
Illinois glass workers were considered by Owens-Illinois management and their glass factory coworkers to be part of the Owens-Illinois “family.” The workers who married coworkers also felt that their marriages solidified their membership in the Owens-Illinois family of workers.

Mabel Adkins’s recollection of the family atmosphere fostered at Owens was mitigated by the fact that relationships between employees were often thought of as atypical in this era. Men and women now worked side-by-side in the glass plant, and “on the job courting” was seen by some workers and various members of the surrounding community as somewhat deviant. Rumors quickly spread beyond the confines of the glass factory through the surrounding community of the dating coworkers, which generated a somewhat scandalous nickname for the Owens-Illinois glass factory. In her oral history, Mabel recalled the nickname given to Huntington's glass factory.

“Mabel: They used to call Owens “Little Hollywood” over there, because a lot of courtin’ going on, you know, different…like different people, men and women threwed together like they do in other jobs. But we never had no trouble.” (Oral History #509, Owens-Illinois Project)

Mabel recalled the family atmosphere present at Owens from the 1930s through the 1950s. She recalled how her fellow coworkers helped each other with family chores or childcare when their coworker was at work or had to be away from home when shopping. She also found her job to be enjoyable, even when her working hours were extended. Mabel stated that when the work was long and there was no one else to replace her, the workers coped by helping each other on the job, or tried to alleviate the working conditions by bringing food into the plant.

“Mabel: Well, it was enjoyable. We had a lot of nice people we worked for. We all got along good. And the worse thing a lot of times, we’d get so busy, nobody to relieue you. If you got to eat, somebody had to take your place on the lahrs.
And sometimes it’d be hard to get somebody to work you know, that maybe wasn’t there. So it’d either…they’d bring us some doughnuts and coffee, or something while we was working, eat standing up.” (Oral History #509, Owens-Illinois Project)

Mabel’s strong sense of the family atmosphere at Owens is reflected in her oral history.

“Mabel: But it was like a big family back then. Everybody knew everyone. And on each shift, we all knew each other, and knew the bosses. And they were good to us, and of course, we packed bottles for 8 hours, but we had rubber mats to stand on. Otherwise, you’d be standing on concrete. So, I used to have quite a problem gettin’ me a rubber mat sometimes. Some of ‘em didn’t use ‘em to stand on. Oh, law...” (Oral History #509, Owens-Illinois Project)

The glass workers utilized close ties with other employees and their families within the plant, which fostered a family atmosphere. These close ties crossed the worker/management boundaries. Often, managers were former hourly employees who had worked their way up through the system. In her oral history, Mabel remembered making friends in the plant. She recalled having dinner at her boss’s home.

“Interviewer: So, did you make some good friends there?
Mabel: Mm-hmm. Yes, I knew a lot of different people, and the families. I remember the…a Bill Chess was one of my bosses. And I used to go to his home. He lived over here on Jefferson Avenue. And him and his family…and he was a good old guy, big rough lookin’ fellow, just as nice as he could be. And I know one time I guess my husband and a bunch of them killed some squirrels and rabbits. We went over to Bill Chess’s house, and his wife baked nine rabbits in the oven with a great big roaster, and we all had a big piece. (Wow, yeah) Yeah, we had a good time.” (Oral History #509, Owens-Illinois Project)

The close ties with managers that Huntington's glass workers developed to cope with various debilitating forms of work was a subtle form of resistance that ran counter to a bureaucratically structured workplace. Utilizing De Certeau’s analysis, Huntington glass workers were resisting formalized hiring practices and workplace behaviors. However, by the late 1960s, close ties between workers and bosses came to an end due to formalized work agreements via union contracts coupled with codes established by Civil
Rights legislation. As a result, fraternization among bosses and workers eventually ended.

**Eight Hours for What They Will: Company Sponsored Activities**

Many employees working in the plant were related, which generated a family atmosphere. However, this was not the only reason for the family atmosphere remembered by glass workers. Glass workers, with and without the monetary support of Owens-Illinois Glass, created and participated in company-sponsored and worker-sponsored social activities outside of the glass plant. According to many of the glass employees interviewed, in this era Huntington’s glass workers participated in a number of social activities for the workers and their families, which included athletic events, weekend vacations, hunting and fishing trips, employee picnics, holiday celebrations, honorary banquets, and dances. Mabel Adkins commented on company sponsored activities.

“Interviewer: So you last worked at the plant somewhere in the middle ‘40’s? (Who, me) Mm-hmm. (Yeah) Somewhere in the mid-‘40’s. (Uh-huh, yeah) Did the plant like have company sponsored activities? Mabel: Oh, yeah, we had a club house across from Owens, was a club house there. And we had uh, that was for the employees, dances and different things, and activities. And uh, I know I’ve been to several dances when we worked there. I mean, they always had something going on at the club house. In fact, my bowling leagues, we used to have them down there. Some of the best banquets they ever had was there. (Really) Yeah, they had a good chef that did our food, delicious. And it was such a big room, ‘cause they’d have the dances and things every year, and activities.” (Oral History #509, Owens-Illinois Project)

Huntington's glass coworkers took trips to professional and college sporting events, which included trips to Cincinnati Reds baseball games or football and basketball games at Marshall University. They also held their own events in the glass worker
clubhouse the company built adjacent to the glass factory. At one point, Owens-Illinois even had its own marching band. The band signaled the glass factory’s community investment and spirit. The band participated in community events to demonstrate to the surrounding Huntington community the economic and social impact that Huntington's glass workers had on the city and surrounding region. The “Owenizers” also had their own country music band that performed at club parties. Socializing outside of the glass factory was a mechanism developed to cope with long working hours and to solidify group solidarity.

Many Owens-Illinois employees were hired on the basis of their ability to play a musical instrument or effectively participate in an athletic event for the company. It was reasoned by Owens-Illinois management and Huntington glass workers that the new worker who was hired for his or her musical or athletic ability could still be trained to perform various jobs in the glass plant, even though they were initially hired for abilities unrelated to any glass manufacturing experience. Initially, this hiring practice appears unfair. However, their physical or artistic capabilities enabled them to become an Owens-Illinois glass worker. Ultimately, the new glass worker could economically contribute to his or her family. This is a type of coping mechanism that was employed by family members who worked at Owens-Illinois. Via social networking, a relative or friend of an Owens-Illinois employee could gain employment with the glass company due to individual abilities that were unrelated to their work in the glass factory.

According to several former Owens-Illinois employees, these plant-sponsored social activities fostered a sense of family among employees, which in turn generated a great deal of loyalty to Huntington's glass factory and the company. Utilizing de
Certeau’s analysis of forms of resistance that occur in the practice of everyday life, the participation in social activities associated with one's workplace were subtle forms of resistance that were deployed by Huntington’s glass workers to offset the tedious labor required to manufacture commercial glass containers. Glass workers who regularly participated in these plant-sponsored social activities were coping with the standard “labor-for-pay” arrangement contractually agreed upon by glass workers and Owens-Illinois management. According to several oral histories analyzed in this study, many workers thought these plant-sponsored social activities to be very important to a glass worker’s self-esteem. The glass workers who were hired to play sports for Owens-Illinois sports teams often identified themselves as workers who represented the glass company, rather than merely glass workers who had a job, and performed on-the-job as they were contractually obligated. Owens-Illinois softball, baseball, bowling, golf, and basketball sports teams played competitively against other business-sponsored teams. The glass factory’s pride was at stake in these games. Ralph Clay, who began working for Huntington’s Owens-Illinois glass plant in 1950, reminisced in his oral history about the many sporting activities the plant used to sponsor.

“Interviewer: Did you take part in any of the social activities that the plant sponsored?
Ralph: Well we uh, when I first went there we had a ball team, and I played softball, uh, eventually we had a golf league, I played golf. I never did bowl any. They always had a bowling league. I never did bowl. Basketball, we had basketball, played a little basketball, wasn’t very good at it, [Laughter] but I, we really, back years ago, I guess I know a lot of fellows it was hard, because they were ball players, (I bet) that’s all. They would give them a job working down at the ball field, uh, cleaning up or sweeping or doing this or that, you know. But, their main, (Reason) the reason was to play ball or something like that. But they built warehouses on the ball field, and management kind’a shied away from any athletic activities for the, you know, as far as footing the bill for them. (Oh, they did) yeah, they quit. Use to they would pay half on your uh, golf fee or you know, or maybe you would just have to pay so much. And bowling, they would
give so much on the bowling, but that went out years, you know, a long time ago. (Sure, sure) And the main thing they were after, the money, the dues, and that was it. (Yeah) [Laughter] I mean that’s the way…(With gun clubs and ...) Well you know they had a Rod and Gun club out in Wayne county, (Yeah) and fishing lake out there. Really the employees had a good, everything was family orientated, you know. (Yeah) We use to go have picnics and everything like that, and each shift have a… we’d have parties, and all this stuff. But eventually that just went.” (Oral History #525, Owens-Illinois Project)

According to several other oral histories analyzed in this study, from the 1930s through the mid-1980s, the company also sponsored many social activities for their employees. Not only did the glass workers benefit from these social activities, but their families did as well. Typically, there were several shifts of the banquets or celebrations that were scheduled in order to match the various shifts that glass coworkers performed. Put differently, shift A would attend the shift A dinner or banquet, Shift B would attend the shift B dinner or banquet, and so on. In his oral history, John Page Jr. remembered that the various shifts also competed against each other in sporting events. Each shift developed its own team, and Owens-Illinois workers could compete in a league of their own making. Eventually, however, Owens-Illinois’ new management was forced, due to global competition and the increased demand of commercially produced aluminum and plastic containers by liquor, beer, and pharmaceutical manufacturers, to phase out the funding for such company sponsored social activities.

“Interviewer: So what about, uh, company sponsored activities? Did you participate in any of those?
John: When I first went in there, when I first got the job at Owens, uh, I played basketball. (Right) Well, they something like department uh, basketball, you know, like A, B, C, D shift and then maintenance department. And they played against each other. (Oh, I see) But then as the time went along, they cut all this, cut it out.” (Oral History # 505, Owens-Illinois Project)

According to the oral histories analyzed in this study, by mid 1970s, Huntington's glass factory was facing a changing glass container market. Technological developments
in container manufacturing brought new forms of competition. The U.S. container market was transformed with the development of plastic and aluminum container production. Plastic became a substitute for condiment, aspirin, and milk bottles, and aluminum became the container of choice for many mass-produced American beer companies. By the early 1990s, glass container manufacturing controlled a shrinking percentage of the container market. Aware of plastic and aluminum container advancements, many companies, including Budweiser Beer, began to demand an error ratio for container production that was unavailable in glass container manufacturing. Additionally, glass often breaks in shipping and is heavier than plastic or aluminum. Therefore, many glass plants were facing shutdown, with new plastic or aluminum container plants taking their places.

Additionally, Owens-Illinois was facing its ultimate challenge, the rise of a global market that forced Owens-Illinois management to find ways to lower costs of production while maintaining or increasing profits for the company. Many glass manufacturing plants in the U.S. could not compete with the developing world’s challenge. As American-owned companies, such as Owens-Illinois, developed the ability to “transnationalize” their company’s manufacturing base, they moved their operations to developing nations where labor was cheaper and costs of production were lower, all the while maintaining ownership of technological innovations within the field.

In an attempt to compete in the changing container industry and the global capitalist market, Owens-Illinois began to hire new managers from outside of Huntington’s glass factory. More rigorous management was required by Huntington's glass factory’s managers if Huntington's glass factory was to remain profitable. This
forced Huntington's new glass plant's managers to end the funding of plant-sponsored activities.

According to the oral histories analyzed in this study, plant-sponsored activities had been instrumental in generating a family atmosphere among Huntington's glass workers. These social events gave glass workers the opportunity to socialize outside of the glass factory. According to James Anness’s oral history, by the mid-1980s, Huntington's glass workers had little opportunity to socialize outside of the glass factory. The new Owens-Illinois management phased out factory-sponsored social activities. As a result of these cost-cutting measures, an important connection of a Huntington glass factory worker's family to Owens-Illinois disappeared.

“Interviewer: So the supervisors changed often?
James: Yeah, your supervision starting changing a lot more. It used to be people couldn’t hardly wait to get in there to work. It was a such a… it was a family thing and people would work together, they’d work hard and they played hard. But over the years, especially here in the last 7 or 8 years, have a new bunch of people taking over and they got so that they…we used to have clubs and everything on each shift. Everybody had their own club. We’d go to the horse races, go to Cincinnati ballgames, always have parties over to…to the Clubhouse across from Owens. And this new breed that come in, they eventually just started phasing everything out.
Interviewer: All the outside activities?
James: Yeah, the first thing to go was your outside activities. Where Owens used to pay for a…we used to have Camden Park day for the families…we used to take the kids there, they really looked forward to stuff like that…used to have for all the holidays, they always had something nice.
Interviewer: So your whole family was really part of that?
James: Oh yeah, yeah. Your family was connected with Owens.” (Oral History #531, Owens-Illinois Project)

As discussed in previous chapters, the passage of Civil Rights legislation, along with the growth of strong national unionization among women glass coworkers, gave many Huntington glass workers a federal judicial process with which to gain better paying jobs and supervisory positions. The glass factory’s family atmosphere was
changed by the resulting formalization of work rules and other regulations governing workers’ daily life on the job.

The development of formally recognized bureaucracies, via the dependence on union contracts for available glass manufacturing jobs, created a workplace climate where available jobs were contractually negotiated through national and local union representation. Additionally, more salaried managers armed with rigorous managerial techniques were hired into Huntington's glass factory from outside the Appalachian region. Prior to this era, salaried managers were hired from within the ranks of hourly glass workers. By the 1970s, Huntington's hourly glass workers seldom went to their boss’s homes for dinners, or socialized outside of the glass factory with their coworkers and superiors. Huntington's glass workers were now required to precisely meet the requirements of nationally-recognized contracts. The opportunity for family networking for available glass manufacturing jobs was greatly reduced.

New glass manufacturing job postings were filled according to legally recognized rules contractually agreed upon by the glass manufacturing union workers, their national leadership, and Owens-Illinois management. Huntington's hourly glass workers, armed with new contractual rights and responsibilities, could directly oppose unfair hiring practices by Owens Illinois. In the 1970s, with these new policies fully in place and understood, Huntington's glass workers gained a better economic foothold, but not without important sacrifices. One major sacrifice would be a loss of the family atmosphere once found in Huntington's Owens-Illinois glass factory. According to many oral histories of former glass factory workers, by the 1980s, the family atmosphere in Huntington's glass factory had all but disappeared.
In the 1980s, Owens-Illinois began to drastically cut back on the social activities they had once sponsored for Huntington glass workers. In his oral history, John Page Jr. speculated that this led to a morale problem that reduced the family atmosphere for Huntington glass workers and their families. His children had previously enjoyed company-sponsored social events, and watching their father play basketball.

“Interviewer: This is one of the things they cut back, in the ‘80s?
John: Yeah, when they started cutting back in, they started cutting all that out. So...
Interviewer: That was another morale problem I guess. [Laugh]
John: Yeah. That was another morale breaker. (Hmm) So we did have, we had, I liked it myself. ‘Cause see everybody got together and they played.
Interviewer: Yeah. It sounds like there was a big difference between when you first got there and when you left.
John: It, it was, yeah…at the last. (Yeah) When I first got there, it was nice, you know. Then I guess they started cutting back. They cut back too far, you know, when they kept cutting back. I thought they just, they just cut it so far, the morale went down. (Mm-hmm) It, people always when they had that there, they looked towards that, and even the families, you know, the kids and everybody liked, (Right) you know. Yeah. I know when I played, my kids I couldn’t keep them off the court. They was ready to go. “When you gonna’ play, Daddy? When you gonna’ play?” I’d say, “Get off that court.” (Yeah) But they really liked it. But then after, you know, like I say, these days, they, the computer do-, you know, taking over, so I guess they just decided to cut down.” (Oral History #505, Owens-Illinois Project)

The reduction of company sponsored social activities created a more alienating workplace. Ultimately, this was not to Owens-Illinois’ advantage. Huntington's glass workers became increasingly dissatisfied with the loss of the family atmosphere in the glass factory generated by the increasing pressure to maximize profits in an increasingly competitive global industry. The ultimate logic of this technological transition was deindustrialization. New managers were hired by the glass company to maximize output and reduce financial losses. The new managers appeared to usher in the closing of
Huntington’s glass factory as more workers began to become disgruntled about the loss of company sponsored events and the increase in the focus on glass container production.

**New Management and Cutbacks (Downsize This)**

John Page Jr. worked at Owens-Illinois in the automotive department as a crew leader for the much of his career. He didn’t often get the chance to mingle with workers in other departments, but remembered that in the early 1980s glass workers began to become disgruntled with Owens-Illinois management. They were also worried about the possibility of getting laid off from work.

“Interviewer: When did they start this major cutback?
John: Well, (‘81?) yeah, ‘81. (‘81.)
Interviewer: Have they got…
John: We had a lot more in the maintenance. Sometimes they had up to about 10, you know, then they just, they just started laying-off. Cutting back, you know, cutting back and, (Right.) laying-off people.
Interviewer: Didn’t they have new management come in right around that same time?
John: Yeah, well, (Was it because of the new management?) well, I’ll tell you, the last few years, well, what happened with the, yeah, new management come in. But then it got worse it seemed like it. I mean, it started at that time. But then after the, these few years here before it shut down, they got, it seemed like it got worse. You know, management. (As far as the cutbacks or) Yeah, cutbacks and everything.” (Oral History #505, Owens-Illinois Project)

According to several oral histories analyzed in this study, during the 1980s Owens-Illinois management was constantly changing, leaving glass workers in doubt about the overall financial health of the company and in fear of losing their jobs. John Page Jr. recalled in his oral history that the management was ever-changing and that each new management team had different ideas about how Huntington's glass workers should manufacture glass containers.

“Interviewer: How was the management? How was the new management?
John: Well, they, I don’t know. See, what happened when the plant was running, it was running good. And then this management come in there, and the next thing you know, we was almost on top, and the next thing you know when they come in, we was on the downfall. So, it, it, it had to be something wrong there, you know. (Mm-hmm) And everybody was complaining about that. They just said the management…you could see the change in the management. So that’s how it shut down. (Hmm) You had, they different people, you know, you have different people come in and next thing you know they was just laying-off, and laying-off… laying-off. And then they just, sometimes when they uh, had the bottles going through and everything, they’d just make like a shortcut, you know. And then, they’d just let things go through when it’s not supposed to. Machines run faster. They had the computer, you know, machines.” (Oral History #505, Owens-Illinois Project)

The leveraged buyouts of the 1980s had a debilitating impact on Owens-Illinois’ ability to continue to compete in glass container manufacturing. Kohlberg, Kravis and Roberts (KKR), a well-known corporate raider firm bought shares of the controlling stock in Owens-Illinois, and began to sell off Owens-Illinois’ most profitable manufacturing processes to pay dividends to its investors.iii According to several oral histories analyzed in this study, Huntington’s corrugated department was one of the first of Huntington’s glass factory’s assets sold by KKR. As a result, Huntington’s glass factory no longer made their own boxes in which their glass containers were transported to customers. Once this occurred, the Owens-Illinois’ plant in Huntington was at the mercy of cardboard box manufacturers. The bottom line for KKR was profit, not product. Owens-Illinois merged with Brockway Glass in the late 1980s, creating the Owens-Brockway Glass Company. The new company began to squeeze the most work they could out of Huntington’s remaining glass manufacturing workforce. Many glass workers commented in their oral histories that the new factory managers from the state of Texas who moved to Huntington at this time had little understanding of Huntington’s glass factory’s operations and the surrounding Appalachian culture of its workers. Many
former Owens-Illinois glass workers complained that the replacement of local
management with outside management was often resented. Huntington glass workers
often felt discriminated against by the new managers from Texas.

In the early 1980s, new management’s cutbacks and the constant gossip about the
possibility of Owens-Illinois being shut down permanently prompted a change in the
relationships workers had with management. The constant worry over financial loss and
the poor treatment of workers by management changed the way Huntington glass workers
thought about their jobs, and their relationship with Owens-Illinois management. John
Page Jr. remembered in his oral history that the new management and glass workers had
troubled working relationships.

“Interviewer: Did the new management urn, change any of the relationships?
Like did people get along with the new management?
John: Well, what I heard, they didn’t get along too much. I mean, you know, I
used to stay down in the automotive shop, but people talked, you know, and the
new management came in. They, they didn’t have, the morale went down. That’s
what, that’s what it was. The morale, you know, when you, when the morale go
down, you just, it’s not, you know, together.
Interviewer: Was a lot of that because people were afraid they were going to get
laid off?
John: Uh, no, it was just…it’s just the way the management done, you know, just
the way they treated them. (Oh) It’s, you know, it’s a different way. You treat
people different ways and, you know, they’ll work better for you if you treat them
right. Now if you don’t treat them right, then the morale go down. Then you
just… you ain’t got nothing. You know, I mean, that’s just the way they was
feeling at the last. (Yeah) You know. So, but it, it’s, it was a good job. I’ll tell
you, it was a good job for us, and uh, I miss it, you know. And you know, you’ll
never find another job that, like that. That’s just the way...” (Oral History #505,
Owens-Illinois Project)

The morale of Huntington's glass workers was eroded by the constant fear that the
glass plant would be shut down, and by the poor treatment of glass workers by the new
managers hired by Owens-Illinois to either save the Huntington glass factory by reducing
overall costs of glass container production or shut down the factory and sell the glass
plant’s most valuable glass production machinery and assets. The fear that over one hundred years of glass production in Huntington, West Virginia would come to an end was finally realized in December 1993. Several new coping mechanisms to counter deindustrialization were developed by Huntington's glass workers after Owens-Illinois decided to cease glass production at their Huntington glass manufacturing facility.

**Reading, Writing, Route 23: New Coping Mechanisms and Job Loss**

Many of Huntington's glass workers were taken by surprise by the sudden shutdown of Huntington's glass factory. Huntington's glass workers had become accustomed to hearing rumors of the glass factory’s eventual shutdown. According to the oral histories analyzed in this study, at the time of the plant’s shutdown, many glass workers only needed a few months to reach full retirement. Glass workers who were close to retirement were given the opportunity to accept a retirement package that included a one-time monetary buyout of the remaining portion of their retirements, coupled with only a percentage of their full retirement package. This retirement option was accepted by many of the glass workers who were very close to reaching the number of years they needed to activate full retirement benefits. Several hourly glass workers with at least twenty-nine years of seniority or more were allowed to remain working in the glass factory, dismantling various glass manufacturing machines. This allowed several glass workers to meet the minimum requirements to activate their full retirement benefit packages. However, the majority of Huntington glass workers were still years away from full retirement. They would have to accept a fraction of their retirement packages from Owens-Illinois, and look elsewhere for available work. Unfortunately, the city of
Huntington, like many regions in the U.S., was in an economic downturn due to deindustrialization and the recession that many endured during the Reagan Administration. Huntington glass workers were now faced with their greatest economic crisis since the Great Depression.

Ralph Clay reported in his oral history that after he left Huntington’s glass factory, he applied for several jobs at Community Services in Huntington. He also applied for van driving positions with Huntington’s office of Victims of Crimes Advocates (VOCA) and Cabell County Community Services, also located in Huntington. He reported that he and his wife liked working with the elderly in the Huntington area.

“Ralph: No, I enjoyed having you. (Okay) I love to talk. I like people. (I do, too) I love to talk to people. I got some friends that’s got Multiple Sclerosis, and I go see them every now and then. ‘Cause they don’t have nobody to talk to. And I, I go talk to sick people. I like sick people. I like to talk, I like old people. I put in for several jobs with the Community Services. My wife likes old people.

Interviewer: You put, you put in for jobs?

Ralph: Van drivers jobs or you know, with Southwestern Community Action, and Cabell County Community Services, and stuff like that. I like old people.” (Oral History #507, Owens-Illinois Project)

Immediately after Huntington's glass plant closed, Sadie Page was often in contact with former glass workers. Sadie recalled in her oral history that many former Owens-Illinois glass workers were, literally and figuratively, trying to reprogram their lives by taking computer courses at the local vocational school. She recalled that there were forty-five former Owens-Illinois glass workers taking a single math class at the local vocational school.

“Sadie: I did, yes. Yeah, mm-hmm, yeah. I saw ‘em all, I knew ‘em all. And uh, most of the time, if a person was scheduled to work A shift, that was, I mean, they knew who the other people were because sometimes they might shift transfer, you know, they might for whatever, they might take a job posting, and it might be on a different shift. And you’d, they kind of knew who the other people were, but they were more, you know, comfortable with their own group, and some of the groups
were a little more difficult than others. But you find that everywhere. Uh, the people that worked at the end, I don’t know how it was when I first went there because I wasn’t in this position, but toward the end, the hourly folks were working very, very hard because we were short-handed. There was a lotta’ pressure on ‘em. They worked very hard, and uh, one of the girls said, “You know.” She’s in this uh, they’ve offered a review class out to Vo-tech to the people who just felt their skills had just, math skills and everything, were just nil, you know. So they’ve offered uh, a uh, review class out there. And uh, I think, they were telling me last week, ‘cause I’m takin’ a WordPerfect class myself out there tonight, and they were tellin’ me there’s about 45 in that class. And that some of ‘em had said you know, “We just feel like after, you know, the redundancy of our job, you know, that our minds just aren’t as sharp as what they ought to be.” So uh, a lot of people are seeing this that aren’t… they’re, they’re movin’, tryin’, to do, you know, to re-program their lives. They really are, and an awful lotta of ‘em. So…” (Oral History #521, Owens-Illinois Project)

Sadie’s term “reprogramming” is quite appropriate. Huntington's glass workers were now faced with structural unemployment, and were taking math courses in hopes of actually reprogramming their minds that had been accustomed to glass manufacturing work. According to Sadie's oral history, many of these workers felt their minds were not sharpened enough to take other jobs outside of glass manufacturing. Therefore, they had to retrain themselves-to reprogram their minds, to successfully cope with the changed situation.

Prior to the closure of Huntington's glass factory, Sadie had worked in a middle management position. Her job had required her to make certain that hourly glass employees were properly compensated for their labor. She was also been involved in the ever-changing computer systems that Owens-Illinois utilized to calculate job performance and employee wages. Sadie also commented in her oral history that she was still helping former Owens-Illinois glass workers cope with their job loss. Sadie was continuing as part of a process of helping former Huntington glass workers adjust to deindustrialization and this loss of work.
According to several former Huntington glass workers’ oral histories, the RCA glass tube manufacturing factory in Columbus, Ohio interviewed many Huntington glass workers prior to the plant’s closing in December of 1993. Upon receiving official notification of Huntington's glass plant’s shutdown, several Huntington glass workers accepted positions at Columbus’s Radio Corporation of America (RCA) glass tube factory. This group of former Huntington glass workers decided to cope with this situation by maintaining residence in Huntington, West Virginia and driving daily to Columbus, Ohio to work. The new RCA glass tube workers drove their automobiles westbound down Route 52 towards Portsmouth, Ohio, then traveled north, on Route 23 to Columbus, Ohio. This trip equals nearly 120 miles traveled one-way to get to work. The former Huntington glass workers who that made this daily trip rationalized that they only needed a few more years of full-time employment to reach a number of years where they could retire by combining several retirement packages to equal a full retirement package.

Sadie recalled in her oral history several former Owens-Illinois employees accepting jobs with the television glass tube factory in Columbus, Ohio.

“Sadie: We have had quite a few people leave Huntington. And I’m aware of that. The uh, 0-I plant in Columbus took uh, a number of our people. Uh, that used to be an Owens-Illinois TV tube plant. But it’s no longer a, although they haven’t changed the name yet, it is now owned by the Japanese. And they’re doing very well. So they came to Huntington and interviewed our people, and they took uh, oh I don’t know, I think 20, 25 maybe at that time for those folks who could move. And, and I have to say this too, uh, uh, uh, most of the employers that I’ve talked with around the area, they seem to kind’a have an allegiance to, to the folks that are coming to them from 0-I. They, they, they want to give them...[Inaudible] the first opportunity, you know, they can. If they have an opening, they will consider an 0-I, or if they’re qualified, you know, before they would someone else. They are doing that. I know of several. I have uh, I’ve seen that happen.” (Oral History #521, Owens-Illinois Project)
George Kline also recalled in his oral history that a good friend of his as well as many other glass workers who formerly worked in the Huntington’s plant accepted jobs at Columbus’s glass television tube manufacturing factory. He also remembered that he had questioned the idea of Huntington residents working in a factory that was so distant from their families.

“George: Why yeah, they…right down Columbus, one of my buddies well, lives right down the road, he worked in Columbus at Owens making television tubes. (Yeah, yeah) He went up there when this plant shut down. There was quite a few of them that went up there, but he don’t like it up there because I mean, if his family was there and had his home there, it would be alright, you know. But coming here, back and forth, why…” (Oral History #519, Owens-Illinois Project)

According to the oral histories analyzed in this study, many of Huntington’s glass workers simply retired, accepting a percentage of full retirement. They filed for unemployment compensation in hopes that before their unemployment benefits ran out they would find full-time employment with another factory in the Huntington area. Sadie Page recalled in her oral history that twenty-two salaried workers took an early retirement option rather than attempting to stay to see if the glass factory would be able to rebound from its initial closure, which would have enabled returning workers to gain more time to put towards their retirement.

“Sadie: That part of it was sad. And then uh, you know in the spring of ‘93, we lost about 22 salaried folks who took an early retirement package. And you could see then that something, you know, this wasn’t good, what was happening. So, those are the things uh, that, that kind’a bothered ya. Plus, you know, the glass industry was in a decline and has been for some time. So that made us all more in tune with everything that happened. You know, that would make our ears go up, “Uh-oh, what’s this mean?” So uh, those were the things that kind’a bothered ya.” (Oral History #521, Owens-Illinois Project)

Many deindustrialized glass workers decided to take vocational classes that were funded by the Job Training Partnership Act (JTPA) enacted by U.S. congress in 1992. A
few other glass workers decided to attend Marshall University, where they could work on college degrees in hopes of eventually obtaining a job in the new service economy that was beginning to take shape in Huntington, West Virginia, as well as the rest of the United States. Manufacturing jobs would no longer be a high priority in industrial cities in Appalachia or throughout the rest of the U.S. Service sector jobs required technical training and college degrees, unlike the on-the-job-training that was associated with industrial jobs. Huntington’s job opportunities were still undefined, but most companies that were growing in Huntington (plastic manufacturing, telemarketing, medical facilities) required a college diploma or its equivalent. This era was a defining shift in Huntington’s economic and social climate. Job opportunities for blue collar workers were diminishing and the emerging white collar job opportunities required an increased formal education for those who wished to become employed in Huntington’s ascending service-sector economy.

This chapter demonstrates how Huntington's glass workers resisted powerful social forces by utilizing their creative outlets while at work and in the pursuit of conducting their everyday lives. This chapter suggests that while large social forces seemingly have the ability to control individuals, Huntington’s glass workers ultimately had the ability to manipulate their immediate surroundings in creative ways through social activities that, while bounded by the immediate confines of the glass factory, emerged in opposition to Owens-Illinois’ management and were effectively deployed throughout the Huntington community. In other words, Huntington's glass workers possessed the necessary social power at the individual level to define how their lives
would be affected by their glass manufacturing jobs, and how they would negotiate future changes in their jobs with subtle deviations.

Ultimately, Huntington glass workers refused to simply accept defeat. They designed and deployed various coping mechanisms to help them adjust to what many glass workers and Huntington residents considered to be an economic disaster. From subtle forms of coping mechanisms within the workplace to more drastic forms of overt resistance such as lawsuits, Huntington's glass workers pulled together, utilizing available resources to construct new ways of thinking about their jobs, their educations, and their everyday lives. This chapter demonstrates that a degree of human agency was available to Huntington's glass workers in eras of full employment and during times of unemployment. Indeed, while they were employed, Huntington's glass workers creatively coped with their working conditions and the effects their work had on their everyday lives. Displaced Huntington workers sought work elsewhere within Huntington or the tri-state area. They overtly resisted by utilizing lawsuits and legislation to deal with unfair working conditions; ultimately, they survived the deindustrialization process.

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ii The term “transnationalize” refers to the ability of business to move manufacturing operations to other countries. This innovation of doing business in a global capitalist market was due to increased pressure brought on by the globalization process.

iii Kohlberg, Kravis, and Roberts, (KKR) bought the controlling stock in Owens-Illinois Glass Inc. After the purchase in 1987, KKR began to sell-off glass manufacturing machinery and eventually closed down many Owens-Illinois glass manufacturing facilities throughout the U.S.

iv Community Services was a federally funded organization that attempted to find jobs for displaced industrial workers via Community Action agencies. It was installed during the recession years of the 1980s to offset economic downturns in Huntington and other cities throughout the U.S.
CONCLUSION

The first goal of this study was to demonstrate that Appalachia has been incorrectly stereotyped as a bucolic region of the country, nestled within the interior of a complex of states and regions that were far ahead economically, politically, and socially. The result of this stereotype has led many Americans to believe that Appalachia as a region is socially and economically retarded. Therefore, those who reside in Appalachia have been seen as socially lagging far behind the rest of the U.S., serving as scapegoats for all that could go wrong in the wild outback of America.

The very idea that a large portion of the United States interior was a rugged outback whose population was socially cut-off from the rest of the country, likened to a Third World colonial region, suggests that some may wish for such a place to actually exist. Declaring Appalachia “backwards” has politically and socially served those in power in more economically developed regions of the country. It is a heuristic demonstrating what is right with America and what is at the same time terribly wrong. The limitations placed on the inhabitants of a region incorporating geographical boundaries that became reified, politically and socially re-enforced by organizations bent on solving the cycles of poverty via “culture of poverty” models, remains inexcusable. Eric Liu would call this a demographer's false imposition of order. Liu’s remarks on the portioning of any culture away from the U.S. mainstream demonstrate the limitations of this arbitrary geography, which served those that wish for deep separation as a sort of mentality, a love of clean lines and boundaries. But what it charts with great accuracy is a map of our own partitioned soul. Appalachians realized that they had been economically and socially cut off from the rest of the U.S. and its population. As a form
of self-protection, the citizens of Appalachian communities such as Huntington, West Virginia created coping mechanisms, developing a culture that provided forms of insularity that produced the illusion to outsiders that some sort of Appalachian clannishness existed, when in fact, what outsiders were witnessing were the development of coping mechanisms and sometimes overt resistance to powerful social forces.ii

These coping mechanisms were often misidentified as peculiar artifacts of a culture of poverty. Forms of overt resistance were misidentified as a regional stubbornness in regard to new economic and social ways developed in the Northeast industrial centers and deployed in Appalachian cities like Huntington, West Virginia. The exclusionary practices of the mainstream, whether by law, social, or economic practices, produced enclaves that were misidentified as a self-justifying stereotype of the backward character of Appalachian workers.

The Huntington glass workers utilized a variety of creative coping mechanisms to address problems that arose between the glass workers and Owens-Illinois management and other coworkers. As the social landscape changed via federal legislation and the introduction of new technologies, glass workers often openly resisted problematic employment situations. Many glass workers also openly resisted unfair labor practices when they had the ability to do so. This study also argues that Huntington's Owens-Illinois glass factory was central to the city's economic character. Many individuals and their families depended on the glass factory for economic survival.

During the early years of the Owens-Illinois glass factory in Huntington, West Virginia, the large majority of glass workers were white men. The few women who worked in the glass factory in the early years of its operation typically held jobs that were
low-paying and possessed a lower status. However, the oral histories analyzed in this study suggested that many Owens-Illinois glass workers believed that without female glass workers, Huntington’s glass factory never would have survived. Female glass workers developed numerous coping mechanisms, which aided them as they toiled at glass manufacturing work that many of their male coworkers refused to do. An example of the type of work many men refused to do was in the selecting and sorting department. Opal Mann recalled in her oral history the tedious nature of this work that was absolutely necessary for the plant to operate at maximum efficiency. Female glass workers who worked in the selecting department had lower salaries than men and their job was considered to be low in terms of prestige. The factory could not have survived without women workers during WWII, as many of the male glass workers were drafted into the armed forces. During WWII, a few women were hired into the corrugated department, although Owens-Illinois preferred to petition the armed services to allow their male glass workers to continue working at Huntington’s glass factory rather than be drafted during WWII. Owens-Illinois management argued that by working in the glass factory the male glass workers eligible to be drafted into the armed services were already helping the U.S. war effort. When the few men who were drafted into the military during WWII returned from the war, women were forced to go back to the jobs they had before the men they replaced left. Again, female glass workers were forced to cope with this situation. They were looking after their families and friends. They developed various coping strategies that helped them deal with this economic downturn. The low-paying job status of women in Huntington’s glass factory was permanently changed with the passage of legislation during the 1960s that gave women the right to gain better jobs with better pay.
Eventually, women were given the opportunity to bid on higher-paying jobs. This opportunity resulted from the federal Equal Opportunity Employment Act. However, this study clearly demonstrates that the passage of this federal act did not immediately have a positive effect on the workforce at Huntington’s Owens-Illinois glass factory. It took the struggle of an individual named Opal Mann for worker equality to become a reality. Although Mann had on many occasions brushed up against unfair labor practices within the glass factory, she did not have the ability to overtly resist these powerful social institutional arrangements. Until federal legislation enabled her to overtly resist her employer’s demands, she was relegated to develop and deploy coping mechanisms that brushed up against male labor leaders and her male bosses.

Mann often trained male glass employees who later became her supervisor. To cope with such situations, Mann would demonstrate her new supervisor’s incompetence by purposefully selecting inferior bottles and placing them in boxes to be shipped out so that plant managers could find them and blame the new male supervisor. Mann coped with unfair glass factory situations like this until the social playing field changed in such as way that she could openly, overtly resist.

An example of an instance of overt resistance would be when Opal Mann actually brought a federal lawsuit against Owens-Illinois glass manufacturing company, changing the way this large social institution would hire men and women from that time forward. Opal Mann, taking full advantage of changes within the U. S. employment structure following the passage of civil rights legislation, was able to force Owens-Illinois and from then on other US manufacturing companies to discontinue discrimination toward
female employees. No longer would certain jobs that historically had been labeled men's jobs only be offered to male employees.

Another, less extreme example of an individual gathering enough momentum, in terms of human agency, is evidenced by African-Americans applying for and obtaining jobs within Huntington’s glass factory. The Civil Rights Movement and the passage of civil rights legislation changed the social system in such a way that African-Americans with varying levels of human agency began being hired into Huntington's glass factory. From a theoretical standpoint, the aforementioned example is more than just coping mechanism—it is a form of resistance. Blacks eventually, in a trickle, began to apply for jobs at Owens-Illinois. Their oral histories indicated that getting a good job was not an easy task. African-American men were allowed to take low-status positions within the glass factory that historically had belonged to women. The Civil Rights movement gave African-Americans the right to apply for jobs in Huntington’s glass factory, but they were never guaranteed they would actually receive a job there, and if they did, it would most likely be in a low-status, low wage department. As a result, African-American workers also developed coping mechanisms while they worked at Owens-Illinois, and eventually developed the ability to overtly resist unfair employment rules and labor practices. Unfortunately, African-American glass workers were rarely employed by Huntington’s glass factory long enough to earn full retirement benefits. However, as the oral histories analyzed in this study suggest, they often coped with economic deprivation and openly resisted when the social playing field gave them the ability to do so.

This study shows how, in the midst of what appears to be the victory of social structural forces, individual workers created coping mechanisms to covertly brush up
against strong structural social forces, or, when social conditions allowed, more formalized modes of resistance (unionization or legal battles) were erected and deployed. Utilizing the oral histories of deindustrialized Owens-Illinois glass workers in Huntington, West Virginia has given a new voice to Appalachian workers, indicating why traditional academic culture of poverty models are insufficient and explaining how and why residents of this impoverished area resisted economic disasters. This study illuminates the complex web of social relations associated with the industrialization process in the glass container industry in Huntington, West Virginia and their role in the coping mechanisms created and deployed and the series of instances of overt resistance displayed by glass workers in Huntington’s Owens-Illinois glass factory. The type of coping mechanism and the variety of periods of overt resistance depended not only on what was available to individual glass workers, but the personality of the individual experiencing an instance of unfair labor practices.

Ultimately, this study suggests that the culture of poverty models used to explain economic underdevelopment in Appalachia fail to appreciate the social complexities associated with industrialization and deindustrialization. These models are self-justifications of “Appalachian Otherness” that serve to create and reinforce unfair stereotypes about the region and its inhabitants. This study confirms the work of earlier scholars who demonstrated that political elites dominated West Virginia’s early years as a state and were in some part responsible for its economic underdevelopment. This study also is in consensus with scholars who theorized that West Virginia’s underdeveloped economy was in part due to absentee ownership of valuable regions of the state that contained an abundance of natural resources. However, this study adds that these earlier
studies seldom recognized the complexities of social relations and failed to chronicle the existence of an inexhaustible variety of coping mechanisms that were utilized to offset times of economic calamity and unemployment. They also failed to record instances when Appalachian workers openly resisted unfair labor practices. Appalachian glass workers, much like industrial workers all over the U.S., did not languish in their own despair or only do what their bosses told them to do. They coped with their economic and social circumstances, often resisting deleterious economic situations. Appalachian glass workers created coping mechanisms that protected their families and the region from outside social forces.

The oral histories of Owens-Illinois glass workers analyzed in this study serve as a snapshot of the process of creating and deploying coping mechanisms and series of overt resistance. Many former Owens-Illinois glass factory employees decided to continue to live and work in Huntington, West Virginia, following the closure of the plant. Many reinvented themselves to get different jobs in the city. They and their families still live and work there today.

The future of deindustrialized cities along the Ohio River valley in Appalachia remains uncertain. A suggestion for future studies would be to conduct more research that illuminates the actual voices of economically dispossessed Appalachian workers and their families. We are only now beginning to fully understand the effects the deindustrialization process had on Appalachians and scholars should in the future be more aware that Appalachian workers, like most workers in the U.S., seldom go forward resigning their futures to a faith in the unknown. No doubt, Appalachians will continue to struggle with the deindustrialization process. They will produce further coping
mechanisms to offset their underdeveloped economies and will overtly resist when the social climate allows them to do so. They will survive and will not simply go away quietly. It is the author’s hope that through this and future research, their dissonant voices will continue to be heard.

“Follow your own course and let people talk”

Dante

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