From Steel Town to "Ghost Town": A Qualitative Study of Community Change in Southeast Chicago

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LOYOLA UNIVERSITY CHICAGO

FROM STEEL TOWN TO "GHOST TOWN":
A QUALITATIVE STUDY OF COMMUNITY CHANGE
IN SOUTHEAST CHICAGO

A THESIS SUBMITTED TO
THE FACULTY OF THE GRADUATE SCHOOL
IN CANDIDACY FOR THE DEGREE OF
MASTER OF ARTS

DEPARTMENT OF SOCIOLOGY

BY
EDWINA LEONA JONES

CHICAGO, ILLINOIS
MAY 1998
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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I wish to thank everyone who has taken the time to tell me their story of community change. To have the opportunity to take part in this discussion and learn about the range of experiences has taken me far beyond anything I could expect from a research project. Staff at the Calumet Environmental Resource Center was especially helpful in locating historical documents for this research. I would also like to thank colleagues and friends who volunteered their thoughts, time, and research as well as stories of their own family's and friends'. I would especially like to thank the residents of Southeast Chicago who shared much more than their time.
DEDICATION

To Lorrie, my parents, and my football and softball teams, all of whom constantly expand and enhance my understanding of community change while keeping me grounded in reality. And, of course, to the storytellers and spirit of all "ghost towns".
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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

This thesis is a case study of community change told from the perspectives of residents of Southeast Chicago. Forty percent of all jobs in this area of Chicago disappeared between 1970 and 1990 as a result of the severe contraction of the steel industry, (Claretian Associates Neighborhood Development Office, 1994). By the 1980s, less than 10 years after William Kornblum published his study of the same region (1974), Blue Collar Community, a way of life centered around the steel industry ended for many.

While I limited my research to Southeast Chicago, in order to focus in-depth on one of these communities, the decline in the steel industry affected many communities. I draw on my experience of living over thirty years in a steel community, on conversations and interviews with family, friends, and acquaintances from western Pennsylvania and Youngstown, Ohio, and on three classroom discussions at Calumet College in northwestern Indiana. All of these conversations have shaped and informed this research.

1 In fact, the greater Calumet region including Southeast Chicago, its southern suburbs, and Northwest Indiana share very similar histories of growth and decline based on the development of industry.
The term "Rust Belt" emerged as a summary description of the aging industrial region of the northeast and midwest. Changes at the corporate level ended century old relationships between individuals, communities, and industry. As manufacturing jobs declined in these areas demographic and economic conditions also changed drastically. Population loss was widespread and unemployment or underemployment became the reality of many workers. They watched their communities continue to lose businesses once this spiral of decline was set in motion.

This loss was part of a national steel crisis brought on by global corporate restructuring affecting all aging industrial communities. At the turn of the twenty first century, the role heavy industry played in the national economy will have been drastically reduced as will the role of the communities where this industry was located. Communities that once shared an identity as builders of the country's infrastructure, the suppliers of steel for bridges, skyscrapers, automobiles, and the military industry now share more than a decade of decline and an uncertain future. I focus my attention on these communities, which at the local level once served as centers of employment, commerce, and had provided the basis of a blue collar identity for residents. Residents of Southeast Chicago, like members of other communities across the Rust Belt, continue to struggle to find their place in the high tech
service economy.

Usually these industrial towns are referred to in academic literature as "in decline", as if there is some clear picture of what this means. In a chapter on uneven economic restructuring, Gordon L. Clark writes a more explicit description of the older industrial towns outside of Pittsburgh, "These towns have become quite literally boarded-up ghost towns, dying in the shadows of their decaying factories and mills, (51)." But these communities do still exist and what the literature does not address is that people continue to exist in them; that is my interest here.

Before interviewing, I had expected to hear people tell stories that centered on the economic decline brought about by the steel mill closings. Instead, the major themes I have come away with are ones that address much less visible, subjective, quality-of-life issues. The three main findings I focus on here are; decline was much more than economic as descriptions of decline and becoming a ghost town describe losses related to identity, friends and family, and a belief system; social relations, some related to the mill closings and others not, were undergoing less obvious changes but affected everyday interactions within families and between neighbors and institutions; and a range of differing perspectives existed within the community, dismissing any stereotype of blue collar communities as homogenous.
As the title of this thesis suggests, the term "ghost town" has become a generic way of describing communities where basic industry withdrew its connection. Clark's study was the first place I read this description and was offended by it, knowing that family and friends exist in the towns he was describing. So I use it with much apprehension, not wanting to promote the image of dead towns where nothing of interest is happening.

At the same time, the use of the term "ghost town" or similar imagery was the most common theme raised in my interviews. My interviews and research suggest that the relationship between individuals, communities, and industry has always been much more complex than a labor production equation. Physical and social infrastructure were built together. These relationships have dissolved with nothing there to fill the void, accounting for the accepted and widespread use of varying images related to "ghost town". It is clear to me from this usage that the process of disinvestment has to be looked at as much more than economic to understand the long term affects on community.

The second finding from my research is that social relations, that were less obvious sources of concern, had been changing over a greater period of time and at various levels. Southeast Chicago had developed a set of social relations based on a heavy reliance of industry as a centering force. However, when residents gave accounts of
what was changing in their world, there was much more happening than the closing of the mills. Changing social relations described in this thesis are changes in the quantity and quality of interactions within families, between neighbors, and in churches, schools, and parks. Generally, most residents interviewed have experienced a decline in quality of life but they also share glimpses of how a sense of identity and community are maintained and regenerated.

Another major finding is that very few common themes or perspectives were repeated throughout the interviews. Heterogeneity among what is broadly termed "blue collar community" is underrepresented in working class literature. Residents living in Southeast Chicago differed greatly on their experiences and views of changes. Conflicting perspectives arose around issues related to the environment, decisions to move and decisions to stay, and union and industrial life in general. Many times these differences related to timing and circumstances and relationship to institutions and industry.

In this study I attempt to link local concerns of how change is experienced in a specific community with broader societal issues related to the process of disinvestment. Most important, this research is meant to chronicle that life does go on in "ghost towns", that regeneration of community and identity comes from many sources, and that
heterogeneity within blue collar communities offers conflicting perspectives and competing histories. These stories should not be lost when the contestation and struggle over the future gains momentum.

In the next chapter I review literature which provides an historical account of the relations between industry and community. These works also provide background to the era of industrial decline and have shaped the debate over the interpretation of this era. In chapter three I describe the design of this research and some of the challenges it presented. I present the findings from the interviews of this research in chapters four, five, and six. The conclusion brings together thoughts on the research, methods, and findings, and speculation on further research.
Vivid images of human degradation in working class life have been a part of the social sciences since Engels (1958) described the industrial communities in the "Great Towns" of England in the 1840s. In the United States, concern over poor living conditions in industrial communities became the subject of studies at the turn of the twentieth century (Byington's, 1910). The rise of industrial cities corresponded with a rise in academic interest in working class life.

By the 1970s the images of overcrowded tenements and general squalor had given way to description of orderly industrial communities as in Kornblum's, Blue Collar Community, (1974). Blue collar communities had more to offer for study than changes in material conditions. Beyond the imagery of the living and working conditions, this study also examined the role industry played in determining the patterns of interactions and social organization in the local communities. These works provide a historical account of the relations between industry and community.

Bluestone and Harrison's book, The Deindustrialization of America (1982), identify the processes of disinvestment
and abandonment as political and economic choices of industrial leaders. They also relate the ways that the political leaders regarded the mobility of capital as a greater asset than the viability of communities. Their work is valuable for exposing the effects of deindustrialization at the community level, while questioning the larger relationship between capital and community.

Thomas Misa, an industrial historian, argues that the decline of the steel industry can be traced to an "isolation from innovation", a result of nonresponsiveness to consumer demands (A Nation of Steel, 1995). He holds accountable a number of actors: the industrialists, the unions, and the government, all of which might have influenced the course of events in the steel industry. Like Bluestone and Harrison, Misa calls for a political response, primarily here, a change in industrial policy.

While works such as these raise arguments about national policy to control market forces they also provide important insights and questions that persist in local communities. Does capital need to be in conflict with community? Does industrial isolation necessarily lead to worker and community isolation from innovation as well? Misa's research is specifically on the steel industry, but his thesis of "isolation from innovation" suggests a set of implications reaching far beyond the steel industry itself. When the development of industry is as deeply enmeshed as it
is in the communities where it is located, over a number of generations, one would also have to consider the relationships between industry, community, government, and the workers as suffering the same consequences. Bluestone and Harrison and Misa set out important macro level arguments which offer background and insights to the era of industrial decline.

There are two large bodies of literature regarding the era of plant closings and its effect on individuals and community; the social work and social movement research. The social work literature describes the effect of decline and disinvestment at the individual level. This literature shows that class, ethnic, racial, and gender differences need to be included as important factors in how an individual is affected by dislocation. Biegel, Cunningham, Yamatani, and Martz, specifically look at the reluctance\(^2\) of a historically working class population in reporting unemployment and in seeking assistance from community institutions and agencies (1992). They found small percentages of those who qualify for assistance seeking help

\(^2\) The history of this reluctance is traced back to the ethnic group resistance to paternalistic service workers from the settlement house period and is documented in Nash (1987) and Couvares (1983). Also, the under-reporting of unemployment was given by one of the priests interviewed for this thesis as a major factor for becoming involved in community organizing fourteen years ago. It continues to be a concern in some areas in Southeast Chicago today and might relate to both ethnic group and spatial identity as well as concerns over immigration issues.
outside of their immediate network putting additional stress on those facing similar circumstances.

Other social work literature focused on disparate dislocation experiences. Minorities and women were found to have suffered a disproportionate share of negative consequences due to dislocation. Putterman's (1983) study on steelworker dislocation in Chicago, found that "... minorities and women, Blacks in particular, remain the least likely to find new jobs (45)." This race and gender disparity was also found to be true in a 1989 survey done by Baum, Shore, and Fleissner in the Pittsburgh area.

Social work research suggests that there will be long term effects of dislocation due to deindustrialization. These effects will be felt most among working class families and community institutions already under enormous stress from their own losses, and by women and minorities, particularly those who have not found work in the aftermath of the closings. They do not speculate at the long term impact this may have on communities but they do provide information at the level of the individual to consider in the context of community.

Following the plant closings, studies on community impact focused on the response to the closings. Research on the role of various movements dominated the literature (Fuechtmann, 1989, Fitzgerald, 1991, Hathaway, 1993). They chronicled the major actors and actions taken by local
groups to apply pressure on industry and government to prevent plant closings. They also evaluated the effectiveness of the various efforts. Generally, while important coalitions were formed and mechanisms identified for slowing the process of closings or gaining more control of economic development at the local level, little was found to stem the tide of disinvestment.

Others, like Hoerr in Pittsburgh (1988) and Bensman and Lynch in Chicago (1987) provided a broader picture of the series of events leading up to the closings. Bensman and Lynch, *Rusted Dreams*, provide description of the relationship between the history of the people in the area, industry, the local political machine and the community institutions that pulled together to organize community responses. They also document the limited impact these had on interrupting the closings. From their analysis, Bensman and Lynch also propose a far-reaching federal industrial policy which would eliminate the extreme conditions caused by plant closings.

Social movement literature provides insight to the groups interested in changing the progress of disinvestment in these industrial communities. What is lacking is an explanation of what the majority of people were doing during the plant closing era. This lack of understanding of what people were experiencing will remain a barrier when identifying courses of action to stop or limit the effects
of disinvestment.

Two authors, Thomas Geoghegan and Kathryn Dudley, writing from very different experiences, identify some of the changes happening in these communities during the era of deindustrialization. Thomas Geoghegan, a Chicago labor lawyer, *Which Side Are You On?: Trying to be for labor when it is flat on its back* (1991), describes his experience working on labor issues during this time period.

His insight into the cultural distinctiveness of the labor groups he worked with, especially in his first chapter "Solidarity", offers a look into what he considers one of the main tensions between living a blue collar life and "fitting into" mainstream America. He states that solidarity, as part of the labor culture, runs counter to the mainstream value system based on individualism. He observes that making changes from blue collar life and solidarity to a post-industrial world and individualism, is necessary to make it in a capitalist culture and some struggle with this change more than others.

Geoghegan does not romanticize this point. What seems underdeveloped in Kornblum and to some extent in Bensman and Lynch, Geoghegan constantly wrestles with, the world of cultural difference between himself and the unionists he represents. Yet at the same time he is somewhat amused that he runs into some of these same people on the golf course. By including in his narrative the ever changing cultural
identity of individual union workers he brings into motion changes within the identity and culture of a blue collar community. It is important to note from this observation that no community is totally static and that change is happening in various dimensions. Geoghegan captures that essence while offering some insight to challenges workers are faced with. His cultural component begins to uncover dimensions of change and differences that need to be considered along with the economic, political and industrial perspectives of Bluestone and Harrison, Bensman and Lynch, and Misa.

Kathryn Dudley, *The End of the Line* (1994), challenges Bensman and Lynch and the industrial policy changes they propose. Dudley questions whether this solution would be welcome even in the steel making communities. In speaking of Bensman and Lynch she asks, "But what, we may ask, would lead them to believe that such an effort can succeed with the public now when it has failed to attract widespread support in the past ...? (84)" Dudley argues:

> Belief in free market competition and the survival of the fittest is more than just an economic model. These principles are also part of a meaningful cultural system that allows people to invest their behavior in the marketplace with moral significance. Darwinian thinking is not simply about the beneficial thinking about eliminating the unfit. It is also about how success should be measured in a world where resources are limited and the competition is fierce (85).

This assessment runs counter to Geoghegan's initial observations but extends the argument that cultural
imperatives need to be considered when trying to explain the general acceptance of the ramifications of deindustrialization.

Dudley also provides greater depth into understanding conflicting perspectives between residents over community redevelopment. Her study, done in Kenosha, Wisconsin, a city which developed around the growth of the auto industry, examines the experience of a major plant closing and the series of events related to Kenosha's transformation into a white collar community. Her emphasis is on cultural conflicts between blue and white collar residents. She finds a distinct difference between the groups in how the auto plant closing was viewed. Dudley suggests that there are strong cultural forces at work which cause redevelopment issues to be highly contentious. In Kenosha, where the tensions between white collar and blue collar values play out in elections and redevelopment plans, it is apparent that the winner rewrites history for his/her own current needs. A not very distant past is retold from the perspective of the newly powerful white collar residents.

In time, studies of deindustrialization's effect on communities and individuals dwindled as the process became subsumed under the issue of globalization. In a sense, researchers abandoned the communities as well. As the population, especially the large pool of unionized labor, dwindled so has the potential for a large scale movement and
subsequent attention in academic research\textsuperscript{3}.

The literature reviewed in this chapter provides a description of the historical relationship between industry and community. It also provides background to the era of industrial decline, its effects on individuals and community, who was involved in efforts to change the course of events and why they did not have much effect. Little of the work after the initial interest in plant closings has actually talked about the mundane reality of what life is like long after the centering influence of industry disinvests from these communities. The next chapter discusses how I went about the task of informing this research interest.

\textsuperscript{3} I have found the greatest exception to this is in places such as Dudley's Kenosha study where there is some redevelopment happening. Some interest also remains over issues of identity and uneven redevelopment.
CHAPTER 3
RESEARCH DESIGN

Census data, newspaper accounts and historical documents such as Local Community Fact Books, industrial waste studies, and the Lake Calumet Airport Feasibility Study inform my research but the main source of data is interviews with members of the communities.

Local Context

The ecological boundaries that are included in this study are the four community areas of South Chicago, South Deering, East Side, and Hegewisch. Lake Michigan and the Indiana state line on Indianapolis Boulevard are the borders.

4 Being new to the area and with no contacts in Southeast Chicago, I located the community to study on practical grounds. Using the network of graduate students available to me who either live or have done research in the area, I started making contacts which they provided. By the end of the process I had interviewed people in three of the four community areas listed.

5 Ecological boundaries are the Community Areas designated by Ernest Burgess in the 1930s which combined census tracts into named communities. There are 77 such community areas in Chicago to date. Community Area Fact Books, based on decennial census data, have provided the most comprehensive data source of census information along with historical context of the City of Chicago since the 1930 census.
to the East. Generally, 79th street in South Chicago and 95th Street in South Deering are the northern boundaries. The Chicago City border of 138th street in Hegewisch is the south border. The diagonal of South Chicago Avenue in South Chicago and Stony Island Avenue and the Calumet Expressway in South Deering and Hegewisch is the border to the west.

Neighborhoods within these community areas which Kornblum\(^6\) identified in the late 1960s and early 1970s continue to be the references used today. Terms like, The Bush, Millgate, Irondale, Slag Valley, and Jeffrey Manor or 'around St. Kevin's' and 'around Our Lady of Guadalupe' are still the local's designation.

Southeast Chicago is cross cut with railroad lines, waterways (man-made and natural) and highways. The Chicago Skyway cuts across the East Side and South Deering. The waterways on the east, Lake Michigan and Wolf Lake, and the marshlands around Lake Calumet and the Calumet River coexist with factories and waste disposal dumps.

The artificiality of this environment remains important because of the lasting impact of the industrial legacy. According to a historical survey, "The selection of the Calumet area for factory sites was the result of a vigorous promotional drive carried out during the late nineteenth century. ... Their claim that the Calumet area was an ideal

\(^6\) His descriptions of the various neighborhoods and ethnic groups are very detailed and would make an interesting comparison to the present day.
industrial location had merit, but it was the situation and not the site that made this so, (Colton 1985, 14)."
Developers ignored the many physical problems the Calumet wetlands presented. Instead, they saw an opportunity for selling land while Congress was willing to fund improvements necessary for river travel. The "natural advantages" used to argue for Congressional support were hard to find. The shallowness of the marsh made it impassable by boat. Where construction did take place on the sandy ridges east of Lake Calumet the ground had to be raised artificially (18). The "situation over location" is important because the situation includes a changeable landscape, an amenable political body, and economic interests.

The scale of "man-madeness" is so great in industrial areas that it is hard to see until it is gone, as is the case of the U.S.X. South Works in South Chicago. The almost entirely vacant 575 acres along Lake Michigan is the largest "brownfield" site in Illinois and one of the largest in the country, (Jepsen, 1995) and the structures built on the sites were gigantic. The scale of building and equipment to worker created a surrealistic environment which is also part of the industrial legacy.

The changes to the land, the built environment, the vacant space are only part of the story of the change in the

7 "Brownfields are abandoned or underutilized sites where real or perceived environmental contamination restricts redevelopment, (Warren, 1997)."
environment. Some corporations did not vacate their space but allowed the huge hulking structures to sit and decay. Wisconsin Steel/Navistar\(^8\) is located at the corner of 106th and Torrence on a 150 acre site on the east side of the Irondale neighborhood in South Deering. It was still there when I was doing my research in 1995 and 1996 though the mill had closed permanently in 1980. The environmental clean-up is still being estimated at both the U.S.X. and Wisconsin Steel sites. If different neighborhoods have their own specific reflections on how change occurred, their perspectives are shaped by the physical remains of mill sites after the plant closings.

**Local Demographics**

Change between 1968 when Kornblum did his research and 1990 is phenomenal, especially when contrasted with the stability of the community prior to the 1970s. The Calumet area became one of the largest industrial districts in the world between 1890 and 1920 (Lake Calumet Airport Feasibility Study, 1990). Waves of immigrants populated the communities surrounding the steel industry. These populations formed neighborhoods based on housing

\(^8\) This issue came to an end March 11, 1997 as Navistar International Corporation and the federal government announced that a deal had been negotiated to clean up the 190 acre site (Franklin, 3:1,3). Even in this Chicago Tribune article it is clear that city and state officials are positioning themselves as the champions of the community, seventeen years after the closing.
availability and cultural and religious identity.

The history of parish development is an important aspect of neighborhood formation for a number of reasons. Since a high proportion of the population during industrial growth was Eastern European and then Mexican, both predominantly Catholic groups, the church became the major institution marking a neighborhood. As a long standing institution in the community it had a strong influence on the attitudes and beliefs of its congregation for many common-place decisions such as home buying and family formation. The church also reinforced the parish boundary as a contentious issue within the community, (McGreevy, 1996).

The four community areas together totalled 88,986 people in 1990 (CHART 1) with South Chicago accounting for almost half of the total with 40,645 people. The peak year of the four community areas was 1950 with a total of 102,222 people. While these figures provide an aggregate summary that show a trend of population decline there is a great deal the totals do not reveal.
Each community area had different population losses, gains (TABLE 1), and racial and ethnic composition. South Chicago has been losing population since 1930. It had substantial drops between 1950 and 1960 and again between 1970 and 1980. The latter drop has been attributed to U.S. Steel South Works cutting its workforce by eighty percent during that decade (Claretian Associates, 1994). Hegewisch is at the opposite end of the spectrum on population growth and size. Its peak population growth shows up in the 1980 census at 11,572, the smallest of the community areas in population, and benefited from a large post World War II construction boom between 1950 and 1960. East Side and South Deering both peaked in population in the 1970 census, 24,649 and 19,271 respectively, and have since seen small declines.
TABLE 1

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<th></th>
<th></th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>South Chicago</td>
<td>55,715</td>
<td>49,913</td>
<td>45,655</td>
<td>46,422</td>
<td>40,645</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Deering</td>
<td>17,746</td>
<td>18,794</td>
<td>19,405</td>
<td>19,400</td>
<td>17,755</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>East Side</td>
<td>21,619</td>
<td>23,214</td>
<td>24,649</td>
<td>21,331</td>
<td>20,450</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hegewisch</td>
<td>7,142</td>
<td>8,936</td>
<td>11,346</td>
<td>11,572</td>
<td>10,136</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>102,222</td>
<td>100,857</td>
<td>101,055</td>
<td>98,725</td>
<td>88,986</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Though East Side and South Deering have had similar population trends in total numbers, South Chicago and South Deering have experienced more similar changes, as have Hegewisch and East Side, of racial and ethnic composition. In the first decade of the 1900s, the growing population of the entire area was primarily Southern and Eastern European. Each of the community areas mentioned had its own mix of immigrant neighborhoods as the European in-migration slowed after 1930.

South Deering and South Chicago have some of the oldest Mexican-American enclaves in the city dating back to 1910 (Claretian Associates, 1994). There were few black's living in, as opposed to working in, the region until after 1945 and then it was predominantly in South Chicago (Kornblum, 1974) and in more significant numbers and varying degrees in
South Chicago and South Deering after 1960 (Claretian Associates, 1994, Chicago Fact Book Consortium, 1984). Since 1970 both South Deering and South Chicago lost the majority of their white population while increasing most significantly in blacks with a continuing immigration stream of Latinos.

Hegewisch and East Side experienced changes in the white ethnic groups from the first settlers to the turn of the century Eastern European immigration. Until recently both communities remained predominantly white with neighborhoods mirroring the old and new European immigration streams. In the 1970s and again in the 1980s East Side experienced an increase of its Latino population so that by the 1990 census it had reached forty percent of the total. In 1990 Hegewisch had a thirteen percent Latino population. (City of Chicago, Department of Planning and Development. 1993. U.S. Census 1980, 1990). Both community areas continue to have very small black populations.

**Economic Loss**

The large decline in the total population coincides with the steel plant closings. In describing population changes in the South Deering community area, the 1980 Local Community Fact Book states, "While the population composition changed, the growth of the community was halted by an economic catastrophe. (Goes on describing the closing of Wisconsin Steel Works and then summarizes) ... This meant
massive unemployment in South Deering and threatened to lead to an exodus comparable to the one following the Cummings strike, nearly a century ago, (136)."

Along with changes in population were changes in employment opportunities. I have already reported that forty percent of all jobs in the Southeast area of Chicago disappeared between 1970 and 1990. Steel mills in the Southeast side of Chicago, Wisconsin Steel Works in South Deering, U.S. Steel's South Works in South Chicago, and Republic Steel in East Side, closed almost completely between 1980 and 1985 (the latter two kept small sections of the mills running with a few remaining workers until the early 1990s). The mills alone accounted for the loss of 3,400, 9,000, and 4,000 jobs respectively between the years 1980-1983 (Bensman and Lynch, 1987).

Communities in the region experienced the "ripple effect" that Bluestone and Harrison described in their 1982 book. The process begins with workers' loss of wages, the loss of contracts to suppliers, and loss of corporate income and commercial property tax revenues. This produces the secondary ripple, the loss of spending dollars in the community and supplier plants closings which means a reduction of more jobs. This produces a tertiary ripple: the increased need for services and reduced personal tax receipts that make it difficult to supply public assistance for the increasing needs.
There were noticeable differences of individual experience though in Southeast Chicago depending upon the employee relationship to the steel industry. There is little doubt that how Wisconsin Steel (Envirodyne/Navistar) eventually closed compared to U.S. Steel (USX) or Republic Steel that the workers of the former suffered much greater hardship. Wisconsin Steel workers formed an independent trade union in 1937 and were not bound by industry-wide agreements. Their experience of deindustrialization not only took a job and a way of life, but for many it included losing their final pay check, benefits, and pension supplements. Bensman and Lynch describe the negotiations that led to the loss of their benefits as the time when the Progressive Steelworkers Union really paid for their independent status (54). Just as there was a difference in the way companies handled a plant's physical closing, each steel mill had a different process of terminating workers which may have a lasting impact on the community.

Current Interests

The research literature may end at this point but the interest in areas like Southeast Chicago is not over. Dudley argues that there are always competing interests over history, land, community development, and the direction each of these takes. Political and economic interests enjoin the support of those benefitting from the system. Kenosha, the community she studies, has been pulled into a redevelopment
phase more quickly than other heavy manufacturing areas due to its proximity to the Chicago metropolitan area. I argue that the same forces are at work in any area undergoing drastic economic change though perhaps in a much less visible way.

There has been some past and current interest in developing Southeast Chicago. The area underwent heavy scrutiny in the late 1980s and early 1990s as the site for the third airport. Competing forces within Southeast Chicago (residents wanting an airport versus those who did not) argued over issues surrounding community preservation, environment, and employment. The airport plan divided the community and foreshadows possible conflicts over future plans where employment considerations will compete with environmental or relocation concerns.

The lakefront property owned by U.S.X. will continue to have a direct effect on the community whether it remains barren or redevelops, simply by its size. Left barren, the property is a symbolic statement of the community. If and when it does redevelop the direction United States Steel or

---

9 I learned of this conflict through the interviewing process. It took talking to only a small number of people before I had heard very different interpretations of what the airport debate meant to various sectors of the community. These competing perspectives were not addressed in the 1990 Local Community Fact Book leading me to suspect that history has already been altered. A particular "community story" is being set forward understating the divisions within the community and promoting an image that a unified pro-environmental movement voice existed.
whoever owns the property at the time will again arouse many of the same debates as the airport. The City of Chicago and its Brownfield development initiatives "hope" to be a partner when U.S.X. finally decides what it would like to do with the property (Jepsen, 1995). At this time, U.S. Steel alone has control over the expansive property located in South Chicago.

Because of the downturn in the local economy a large slice of the area is part of an Enterprise Community. This will bring federal tax incentives for businesses who locate and employ residents of the area. The highest poverty rates include parts of South Deering and South Chicago, and a small northern section of East Side. To be awarded this designation various interests, community economic development corporations, community organizations, universities, a city college, a health center, within the region, and Housing and Urban Development officials, had to form a consensus on where the community is heading and write a local plan for the future. Community representatives from East Side, South Deering and South Chicago study area had to reach out to other neighborhoods, including North Pullman and Roseland, and find common interests and concerns (Calumet Communities Consortium, 199410). It is too early to know what will come of this effort but it provides some

10 Federal designation was not received but the area did receive Enterprise Community by the state.
indication of the extreme downturn the area took and the forces that are at work in it today.

Research Methods

It's a long story and it's interesting if you have the time to really discuss and put it on paper where you could really read it. You'd be surprised at the difference now than it was then. It's like there was a difference in the same job and things. And everything has changed in the last thirty, forty years. (Mr. Smith)

The design of the research is a qualitative study based on data collected primarily through interviews and observations but supported with historical data and current reports. C. W. Mills states that the task and promise of a "... sociological imagination enables us to grasp history and biography and the relations between the two within society (1959, 6)." I chose interviewing as my method for learning about biography. Through personal experiences of change, I have a better understanding of the issues residents' viewed as important. The secondary data begins to inform the historical story of Southeast Chicago.

Contacts within the community came from colleagues and their research with community organizers, teaching experience, family, and friends. Another source of information came from the many contacts I had made over the

\[11 \text{All names have been changed to provide anonymity (though no one saw this as necessary) for any direct quote. All quotes are from interviews conducted between 1995-1996 unless noted otherwise.}\]
past year working in community development with a large Chicago nonprofit organization. This added a useful dimension because I was able to take part in meetings and site visits where the social service needs of the community were being discussed. It also provided sources of on-going research in the area.

I completed nine interviews in Southeast Chicago using a variety of techniques. Six of these were one-on-one, in-person interviews. Another in-person interview was with a group of senior citizens and younger employees, and one was with two elderly women. The ninth was a phone interview.

Over twenty residents of Southeast Chicago spoke to me about their experience in the community. Four informants were priests who were or are active in the community after the mills closed. One interview was with a long-term resident who had recently moved. Another interview was with a resident of Hegewisch who spent most of one morning driving me around the various wetlands and parks of Southeast Chicago, the southern suburbs, and Northwest Indiana. The remaining three interviews were with residents of South Chicago and South Deering.

I organized a group discussion at a senior housing project where a diverse mix of fifteen mostly long-term community residents came to participate. I also interviewed two women volunteers at a church I visited to interview its priest. I conducted a phone interview with an African
American resident of Jeffrey Manor.

There were four blacks, ten whites, and six Latinos in my sample. Ages ranged from the early twenties into their seventies. Few were of the middle thirty-five to fifty range. The sample as a whole leans heavily towards the elderly because of their availability. Many had some connection with the mills, either working there themselves or having a close family member who had. A few had no family connection with a steel mill but worked in other industry. Most had lived their entire adult lives in the community, a few had not.

I also interviewed four community and labor organizers, two of whom were active in Southeast Chicago and two who were active in the Pittsburgh area during the plant closings. These were all people in the thirty five to fifty year range, white, and two were male and two were female. All of the labor organizers had worked in the steel industry.

There were two classroom conversations in Northwest Indiana where students responded to my presentation about the research. There were over thirty students in the two classes, many of them returning students who were attending a sociology class after work. The process of mill (and refinery) closings continue in their communities. These events were interesting opportunities to listen to on-going stories of decision-making from a group with some age
(eighteen to sixties), racial, and ethnic diversity. Other formal and informal interviews with friends and acquaintances from the Monongahela Valley in Pennsylvania and the Mahoning Valley (Youngstown area) in Ohio added to my understanding of community change in the face of economic collapse.

The large group discussions were difficult and unwieldy. People usually had a lot to say and it was tough to limit that in a group. The interview with the two women offered a great deal for me to think about in interviewing technique. They seemed to provide each other with insights or encouragement that helped the conversation maintain its direction. One of the Latino women was uncertain about her English and kept asking her friend if she was saying it right or for help with a word or phrase. Undoubtedly this language barrier limited what we could communicate to each other but having a friend present gave her confidence to take part.

Six of the interviews were taped and transcribed and the others were recorded from hand notes. All of the interviews lasted one to two hours. The taped interviews offer much greater accuracy as well as preserving the emotional tenor of the talk. In the interviews, I was the learner; someone wanting to understand what has happened in this community since the closing of the mills. I have always been open and straightforward about the topic of my
research and have given assurances of confidentiality, though few thought this was important. During my introduction of the research project I felt it important to share the fact that I had lived in a community that went through many of the same series of events.

The interviews were unstructured but I had issue-oriented questions prepared to initiate conversation on the topic of community change if I needed them. The most common process I encountered was once a conversation began I only used follow-up questions as needed in the course of a residents narrative.

To some extent my emphasis directed the responses. I began every interview with the question, "Can you describe what changes have taken place in your community since the closing of the steel mills?" Directing the interviews to this particular focus provided the residents with a framework for their responses. Decline, loss, abandonment, and sadness as the most common themes among stories was not then a complete surprise. They were following my lead to focus on the steel mill closings. Not directing the conversations any further allowed residents to speak about change however they wanted. Sometimes their stories were at first related to the economic upheaval, but then they moved on and told stories related to the slow, unnoticed changes that occur in any community. By not limiting the topics through directed questions or providing a restricted
presentation of responses of what residents spoke about, the stories are more complex but, to me, more clear of how residents have experienced change.

There has been a great deal of care to say who and what this research is about. I have avoided the usual spokespeople, except for the priests and community/labor organizers who provided information but are not the main source of interview data for this study. There were community people, who were recommended repeatedly, I refrained from interviewing. Often the most eloquent or articulate residents are called on repeatedly for their story which then becomes "the" story of the community. Priests, organizers, and other researchers pass these names along because the individuals provide easy access to the voice of the community. The researcher is also assured a certain amount of ease in conducting an interview. I hope to have the chance to talk with these spokespeople in the future along with the aldermen and assorted other community, industry, and political representatives. I was also restricted in my interviews by not being able to speak Spanish. This limited who I could talk to and what a person could express to me.

I spent some time riding and walking through various parts of the community making observations. There were a number of occasions when I was able to tour around the area with other graduate students, with one of the interviewees,
and with others involved in community development. Beyond these few occasions I did not spend a great deal of time in the community other than during the days I went to do interviews or research at another university. I would shop or have lunch in the area when I did visit. I do not want to make the claim that I got to know the region very well. I feel as if I only scratched the surface of daily life in the community. However, the process of learning about the community and the unfolding of different perspectives of the community has become a distinguishable part of this research.

Considering that nearly 90,000 residents live in Southeast Chicago, I do not feel that my interviews represent all major points of view. There is however enough diversity in the group to feel that this is a good beginning and not strongly biased to any one perspective. I ended up finding a greater range of views as opposed to depth of any one particular view. For these reasons all findings are very speculative but they are meant to guide and shape the direction of future research. Researching the local context as well as the personal biography builds a strong framework for this endeavor.
CHAPTER 4
FROM STEEL TOWN TO "GHOST TOWN": THE MATERIAL AND SYMBOLIC CONTEXT OF COMMUNITY CHANGE

Agnes, an elderly Polish woman from the parish where Wisconsin Steel is located: And um, some people say, 'Oh, this is such a very depressed area'. Well, in my estimation, since the mill closed, the mill is just like a ghost hanging over the whole community like a cloud.

Presenting findings from the interview data poses some Challenges. Residents had many overlapping stories to tell. They discussed changes at the level of the individual, family, community, and at the level of global economy, country, and corporation. What I heard most commonly was a description of decline which is the topic of this chapter. But these stories were more complex, revealing at small glimpses the context of lives that were undergoing changes from many forces. These insights weave the overlapping layers of change into a coherent story of the fabric of everyday community life and will be covered in the remaining chapters.

By centering this chapter on the theme of decline I do not want to add to a stagnant, one dimensional view of
community in industrial areas\textsuperscript{12}. The few people I spoke to who lived in areas further from the mill sites never spoke about decline and instead discussed other interests. Furthermore, while decline is the most common theme among the interviews it is only one of many topics raised in each interview. There is however no denying the amount of hardship some residents continue to feel as they try to make sense of their experience. Decline then has to be addressed, especially as it becomes a long term image associated by those within and outside of the community.

The extent of the role of industry in the development of the community can not be underestimated. Residents relayed a picture more focused on change in the identity of what constitutes their community. Industry promoted immigration and migration of residents to the community and had supported many of the events and institutions residents pointed to as mainstays of the community. The economic decline is felt by related industry and small shop owners in the local economy but it is also felt just as keenly by residents who have watched their once bustling community be reduced to a shadow of its former self.

\textsuperscript{12} While respecting the social and political implications research done by both Kornblum (1974) and Bensman and Lynch (1987), the image created by the focus of their research then becomes the image for the entire community. This leaves very large segments of the community who were not steelworkers, or steelworkers who were not taking part in the activities they were researching, unaccounted for.
Family and social relations were drastically altered within the community and a belief system based on hard work equaling a sense of security was shaken. Residents displayed an attitude of ambivalence towards the key institutions of the past and those which might take shape in the future. This attitude is a result of this extended time period of uncertainty. The parts that made up the whole of a local community identity were decentered and fragmented as industry disinvested without anything taking its place.

From the Past

Statistics do not convey the story of community change experienced by the local residents. In their interviews, residents had a historical point to make. Their community had changed dramatically in a short period of time and they wanted to be sure I understood that what I was observing during my research was not the way it had been a short while ago. Many residents drew on the past to contrast with the present as the way to describe community change. Their reminiscences about better days and easier times offered a nostalgic quality to the interviews.

Commonly, they portrayed a stable community with neatly tended yards, nice homes, bustling and thriving business areas, good schools, great park programs, that was a comfortable place to raise a family. They spoke with intense pride in a hard-earned well-being quickly lost to a
series of events tied to steel plant closings. A third generation Mexican American woman (Theresa Anne), in her late thirties or early forties, who grew up in South Deering, spoke of security, family, social activities, and community pride:

... [i]t seemed to me like most people worked, that I mean you know that was a real norm ... and there seemed to be like a lot of family orientation. I mean there was a lot of, a lot of family kinds of things that would go on. Um, there was a sense of content, contentment, I don't know if the word is contentment, what the word is but there was a content feeling. Nothing like there, nothing like now. I can't explain it except that it's, it felt comfortable and secure. Um, there was like kind of a pride that you saw and felt, you know? Just saw by way of, I mean by the way people kept up their front yard and flowers. I mentioned to you the parades (previous interview) ... it really ... stands out in my mind, my memories, those parades. Fourth of July parades. And there used to be a guy who used to go around the neighborhood collecting for Fourth of July fireworks at our park. We had the best fireworks on the whole Southeast side of Chicago. People from lots of different places will come to Trumbull Park to see the fireworks. And people could afford to actually contribute to that. Cause um ... people were working.

Others spoke in terms of a settledness that tightly linked the worlds of work, family, and community. This picture of stability never sustained itself under closer scrutiny as the layers of stories, including strikes, layoffs, the effects of war, and of children leaving for education and a different life, unfold. But this strong image came across in many interviews when residents described changes in their community.

Reminiscences also bring to life the "pride" which was
part of resident's sense of community identity of the South Chicago shopping and social district. These areas were at the center of public activities for steel workers and their families. Not everyone worked in the mills but the area thrived as industrial workers supported a wide range of businesses and services for the steelworkers of Chicago and the Calumet region. Identity as a center of this larger community was also lost when the mills closed.

This aspect, changing identity accompanying the loss of heavy industry, was most prominent in the talk of older residents. They compared goods and services that once were available with their absence in the present. Being part of a prideful community was replaced by the knowledge that they are now a marginalized and depressed community. What is and is not available in the retail establishments is a constant reminder of their severe decline.

Tom: We had a real nice department store here called [ ].

[Others: Ah-hm.] And... there was uppergrade clothing because the steel men, they were making good bucks. Okay. He even told his customers that they could charge, and then pay when the guys were back to work.

Others: There was Goldblatt's. ... same thing years ago, then we had furniture...

Tom again: They had five floors then.

Others: ...five floors at a Goldblatt's ... we had furniture and more, more things to pick from than we do now.

[Others start listing all of the stores that have closed...]
Another man's voice: See this was the downtown for the steel mills. Instead of going downtown they'd all come here. Cause all of the stores were here.

Katy: Yeah.

Lefty: We had better stores.

Katy: And people from Indiana used to come here. Louise overtop of Katy: Yeah but you gotta give Goldblatt’s credit, they’re still hanging here.

[small banter back and forth.]

Other woman: That, the things they have now is more from stores that can't sell their stuff so they bring it to Goldblatt’s and put the price down for them to sell it. In other words its more or less like a second hand store...

Informants also focused on family decline and a man's inability to support a family. A priest from South Chicago talked about a tremendous change in the fabric of life, and this ego crushing related to workers making one-third the pay of their mill wages. Many people mentioned the shabby appearance of homes and yards of those unable to maintain what they had. Workers could no longer afford the lifestyle they and their families had become accustomed.

There were other aspects to decline. For some residents there was the recent memory of having a full range of services within the neighborhood, usually within close walking distance. Along with local economic decline there is the added inconvenience of having to travel in a car or bus to shop or else having to pay the higher prices of the small, less well stocked store that is available in the neighborhood. Two elderly women who are long-term residents
of South Deering discuss the stores which were once there but have since closed.

Margarette: But we don't have a grocery store. [ ] was a grocery store right here. When Wisconsin Steel disappeared the stores, the drug stores, everything closed.

EJ: So how do you get things now?

Margarette: You have to go for 106th on [the] East Side, Walgreens and Dominicks and Jewels, we don't have anything. Even for a ... for emergencies you have to go East Side or South Chicago ...

Agnes: No, we have the El Capital is a good grocery store but they don't keep the full supplies, I mean reasonable store. The one over here across the street it's expensive. [Margarette: Very expensive]. It's frustrating if you want something in a hurry and you go to the store and they don't have it. But it's, in emergencies it's good it's walking distance.

Neighborhoods were previously able to support most retail needs. The convenience stores that do exist offer a limited but expensive stock for those who do not have access to a larger shopping area. Residents have to rely on public or private transportation to gain access to many basic necessities. That aspect of community life also disrupted the daily interactions which took place as residents and workers shopped in the immediate area. These interactions are now dispersed to a much greater area. Many residents of Southeast Chicago travel to other community

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13 Herbert Gans, 1996, in writing about the functions of poverty in society discusses the role of these communities to market less than desirable goods.
areas, the mall\textsuperscript{14} in the south suburbs, or to the cities of northwest Indiana.

'What was' remains clear for a wide range of age groups, from those in their late twenties to the elderly. What has replaced that vibrancy is a degrading of the image of "making it", of no longer being a center of activity, and the attrition of public spaces for community contact. Residents resent their new options. They must either leave the communities to shop or pay the price of "convenience" to those businesses which currently exist in the less affluent neighborhoods. And at the individual level it is the inability to maintain self, family and home.

This is an extension of the "ripple effect" played out in the local community over many years and where the beginnings of the image of abandonment and ghost town are traced. In this layer of change the community felt more than economic decline but they expressed the dissonance of an image of the recent past with the constant reminders of the everyday present. This continues as personal relationships erode over time creating another layer to the concept of decline.

\textsuperscript{14} A point for further research would be the chronology of economic development, especially the malls in the suburbs, to the decline of the these blue collar shopping districts. At a later presentation of this material in Northwest Indiana the same mall was mentioned as having the same kind of effect on downtown Hammond. The resident dated this shift in shopping to a time prior to the major industry shifts.
From Steel Town to Ghost Town

The imagery of ghost town emanates from the visual change in the landscape. The visual change is seen both in the daily activity level throughout the neighborhoods where the mills were located and in the actual physical presence of the structures abandoned and left behind. For over seventy years the mills had sustained a pulse that centered most activities. From daily shifts, community recreation, yearly celebrations, to seasonal slowdowns and extended layoffs or strikes, mill activities set the tone and pace of life in a steel town. The local community had grown used to riding out both the peaks and the valleys of industry cycles. But when the mills were running they were the heart which pumped people in and out of the area and money into the local economy. When the mills closed permanently this pulse ended.

Visual change impacts the small neighborhoods adjacent to the mills as well. Large numbers of people stopped coming through the area so neighborhoods could no longer support the businesses which had opened to service mill worker traffic. Local shopping areas did not simply close, but were also left to sit empty and in disrepair as a visual text for community decline and abandonment. The following quote came from a parish priest (Father Paul) in Merrion Manor.

Anyway, um it [Wisconsin Steel] shut almost like overnight and it had a very devastating impact I think
on the community. Psychologically ... [EJ: South Deering?] well South Deering especially because that was so close. But also this community [Merrion Manor], we had people from this area who worked there. And then for example if you drove in, I don't know if you got on 100th Street, but if you look on 100th Street between Oglesby and Yates, there is a shopping strip, used to be a shopping center there. And in the late '60s and the early '70s there was a full compliment of stores there. The neighborhood hardware store, um convenience store kind of things. And after that it was closed up. It lost a lot of the traffic you know going through and so on. So that started to get run down in the early '80s. And the last store, um was evicted from there I think in 19 I'll say '93 I think. And now it's basically completely abandoned.

The economic decline has a domino effect on the image of a physical community. Having many businesses close at once added to the sense of ghost town. What follows is how an elderly white ethnic woman, Katy, from South Chicago tied together the plant closings and subsequent business closings to the image of ghost town.

Ah, well, the stores started closing up. ... They started laying-off in the stores. We had a couple of drugstores close, two of them, they just had Woolworth's close, um you know, other little stores that just closed, other little restaurants, a lot of things closed. And uh, it just seems very sad. I never seen anything like it, it was like a ghost town.

The other visual image raised by residents was the physical presence of the industrial site itself. Once the industrial structures located on large parcels of land became idle they took on a symbolic significance. Ghost town as a term embodies this physical death and its symbolic significance. The following quote is from a priest (Father Matthew) who worked at St. Kevin's in South Deering during the plant closings.
The mill just sat there and the wind and the elements do its own tear down of the place. They [Navistar] made no effort to tear the mill down. ... after the mill closed it's like the body didn't die, it could not be buried so it just sat there and rotted before everybody's eyes. It was just appalling. And it is still standing, most of it is now down. ... So as the building kind of starkly deteriorates before the community's eyes it's kind of a stark symbol of the lack of care and um the word...its not about care its um...its kind of like the community has been left bereft, dead but not buried.

Agnes, a parishioner of the same church, one block from Wisconsin Steel, stated it a slightly different way, "And um, some people say, 'Oh, this is such a very depressed area'. Well, in my estimation, since the mill closed, the mill is just like a ghost hanging over the whole community like a cloud." The priest is delivering the symbolic message as well as a critique of the policy of disinvestment while the resident is stating more bluntly the immediate case of what it is like living next to a structure abandoned for over fifteen years. In either case it is the physical structure defining the image of the community to the general public. Both the quantity and quality of mill and business disinvestment created the surreal image of ghost town.

There were also aspects of abandonment which residents expressed other than the physical change of industry and businesses and the economic loss. Accompanying the death of the industry is the long lasting and far reaching emptying or loss of what constituted community. For some who remain it was a keen sense of sadness, abandonment by family and friends.
A woman from Northwest Indiana was discussing the changes in her neighborhood which had occurred during the same time period. She said that what I had described happening in Southeast Chicago was very similar to what she had experienced. She had felt abandoned. "Friends of twenty six years were gone along with the sense of community in my own neighborhood. It was almost like a ghost town."

Katy replied in a disgusted almost exasperated tone after I had asked the seniors group whether their children had remained in the community "... they got all their education, their degrees, and then they left the community and we're stranded here with nothing." It was one of the few times anyone expressed strong resentment with the way things turned out. However, the experience of watching the young leave so that those remaining sensed a loss of youth or vitality in the community was expressed in a number of different interviews.

The subjective characteristic most commonly mentioned in reference to this process of change was sadness. I asked Theresa Anne, who had been away from South Deering a year during the time period Wisconsin Steel closed, to describe her community when she returned.

EJ: Could you watch that change? Could you see it, ... was that something that you were aware of as you came back to live in the neighborhood that that was changing?

Theresa Anne: I was out there for a year ... when I came back the mill had already closed. Cause it, the doors closed in 1980 it was actually 1980 that the
doors closed. And I think it was somewhere, I want to say ... I don't remember the month but I heard about it first from my mother. And then when I came back that summer ... and I got that apartment by my mom's in the next block. And I don't know if it was, you know, a mind thing or if it was a reality but I felt, I sensed a difference. I sensed sadness. It could have been in my own mind but I sensed it. And I felt it.

This resident had been gone a year so the contrast was more striking but she expressed what many felt the community was going through. I expected anger, disgust, bitterness, which may have been the more dominant response ten or fifteen years ago, but there was really a much stronger sense of sadness accompanying the descriptions of change.

There is a time dimension here that adds to the quality of the changes people are expressing. Plant closings are often expressed in economic terms but in the daily lives of these residents the era was more often expressed in terms of personal loss.

Another level of abandonment, a belief system based on "God provided for people who work hard and are responsible", was raised by Father Matthew. When I spoke with him he had moved on to another parish in a Southwest suburb of Chicago after spending thirteen years within what he called the triangle of mills, (Wisconsin Steel, Republic Steel, and U.S. Steel South Works) in Southeast Chicago. His long description of change came at a point in the interview when he was describing how residents of his parish knew that the status quo of three generations was coming to an end. What follows is part of his narrative of the fourth aspect of
change. In it he moved from describing the physical abandonment to the feeling of spiritual abandonment and then how this manifested itself in his parish:

There's also a thing in the people I think from a priest's point of view that's a struggle to deal with was that there was certainly a sense of God's...or in people's eyes, how did God fit into all this stuff? We've been brought up with a strong ethic that if you work hard, you can earn money, you are being responsible, you are giving to your community you are paying your taxes. That for someone who works hard, God provides. So the image of God has been kind of the unspoken as the provider, God provided for people who work hard and are responsible, he provides. The mills close, there's no jobs. For three generations what had been a source of employment, security, and income is now dead but not buried. So what about this God then who is the provider for those who worked hard? That whole thing came crashing down with the mills [and] the local economy. So there's a sense that that no longer works and people are feeling deeply betrayed. Not just by an Ed Vrdolyack or by International Harvester or by a world economy or a world steel market. But also a tinge of betrayed by their own vision of God as provider, the vision was linked to a paycheck and job [security].

He went on to talk about community depression and I asked if he could describe what he meant:

Depression manifests itself in a certain kind of lethargy. After awhile, after about three years at Kevin's it became increasingly difficult to motivate people to act on their own behalf. To take their own destiny in their hand and shape and influence the destiny of the neighborhood, the job market in the community. It became increasingly difficult. There was an inertia, a resistance that ... worked with us that we couldn't just write off as another project. People brought it into church with them. There is a lack of, that's funny, its little things that kind of give you a lead or word on human spirits on where they're at. The lack of singing at church. ... Could not get that community to sing. People don't sing when they are depressed. They may do some dirgey kind of stuff to express their sadness. But maybe not even those.
These comments suggest that the belief system has been shaken to its very core. And this plays itself out to the extent that residents no longer feel that anyone or any action can make a difference. Inertia is not the initial chosen response to the plant closings but is a learned response after many attempts by many people to make a difference fail. This becomes a dimension of the current population which makes directing change an even more difficult task.

This decline in faith manifested itself as ambivalence. This was most apparent in the numbers of times residents contradicted their own thoughts within the same dialogue. There would be moments when someone would be expressing strong feelings of patriotism only to later say they could not understand why the government was unable to help industrial communities while plants were closing across the country. What is right and wrong is no longer clear. This kind of ambivalence was also expressed about workers, unions, and corporations. Each was respectively hard working, helpful, and the best to work for or like a family, at one moment and then later described as lazy, troublemaking, and thoughtless. In reality, the residents were expressing the complexity of the world they found themselves in with a belief system that no longer supported their experience.

Ghost town is a metaphor for a variety of ways
residents viewed changes happening in their community. From the physical to the metaphysical the defining quality of this change had to do with being left behind, abandoned, hollowed, to being without meaning or a belief system to explain what had happened. Most visible is the economic loss but this loss was much more. The interwovenness of the economy and industry with community and individual identity is much more complex.

With this in mind there were many topics which were not mentioned, the most apparent to me was the lack of placing blame in any direction. The series of events which happened in Southeast Chicago had major social, economic and political implications. There were powerful actors involved trying to influence how these events would unfold. No actor involved in any aspect of decision making was ever mentioned or implicated by residents in the way events turned out.

Community organizers and priests were the only people who mentioned the political, corporate, union, or community efforts to direct change. A recurring theme in the interviews with priests however was that the series of events was something so big politicians could not help. While there was a desire to have residents be active on their own behalf there was also a recognition of the intractability of corporate decision making.
Conclusion

Over eighty thousand people remain in the community I have described as Southeast Chicago. This is far from any definition of a ghost town. Yet over the two years in which I had become acquainted with this section of Chicago many residents and outsiders used ghost town as their description of the community. Some of this image comes from those who share a loss of identity at being at the center of a steel worker community and for some it is the loss of activity within the community and the visual text of decline written by the remaining business and industrial sites. Other layers of this image are less visible as residents try to make sense of the mounting personal losses in friendships, and a belief system that has lost its meaning. Even newcomers sensed the loss of "what was" while negotiating the challenges of "what is". The ambivalence shown towards major community institutions plays itself out as a reluctance to choose a course of action with no immediate identity or centering force to direct change.

Plant closings began in 1980 and this theme of abandonment and loss remained current in 1995 and 1996 when these interviews took place. The duration and permeability of the effects of decline, though this varied from

15 A new resident of the South Deering community, I spoke to in 1997, described the area as depressed. She had hoped to put her children in the local parish school but it closed. This left her scrambling to find a new school for her children.
neighborhood to neighborhood, was one of the dominant themes that comes from the interviews. This is especially true in the neighborhoods nearest the actual physical structures of the mill sites.

The area remains more industrial than post industrial but it no longer sustains the image of a thriving community. But community life does go on in the remaining spaces where personal interactions continue. The next chapter will examine in greater detail the contextual changes of social relations within the community.
CHAPTER 5

PEOPLE, PLACES, AND THINGS: CHANGING SOCIAL RELATIONS IN A STEEL COMMUNITY

I asked Agnes if people my age (35-45) had remained in her neighborhood and her reply was: No, ah that's what, that's the problem with this area. You know, its the old people that are staying and the young ones are moving out, uh, for better housing to begin with. And better schools. Its the school system that they were worried about then. They started out here in their first married years but then they moved out.

Elderly woman living in senior's housing in South Chicago: Like the Claretians, you take the Claretians for instance. They're building homes. They built this place for the seniors. They've gotten more property down the street that they're going to rehab, you know?

Changing Relations of Family and Neighbors

During their interviews residents spoke about many dimensions of change. In this chapter I move beyond the description of decline to explore the changing social relations in the community. These changes include those resulting from the mill closings along with incremental changes in any community that come with the passing of time.

While nearly everyone interviewed had family and friends who moved from the community after the closing of the mills, it was also the case that many siblings and adult children had moved long before the mill gates shut. These
moves were related to employment opportunities, housing and education available in the community at the time of the move.

Eight of the people I spoke to had siblings or children who had gone off to college or moved away prior to changes in the local economy. For many of these working class families, their children's generation was the first which could afford college. Herbert Gans suggests that ethnic group members need an extended period of opportunity to move out of the local ethnic enclave, (1962). In this community, social mobility was pursued through higher education as expectations of steady employment through the steel industry declined, due possibly to sporadic strikes\textsuperscript{16} and later the increasing occurrence and extended nature of industrial layoffs.

This was a common occurrence in many industrial communities. Social mobility through higher education became available as union wages grew to equal those of the middle class after World War II. This group of young people

\textsuperscript{16} Misa, 1995, describes the importance of these interruptions of steel production in terms of pushing market interests to seek other suppliers. Strikes and layoffs were particularly contentious topic during the group interview of senior citizens. Residents had very divided attitudes toward the efficacy of the union but for some more importantly was the disruption in their lives caused by the sporadic nature of their family economy due to strikes and layoffs (this will be discussed at length in the next chapter). I am making an assumption that the hostility displayed by people who remained through these disruptions reflect some of the impressions those who left felt about becoming part of that economy.
had a wider range of choices for employment and location for settling. During the 1960s and 1970s ethnic neighborhoods were experiencing change from increased levels of income, education, and out-migration of youth (Zippay, 1991). This aspect of community change is often omitted in literature on working class communities when the focus is on those who remain\textsuperscript{17}.

Some relatives moved because of better job opportunities opening in other areas. The sister of one informant moved to the west coast with the relocation of her company. Many of the children, who went to college, now lived close to jobs in other communities. Industrial communities offered few employment opportunities outside of industry-related professions.

Whether for education or employment, the movement was not specific to any race, ethnicity, or gender. In one interview Beatrice, a second generation Polish-American, was proud that her children, nieces, and nephews had all gone on to college. Bonnie, an African American woman living in Jeffrey Manor spoke with equal satisfaction of having seen both her children, a son and daughter, finish college and working in professional fields.

However, the experience was different for those who did

\textsuperscript{17} In reading Rusted Dreams, the description in the chapter "Blood Ties" creates a stereotypical portrait of limited working class aspirations. This fails to account for the subtle but significant changes occurring within many families and industrial communities.
not move until after the mills closed. The daughter of one of the older women in the focus group decided to follow her job to the western suburbs. She was laid off shortly after the move as the business downsized and relocated to the outer ring of western suburbs. Her own daughter was, at the time of the interview, deciding whether to move again further west or to move back to the city for family support. What her mother described, of those who did not leave until after the mills closed, was the experience of the "last hired first fired." What research has shown is that this phenomenon was especially true for women, and minorities.

At first, some of the people who went off to school did return to their community in hopes of settling there. But it was the quality of housing and education for their new families that was seen as less than adequate to meet their needs. In the following conversation I was asking Agnes about where her own children lived.

EJ: Nobody wanted to stay in the area or ...?

Agnes: No, ah that's what that's the problem with this area. You know, its the old people that are staying and the young ones are moving out, uh, for better housing to begin with. And better schools. It's the school system that they were worried about then. They started out here in their first married years but then they moved out.

Only in Hegewisch, here the local conditions conducive to attracting young people back to the community. A Daily Southtown article titled "Old-fashioned values: Tight-knit Hegewisch prides itself on roots" states, "Hegewisch
residents are known for passing their homes down to their children and grandchildren (Dodge, 1995)."

These recent changes in ethnic enclaves with the growing separation of family members, has produced a tension within families and a stress on the local community. In every ethnic or racial group there was some mention by parents and in one case by the child who had moved away from the community of pressuring the elderly parent to move from Southeast Chicago. Most of the elderly people I spoke to stated that their children saw the present community as too dangerous for the elderly to remain. The increasingly violent nature of gang activity and random gunfire was a major cause for concern.

However, none of the elderly planned on leaving. For them, losing their home and leaving their community means a loss of independence and of the ties they have made over a lifetime with people outside of family. The son of Margarette, a Mexican-American woman, wanted her to move closer to him in Georgia. She retells the conversation:

"Mother I can't see you in this neighborhood anymore, why don't you sell the house and buy in Georgia?" Ah, my husband is already on pension pretty soon, in two years, "Sell the house [ ] and buy a nice house, small house, they are cheaper over there. More cheaper than Chicago." And I say, "No, I'm happy here. For me, I feel uh [ ] in this kind of neighborhood, God's presence. In the rich neighborhood I don't feel God's presence in there, their neighborhoods."

During the time I was interviewing and working with different community development groups I had learned a great
deal about concerns in the community related to the weakening of local family support systems. Local community organizations were preparing for intergenerational conflicts over the parent’s desire to stay in the community and maintain their own home, and care for their everyday necessities while their adult children pressured them to leave the community.

This was not an easy subject to address because ethnic groups considered themselves capable of "taking care of their own", a sentiment I heard often in my interviews. At the same time the spatial closeness that had made the family support network possible was eroding quickly as were the local services which would make community care for the elderly possible. Among major areas of concern for one community housing provider was how to provide for both the affordability of housing and a continuum of health care in the community, as the elderly stay and their presumed caretakers move away (Interview, Claretian Associates, November, 1995).

The experience and meaning of departure of family members from what had been two and three generation enclaves is best understood historically. Early movement was influenced by the increase of opportunities for social mobility through education and employment. Later, as some adult children looked to return to the community, the lack of quality housing and local public education became major
factors in deciding not to settle in Southeast Chicago. Movement after the mills closed had a much different quality, relating more to the lack of local opportunities. Historically there were many reasons, both positive and negative, for leaving the community given an individual's situation when making the decision.

Rarely does a person leave what is considered a "home" on one factor. Theresa Anne, who had recently moved to Northwest Indiana, made one of the most interesting statements about her decision to move. She said that Southeast Chicago would always be what she considers home but the quality of life for her children was much better in their new community. For her, housing and employment were not an issue. Education for her children was one of the major issues, but it took a series of events before she finally decided the quality of life equation had become too unbalanced in South Deering.

She began to lose hope after it became clear that there would be no new airport in the area. There was also increased violent gang activity. A young boy was shot and killed at the end of her block. The safety of her two boys was her major concern. In her new Indiana community quality public education and a safe active park system added to the quality of life she had spoken of. In her youth, South Deering had offered all of those amenities but now she saw them as available for her children in Indiana.
Family relations were already changing as opportunities initiated movement of a generation away from the community. While this stream of people moving out grew into a flood during the plant closings there was an influx of people not connected by family or common history moving into the community. Relations between neighbors underwent drastic changes after the mill closings.

The census data shows a great deal of change both in total numbers and in the race and ethnicity of the population. While the mills were going through their layoffs and closings, people were moving into and out of various neighborhoods. The data reviewed earlier also discussed the loss of employment for many of the local residents as the poverty rate increased dramatically. So there was a quantitative change happening in total numbers of people, with differences depending on time and community area, but generally downward. There was also a number of qualitative differences based on employment, race, and household structure.

What was happening in the different neighborhoods was not just a movement of friends and family out of the neighborhood but in the case of Southeast Chicago a movement of different types of newcomers into the neighborhood. In many instances residents and priests spoke of new residents who were not of the "quality" or "caliber" one would want as a neighbor. In Jeffrey Manor, where in 1980 ninety-six
percent of the population was black, it likely was a class or household issue. Likewise, two Latino’s interviewed discussed a tension between new immigrants and the settled Latino population which had a distinct class bias. There are few white youth left where the elderly white population live. Race, ethnicity or class was never mentioned by them, only the household status.

With the decline in employment and wages in the community combined with the demographic trends of population decline and change, many of the historical sources of ties within neighborhoods no longer existed. What is certain is that people no longer necessarily know their neighbor either personally as a friend, acquaintance, relative, or as a person employed in the steel or related industry or service. This can be said between the long-term residents who no longer maintain their properties as they had in the past with those that do, as well as with the long-term residents and the newcomers.

The quality of personal relations has declined as newer and older residents (in terms of years residency) are unfamiliar with each other and see each other as part of the explanation for the context of the current state of the community. There is some empathy for long term residents who are having hard times but it has its limits. One resident of Northwest Indiana summarized it as:

...The ones that can leave do, others (the younger people) who stay have faced job loss, depression, and
alcoholism, the young ones moving in are predominantly single parent families, and the very old are struggling to hang on, are set in their ways, and put up with it.

Seeing ones neighbor as more of a "stranger" is happening at the same time fewer contacts are happening in employment, local public spaces, and while the industrial, commercial, and home sites are looking worn down or abandoned. It is the physical image of decline (implying lack of pride in one's home and therefore neighborhood) which again stands as the public image of the community. But the underlying tensions are tied not only to the change in the economic condition of the community and its residents but as unfamiliar relationships of neighbors within the community grow and fewer opportunities to build familiarity exist.

Changing Relations Between Residents and Institutions

Another set of social relations which have seen drastic change concerns the residents and long standing community institutions. The most commonly mentioned institutions were the schools, parks, and churches. What people clearly recognized was a decline in schools and parks and a changing role of the church.

Most residents who mentioned schools believed they had declined drastically. As was already stated in a previous quote, this decline played an important role in younger families choosing to move from the area. In Theresa Anne's
case, where she had a three generation connection with her community, the schools had played a major role in her decision to move out and in her decision of where she located. It was also a place where she could contrast the interactions of her new with her old community.

You go to the schools for parent— you know teacher conferences, I mean talk about lots of people and participation. ... And that makes it feel like my old kind of community, where people cared, people really care. I saw with my own kids growing up out there [South Deering], I had to send them to a magnet school in an African American community. When I lived in South Deering so they could get a good education I sent them to a magnet school. And um, a lot of people do that in poor communities, they send their kids to magnet schools so they get a better chance at a better education.

Theresa Anne described this as experience based on gaining knowledge. Parents who become involved in their children's education learn where the good schools are and move their children into them. She is Latino, moving her children to a predominantly African American school because of what the magnet school had to offer. She said that many of the new parents in the community, African American and Latino will do the same, once they see how poor the local schools are.

No one spoke positively about any of the schools in Southeast Chicago today. They believed that schools that once were some of the best had become some of the poorest. The decline in the number of local parish schools as well as the high cost of tuition made them a less attractive alternative to residents who had previously enrolled their children in them. For one of the youngest people who took
part in the interviews this was seen as a drastic decline in what her parents could provide her. Maria, a Latino who was raised in South Chicago, had attended a parish school until high school, when her parents could no longer afford to send her. She felt going to the public school provided her a lesser quality education.

Not surprisingly, the issue of parks and sports were, like education, services that had declined over time. They were an integral part of the social dimension of community, as were parades and festivals. Informal social interactions occurred at field houses, sporting events, and picnics. Much of the community-building efforts happened around these events that brought everyone together. The park was now viewed as either unsafe or as the programs having dropped in quality. Little league had disappeared for a short while altogether.

Unlike the schools however, the parks were mentioned as a local institution that are now really trying to make a difference. The elderly mentioned the numbers of programs initiated by the park district for their participation. One priest spoke of the local park district administrator as working very hard at creating neutral gang territory for youth activities. Not everyone agreed at the success of these efforts but the parks were seen as one of the areas where someone was trying to make a difference.

The institutions most apparent in these communities
were the churches. I had asked frequently if I was getting a slanted view of the community by speaking to people at churches or at housing provided by a church based organization. The response I heard most often was, "Who else do you expect to find?" The church has played a critical role in becoming the food pantry, the day care center, the youth activity center, the counseling center, and the builder of housing. The role it has played continually changes and adapts to the current needs of the community.

When asking the senior’s group about positive events in the neighborhood, an elderly woman in South Chicago said:

...Like the Claretians, you take the Claretians for instance. They're building homes. They built this place for the seniors. They've gotten more property down the street that they're going to rehab, you know?

The priests I spoke to were all active in community organizing efforts within their parishes. They were well versed on local politics, community and economic development, and involved with organizing efforts outside of their parish responsibilities. I am certain that not all parishes in Southeast Chicago had activist oriented priests. I had tapped into a group of priests involved in progressive teachings of social justice issues. In the interviews I conducted, the various parish churches represented were mentioned by residents for providing social services, housing, advocacy, and above all else leadership and a place to organize any type of community event or effort.
I asked Bonnie about what was happening in Jeffrey Manor after the mills closed. She spoke about the community experiencing a lot of change that caused depression. Growth from this, she stated, takes time to adapt to change. Jeffrey Manor had gone through a lot of hardships together. They, the parishioners of Our Lady Gate of Heaven, worked with the priest, who led the effort but made everyone take part. Bonnie emphasized the part about the priest making everyone take part in community efforts.

The church has also been active in promoting community events such as the Stations of the Cross on Good Friday carried out in the streets of the community. A number of priests recommended that I take part in this observance (which I did in 1995) because I would be able to see the way community members have associated their neighborhood with prayer. One priest said it is the symbolism of a very concrete death and life giving event and ties the story of sorrows and passions of the community to a larger story, and ultimately redemption. This procession takes place outdoors as it winds its way through the streets of a number of Southeast side parishes. It has become a means to participate in a public display of community as well as a deeply religious ritual. In my observation it was also a special day for generations of family and friends to dress up, have fun, and to take pride (not to mention a lot of video film) of those participating in such an impressive event.
Sustaining the intensity needed to cope with years of trying to provide for the needs of the community, inspiring residents to action for those needs, and administering the cost of running a parish in a neighborhood with declining income takes a toll. One priest was personally burned out by the inertia, the years wore him down physically and mentally. The way he described it was, "Those who left had the incomes, those left behind had the least to give the church. I had staff layoffs and the building was hard to keep up. It needs to be more about thriving than surviving."

He had a core group of parishioners to sustain the church after he left because they saw it as a care-giving place for the neighborhood. It is here in the places that remain in the community where people are engaged, influencing their own destiny to survive in the neighborhood where not ghosts but the spirit of community is still kept smoldering by very real people. While the years take their toll the elements to build community are alive if not well.

This is tempered with reality. A recurring theme in the interviews with priests was that the series of events related to the steel plant closings was something so big politicians could not help. The priests chose to fight their battles at the level they saw themselves being most effective. This was meeting the basic needs of the community. While there was a desire to have residents be
active on their own behalf there was also a recognition of the intractability of the corporate decision making in a global economy without regard for the local community. This came though mainly when the priests discussed the inability of local officials to redevelop steel mill sites.

**Stories Not Told**

At the other end of the change spectrum in social relations were very few stories of personal or family troubles. Everyone spoke in terms of the "other" if there were negative implications (children were mentioned without prodding only in a positive light). There was a general perception that divorce, domestic abuse, alcoholism, drug abuse were much more prevalent after the mill closings but this was a topic kept very general. I did not expect parents or spouses to speak to a complete stranger (especially considering most of these were not private or in-depth interviews with any one individual) about their troubles.

There is however reason to be concerned here. When I did question one resident directly about her children, she spoke about a son who had lost his job in the mill and then spent the next ten years in and out of hospitals and treatment for depression. He considers it as having lost ten years of his life but he is better now and back working for a trucking company. The very quiet, private nature of
the losses individuals and families experienced may never become part of the social cost equation. Embarrassment accompanying the stigma associated with mental health issues or family problems makes this a difficult part of the story to learn about.\(^{18}\)

Only one person even mentioned the fact that the social services were either not available or not appropriate for the kinds of problems residents were experiencing. One person mentioned that alcoholism became a more obvious problem and that families that had been close knit were falling apart. She stated, "Social services weren't there, it was a big void."

**Conclusion**

Southeast Chicago developed a set of social relations based on a heavy reliance of an industrial organization. Those described here, family and neighbor relations and relations between residents and the institutions they see as important to their community provides a summary of how residents talked about these changing relationships within their community.

Historically industry was a center for employment, it created a center for retail expansion and interaction, and

\(^{18}\) As I mentioned in the literature review, there was a great deal of social work research done on this topic shortly after the plant closings. The long term impact in these communities is not well documented.
it had provided many of the sources for recreation and community gatherings. People spoke of Inland Steel as a family, and Republic Steel and U.S. Steel as good places to work, they treated their workers well (only one person mentioned the Republic Steel labor dispute and ensuing riot). The community link with industry was strong and its gradual disinvestment left areas of community needs unmet but often unnoticed as well until the needs were critical.

A sense of abandonment starts to take hold after the initial plant closing and then the long extended list of decline starts adding up. The community goes from being a major source of employment, production, retail center, meeting and gathering place to a second hand retail outlet. A physical presence of the hulking structures industry leaves behind forms the backdrop for smaller signs of decline. Strip malls closing and being left abandoned, homes and yards no longer maintained, a sense of sadness of what people have endured, and a loss of pride through the inability to support a family were common characteristics of the changes from a steel town to a ghost town presented by the residents of Southeast Chicago.

Changing interactions between generations in a family, and between old neighbors and old and new neighbors are part of the less obvious changes taking place. Social mobility was already moving a significant number of younger people out of the ethnic community. Changes in the quantity
and quality of interactions within neighborhoods, schools, and parks add to what is seen as a decline in quality of life that residents experience. Neighbors seem like strangers both in history and lifestyle while families work through the difficulties of interdependency between generations. Institutions within the community exhibit elements of both the tensions and decline that exist along with the possibilities for regeneration. These stories about the process of change in a community summarize some of the more and less apparent and compelling changing social relations residents acknowledge and for which they make daily accommodations.

The restructuring of this community is happening over a long period of time without the organization industry had provided. The challenges have been obvious due to the economic decline and the less obvious restructuring of relationships. Within these stories though it is also possible to see how and why the spirit of a community is sustained and renewed even under very trying circumstances. The elderly, whether they are there because they choose to be or can not afford to leave, hold the history of the neighborhoods. They are also constantly forced, mainly by their families, to articulate why they stay and how they make accommodations for all of the changes and inconveniences many of those changes bring. This brings a certain zeal as the woman exhibited in her "presence of God"
statement. For all of the inconveniences, the elderly are true boosters of the community.

New people are moving in. From the new residents, the neighborhood gets an energy and a vitality. I did not have the chance to speak with any newcomers during the course of the interviewing but in a number of stories it was the new home owner who was trying to restart the little league, or the new couple from Mexico who parishioners rallied around to provide for some basic needs. The churches, the parks, and the senior centers are where people are interacting and learning about each other.

The last chapter will look at some perspectives residents had for addressing the process of community change. This provides multiple sites for understanding the possible conflicts and opportunities for the future of the community.
CHAPTER 6

LOCAL AND PERSONAL: PERSPECTIVES ON COMMUNITY CHANGE

The neighborhoods of Southeast Chicago are linked to the growth of the steel industry and in this context linked to each other. However, a short drive through the various neighborhoods within this region features striking contrasts. Small neighborhoods provide distinctly different experiences between neighbors, institutions, and industry. Awareness of the heterogeneity among what is broadly termed "blue collar" communities is an important beginning to understanding the variety of stories residents had to tell.

I have been interested in the stories of the people who have worked and or lived in the community during the changes experienced in Southeast Chicago since the closing of the steel mills. The stories I heard pull the focus to the everyday movements of people such as shopping, volunteering, work, and activities of children or grandchildren because that is what life is. Community is very local and it is personal.

In the previous two chapters community change is described by residents through the mill closings and disinvestment in the community, and subsequent changing social relations. Most interviews however, did not center
on gloom or depression. One interview hardly touched on the down side of the community change and never on the "ghost town" theme. Individual's had their own interests, the environment, the church, their children and their own story, changes in shopping, deciding to move or not, and so on, which they discussed at length. I want this variety of perspectives to complicate the picture of the Southeast Chicago story.

In this chapter I will describe a number of the issues residents of Southeast Chicago shared where their stories brought to the surface conflicting perspectives revealing divisions between members of communities. Each issue discussed has its own history which can not be dealt with in full. What is important here is not the specific issue but that this small pool of people offered many different perspectives. Each informant offered insight to underlying community conflicts or strategies for sustaining themselves or their community through the effects of long term disinvestment.

**Environment and the Economy: Community past, present and future**

Hegewisch is in the very southeast corner of Chicago. The housing is almost exclusively single family homes or two and three flats. Of the community areas in my research, it had the most recently built homes. The yards are very well tended, even on close inspection. Demographically, it
remains mostly white but with a slowly increasing racial and ethnic mix of residents. The area is surrounded by highways, railways, landfills, wetlands, and industry.

The one person I had interviewed from this community captured many of the contrasts Hegewisch has with its neighbors. Beatrice is a retired office worker of Republic Steel. Her family had worked in industry but her children and her sibling's children did not. Her outlook for the community was bright. She showed a great deal of pride in Hegewisch being able to attract young people back into the community and provided a newspaper article detailing its success at doing this (Dodge, 1995). Beatrice rarely spoke of community decline and never any aspect of the ghost town theme.

Since retirement she has been very involved in a number of community activities including the building of the new library and tending to her church's, as well as her own, garden. Most importantly she has been heavily involved with a local environmental group. She is self taught on the topic of wildlife and plant life of the wetlands and the environmental concerns in the Calumet Region. She gave me a list of contacts if I wanted to pursue an environmental angle in my research.

What Beatrice offered during the morning I spent riding around the area with her were ideas about the future of the community (in this sense the greater Calumet region) and
economic development linked to long term environmental recreation and restoration. She expressed her disbelief that the Calumet Lake Airport was ever even considered and was active in seeing Hegewisch\textsuperscript{19} show its displeasure with the plan.

Noteworthy from this interview was that I was talking to a woman who was from a steelworker family, worked in a mill herself, raised a family and retired to a life of volunteerism and environmental activism. Not only is she not a one dimensional stereotype of a working class wife but she is not alone. In observing one morning of her daily routine of phone calls and contacts she is hooked into a network of like-minded individuals in Hegewisch.

However, the main topics raised during this interview; brownfield development, environmental concerns, and community attachment, are a major tension between residents of Southeast Chicago. Competing views on employment versus the environment arose especially in terms of the Calumet Area Airport plan. In the interview with Theresa Anne,

\textsuperscript{19} Mayor Daley’s plan for a third effort pitted community areas and neighborhoods of Southeast Chicago against one another. To some it was a final attempt to get entry level employment opportunities into the community again and to others it was seen as destroying an historical community and yet to others an ecological community. A detailed historical account of the various residential positions on the airport would expose more of the internal tensions between age groups, class and special interests. The newspaper article she provided discussed the local campaign "Dump Daley" and lobbying efforts. Most housing in Hegewisch and some of South Deering, East Side and two south suburbs would have been eliminated and residents relocated.
there were a number of times when she discussed the importance of the airport to the community. Her perspective linked the development plan with the hopes and future of the community.

I think that some people are not uh, some people do not accept the fact that the neighborhood really has changed so drastically. I think, I think there are some people who are ... the vast majority of the people from South Deering, which is the neighborhood I grew up in, supported the airport idea. But there was a handful of people that were, that said um, "Why do that to such a wonderful community?" Wonderful community? Our community's dying, what are you talking about wonderful community? I think that they almost were like blind to the reality, partly due to their strong roots that were there. And they didn't want to admit to the fact that the neighborhood was dying. I really think that that was what was going on.

(later same interview)

EJ: But you still decided to buy in there?

Theresa Anne: There was still some hope I know in my own mind. I think in maybe some other people's as well. ... I know that the airport was one big, that was probably a big ... part of the big hope. You know? And, I think that, see when you have something to hold onto like that you [are] just a little more up about the rest. I'm thinking, in '89 was I still doing some of the little league stuff? I know I was still contributing to the little league stuff and um ... like sending the kids to the St. Kevin's day camp by then. And there were still some little pieces that seemed like, maybe, you know maybe something can happen here. Maybe we can turn it around, I think. And I, and I think one of the things that really like ... the gang banging that was, that I didn't know existed to the extent that it did in that little part of the neighborhood was a significant turn-off to me. Cause my first summer, I moved in at Christmas time, a week before Christmas at 104th. And my first summer there a young African American boy was murdered on the corner and I lived, there's a fire station and then there's my house. ... It seemed like simultaneously it was when they decided, no, we weren't going to get the airport. And it seemed like it all came together and it seemed like the gang banging, the graffiti was ... I don't
know if it was more noticeable or if it was taking place more. And now there wasn't a hope and it just was totally really negative. It just seemed very, very negative. Cause I remember some of the gang bangers even saying, "Do you think we're going to get that airport Mrs. [ ], ... , do you think we're going to get that airport? We got to get that airport, you gotta, you gotta go out there and, oh you gotta go out there and fight for us." And, you know like there was a lot of people kind of depending on that, kinda counting on that. It seemed like a lot of people.

For Theresa Anne the airport plan was the remaining hope that the South Deering community could end its downward economic spiral. Generally, the airport was an economic development plan which for some carried the death of their community and for others carried the hope for the future. It was this kind of contrast in perspectives which made me wary of not only the differences between residents but of how complex these perspectives are in the reality of creating change for a community. Both women were very positive at other points in their interviews about what it meant to keep Waste Management from starting another landfill in the area. That was a view with common ground, "No more dumping on us!"

But, jobs versus the environment, will be a continuing tension between residents. These women share a common history but do not agree any longer on a common future. The views that they represent will be debated every time a new development plan is raised. In Theresa Anne's interview there was no mention of the environment. In Beatrice's there was no mention of unmet employment opportunities for
large portions of the Southeast Chicago population. What they did share was a part in actively campaigning for their own points of view.

Community attachment without an environmental concern was another point of view that worked against the airport plan. Hanging on to the history of the community was more important to some of the elderly residents than of looking to the future. Father Matthew who at the time was at St. Kevin's, said of the airport decision and what it meant for the future:

People are not sure where to move on to, it will be played out in this [the older] generation. The next generation will have to address economic and urban development. The airport was a measure of what will be sacrificed. Relationships—schools, churches, environment of life friends, networks, was too much to let go of for the sake of the next generation. [Could not let go of the] sadness too. It asked too much. It is a post-industrial area, but [I] don't know what it will go to.

The priest is suggesting that the elderly are also wrapped up in the future by their attachment to what was and prolong making a decision on how this community will play an active part in the post-industrial economy. Each point of view speaks of a different local vision for the future one emphasizing environment, another jobs, and another attachment to a history which is linked to a current set of networks.

Another perspective of the environment and economy characterized the class distinction between residents and spokespeople. Comments made about the cleanliness of the
area before and after the mills had closed were illustrative of these differences. A priest compared the environment around U.S. Steel South Works in the present to when the mills were going strong in the 1970s. He stated of the earlier years, "[T]he parking lots were full, and it was dirtier." To him, the community was cleaner now.

Margarette and Agnes, parishioners of St. Kevin's, stated it very differently.

Margarette: And um, I don't know exactly when the neighborhood re ... [Agnes: Changed?] changed. Do you know exactly? I can't remember exactly. ... Yeah, well, there was a yeah no big problems ... pero, this dirty and depressing, like a ten years ago? Or maybe more, I ...

Agnes: When the steel mill closed, yeah.

Margarette: Yeah, fourteen years, exactly fourteen. To Margarette and Agnes the community became dirty and depressing when Wisconsin Steel closed.

The importance of the difference in views has tremendous implications. Speaking to priests and community leaders is a common means of getting the view of the local community yet they are in many ways outsiders, not from the community. Priests also represent the local area in many high level discussions about the future of the area. In this instance, the priest carries with him many middle class values of what a community should be. To him, Southeast Chicago was dirty when the mills were working. This is also a common media view of an industrial community. To these residents, the community was not dirty and depressing until
the mills closed. These competing views contain many of the quality of life issues already discussed in the conflict between environment and economy, the mill working means pollution but it also means jobs\textsuperscript{20}. The quality of life is better for those who rely on the mill for employment but takes away from the quality of those who focus on the pollution. It also raises the question of who really represents a community and what perspective he or she takes to a discussion about the future of "the community".

During my research it became clear that there were very strong differences within this community over its potential for the future. The issue of environment and economy was only one of many ways conflicting perspectives, within the community and between insiders and outsiders, found in the interviews.

\textbf{Timing: Moving in, moving out, and staying put}

When and how someone comes into the community seemed to play a significant role in how one characterized change. At St. Kevin's, I interviewed two women together in the church kitchen. They were both there because they do volunteer work at the church. I guessed that they were about the same age and would have very similar ways of perceiving the change experienced in that neighborhood. Instead, there

\textsuperscript{20} Edwin Dobb's (1996) article on copper mining in Butte, Montana states the case well of class tensions over industrial production and lifestyle choices.
were remarkable differences. Agnes, the older Polish woman spoke first about when change "really" took place in the community. Her story began back in the 1950s when Trumbull Park Homes were first integrated with blacks. Sporadic rioting occurred from 1953 to 1955, (Chicago Commission on Human Rights, n.d.).

Agnes: Right. ... But before that we had a, what was that, oh they were called South Deering Improvement Association (SDIA). Now when the blacks moved in, they were, in my estimation they [SDIA] were the instigators in all this problem we had. They would rile the people up. They were the ones that used to set the garages on fire and stuff. You know to get attention or whatever. I don't know what their purpose was. But they were the ones that did it. And, if you say, say that to any of them that are still living, you accuse them, they'll deny it. But they all moved out of the neighborhood, almost immediately. And they went to the suburbs so guess what (she laughs). That happened in the suburbs, the blacks followed them and now, which is the truth, and now they are moving further away. And uh, we really should be integrated. I feel as it makes for a more rounded life for everybody. When I lived in South Chicago we went swimming with the blacks kids in the park and we went to school with them. And there was never any problem. But it was this one particular group that really started it. And then, when the blacks started to come to church it was horrible, it was simply horrible. And this particular black group, I'm sure they weren't Catholic because they just sat there, they just sat there. They didn't do stand, kneel, they just sat there. And the police would escort them to church. It was, that was the times that I didn't go to church because I was afraid.

EJ: What years was this?

Agnes: Oh '51, '52 [actually would have to be 1953, 1954, and 1955]. And we were in a police state, oh for, I would say for more than a year. The policeman had a, a housing in the project. They stayed there day and night policing the people. And then once the thing settled down ...

Margarette: Watching the people?
Agnes: Yeah, so they wouldn't ...

Margarette: Um, day and night?

Agnes: Ah-hm, yeah. Margarette's uh quite a bit younger than I am, so she doesn't remember.
(Margarette: Five years only ... five years). So she doesn't remember. And I remember Margarette when she first came to this country she moved next door to me. She was a child bride. [They laugh.] So, and ah, what else can I tell you?

EJ: Well we're up to '50, 1950. Were you, what time did you move into the community, when you were a child bride?

Margarette: Yes, (EJ: What years were those?) end of '53 (Agnes: ah-hm) '54.

EJ: What was it like then, when you moved in then? What was the community like then?

Margarette: Oh, beautiful. Beautiful, quiet, um there was a what I say ... ah in the summertime. Sometimes ah, I remember when I just came um, next to your house, we sleep with the door open, just the, you know the ... [Agnes: screen door] the screen door open the whole night. So nobody bother ... It was nice.

Agnes: And now these, these past years. Oh, I don't know how many years now Margarette would you say that all this gang activity started here, with the shootings ...

Margarette: Would you say maybe, yeah it was Wisconsin steel closed, right?

Agnes: Yeah.

EJ: So the sixties and the seventies were still pretty, pretty nice?

Agnes: Yeah, yeah.

This interchange is remarkable in a number of ways. The first is that I always prefaced my interviews with being interested in what happened in the communities after the mills closed. So it was interesting that Agnes went back to
the 1950s. But she caught my emphasis on change and this is what she wanted to talk about. Her perspective is both one of a certain age and of experiences within the community.

The late nineteen forties and early fifties saw much change in the policy of public housing in Chicago related to integration of blacks and whites in low income housing projects such as Trumbull Park Homes. Violence erupted in the local neighborhoods. The Trumbull Park riots happened as the Chicago Housing Authority was going through substantial internal policy changes of how the process of integration should happen21.

Agnes' experience was from the perspective of someone who had remained living in this community for the past fifty years through turbulent and peaceful times. She wanted to discuss race in the context of the community's history and to add a perspective not often discussed, that of a white ethnic who is not a bigoted caricature. Having been raised in an integrated neighborhood of South Chicago, Agnes did not understand the perspective of the racist South Deering Improvement Association. At the same time she did not like blacks attending her church because she felt they did not show respect to Catholic practices.

21 This era of public housing in Chicago is formative for the policies which emerged and helped shape the Chicago Housing Authority of today. Internal race and patronage politics shifted from liberal to conservative and ended the era of trying to maintain integration within the projects, (Bowly, 1978.) This marked the beginning of the era of all black projects, later to become all poor black projects.
Creating greater distress, her place of worship became an extension of the encampment happening at Trumbull Park Homes where there was no escaping police presence. Police were also at the school that her oldest son attended, adding to this uneasiness. Her dialogue expresses the complexity of change where racial change happening at Trumbull Park Homes affected her everyday interactions.

The views of the South Deering Improvement Association became those ascribed to all South Deering residents. However, Agnes wants to tell me that her two strongest recollections of this time period were disgust for the SDIA and the fear from the constant police presence. When discussing the following two decades, when more ethnic and racial turnover in the population occur, Agnes describes South Deering as a beautiful community. Even after the 1980 Wisconsin Steel closing, when gangs became more violent and stores and other services were harder to access, Agnes was and remains a booster of the community.

Margarette adds another perspective. In the above interchange she stated she came to the community in 1953 or '54. That is when the Trumbull Park Homes riots were taking place and yet later in the interview she speaks of the area being beautiful and quiet. Margarette had just moved from Mexico into her cousin's home on the same block from Agnes and was newly married. She was not yet attached to any of the community institutions and did not have any
recollections of the disturbances that Agnes had. In her world there was no recognition of the Trumbull Park Homes riots.

Our personal worlds are very central to what we as individuals come in contact. The experience of these women, five years apart in age and about ten years difference in establishing residence in the community of South Deering, shows how different and localized that perspective can be.

Agnes pointed out a less often identified turning point in her experience of community change. She said that her boys' age group was more affected by Vietnam than what happened later in the mills. She said that many young men came back "messed up" by that experience and that it changed the community.

Many if not most of the men sent to Vietnam were from blue collar communities, especially minority and Catholic. Many informants mentioned that some of the men who were most commonly seen asking for money in the community were Vietnam vets. They are the most visible reminder of what the war meant to these communities. It is really unknown what the less visible impact in terms of homelessness, mental illness, and substance abuse has been on this community and working class communities in general.

Timing, seen as when a person becomes a resident of a community and major events that occur during that time
period both seem important to consider when looking at various perspectives of change. In the instances above age, community attachment and major events (Trumbull Park Homes riots, Wisconsin Steel closing, Vietnam War) formed the context of how a resident described change and the issues they saw as important.

Agnes and Margarette also told a story about a young couple who just moved to Southeast Chicago from Mexico. The parish came together and donated a table and television. The young woman's mother had been trying to talk them into returning to Mexico but they want to stay. They are content and eager to be part of their new home. Both women were impressed with the young man's ability to find two jobs.

This same type of story was repeated in another context. It was told by Theresa Anne as she discussed people moving into the neighborhood after the mill closings. From her perspective these newcomers would not view the changes in the community the same way as those who had been there for generations.

Theresa Anne: [I]n addition to that, I recall this one family in particular that had grown-up in the CHA housing facility (Trumbull Park Homes), which is part of our neighborhood, and they, I remember them, their whole, it's a large family, uh, they did not feel the way that many of the people who had lived on the other side, the residential side not public housing but on the residential side, private homes, how they felt. They didn't feel the same. These, this one family in particular, had moved out of the CHA housing facility as grown kids already, I mean grown adults now. Still in their household with their mother. And, to them, coming across that borderline, the projects and the private housing to them was like a big leap and a very
positive leap. (EJ: Uh-hm) But they hadn't been privy to the realities of our life prior to living – to their move. And so they didn't feel it the way people who grew up on this side felt it. They saw this leap as just a real big positive cause there is a difference. Certainly there is a difference, but ... cause I lived in CHA housing for a year and I know, I know some of the differences. But, um, those kind of, people like that they didn't see the drastic change because they weren't really part of it to be honest with you.

The residents of Trumbull Park Homes who Theresa Anne is discussing became the builders of a new little league. They had high expectations after leaving public housing without many of the trappings the history of South Deering holds. The decline in the local community was happening while others saw moving in as moving up and out of public housing or from another country in even greater financial distress. Not having interviewed anyone who had made either types of moves it is hard to know what their decision was based on but I would speculate that this was seen as a positive move.

Another way that residents perceived the community differently was in what it had to offer individual social needs. Bonnie described why she was thinking about moving out of Jeffrey Manor. For many of her neighbors who were married and comfortable the community had a lot to offer. She was looking for some lifestyle changes for herself. Divorced, fifty years old, her children grown and moved out, and looking at an early retirement, the community did not offer the kinds of activities she craved. As a single
woman, she did not want to be responsible for the upkeep of her home. Feeling a little bored, wanting a change, Bonnie was in the process of looking for some place else to live. What she said was, "...[I'm] not running for reasons other than personal growth, its Bonnie not Jeffrey Manor." Her personal, rather than family needs were pushing her to leave Jeffrey Manor.

Agnes was older than Bonnie and made her decision to stay in South Deering over some of the same issues:

I'm usually here [St. Kevin's] on Friday's but there are times that I am here more days and that's how I keep busy. And I never sit home. If I'm not doing stuff here, I'm doing stuff someplace else. I belong to one senior citizens club in the park and I gave that up because its terrible just to be with old women. They're worse than little children. They watch you, you know if you have a birthday cake or whatever they watch, whose slice is bigger you know and they do complain. They do complain. Old people are terrible. So somebody says, was wanting me to go and live in the senior citizens home you know in River Oaks, that place. I couldn't, I couldn't. I have to look out my window and see kids running around and stuff.

Marital status made Bonnie uncomfortable with her more "settled" neighbors and the community no longer offered the kinds of experiences where she felt like she was growing. For Agnes, the church offered her the opportunity to volunteer. Where she lived allowed her to feel part of a still close and vibrant neighborhood and preferred it to what many of her friends were choosing, a seniors home in the suburbs. Each woman chose her strategy to stay active, one by looking outside her community and the other by finding ways to remain active in it.
Conclusion

"Human variety" is what made this qualitative research interesting and fun. Finding instructive differences within this small number of interviews suggests a variety of implications for reflection. First and foremost is that there is life in this "ghost town" and it is a vibrant and heterogeneous community.

History relating to industry and the timing of development around that industry plays a key role in the differences between residents of neighborhoods. Spatial location is important as well. Living near the old Wisconsin Steel site in South Deering or the South Works site in South Chicago is very different than living in Hegewisch where the remains are not the backdrop against the residential area. Decisions about redeveloping each of these industrial sites will set changes in local relations among residents in motion.

The human variety, though offering many shared environmental and historical qualities of community, had many differences. The common factor in decisions or opinions about issues in the community were related to opportunities and access. A resident's perspective, depending on race, ethnicity, length and timing of attachment to the community, marital status, and age varied as to how they all saw access to and opportunity in housing, employment, recreation, and education.
This variety also enhances the possibility of conflict. How access and opportunity are distributed over time defines much of community change in terms of social relations. Whose interest or how many interests to consider becomes an issue. The Calumet Area Airport plan is an instructive point of contention to be examined between communities (spatial and constituent). At the level of community, what might seem like a good direction for development for most residents in Hegewisch may not seem very good in South Deering and so on down to the smallest recognized neighborhoods.

At the level of resident the choice of "home" is measured in individual perceptions of community amenities fitting self-defined needs. Some residents chose to leave, some chose to stay, and some chose to move in and become residents for a multitude of reasons. Access and opportunities were key to what they chose. But it is also important to note that no one story was simple, driven in any way by a single factor. The "human variety" in this research was limited but offered a great deal of insight into creating a story of community change that captures the dynamism differences provoke.
CHAPTER 7
CONCLUSION

What this thesis offers is a backdrop for building questions about community change which link the world of global economic restructuring with the block by block neighborhood changes of Southeast Chicago. The residents experienced an extensive and long term restructuring of the local community due to the decline and disinvestment of the steel industry. Their stories provide a beginning point for understanding what happens in these communities long after the mills close.

I found that the relationship between industry and community was much more than economic. In the community, a sense of abandonment started to take hold after the initial mill closings and the list of business and institutional closings grew. The community went from being a major source of employment, production, retail center, meeting and gathering place to a second hand retail outlet. The physical presence of the hulking structures or enormous parcels of vacant land industry left behind forms a public image of decline. Strip malls closing and left abandoned, homes and yards no longer maintained, a sense of sadness over the loss of friends and family in the community, and a
loss of pride through the inability to support a family were all common characteristics presented by the residents of Southeast Chicago describing in their terms, changes from a steel town to a ghost town.

Issues of identity and status were as unsettling as the extensive ripple effect of economic decline. Losing a centering identity related to the production of steel created an environment where ambivalence and ambiguity towards institutions, each other and the belief system occurred. Combined with the ineffectiveness of all levels of public officials to initiate a plan of action for recovery, this inertia became a major barrier to directing change at the local level. Priests, instrumental in keeping residents active on their own behalf, referred to this as seeing problems too large for anyone to influence.

Social relations between individual’s and institutions also underwent dramatic changes. These changes included new and unfamiliar neighbors, and changing neighborhoods, businesses, churches, schools, and parks. Decline in the appearance of the neighborhood and the services located there added to what informants perceived as a decline in quality of life.

Some of these changes had already started taking place prior to economic decline. The severity and long term nature of the decline exacerbated tensions growing in the everyday interactions between neighbors. What once was
familiar was disappearing while growing changes are becoming visible. Institutions were also either changing or in decline to a degree that they were no longer familiar. The space and time to increase familiarity and comfort decreased. Even churches, one of the few remaining institutions, were in flux as they tried to serve the basic needs of the community. The role of the priest seemed to dictate in many ways the direction a church chose to interpret and meet needs in what they defined as community. The priests I interviewed worked as community organizers to address plant closings and over time, worked to supply food and shelter as meeting basic needs became crucial.

The "human variety" along with the common stories of change adds a complexity which begins to convey the actuality of community life. There was extensive heterogeneity in what is often thought of as a one-dimensional "blue collar" community. These various perspectives were necessary for understanding processes of change at the local level. They are also important for considering both issues with common ground and issues with competing interests.

Comparing experiences based on the human variety is less than adequate with such a small number of stories to use as analysis. I have not spoken with young people, working age men, recent immigrants, and non-English speaking residents. However, I think it is important to note from
the stories, experiences were related to race, ethnicity, and gender. But those factors were cross-cut by age, marital status, employment status, and timing of residency in a community. This was then influenced heavily by changes in the local economy (industrial organization) and available local institutions (churches, stores, recreation). Focusing on the multiple perspectives of the residents provides an opportunity to add to the discussion of community change in areas often overlooked by researchers. This approach also suggests a number of the potential internal conflicts and opportunities which await the residents of Southeast Chicago.

Southeast Chicago reframed a community in the areas where people do still meet: churches and shopping areas were where most people met with their neighbors. Through volunteering at church, joining the environmental group, and being active over issues affecting the local neighborhood, people reconstituted their community. It is these forums that allowed older residents to insist to doubting family and friends that it was to their benefit to remain in the community.

A few institutions were also active in trying to recreate community participation. Programs for the elderly and the youth at the parks and the church (St. Kevin's was running little league and a summer basketball camp for community youth afraid to use the park) were on-going though
there was some skepticism that these efforts would be effective after seeing so many fail. Regeneration was also seen in the opportunities this community offered newcomers. For example, while tensions exist between neighbors unfamiliar with each other, new home owners and new citizens also brought enthusiasm and energy into the community. While I am not trying to put a happy, feel-good spin on grim circumstances, it was apparent in my interviews that life does go on and people make the best of it. This research contributes to the broadening of people's awareness of what keeps these seemingly ghost towns alive.

Completing an Intellectual Journey

There are two paths this thesis suggests for further research. One is the theme of ghost town and the issues that arise in communities with similar sets of circumstances. The other is the unique set of circumstances which set old industrial communities apart from others. Each path offers its own set of questions which need further research.

"Ghost town" is not a term I would like to perpetuate. However, considering the circumstances, it is a theme which implies a much greater meaning than simply an area's loss of population. A particular set of circumstances occur in many different types of communities where this feeling of being left behind dominates the local environment. "Ghost town"
seems to me to be equated with disinvestment, not just
corporate disinvestment, but a pulling back of resources
from government, businesses, long standing institutions\(^{22}\),
and friends and family. Change is happening in many
dimensions and these communities seem caught for whatever
reason at the crossroads of a number of them at once.

When I think of the various types of community studies
with similar profiles, most typically I think of inner city
studies and studies of the decline of urban centers. These
studies concentrate on the uneven impact of disinvestment
relating to race, ethnicity and the isolation of the poorest
of poor. The essence of a ghost town image stretches far
beyond inner cities though to rural and small town farming,
logging, and mining communities around the country as well
as communities where white collar corporate headquarters and
military bases were relocated or closed.

The issue becomes one of having any control over events
which unfold in a community. Decisions made in meetings not
open to the public decide the future direction and well-
being of residents. This continues to raise Bluestone and
Harrison's original question about an inherent conflict with
capitalism and community in a global economy. Is creating
seemingly "ghost towns" everywhere part of the equation

\(^{22}\) It was suggested to me in Pittsburgh to do a study of
the diocese decision making in parish closings. Closings
were seen as having great negative impact on local
communities.
necessary to generate profit?

There are important questions to ask about the process of disinvestment. Is there a way to decrease the likelihood of continually creating ghost towns? Considering what is known about the public and private decisions made in places such as Buffalo Creek which Kai Erikson (1976) described over twenty years ago, there are steps to be taken to avoid much of the potential for long term community depression. It would seem that policy decisions, public and private, set in motion disorientation (leaving a mill to sit and decay for over fifteen years) leading to long term community depression. Recovery or regeneration is then much more difficult to attain. In light of Erikson's research the only surprise is the minimal effort made to prevent this from happening repeatedly.

My research is also a starting point for documenting and understanding change happening specifically in industrial communities. I have begun to do this by examining the industrial forces that brought this development into motion and sustained it to the point of where it is today. To complete this intellectual journey requires further exploration about the unique relationship between early industrialists, development of communities and institutions around industry, and the residents who settled in these communities.

The many special interests served (or not) in this
development need to be considered. Residents and special interest groups each have their own rhetoric at work shaping and reshaping the relationships within some malleable process called community. Steel communities or working class communities in general have always had a variety of issues competing for interests, a certain amount of change happening, and a changing mosaic of people calling the community home.

After the mills closed there was the expected economic turmoil and sense of personal loss for those rooted in the steel industry or in some way providing service to the industry or the community. While many different communities have experienced the same kind of upheaval in the new global economy, the steel communities have their most stark contrasts with these other communities by the depth of restructuring the major industrialists of the twentieth century made. This is seen in the natural environment and in the fabric of the local social, economic, and political life built upon the landscaped terrain.

Placing Southeast Chicago in the center of this research provides a starting point to disentangle the interactions various forces in a community have and will continue to bring to bear on each other. It seems appropriate to increase attention to the process industry undertook as it withdrew from Southeast Chicago. Communities are not simply victims of circumstances. What
Dudley suggests is close examination of the cultural imperatives which allow actions to happen in a particular setting. Here it would be necessary to more closely outline changes in the social and public infrastructure to relate the historical context of industrialization to where disinvestment, the process which has the magnitude and destructive force necessary to create images of ghost towns within vibrant communities, is acceptable.

It is also important to look at the uneven impact of disinvestment to learn why some communities do recover more quickly than others. When Misa wrote about the decline of the steel industry he clearly demonstrated an "isolation from innovation" impacting the large domestic steel producers. Considering the role of industry as a major supporter of physical, social, and civic infrastructure in the communities it was located, I would suggest this isolation from innovation impacted workers, families, and institutions tightly linked to industry. For those who grew less dependent on industry, individually or at the community level, the impact would not be felt as strong.

Design

There were both practical and substantive issues the design for this research created. Practical issues consisted of the how many, how in-depth, and who questions, I had to answer first to set parameters for the interviews.
My decisions were made between limitations of time and resources and having to manage an unending flow of information.

It is also hard and slightly arrogant to impose on everyday people. Unlike the polished spokespeople, I took time from residents's personal and work lives who did not receive anything back from me. Hopefully, a fair rendering of the interviews is my end of the bargain.

Substantively, I have had to ask myself, "have I gotten at what I wanted?" The answer is yes, with qualifications. What stories people wanted to tell me countered pictures that are more typically conveyed in other works. Their stories are quite powerful though when I think about what people wanted me to convey to a greater audience.

The older Polish woman wanting to tell the world that there are ethnic people who were not part of the racist acts of violence but were also frightened by the changes and the constant police presence. The lone Hegewisch resident interviewed expressed her love of community tied to its natural environment while surrounded by land fills and industry. And for the Mexican-American mother of teenage boys, she shared the sadness which accompanies choosing to leave a place called home and the determination to provide her children the quality of life she had experienced growing up in South Deering.

Had I structured the interviews I would only know about
issues I saw as important. That has its place in other research designs. I was interested instead in learning what residents saw as important. This allowed room for both their personal experiences and issues which never become part of the given history. What do we know about the long term impact of Vietnam on working class communities? How do we learn about the untold social cost of displacement from the workforce? What is the role of identity to a community? I know I spoke to a limited number of people and realize large segments of the population have been left out. But what I did get were parts of a story that suggest there are many dimensions of community rarely made public.

Epilogue

The future of Southeast Chicago remains uncertain though the wheels of change have lurched forward on two major fronts. On September 26, 1997 the Chicago Tribune reported the South Works site was put up for sale as a mixed-use development (Allen). On October 12, 1997 the Chicago Tribune reported that the findings for the Lake Calumet ecological park, a decision on the recommendation by the National Park Service to become a National Ecological Park, will be finalized and made public in January 1998 (Ziemba). The tensions within the community are hardly mentioned in either article and only a short mention was given to the conflict between corporate and local interests.
Change is continual and occurs in all communities and with all individuals. It is the details of the change, the process of plant closings and displacement or studies of environmental and social impact which explain the outcome. Details carry information of how and why various opportunities exist for some and not for others and are the definers of how change is encountered. Understanding why places become "ghost towns", how social interactions are changing, what differing local and personal perspectives of change within communities are, is important. It could help mediate some of the more negative consequences of change while enhancing opportunities for the greatest numbers of people in seeing the possibilities change offers.

As Mr. Smith stated, "It's a long story and it's interesting if you have the time to really discuss and put it on paper where you could really read it." I have begun to put the long story on paper but there is long way to go in completing this intellectual journey.
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VITA

Edwina Jones graduated from Pennsylvania State University-Harrisburg in 1993 with a Bachelor of Science degree in Sociology. She is currently enrolled in the Ph.D. program of the Sociology Department at Loyola University Chicago. In the fall of 1995 she was awarded a Community Research Fellowship in Community Development at United Way Chicago and was the principal researcher on a best practice study of affordable housing property management. The following year she was a research assistant on the Public and Philanthropic Funders/Planning Project, managing and analyzing qualitative data with Dr. Kirsten Grønbjerg. They presented preliminary findings of this research at the 1997 ARNOVA Conference. In the fall of 1997 Ms. Jones was awarded a United Way/Crusade of Mercy, Community Research Fellowship in Community Development and is currently working on a community development needs assessment of Chicago.
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The final copies have been examined by the director of the thesis and the signature which appears below verifies the fact that any necessary changes have been incorporated and that the thesis is now given final approval by the committee with reference to content and form.

The thesis is, therefore, accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts.

3/27/98
Date

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