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'Not Our Jobs to Sell' – Workforce Mobilization, Deindustrialisation and Resistance to Plant Closure: Scottish Female Factory Occupations, 1981 – 1982

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This thesis is the result of the author's original research. It has been composed by the author and has not been previously submitted for examination which has led to the award of a degree.

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Abstract

This thesis seeks to expand our understanding of widespread workplace closures and socio-economic change that occurred in Scotland in the late twentieth-century by incorporating the narratives of female workers that took resistive action to the mobility of capital. Its focus is on the early 1980s, a period of accelerated industrial contraction that saw the decline of the nation's traditional heavy industries, and those sectors in which women dominated, such as clothing and light electronics. Three instances of previously under-researched resistance to proposed factory closure are extensively analysed in an attempt to comprehend how the workers involved perceived their work, the impacts of closure on their communities, and how their actions developed.

It is argued that female manufacturing workers, while consistently occupying the lowest paid and lowest skilled jobs, extracted substantial value from their experiences of work based on the solidarities forged at the point of production. Scottish labour history has continued to neglect the narratives of the women that worked at these sites, leading to a significant degree of speculation over their perceptions of industrial work. This thesis addresses this omission by placing the testimonies and reflections of the workers at the centre of its analysis.

In considering the mobilization of the workers through occupying plants to resist closure, it is argued that a multitude of factors dictate whether workers form a collective and choose to take oppositional action. The bonds of solidarity created among workers based on their position in the labour process cannot be separated from the collective actions that develop. Furthermore, it is asserted that these factory occupations were highly influenced by socio-economic developments in each of the localities where they were based, creating additional complexity to assessing why, and how, these groups of workers acted collectively, contributing to general discussions on workforce collectivism through industrial action.

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List of Abbreviations

AEU	Amalgamated Union of Engineering Workers
ASLEF	Associated Society of Locomotive Engineers and Firemen
BMC	British Motor Corporation
CDC	Cumbernauld Development Corporation
CRS	Contract research staff
EB	Executive Board
FTO	Full Time Officer
ILP	Independent Labour Party
ITGLWF	International Textile, Garment and Leather Workers' Federation
NUFLAT	National Union of Footwear, Leather and Allied Trades
NUPE	National Union of Public Employees
NUTGW	National Union of Tailors and Garment Workers
RMT	Nation Union of Rail, Maritime and Transport Workers
SNP	Scottish National Party
SOHC	Scottish Oral History Centre
STUC	Scottish Trades Union Congress
SWP	Socialist Workers Party
TUC	Trades Union Congress
TCC	Telegraphy Condenser Company
TGW	Transport and General Workers' Union
UCS	Upper Clyde Shipbuilders
WCML	Working Class Movement Library

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Chapter One. Introduction

> *Successful sit-ins seem a particularly Scottish phenomenon. Since the success of the work-in at Upper Clyde Shipbuilders in 1971 there have been numerous others which have either led to a number of jobs being saved or have led to increased severance payments to the workforce. In the last year there has been a successful sit-in at the Lee Jeans factory in Greenock; one at the Lovable Bra factory in Cumbernauld; and, most notorious of all from a legal perspective, the sit-in at Plessey Capacitors in Bathgate.*
>
> K. Miller, 1982.[1]

Over a fourteen-month period between February 1981 and March 1982 there were three significant and well reported instances of Scottish manufacturing workers occupying their factory premises in opposition to proposed closure. Beginning at the Lee Jeans factory in Greenock (February – August 1981), the tactic was then used at the Lovable Bra plant in Cumbernauld (January – March 1982) and at Plessey Capacitors in Bathgate (January – March 1982). These disputes represent a dramatically different approach taken by workers faced with closure due to capital migration in Scotland at this time. Throughout the first half of the 1980s, 613 manufacturing sites closed across Scotland, leading to the loss of 164,000 jobs.[2] The vast majority of these closures occurred with little noted resistance by the workers, far less the use of militant action such as the seizure of plant and machinery. Workers' use of factory occupations, that had ignited the British labour movement following the work-in at Glasgow's Upper Clyde Shipbuilders (UCS) in 1971, had dramatically reduced towards the end of the decade and into the early 1980s.[3] Capital was relocated as large manufacturing sites such as Singers in Clydebank and Talbot Motors in Linwood closed, with the workers expressing minimal resistance

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[1] K. Miller, 'Plessey Co Ltd. V. Wilson'. *Industrial Law Journal*, Vol. 11, No. 1 (1982), pp.115-116, p.115.

[2] T. Dickson and D. Judge, 'The British State, Governments and Manufacturing Decline', pp.1-35 in T. Dickson and D. Judge (eds), *The Politics of Industrial* Closure. London: The MacMillan Press Ltd., 1987, p.29.

[3] A. Tuckman, 'Workers' Control and the Politics of Factory Occupation: Britain, 1970s', pp.284-302 in I. Ness and D. Azzelini (eds), *Ours to Master and to Own: Workers' Councils from the Commune to the Present*. Chicago: Haymarket Books, 2011.

when faced with the systematic desolation of Scotland's industrial economy.[4] Thus, the workers' action in these occupations represents a distinctive response to closure throughout this period of accelerated industrial contraction in Scotland.

Another aspect that makes the 1981-82 disputes unique in Scottish labour historiography, and was repeatedly emphasised in contemporary reports, is that they took place in plants with predominantly female workforces. At each factory, a clear majority of workers were women, and it was women who led and participated in the occupations.[5] The distinctiveness of women workers as the public representation of militant resistance to closure was commented upon by Angela Coyle in 1984, who asserted that 'some of the most hard fought and successful struggles against redundancy have, in fact, been women's'.[6] Similarly, Marxist Feminist scholar Esther Breitenbach wrote in 1982 – before the disputes at Lovable and Plessey had concluded – that:

> It is a pleasure to note that the most effective and most militant campaign fought so far [against closure] has been the occupation by the women of Lee Jeans in Greenock.[7]

Each of the disputes received substantial coverage in local, regional, and national media, becoming *cause celebres*, to various degrees, within the British labour movement and working-class communities. Leading figures in the national Labour Party visited the workers and messages of solidarity were received from across the international trade union movement. Demonstrations were organised in the localities where the factories were based, manufacturing workers sent substantial donations to support the continuation of the disputes, and many of the women

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[4] See D. Sherry, *Occupy!: A Short History of Workers' Occupations*. London: Bookmarks, 2010.
[5] In considering the use of terms throughout this thesis, 'occupation' and 'sit-in' are used interchangeably. This is a reflection on the ways in which the disputes have been represented in academic and public discourses. Academics tend to use the term occupation, with no explanation for this preference, whereas contemporary reports and the recollections of those involved, refer to them extensively as being 'sit-ins'. No significance has been ascribed to this use of language.
[6] A. Coyle, *Redundant Women*. London: The Women's Press Ltd., 1984, p.34.
[7] E. Breitenbach, *Women Workers in Scotland.* Glasgow: Pressgang, 1982, p.31.

travelled across Britain to speak to other workers with the rallying call that these were 'not our jobs to sell'.[8] By militantly resisting the rights of corporate enterprise to end production and relocate to new, lower cost sites, the actions of the women at Lee Jeans, Lovable, and Plessey are important in the history of the struggles between capital and labour in Scotland's industrial communities.

Given that these occupations were high profile actions that received considerable contemporary media coverage, it is remarkable that they have not been subject to much academic analysis. Despite a recent increase in academic studies of the factory occupations in Britain during the 1970s and early 1980s, no previous study has compared and contrasted these disputes in an attempt to understand them in their social, economic, and historical contexts.[9] Nick Lorentzen discussed the Lee Jeans sit-in in 1986, which represented an outline of the events that took place through a consideration of the waves of factory closure that occurred in that decade.[10] Similarly, Patricia Findlay published research into the Plessey occupation in 1986, seeking to understand its importance within contemporary industrial relations debates.[11] Lee Jeans is the only one of these disputes to have received significant historical examination, with an article published by this author based on a small, undergraduate research project, and a recently submitted thesis by Jonathan Moss which incorporated an analysis of the sit-in through a consideration of six instances of female-led dispute across the UK in the post-war period.[12] No

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[8] *Morning Star*, 26/04/1982.

[9] The increase in recent research is demonstrated through the publication of two articles focused on UK occupations in late 2016; S. Mustchin, 'Conflict, Mobilization, and Deindustrialisation: The 1980 Gardner Strike and Occupation'. *Historical Studies in Industrial Relations*, Vol. 37 (2016), pp.141-167; A. Tuckman and H. Knudsen, 'The Success and Failings of UK Work-Ins and Sit-Ins in the 1970s: Briant Colour Printing and Imperial Typewriters'. *Historical Studies in Industrial Relations*, Vol. 37 (2016), pp.113-139.

[10] N. Lorentzen, '"You can't fight for jobs and just sit there": The Lee Jeans Sit-in', pp.43-63 in H. Levie, D. Gregory and N. Lorentzen, *Fighting Closures: Deindustrialisation and the Trade Unions, 1979-1983*. Oxford: Blackwell, 1986.

[11] P. Findlay, 'Resistance, Restructuring and Gender: The Plessey Occupation', pp.70-96 in T. Dickson and D. Judge (eds), *The Politics of Industrial Closure*. London: The MacMillan Press Ltd., 1987.

[12] See A. Clark, '"And the next thing the chairs barricaded the door": The Lee Jeans factory occupation, trade unionism and gender in Scotland in the 1980s'. *Scottish Labour History*, Vol. 48

research has been conducted into the Lovable occupation. This paucity of research and academic analysis of this period of Scottish workforce collectivism can be seen as part of a more general weakness of labour history in considering the independent activism of women at the point of production, and the lack of attention given to female resistance to factory closure.

This study therefore attempts to address this historiographical imbalance and consider the struggles of the women at Lee Jeans, Lovable, and Plessey within the narratives of workforce mobilization and Scotland's socio-economic development in the later twentieth-century. The research has adopted a comparative case study approach, with each dispute subject to in-depth original research, incorporating an extensive analysis of archived documentation and a substantial oral history project. These disputes were selected for analysis as they occurred during a short period of time and across a relatively small geographical area in central-Scotland. Within the literature that does make mention of the occupations of 1981 and 1982, Lee's is consistently discussed as the first action with Plessey the conclusion.[13] An examination of contemporary reports highlighted that the three occupations were the most significant in terms of public visibility, with little mention of other high profile actions by female workers over closure. Another important instance of factory occupation launched by women that requires acknowledgement is that conducted at Dundee's Timex factory in 1993, also in response to closure.[14] Despite the importance of Timex – and its similar under-examination in Scottish labour history – its occurrence eleven years after this wave of occupations puts it out-with the scope of this current study.

The thesis provides an in-depth examination of the factory occupations through considering the multiple factors that led to the closure announcements, the

(2013), pp.116-134; J. Moss, *Women, workplace militancy and political subjectivity in Britain, 1968-1985.* PhD thesis, University of Glasgow, 2015 (subject to moratorium).

[13] See Findlay, 'Resistance, Restructuring and Gender', p.70.

[14] See *The Scotsman*, 19/01/2013.

mobilization of the workers in resistance, the development of the actions, the organisation of the workers, and the support that they received from fellow workers, the British labour movement, and their own trade union representatives. It does this through placing the disputes within their historical context, with a thorough assessment of the local and national socio-economic contexts in which the workers acted. In order to achieve this while ensuring that the project has been manageable and achievable, three broad research questions were devised at the outset:

1. Why did these groups of workers occupy their workplace?

2. To what extent were these workers' actions prompted by the changing political, economic and industrial context in Scotland in the 1970s / early 1980s?

3. What do these examples illustrate about women's relationship with the trade union movement at this time?

The questions were designed to be broad and open, so as not to restrict the research as the data collection progressed and the interviewing process began, whilst also providing sufficient guidance to ensure that the project remained focused. In briefly considering the rationale and approach to each research question, the first is clearly the broadest in terms of scope. Essentially, the thesis analyses the factors that contributed to these particular workers, in these particular plants, choosing to oppose closure in this specific period. As Gregor Gall argues, understanding why workers do and do not take action when faced with closure requires a recognition of the complexity of factors that interact through the process of occupation.[15] In order to understand the factors that can explain these actions, a number of theoretical perspectives on worker mobilization have been incorporated

[15] G. Gall, 'Resisting Recession and Redundancy: Contemporary Worker Occupations in Britain'. *WorkingUSA*, Vol. 13, No. 1 (2010), pp.107-132, p.130.

in this study, along with the literature specific to occupation. The first area of literature that is considered in this area is the formulation of grievances that authors such as Kelly argue are central to explaining and understanding the development of a collective among individual workers.[16] The key stages of mobilization include perceived injustice, attribution, leadership, and grievance formation that lead to the development of collective action. However, there is a recognition that an analysis of collective action requires an understanding of in-plant dynamics, based on the argument of Fantasia that the solidarity expressed at the point of class action draws upon 'pre-existing networks and work-group cultures'.[17] Therefore, the thesis has located and assessed the multiple factors that existed within each factory before, and during, the action taken, allowing for the development of plausible explanatory frameworks in considering why the workers occupied, with the recognition that such a research question involves the analysis of several interacting aspects of work and the process of mobilization.

The second research question builds on this recognition that explaining why workers do and do not occupy is an inevitably multifaceted investigation. As the disputes took place during a particular period of socio-economic development in Scotland, the analysis has been framed within this context. The research coincides with an expansion in focus on deindustrialisation in academic studies of working-class communities across Western Europe and North America in the later twentieth-century. As Steve May and Laura Morrison argue, in order to understand the impact of closure, we must recognise that experiences are 'firmly rooted in the personal identities of manufacturing workers, the companies for whom they work and the communities in which they live.'[18] Within studies of the response to factory closure and experiences of deindustrialisation, it is recognised that there exists a bias that

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[16] J. Kelly, *Rethinking Industrial Relations: Mobilization, Collectivism and Long Waves*. London: Routledge, 1998.
[17] R. Fantasia, *Cultures of Solidarity: Consciousness, Action and Contemporary American Workers.* Berkley: University of California Press, 1988, p.235.
[18] S. May and L. Morrison, 'Making Sense of Restructuring: Narratives of Accommodation among Downsized Workers' pp.259-283 in J. Cowie and J. Heathcott (eds), *Beyond the Ruins: The Meanings of Deindustrialization*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2003, p.259.

has continuously privileged the experience of male workers, those most commonly assumed to have been impacted by industrial closure. The work of authors such as Jackie Clarke, who analyses closure in specifically gendered terms, is a key addition to the field and this thesis seeks to further illuminate the experiences of women workers faced with closure and their reactions to these processes.[19] Any study of industrial closure that utilises oral narratives must be also aware and wary of the influence of nostalgia on private and public narratives of deindustrialisation. However, as Tim Strangleman demonstrates, it is too easy to simply dismiss the recollections of those who lived through these times as 'smokestack nostalgia', and that narratives of deindustrialisation require a fuller analysis of the desire to 'reflect back and find value in the industrial past'.[20]

The third research question allows for an examination of the relationship between women workers taking part in militant industrial action and their representatives in the trade union movement. The historic approach of the labour movement to the organisation and collective action of women workers has been viewed as, at best ambivalent and, at worst, hostile. These debates are discussed extensively in the following chapters. However, a broad consensus exists in the literature that union support for women's activism requires detailed examination and this is provided throughout the thesis. The role of the unions in each dispute is considered through an examination of the support that they offered the workers and their relationship with the occupiers, within an analysis of the ways that unions had approached male dominated disputes during 1970s. Such an analysis must extend beyond the particular unions involved in the disputes to include the support networks from across the British labour movement. Due to the nature of defensive factory occupation, and that they are inevitably based on the argument of the workers that they have a right to continued employment, the tactic is able to attract substantial

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[19] J. Clarke, 'Closing Time: Deindustrialization and Nostalgia in Contemporary France'. *History Workshop Journal*, Vol 79, No. 1 (2015), pp.107-125.

[20] T. Strangleman, '"Smokestack Nostalgia", "Ruin Porn" or Working Class-Obituary: The Role and Meaning of Deindustrial Representation'. *International Labour and Working Class History*, Vol. 84 (2013), pp.23-37, p.23.

levels of support from other workers, as well as from the localities in which the factories are based. Contemporary reports and the reflections of the workers involved are probed to question why the workers did or did not receive the support of others, the nature of such support, and its significance in considering struggles against closure in the period.

In answering the research questions and providing a contribution to a neglected area of Scottish history and understandings of historic industrial relations, the thesis is laid out to present the most coherent outline and analysis of the occupations, in a case-by-case basis. Before analysing the data found in the archives and collected through the oral history interviews, a full examination of the existing literature is presented. Chapter two addresses five key areas of current research that will shape this attempt to understand the occupations in 1981 and 1982: deindustrialisation; mobilization theory; factory occupation as a mode of resistance; women and work; and women's activism at work. In each subsection of the literature review, historical and contemporary debates are critiqued, and there is a clear indication of the ways in which this research interacts with these perspectives. Chapter two considers those areas, groups, and localities that have not received previous academic attention. At each of these junctures, there is a consideration of the ways in which the focus of this work contributes to our historical and current understanding.

The methodological approach is presented and justified in chapter three, beginning with a full discussion of the philosophical bases and assumptions underlying the study. Subsequently, the methods used are be explained, and the processes of collecting the materials necessary to address the aims of the work and the research questions outlined. As stated, there is the incorporation of the materials available in archive repositories across Britain, but such a documentary-based approach is insufficient in allowing for the thorough analysis required in these cases. Therefore, an extensive oral history project was conducted to provide a rich source of qualitative, narrative data. Chapter three presents an in-depth examination of the

historiography of oral history, before discussing its use throughout this research and its presentation in the thesis. The methods used to recruit respondents are then discussed, along with an examination of the possible limitations of the interviews collected.

The next three chapters present the research conducted on the occupations, organised in chronological order of Lee Jeans, Lovable, and Plessey. Each chapter inevitably differs substantially in terms of content and the specific discussions of the disputes, but are similarly structured. There is an assessment of the historic social and economic development of each locality, with important differences between the three sites highlighted. While it is convenient to broadly label them as part of Scotland’s traditional industrial base, crucial differences are identified that make each locality distinct, meaning that there were three very different local contexts in which the occupations were conducted. The development of the companies and their operations at each site are then assessed, providing a consideration of the corporate structures and, more importantly, the historical presence of the factories in each locality. There is an examination of labour processes, plant management, and the nature of shopfloor cultures among the women, an essential area for examination in considering the importance of the workspace in the development of collective action.

These analyses are outlined extensively in each chapter, with the overarching aim to assess: ‘what was it like working in these factories day-to-day’? Aspects such as the way in which the products were manufactured, the gender divisions of labour, the approach of management to worker collectivism and industrial relations, and the extent of work-group socialising inside and outside of the workplace are comprehensively examined. Following these discussions, the actions of the workers at each plant are described and assessed. The actions differed substantially, and these contrasts are considered and explained throughout, within a full consideration of the particular dynamics of each locality, workplace, and the

process of mobilization.[21] In chapter seven there is a thorough analysis of such points of contrast and comparison that are identified through examining these actions, contributing to our understandings of Scottish women's participation in industrial dispute, mobilization theories, and the pervasiveness of deindustrialisation in shaping worker resistance in later twentieth-century Scotland.

A key theme that emerges in the discussions throughout the following chapters is that workforce mobilization, particularly through the militant action of seizing the plant and machinery in opposition to closure, is a highly complex process based on multiple factors that interact in the development of collectivism, and continue to be pervasive throughout the action taken. It is argued that any attempt to understand mobilization without considering in-plant dynamics prior to action is insufficient in offering a full understanding of the dynamics of cognitive liberation. This thesis illuminates those factors which had an influence on the mobilization of the workers in resisting closure. This necessarily begins with an analysis of the nature of closure and the announcement of relocation, and it is argued that the development of each occupation was strongly influenced by these factors. The consideration of mobilization also interacts with key factors such as deindustrialisation, the historic nature of women's independent collective action, and the role of the institutional trade union movement in facilitating or inhibiting such activism. It is argued that the process of accelerated industrial contraction is a crucial factor in explaining the workers' motivation for taking action, representing a crucial external force in their mobilization. It is contended that institutional trade union hierarchies continued to place greater emphasis on seeking favourable terms of redundancy rather than supporting workers taking direct action, and such an approach was accentuated in these predominantly female workplaces due to perceptions of militancy and organisational conservatism. This is counterpoised with extensive support for the women – to varying levels at each site – from manufacturing workers throughout

[21] As will be discussed in the following chapters, theories of mobilization focus on the 'point' of dispute. This thesis will argue that workforce collectivism is a process, and attempting to isolate specific points of action are insufficient in recognising the complexities of the power dynamics in the employment relationship.

Britain and internationally, demonstrative of a broader resistance to closure and deindustrialisation out-with the formal labour movement. Thus, while the relationship between trade union officials and women participating in workplace activism remained characterised by ambivalence and hostility, this was countered and, to an extent, negated by the large levels of support offered from rank-and-file workers.

It is important to note at the outset that, despite the differences of socio-economic contexts, mobilization processes, and the development of occupation at the distinct sites, the result of each dispute was that the full closure of the workplaces was prevented, and production continued at some level after their conclusion. Therefore, the following chapters outline, examine, and explain three very unique instances of class action during the processes of deindustrialisation in Scotland, as the workers impacted resisted through launching defensive factory occupation. Crucially, women were the leaders of these disputes and the female workforces won their battles against capital mobility.

Chapter Two. Literature Review

And ah'm thinkin', efter aw' thae years, and people are still talkin' aboot it, ye know? We are doon in history, we are. Wit we done is doon in history, Andy.

Maggie McElwee, former Lee Jeans worker, 2015.[1]

2.1 Introduction

This study of the mobilization of the female workers at Lee Jeans, Lovable, and Plessey Capacitors interacts with a breadth and diversity of literature from different disciplines and contexts. For the purposes of understanding and offering an explanation for the development and historical significance of these cases, this review provides an extensive – though not exhaustive – analysis of previous studies, arguments, and theoretical frameworks. The chapter is subdivided into five key areas of literature, comprising distinct areas of research that are linked in this study as they are the historical and sociological themes that contextualise the occupations under investigation.

The historical period in which these disputes took place was one of the accelerated contraction of industry across western Europe and North America which has been termed 'deindustrialisation' by academics.[2] The argument is developed that understanding the multi-faceted processes of socio-economic change at this time requires recognition that deindustrialisation was a cataclysmic event for those communities that were impacted, and that this has important implications for studies which consider the reflections of those who lived through these times. Women workers, however, have not been integrated within the larger body of study into deindustrialisation, as research has focussed almost exclusively on the

[1] Interview with Margaret McElwee conducted by Andy Clark, 21/08/2015. SOHCA/052/007.
[2] See B. Bluestone and B. Harrison, *The Deindustrialization of America: Plant Closings, Community Abandonment and the Dismantling of Basic Industry*. New York: Basic Books Inc., 1982.

experiences of male workers. Such sites of resistance by female industrial workers have not been included within these considerations, representing a substantial gap in our understanding which this thesis addresses. The literature on deindustrialisation outlined in this chapter provides the necessary understanding of the social implications of industrial contraction on those communities left behind, allowing for the following research chapters to consider the ways in which female experiences converge and diverge from the male-dominated narratives.

Deindustrialisation therefore represents the broader socio-economic and historic contextualisation of the mobilization of the workers at each site, but a thorough examination of the disputes requires a fuller consideration of the multiple factors that can offer explanation for workers acting collectively. In considering the phenomena of collective mobilization, a number of theorists have conveyed the importance of factors such as individual cost-benefit calculations, injustice and grievance formulation, the leadership among the collective, and the attribution of blame. The work of Kelly is examined, as this is the most coherent and developed theory on mobilization to have emerged within studies of industrial relations. However, it is argued that it does not give sufficient consideration to the structural and cultural influences on class action which are forged before the point of dispute, such as labour processes, shopfloor cultures, and broader economic forces like the process of deindustrialisation.

Mobilization theory is also unable to offer an explanatory framework for the distinctions in the type of action that workers take. The type of action utilised is significant in this review, as the use of occupation is clearly central to the disputes being assessed here. The mobilization of the workers through occupation is important in contributing to our understanding of this period of industrial relations in Scotland, and to provide an explanation for the development of the occupations at Greenock, Cumbernauld, and Bathgate. This adds further complexity to the discussions of the disputes, and it is argued that the multiple factors that account

for workforce mobilization have a direct impact on the types of action that workers will take in opposition, and that the historical use of occupations in Britain suggests an important link between socio-economic structures and the action taken by the workers. Therefore, a satisfactory study of these disputes requires a consideration of the work examining deindustrialisation, theories on mobilization, and the use of factory occupations in the pursuit of workers' interests.

An additional, and crucial, aspect is that the workforces involved in these disputes were predominantly female, a factor which must be further explored in addressing the gender imbalance of industrial relations studies and the historiography of work and working-class politics in Scotland. It is demonstrated that women have historically struggled against their position in the labour market. The position of women and the action they have taken has also been impacted by opposition and hostility from within the organised labour movement. However, it will be argued that there exists a gap when considering the relationships between men and women at the rank and file level in the later twentieth-century, and the support structures that existed during periods of industrial dispute and class action. Women workers have consistently negotiated a space for independent, collective action, which has further impacted on the types of action taken. This adds further complexity in assessing the factors that allow for the development of explanatory frameworks in the subsequent discussions of the factory occupations at Lee's, Lovable, and Plessey.

2.2 Deindustrialisation

The term 'deindustrialisation' was first utilised to describe Western policy in occupied Germany following World War Two, the aim being to strip the nation of its industrial strength and to reorganise its economy.[3] Its meaning in current academic discussion is broadly related to the decline of industrial production in areas

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[3] J. Cowie and J. Heathcott, 'The Meaning of Deindustrialization', pp.1-15 in J. Cowie and J. Heathcott (eds), *Beyond the Ruins: The Meanings of Deindustrialization*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2003, p.1.

previously dominated by manual labour such as Youngstown, Detroit, Glasgow, and former coal mining communities throughout the UK. Scholars are increasingly interested in examining the multiple impacts of 'capital flight' on the individuals and communities left behind in an increasingly globalised economy which has seen much industrial production relocate to low cost economies.[4] In the context of this study, deindustrialisation in the UK – and Scotland in particular – was dramatic and devastating in the later twentieth-century. As David Rose et al. argue, Britain was the first industrialised nation and, subsequently, the 'first deindustrializing nation'.[5] The fall in Britain's share of global trade in manufacturing began following the end of World War Two, declining from 25 percent in 1950 to 10 percent in 1970.[6] The impact of this decline on the number of jobs in industry was substantial, with a 34.5 percent reduction of British workers in industrial employment between 1966 and 1983[7], meaning that, by 1984, 27 percent of all workers were employed by manufacturing firms, down dramatically from 38 percent in 1980.[8] Areas in which there was a greater concentration of industrial production – such as central-Scotland – were affected disproportionately as compared to areas with more economic diversity. Estimates of manufacturing job losses in 1979 put the figure at approximately 51,000 in the first two quarters of the year.[9] In considering the impact of this period of increased redundancies on women, Breitenbach has demonstrated that accurate assessment is almost impossible due to no available breakdown of job loss by sex. It can be concluded, however, that the period of accelerated manufacturing decline had a substantial socio-economic impact on Scotland, with increased rates of redundancy, joblessness, and the transformation of the labour market.

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[4] T.J. Friedman, '"A Trail of Ghost Towns across Our Land": The Decline of Manufacturing in Yonkers, New York', pp.16-43 in J. Cowie and J. Heathcott (eds), *Beyond the Ruins: The Meanings of Deindustrialization*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2003, p.21.
[5] D. Rose, C. Volger, G. Marshall, and H. Newby, 'Economic Restructuring: The British Experience'. *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science'*, Vol. 475 (1984), pp.137-157, p.138.
[6] Ibid., p.140.
[7] Ibid., p.144.
[8] A. Bryson, J. Forth and N. Millward, *All Change at Work? British Employment Relations 1980-98, Portrayed by the Workplace Industrial Relations Survey Series*. London: Routledge, 2000, pp.19-20.
[9] Breitenbach, *Women Workers in Scotland*, p.30.

The initial academic study of deindustrialisation was led by Canadian left-nationalists in the 1980s. They were increasingly concerned with the dependence of the Canadian economy on American multinationals and, for these 'activist scholars', it was seen as a struggle between Canadian workers and US corporations.[10] In the United States context, the work of Barry Bluestone and Bennett Harrison represents a key early text on the deindustrialisation of North America. Reflective of much of these early studies, Bluestone and Harrison were commissioned by trade unions and community organisations, and were looking at how to 'turn around' the contraction of industry.[11] Writing during the process of industrial decline, they argued that the pace of capital mobility had become 'unacceptably rapid; indeed, perhaps out of control'.[12] The emotion and anger of the authors, based on their experiences and the experiences of those they worked with, is evident throughout and stimulated criticism from pro-management academics within American business schools. Leonard Schlesinger wrote in his review of the work that 'many feel that [they] have unfairly castigated American managers and painted these men and women as money hungry mercenaries', but also conceded that the 'exhaustive statistical evidence… force me to accept the bulk of their argument.[13] Importantly, Bluestone and Harrison argued that 'deindustrialization does not just happen. Conscious decisions have to be made by corporate managers to move a factory from one location to another.[14] This recognition that capital relocation was not the unconscious fallout from market forces but was instead the result of corporate decision-making has had a substantial impact on the subsequent work in the field.

Moving forward from those initial studies undertaken during the most devastating periods of closure, the long term impacts of deindustrialisation have received

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[10] S. High, '"The wounds of class": A Historiographical Reflection on the Study of Deindustrialization'. *History Compass*, Vol 11, No. 11 (2013), pp.994-1007.
[11] Bluestone and Harrison, *The Deindustrialization of America*, p.83.
[12] Ibid.
[13] L. Schlesinger, 'Book Review: *The Deindustrialization of America* by Barry Bluestone and Bennett Harrison'. *Human Resource Management*, Vol. 22 (1983), pp.479-482, p.479.
[14] Bluestone and Harrison, *The Deindustrialization of America*, p.15.

increased attention, with the level of recent research demonstrated by a special edition of *International Labour and Working Class History* which focused extensively on 'crumbling cultures' in relation to such economic processes.[15] Strangleman, James Rhodes, and Sherry Linkon demonstrate that the early approaches, whilst important at that period, resulted in a 'limited' understanding within deindustrialisation studies, as they failed to fully recognise the complexity of these processes, the social impacts of the struggles between capital and community, and their longer term consequences.[16]

2.2.1 Relocating capital

The economic impacts of capital migration are significant and have been covered extensively by researchers.[17] The reasons for industrial closure are relatively clear and not strongly disputed by writers in this area, the most common factors being the aim to reduce labour costs and a reluctance to modernise factories in high wage paying areas.[18] Whilst the relocation of capital is often perceived through an analysis of globalisation, Tami J. Friedman demonstrates that within the US, states were in constant competition with one another to lure industry away from their traditional base, and this struggle was a recurring theme throughout the post-war period.[19] Whereas these discussions are significant in studies of global economic development and corporate decision making, the impacts of these processes on those areas left behind is an increasingly rich area of research, moving the discussion beyond economics towards a wider analysis of the long term social consequences for those areas and communities impacted.[20] Rhodes argues that it is important that researchers recognise that 'the story of deindustrialization... is not

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[15] 'Crumbling Cultures: Deindustrialization, Memory and Class'. *International Labour and Working Class History*. Vol. 84, (2013).
[16] T. Strangleman, J. Rhodes and S. Linkon, 'Introduction to Crumbling Cultures: Deindustrialization, Class, and Memory'. *International Labour and Working Class History*, Vol. 84 (2013), pp.7-22, p.8.
[17] See for example M. Kitson and J. Michie, 'Britain's Industrial Performance since 1960: Underinvestment and Relative Decline'. *The Economic Journal*, Vol. 106 (1996), pp.196-212.
[18] S. High and D.W. Lewis, *Corporate Wasteland: The Landscape and Memory of Deindustrialization*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2007.
[19] Friedman, '"A Trail of Ghost Towns across Our Land"', p.41.
[20] High, 'wounds of class', p.995.

simply an economic one', a view supported by many.[21] The relationships between industry and the areas in which they operate are complex, due to the conflicting aims and expectations of communities and corporations. Jefferson Cowie and Joseph Heathcott argue persuasively that the era of industrial production in areas now deindustrialised must be seen as a temporary phase of capitalist production.[22] These areas, they argue, were built up through the investment of capital, and were subsequently devastated when this was withdrawn, leaving those behind to negotiate the aftermath. Crucially, this difference of expectation is inevitable in a globalised capitalist economy, due to what David Harvey describes as the ongoing tension between capital fixity and capital mobility.[23] The period of the 1970s and 1980s saw the breakdown of what authors have referred to as the 'social contract' between capital and community[24] and the 'moral economy'[25] within areas dominated by industrial production as there was a 'tsunami' of industrial closures throughout North America and Western Europe.[26] Due to the significance of industrial production and the social ties they generated, these communities developed an 'illusion of permanence', believing that they would continue to be central to their localities, offering opportunities for employment, and subsequently struggled to conceptualise the nature of the changes that took place as a result of deindustrialisation.[27]

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[21]J. Rhodes, 'Youngstown's "Ghost"? Memory, Identity, and Deindustrialization'. *International Labour and Working Class History*, Vol. 84 (2013), pp.55-77, p.56; See for example A. Perchard, '"Broken Men" and "Thatcher's Children": Memory and Legacy in Scotland's Coalfields'. *International Labour and Working Class History*, Vol. 84 (2013), pp.78-98.

[22] Cowie and Heathcott, 'The Meanings of Deindustrialization', p.5.

[23] D. Harvey, *Limits to Capital.* London: Verso Books, 1999, p.266.

[24] Strangleman, Rhodes and Linkon, 'Introduction to Crumbling Cultures', p.9; S. May and L. Morrison, 'Making Sense of Restructuring: Narratives of Accommodation among Downsized Workers', pp.259-283 in J. Cowie and J. Heathcott (eds), *Beyond the Ruins: The Meanings of Deindustrialization*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2003, p.260.

[25] A. Perchard and J. Phillips, 'Transgressing the Moral Economy: Wheelerism and Management of the Nationalised Coal Industry in Scotland'. *Contemporary British History*, Vol. 25 No. 3 (2011), pp.1-19, p.11.

[26] High, 'wounds of class', p.996.

[27] Strangleman, Rhodes and Linkon, 'Introduction to Crumbling Cultures', p.10.

2.2.2 Reflection, loss and smokestack nostalgia

The role of memory and reflection has been central to studies of the long-term impacts of deindustrialisation, framed around an understanding that it is as much a social and cultural transformation as an economic and political one.[28] May and Morrison assert that researchers must seek to understand the 'lived experiences' of those impacted,[29] a perspective supported by Tracey K'Meyer and Joy Hart, who assert that a 'grassroots perspective' must be central in order to fully examine the multiple impacts of economic decline, and the significance of this in shaping community identity.[30] Strangleman further supports this approach, and draws comparisons with studies of deindustrialisation and the work conducted on the industrialising period. In referencing E.P. Thompson's seminal text *The Making of the English Working Class,* he asserts that the 'poor redundant steelworker, the obsolete textile operative' have seen their livelihoods ruined due to industrial change in much the same way as Thompson's 'poor stockinger' or 'Luddite cropper', and these processes must be similarly understood through the experiences of those who lived, and are living, through these changes.[31]

A dominant theme within this literature is that of 'loss' for the individuals and communities impacted by this process. Russo and Linkon argue for a multi-layered analysis of loss, stating that it begins with the immediate economic loss caused by joblessness, followed by a loss of confidence in those institutions that failed to prevent closure, such as government and trade unions.[32] May and Morrison argue that it then develops into a loss and a reconfiguration of personal and communal identities, as displaced workers and their communities attempt to understand their

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[28] High and Lewis, *Corporate Wasteland*, p.2.
[29] May and Morrison, 'Making Sense of Restructuring', p.259.
[30] T.E. K'Meyer and J.L. Hart, *"I Saw it Coming": Worker Narratives of Plant Closings and Job Loss*. New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2009, p.2.
[31] T. Strangleman, 'Deindustrialisation and the Historical Sociological Imagination: Making Sense of Work and Industrial Change'. *Sociology*, forthcoming, p.13.
[32] J. Russo and S.L. Linkon, 'Collateral Damage: Deindustrialization and the Uses of Youngstown', pp.201-218 in J. Cowie and J. Heathcott (eds), *Beyond the Ruins: The Meanings of Deindustrialization*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2003, p.202.

new roles and positions in 'deindustrialising' societies.[33] The extent and nature of this loss varies by individual experience and within different settings, dependent on the personal identities of displaced workers, the companies that they worked for, and the social fabric of their communities.[34] According to High and Lewis, for the majority of those displaced, the scale of socio-economic alteration 'has meant losing a fundamental part of themselves, part of their inner being'.[35] The impact of capital relocation on the loss of health has recently received increased focus, as researchers examine how changes in labour processes negatively impacted the health and safety of workers. In his investigation of workers in Ontario, Canada, Robert Storey argues that injured workers have themselves become 'deindustrialized… their bodies artefacts of an industrial age'.[36] Arthur McIvor has also applied such analyses to his work in Britain, arguing that during and after the period of accelerated contraction, 'working conditions deteriorated and inequalities widened between occupational health and safety standards in… declining heavy industries compared to the new "sunrise" sectors.'[37]

Following from this discussion is the impact and pervasiveness of loss for those in the contemporary setting, reflecting on the industrial period from which they are now separated. Rhodes and Strangleman demonstrate the continuing significance of industry in shaping communal identity, despite a radically changed economic base.[38] Importantly, Strangleman, Rhodes, and Linkon argue that these identities – particularly masculine identities - are cross-generational, and remain significant for

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[33] May and Morrison, 'Making Sense of Restructuring', p.260. See also Perchard, '"Broken Men"', p.82.
[34] May and Morrison, 'Making Sense of Restructuring', p.259.
[35] High and Lewis, *Corporate Wasteland*, p.25.
[36] R. Storey, 'Beyond the Body Count? Injured Workers in the Aftermath of Deindustrialization'. pp.58-83 in A. Perchard, S. High and L. MacKinnon (eds), *The Deindustrialized World: Confronting Ruination in Post-Industrial Places* Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, forthcoming, p.82.
[37] A. McIvor, 'Deindustrialization Embodied: Work, Health and Disability in the UK since c1950'. pp.40-58, in A. Perchard, S. High and L. MacKinnon (eds), *The Deindustrialized World: Confronting Ruination in Post-Industrial Places*. Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, forthcoming, p.50.
[38] Rhodes, 'Youngstown's "Ghost?"', p.59; Strangleman, '"Smokestack Nostalgia", p.27; See also High and Lewis, *Corporate Wasteland*, p.39.

those who have never had any experience of industrial production, due to the strength of this historic communal identity.[39] The sense of loss through industrial contraction is demonstrated by the symbolic significance attached to industrial demolition, described by High and Lewis in the American Midwest as 'ritualistic', representative of a larger grieving process for displaced communities and workers seeking to engage with their industrial past.[40] It can be seen that these visual connections with an industrial past further exemplify the sense of personal and communal loss felt by those who have suffered due to industrial relocation, supporting the argument of Rhodes that the social and cultural 'legacies of industry have proven to be much more permeable' than the material landscape of an industrial economy.[41]

Cowie and Heathcott, however, argue that this overly nostalgic approach to the industrial era must be treated with caution and urge researchers of the long term consequences to move 'beyond the ruins' of deindustrialisation.[42] They argue that in order to fully understand the ways in which deindustrialisation has shaped contemporary society, we must move past tales of nostalgia and victimisation and, based on their view that the industrial era is overly romanticised, we must see manual labour 'for what it was: tough work that people did because it paid well and it was located in their communities'.[43] Rather than seeing deindustrialisation through a lens of victimisation and stories of hardship and economic decline, Cowie and Heathcott argue that researchers must approach the subject as 'a fundamental change to the social fabric' that was created during the industrial period.[44] This position has been challenged by researchers, most notably High and Lewis and Strangleman. Whilst High and Lewis agree that many displaced workers do look back with overt fondness to their employment before deindustrialisation, they

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[39] Strangleman, Rhodes and Linkon, 'Introduction to Crumbling Cultures', p.16.
[40] High and Lewis, *Corporate Wasteland*, p.39.
[41] Rhodes, 'Youngstown's "Ghost?"', p.59.
[42] Cowie and Heathcott, 'The Meanings of Deindustrialization', p.4.
[43] Ibid., p.5.
[44] Ibid., p.6.

reject the assertion that we must remove nostalgia entirely from the discussion, as it does offer important insights into the ways in which communities have reconceptualised their identities and the often negative associations.[45] For High, such considerations cannot be ignored, as deindustrialisation does lead to the 'destruction of working-class towns and neighborhoods' and the long-term impacts of negative economic reorganisation must be considered and understood.[46] Strangleman supports High's position, arguing that, while it is easy to dismiss such 'smokestack nostalgia', authors should recognise the significance of social upheaval in configuring 'what it means and how it feels to live in a deindustrializing society' and fully examine the factors which shape narratives, as well as its contemporary importance.[47] The influence of societal identity is more significant due to the communal experience of deindustrialisation; job loss due to closure is a collective experience, as is the process of social restructuring during and after industrial decline. As High and Strangleman argue persuasively, the social implications of such dramatic economic transformation determine that the study of deindustrialisation should be approached with the recognition that it is a collective experience, in which nostalgia plays a significant role.[48] Furthermore, this approach can give us insights into the significance of the sense of loss felt by those affected, its impact on their identity, and their struggle to understand and adjust to their 'post-industrial' society, which May and Morrison argue is one of the most difficult aspects of deindustrialisation for those impacted.[49]

In considering the long-term consequences of deindustrialisation for the communities involved, another important theme throughout the literature is that of 'failure'; areas that have lost their industrial base are seen as areas that have failed, and this has important implications for the way in which these communities are

[45] High and Lewis, *Corporate Wasteland*, p.94.
[46] High, 'wounds of class', p.1000.
[47] Strangleman, Rhodes and Linkon, 'Introduction to Crumbling Cultures', p.20.
[48] High and Lewis, *Corporate Wasteland*, p.99.
[49] May and Morrison, 'Making Sense of Restructuring', p.260.

viewed, externally and internally.[50] Such areas are often some of the most deprived within their geographical locality, characterised by high rates of unemployment, poverty, and addiction.[51] The narrative of failure is based on the perception that these areas have failed to sufficiently diversify their economic base following the massive contraction caused by deindustrialisation, and leads into questions of who is to 'blame' for the subsequent social problems. In looking at local and national media reports of Youngstown, Russo and Linkon demonstrate that, due to minimal analysis and critique of the reasons for closure and decline in the press, the community of Youngstown has been blamed for the problems that developed following the relocation of the once dominant steel works.[52] They argue further that this uncritical and limited reporting by the media has led to the community of Youngstown blaming *themselves* for economic decline, deindustrialisation, and the subsequent social problems.[53] Owen Jones supports this argument in his analysis of the 'demonization of the British working-class', asserting that the narrative of deindustrialisation presented by politicians and the media has resulted in the image of the 'chav' becoming the symbol of 'broken Britain', as the working-class are blamed for their own poverty and deprivation.[54] Such characteristics allow policy-makers to launch populist attacks on welfare recipients and those suffering from addiction, as their problems are presented as individual failings, rather than reflective of the wider process of socio-economic change. Such media presentations have further implications when researching the impacts of deindustrialisation, leading to questions of who those impacted blame for the negative impacts that economic decline has had on their communities and how their perceptions shape their understandings of historical change.

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[50] S.L. Linkon, 'Narrating Past and Future: Deindustrialized Landscapes as Resources'. *International Labour and Working Class History*, Vol. 84 (2013) pp.38-54, p.38; Russo and Linkon, 'Collateral Damage', p.203.
[51] See for example Perchard, '"Broken Men"'.
[52] Russo and Linkon, 'Collateral Damage', p.207.
[53] Ibid., p.203.
[54] O. Jones, *Chavs: The Demonization of the Working Class*. London: Verso, 2011.

2.2.3 The Scottish experience

Looking at Scotland, the most recent research into the long-term impacts of deindustrialisation has been undertaken by Andrew Perchard and Jim Phillips. Their work has discussed many of the same themes threading throughout the international discussion, highlighting that the Scottish experience has many similarities with those in North America and Western Europe. In looking at former coalfield communities, Perchard argues that the sense of loss for displaced workers is highly significant as it entailed a combined loss of employment, status, and workplace networks and cultures.[55] Both authors write extensively about the 'moral economy' of the coalfields, based on the belief that change in the industry would be brought about by collective agreement between workers and employers, therefore preserving the economic security offered by the industry, relating to the 'illusion of permanence' outlined above.[56] The struggle between capital and community was heightened, they argue, following the appointment of Albert Wheeler as Director of the Scottish Area of the National Coal Board in 1980, who viewed pits purely as economic units, as opposed to the view of the community that they were 'social resources'.[57] Phillips argues that the programme of pit closures throughout the 1980s was reflective of the changing balance of 'class forces in the UK', consistent with Bluestone and Harrison's argument in stating that 'deindustrialisation was deliberately willed' by the British establishment.[58]

In considering the reflections of those in deindustrialising communities, Perchard interviewed a number of former miners to examine the impact of the collapse of the industry and, similar to other research in the field, found that the process has left 'profound psychological scars'.[59] The narratives of his respondents 'capture the very real and bitter experiences of individuals and communities', with much of their resentment aimed towards the state, which they believe abandoned them following

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[55] Perchard, '"Broken Men"', p.82.
[56] Perchard and Phillips, 'Transgressing the Moral Economy', p.11.
[57] Ibid., p.14.
[58] J. Phillips, 'Deindustrialization and the Moral Economy of the Scottish Coalfields, 1947 to 1991'. *International Labour and Working Class History*, Vol. 84 (2013), pp.99-115, p.112.
[59] Perchard, '"Broken Men"', p.78.

the miners' strike of 1984-85.[60] As with other deindustrialised areas, the former coalfields are some of the most deprived in Scotland, with an interviewee (Alex Mills) stating in 1999 that there existed a 'plague' of joblessness and drug addiction, describing the post-Thatcher generation as 'zombies'.[61] For both Perchard and Phillips, the problems faced by Scottish industry contributed directly to the increased support for Scottish nationalism, as the people of Scotland increasingly viewed London rule as detrimental to Scottish economic development.[62] Perchard concludes that calls for nationalism and devolution arose from the coalfields, as these communities attempted to fight back against the economic decline that they viewed as being imposed by London.[63] Significantly, he argues that deindustrialisation, and the cultural scars that it caused, 'shape a powerful national narrative' in Scotland, demonstrated by the use of the site of the former British Steel mill at Ravenscraig by both the Conservative and Labour parties to launch election campaigns in 2010 and 2011 respectively.[64] He argues that the contradictory uses of a former industrial site highlights the significance of the symbolism of deindustrialisation in contemporary political discourse, further demonstrating the strength of connection between society and the industrial past.[65] Furthermore, these psychological scars can create significant moments of activism and resistance to civic ideals of regeneration based on the contestation of the uses of space in Scotland.[66] This national narrative of deindustrialisation in Scotland is highly significant when approaching a study of factory closures in Scotland during the early 1980s and, interestingly, differs from the idea of communities blaming themselves, as mentioned in the North American and English contexts. For many in Scotland's former industrial communities, blame is ascribed to Thatcherism and the

[60] Ibid., p.92.
[61] Ibid., pp.78-79.
[62] Ibid; J. Phillips, *The Industrial Politics of Devolution: Scotland in the 1960s and 1970s.* Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2008.
[63] Perchard, '"Broken Men"', p.94.
[64] Ibid., p.79.
[65] For another example of this, see Rhodes, '"Youngstown's Ghost?"'.
[66] See for example McVeigh, 'Backlash at plans to demolish Red Road Flats live on Television'. *The Observer*, 06/04/2014.

British political establishment.[67] Narratives of closure, resistance, and working lives following the trauma of deindustrialisation must be examined critically through aspects of nostalgia and anger at the ways in which former industrial communities across Scotland have declined as a result of these processes.

2.2.4 The missing narratives

This most recent international research highlights the depth of analysis currently being conducted into the long-term consequences of deindustrialisation, the social and cultural impacts on those left behind, and the ways individuals and communities have reconfigured their identities and maintain links with their industrial past. High argues that this approach 'confirms the historiographical trend away from displaced industrial workers themselves… to a wider reflection on the cultural consequences and representations of deindustrialisation', as authors increasingly examine the longer term aspects of economic transformation.[68] It is for this reason, he argues, that trade unions get very little mention in the special edition of *ILWCH*, as the discussion has moved beyond initial work-place-based resistance to closure towards those left behind, and the contested spaces of working class communities. It is the aim of this thesis, however, to 'scale back' High's perception of the historiography to an extent, as McIvor argues, to 'bring the people back in' and consider the under-researched response of women workers to industrial closure, framed within an understanding of the long-term impacts of deindustrialisation.[69] The most prominent studies in this area – and all of the articles in the *ILWCH* special edition – are based primarily on the impact of declining heavy industry, and are therefore the preserve of male workers. As a result, it can be argued that our understanding is framed within the perception of industrial labour as being the domain of men, and therefore its immediate impact in terms of status, identity, and economic diversification, are understood in primarily male

[67] Perchard, '"Broken Men'".
[68] S. High, 'Beyond Aesthetics: Visibility and Invisibility in the Aftermath of Deindustrialization'. *International Labour and Working Class History*, Vol. 84 (2013), pp.140-153, p.140.
[69] McIvor, 'Deindustrialization Embodied', p.40

terms. When appearing in this literature, women are predominantly secondary figures, viewed through the lens of displaced male workers. For instance, Phillips' article in the *ILWCH* edition is the only one to have significant analysis of women as industrial workers, presenting some discussion of the decline of traditionally female industries.[70] He also argues that, in Fife, women were leading the resistance against pit closures, rather than simply supporting males, offering an interesting insight into the gendered political dynamics operating in different localities.[71]

The work of Jackie Clarke on the resistance and reflections of female workers in the former Moulinex plants in France represents an important effort to redress the male-bias of current research. In her work, Clarke asserts that it remains the case that 'the loss of male-dominated heavy industry' dominates the literature on industrial closure.[72] Fundamentally lacking in the current research is an in-depth analysis of the impact of closure and job loss on industrial *women workers,* which examines their experiences through the same themes as have been applied to men: loss; identity; social contract; and the changing status of work. These will have impacted significantly on the ways in which women workers reconfigured their sense of self and their position in their communities through the process of deindustrialisation. One reason for this gap in the literature could be a result of the continuing reflection amongst authors of gender segregated employment. For women, the transition from manual to service based employment was not overly significant as it was perceived as 'women's work', therefore issues of identity and loss will not have been as important as it was for miners, steelworkers, and other male workers. This perspective chimes with Coyle's convincing argument that there is a 'common assumption' that unemployment is less significant for women, as their femininity is not as related to employment as masculinity is perceived to be for men.[73] This key neglect limits our understanding of the impact of deindustrialisation on the communities involved as the responses, reactions, and sites of resistance by

[70] Phillips, 'Deindustrialization and the Moral Economy', p.104.
[71] Ibid., 110.
[72] Clarke, 'Closing Time:', p.110.
[73] Coyle, *Redundant Women*, 1984, p.94.

women workers displaced by capital flight have not been integrated within the broader historical narrative. Such considerations will shape this analysis, as the women involved in these factory occupations will be considered as active agents in the processes of socio-economic transformation, resistance, and changing ideas of communal identity through deindustrialisation.

2.3 Mobilization Theory

When considering the formation and expression of group identities in pursuit of shared interests through the use of factory occupations within the case studies being assessed in this research, it is necessary to consider the theoretical explanations offered for the development of 'the collective workforce'. In periods of 'normal' industrial relations, that is during regular capitalist production, considerations of consciousness interact with a number of themes including agency, corporate policy, and workers' institutions. Adopting a Marxist approach to industrial relations theory, Richard Hyman argues persuasively that profit is the 'key influence' on company policy, therefore it is in their interest to force costs down, resulting in the perpetuity of conflict at work.[74] Jacques Belanger and Paul Edwards, from a non-Marxist but critical perspective, also stress that 'conflict, in the sense of an organizing principle, underlies the employment relationship'.[75] As workers are required to sell their labour power in order to enjoy some of the comforts of civilisation, the unequal power relationship at the point of production is a principal feature of the capitalist economic system. Workers also have a direct interest in the economic success of their employer in order that they may continue to sell their labour for the extraction of surplus accumulation and profit. Whilst a simple economic principle, this arrangement has fundamental implications on the ways in which we can attempt to understand the emergence of collective action. Workers can act collectively through the formation of labour unions so that they are able to

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[74] R. Hyman, *Industrial Relations: A Marxist Introduction*. London: MacMillan, 1975, p.19.
[75] J. Belanger, and P. Edwards, 'Conflict and Contestation in the Contemporary World of Work: Theory and Perspectives, pp.7-25 in G. Gall (ed), *New Forms and Expressions of Conflict at Work*. London: Palgrave, 2013, p.8.

'overcome their weakness as individuals in the employment relationship' and redress the inherent power imbalance. As a result of the perpetuity of conflict at work and the unequal employment relationship, Hyman questions why there is so little expression of conflict at the workplace.[76] Theories on mobilization can therefore offer a greater understanding of the ways in which collectivism can develop, the pre-conditions necessary to facilitate the pursuit of common interests and the structural limitations that inhibit such mobilization developing.

In presenting an individualistic assessment of the barriers to collectivism, Mancur Olson argued in his seminal *Logic of Collective Action* that rational choice of the human being making such decisions must form the basis of any attempt to understand these processes. For Olson, collective action is rational if 'pursued by means that are efficient and effective for achieving [their] objectives'.[77] Olson places particular importance on the size of social groups, arguing that larger groups are more likely to suffer from 'free riders', those who enjoy the benefits without contributing to its organisation.[78] Olson's argument places the individual at the centre of the employment relationship, arguing that, unless they are in a small grouping or are coerced, 'the rational, self-interested individuals will not act to achieve their common or group interests'.[79]

This position has been widely cited, discussed and critiqued since its initial publication in 1965. A central argument against the work is that rational choice cannot offer a satisfactory theoretical framework for offering a meaningful assessment of collective action. Lars Udehn argues that Olson does not offer sufficient consideration of the 'mixed motivations' that determine the actions of those belonging to a collective group.[80] John Kelly supports this critique, arguing

[76] Hyman, *Industrial* Relations, p.151.
[77] M. Olson, *The Logic of Collective Action*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1971, p.65.
[78] Ibid., p.76.
[79] Ibid., p.2.
[80] L. Udehn, 'Twenty-five years with *The Logic of Collective Action*'. *Acta Sociologica*, Vol. 36 (1993), pp.239-261, p.239.

that Olson ignores the ways in which rational individuals may also 'act on behalf of group interests' due to ascribed group norms and identifications to a collective, forged through interaction and association.[81] Furthermore, Udehn illustrates clearly that many studies have demonstrated that group size cannot be satisfactorily labelled as a significant obstacle to collectivism, thereby undermining the rational choice model, concluding that 'Olson's economic logic of collective action must be considered refuted'.[82]

Kelly strongly critiqued Olson's assumptions that group interests, social norms, and moral motivations have a minimal role in the development of collectivism. In his key 1998 text *Rethinking Industrial Relations,* he developed the concept of mobilization theory as an explanatory framework for the circumstances under which a workforce will take collective action. Building upon the work of Tilly, McAdam, Gamson, and other social movement theorists, Kelly argued that the most significant factor in accounting for mobilization is that of injustice which breaches shared social values, which he argues is central to situations where workers develop a collective consciousness.[83] This injustice is the necessary condition from which workers can develop a collective identity and take action in opposition, as they become 'cognitively liberated from a belief in the legitimacy of the status quo'.[84] Utilising Doug McAdam's work on social movements, Kelly asserts that cognitive liberation requires that workers assert their rights and believe that their situation can be altered through collective action.[85] It is also essential 'that workers blame the employer or management for their problems', therefore the injustice must be seen to be directly caused by managerial or corporate policy.[86] For instance, if workers are forced to accept a pay freeze whilst management are awarded generous

[81] Kelly, *Rethinking Industrial Relations*, p.71.
[82] Udehn, 'Twenty-five years', p.261.
[83] Kelly, *Rethinking Industrial Relations*; V. Badigannavar and J. Kelly, 'Why Are Some Union Organizing Campaigns More Successful Than Others?' *British Journal of Industrial Relations*, Vol. 43, No. 3 (2005), pp.515-535.
[84] Kelly, *Rethinking Industrial Relations*, p.27.
[85] Ibid., p.29; See also Badigannavar and Kelly. 'Why Are Some Union Organizing Campaigns More Successful Than Others?', p.520.
[86] Kelly, *Rethinking Industrial Relations*, p.45.

increases in salary, this can lead to a sense of common injustice amongst the workers, necessary for the development of collective consciousness. Vidu Badigannavar and Kelly argue further that injustice which is attributed to non-management factors such as global or market forces is ‘disabling, regardless of their validity, because they will fail to provide a target for collective action’.[87] The factory closures being examined in this research can be seen through this lens of corporate created injustice, as closure is almost always the result of particular corporate decisions, a common theme in the literature on industrial closure.[88] Robert Folger and Russel Crompanzano argue further that the managerial injustice must be morally indefensible in order to create such a strong sense of injustice and unfairness amongst the workers that can then be transformed into collective action.[89]

Kelly discusses three further factors that must be considered when examining the mobilization of a workforce in addition to injustice. Firstly, attribution refers to the reasons and causes that can explain a particular event. The truthfulness of a particular attribution is important when considering its impact. For instance, if negotiations over wages break down, actors may attribute blame to themselves, to others, or to structural factors. This attribution is situational and dependent on the observations of particular groups and individuals based on their perceptions of the way events have unfolded and the actions taken. Kelly asserts that attribution has significant impact on future decision-making processes in industrial relations, as it can lead either to ‘better preparation, fatalism [or] mobilization of the members’.[90] Secondly, a social identity that is both individualistic and collective is recognised, with the understanding that these salient identities can be acted upon depending on the immediate situation. In direct response to Olson, Kelly asserts that ‘once we

[87] Badigannavar and Kelly, ‘Why Are Some Union Organizing Campaigns More Successful Than Others?’, p.520.
[88] K’Meyer and Hart, *“I Saw it Coming”,* p.158; Bluestone and Harrison, *The Deindustrialization of America*.
[89] R. Folger and R. Cropanzano, *Organizational Justice and Human Resources*. Thousand Oaks: Sage, 1998.
[90] Kelly, *Rethinking Industrial Relations*, p.30.

conceptualize individualism and collectivism as situationally specific responses to social cues then it becomes almost meaningless to ask whether a person is one or the other'.[91] For the purposes of mobilizing these collective identities and attributions, Kelly argues thirdly that there must be strong leadership within the workforce. Strong leaders can take action such as refusing to withdraw complaints made or backing down to management counter-mobilization efforts. Building upon the work of Fantasia, he argues that such demonstrations of leadership can 'erode managerial legitimacy and emphasize the need for collective action', creating the necessary conditions under which a workforce will mobilize in opposition.[92]

2.3.1 Uses of Mobilization Theory

Despite its explanatory framework, mobilization theory has not been extensively deployed by industrial relations researchers.[93] Those who have utilised it have been largely supportive of its general presumptions, and a selection of these will now be outlined. In examining public sector workers in the south-east United States, Nancy Brown Johnson and Paul Jarley utilised individual-level survey data to examine the importance of mobilization theory in union participation. They argued that their qualitative research supported Kelly's thesis concerning the centrality of injustice, arguing that justice and injustice 'are important factors in explaining variation in union participation'.[94] Significantly, they argue that it is substantially more important than job satisfaction, widely argued to be a crucial factor in accounting for increased participation in trade union organisation at work.

Gregor Gall utilised mobilization theory in his analysis of the factors that could lead to members of the National Union of Journalists (NUJ), who suffered massive de-recognition throughout the 1980s and 1990s, launching a collective resistance

[91] Ibid., p.31.
[92] Ibid., p.33.
[93] M. Atzeni, 'Searching for Injustice and Finding Solidarity? A Contribution to the Mobilization Theory Debate'. *Industrial Relations Journal*, Vol 40, No. 1 (2009), pp.5-16, p.15.
[94] N.B. Johnson and P. Jarley, 'Justice and Union Participation: An Extension and Test of Mobilization Theory'. *British Journal of Industrial Relations*, Vol. 42, No. 3 (2004) pp.543-562, p.556.

against management and corporate-dictated attacks on terms and conditions.[95] He asserts that throughout the later twentieth-century, employers 'engaged in counter-mobilization and union derecognition strategies', and that these were largely successful, leading to increased exploitation of journalists through below inflation wage rises and the loss of benefits.[96] Despite this, union membership remained resilient, therefore he sought to examine the prospects for recognition campaigning, highlighting victories in the mid-1990s for workers at the *Daily Mirror* and the *East Anglian News*. Despite these victories, workers in the *Bolton Evening News* did not partake in collective action, despite many of Kelly's preconditions being present; a sense of injustice attributed to management and strong leadership within the workforce.[97] He argues that this was due to workers making an individualist cost-benefit analysis that, due to their fears for employment and perception that success was unlikely, they believed that collective action would have negative implications for them and their employment.[98] He concludes that, whilst mobilization theory does not necessarily provide an explanatory framework for why workers and their unions move from lower to higher levels of collectivism, it does still offer a way to examine 'a certain juncture' of industrial relations, particularly when strong collective action is undertaken by workers.[99]

Badigannavar and Kelly deployed mobilization theory to explore why an organisation campaign led by the Association of University Teachers (AUT) was successful or unsuccessful in two universities, one in Wales and the other in Leeds.[100] For these authors, the primary research question is why – in similar situations – some campaigns are demonstrably more successful than others, seeking to provide concrete reasons for this. The campaign led by the AUT was

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[95] G. Gall,'New technology, the labour process and employment relations in the provincial newspaper industry'. *New Technology, Work and Employment*, Vol. 15, No. 2 (2000), pp.94-107.
[96] Ibid., p.101.
[97] Ibid., p.105.
[98] Ibid.
[99] Ibid.
[100] Badigannavar and Kelly, 'Why Are Some Union Organizing Campaigns More Successful Than Others?'

directly targeted to organise the poorly unionised contract research staff (CRS), a source of casual labour, in which Leeds was significantly more successful than their case study in Wales. For Badigannavar and Kelly, it was highly significant that the leadership at Leeds and Wales adopted different tactics when campaigning for organisation; at Leeds, the union involved non CRS staff, whereas in Wales the union focused separately on these casual labourers.[101] Therefore, at Wales, the campaign of organisation amongst CRS was not mainstreamed as a central activity of the branch, ensuring that the campaign was markedly distinct from normal union business.[102] In contrast, the union at Leeds ensured that the casualisation of labour was a central issue in branch activities, meaning that the CRS were not a separate campaign from the broader short-term objectives of the branch. They conclude that this research, in its use of a 'matched pair design', is able to explain why Leeds was more successful than Wales, despite actual work-related grievances being greater at the latter.[103] They argue that the CRS in Wales were less likely to blame their employer for their grievances, and less likely to discuss these with their fellow workers. Taking into account different lengths of contracts awarded, they argue that these cases illustrate the significance of branch-level leadership, particularly militant leadership, in achieving a greater degree of collectivism amongst workers.[104] Additionally, at Leeds the union leadership was able to build coalitions with other groups of workers to support the CRS, further limiting the significance of sectionalism. They conclude that these factors at Leeds: the union being perceived as effective; blame being attributed to the employer; and greater social cohesion amongst the wider workforce can be attributed to the approach of the leadership within the union, supporting the significance of this in explaining workforce collectivism through mobilization theory.

The significance of leadership in contributing to mobilization was also examined by Ralph Darlington, who asserts at the outset of his article that it is 'crucial to the

[101] Ibid., p.522.
[102] Ibid.
[103] Ibid., p.529.
[104] Ibid., p.530.

fundamental problem of how individual actors are transformed into collective actors'.[105] Darlington's primary research aim, however, is to look more closely at the relationship between left-wing union leadership and collective trade union militancy.[106] He examined the two unions operating on the London Underground, the National Union of Rail, Maritime and Transport Workers (RMT) and Associated Society of Locomotive Engineers and Firemen (ASLEF), which had markedly different approaches to industrial relations, based largely on the political perspectives of their leadership, as well as the composition of their membership. He argues that the RMT was consistently more militant than ASLEF throughout the 1990s, with significantly more strike ballots held, a reluctance to accept what they viewed as derisory pay offers, and resistance to the privatisation of the service, therefore being involved in political as well as industrial dispute.[107] There was, according to Darlington, a consistently solid response from the RMT membership to the militant stance of their union which he argues demonstrates the ability of a strong, left-wing leadership in galvanising its membership.[108] Even when accounting for a wide range of factors including the nature of jobs done by RMT workers, he concludes that the strong and militant leadership of Bob Crow and others 'generally helped to build the strength and vitality of collective organisation' amongst the membership.[109]

The interaction between organisation and leadership was also analysed by Phil Taylor and Peter Bain in their research into the Excell Multimedia call centre in Glasgow, which became organised following a campaign by rank-and-file workers in the late 1990s. They highlight that worker discontent was insufficient in creating the necessary conditions for the formation of a collective identity.[110] Rather, a small group of previously unrelated workers began to discuss their individual frustrations

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[105] R. Darlington, 'Union militancy and left-wing leadership on London Underground'. *Industrial Relations Journal*, Vol. 32, No. 1 (2001), pp.2-21, p.2.
[106] Ibid., p.5.
[107] Ibid., p.12.
[108] Ibid., p.15.
[109] Ibid., p.18.
[110] P. Taylor and P. Bain, 'Call centre organizing in adversity: from Excell to Vertex' pp.153-172 in G. Gall (ed), *Union Organizing: Campaigning for trade union recognition,* London: Routledge, 2003, p.170.

as a collective, and were then pivotal in mobilising the collective grievance of the workforce when the employer breached a perceived moral code in its poor customer service for emergency 999 calls.[111] Based on interviews with workers, Bain and Taylor argue convincingly for the importance of this small group of leaders, stating that 'in the development of collective organization [at Excell], leadership proved decisive'.[112]

2.3.2 Limitations of Mobilization Theory

As demonstrated above, mobilization theory has been utilised in a range of settings and sectors, with a number of authors predominantly supporting its theoretical framework. However, among many of these pieces, a lack of consideration has been given to cultures, relationships, and networks that existed previously. The work of American sociologist, Rick Fantasia, in the 1980s emphasises the significance of 'local cultures of solidarity' in explaining the development of class actions.[113] In examining three workplaces in which disputes occurred, he argues that collective action developed 'within the context of a pre-existing pattern of work-group social relationships' which transitioned to solidarity during action.[114] The importance of social relations was also emphasised by Vincent Roscigno and Randy Hodson, who assert that 'social relations on the shopfloor play a meaningful role' in mobilising workers to take industrial action'.[115] Mario Atzeni directly challenged Kelly's mobilization theory through his analysis of occupations in Argentinian Renault and FIAT plants in the 1990s, both in response to managerial attacks on pay and conditions. The response of the workers was markedly different; during the mobilization at Renault, the conservative union was successful in controlling it, whereas at FIAT the workers bypassed their representatives to mobilize.[116] Adopting Hyman's conflictual approach to industrial relations, he asserts that

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[111] Ibid., pp.160-161.
[112] Ibid., p.170.
[113] Fantasia, *Cultures of Solidarity,* p.92.
[114] Ibid., p.108.
[115] V. J. Roscigno and R. Hodson, 'The Organizational and Social Foundations of Worker Resistance'. *American Sociological Review*, Vol. 69, No.1 (2004), pp.14-39, p.36.
[116] Atzeni, 'Searching for Injustice', p.9.

collective mobilization cannot be understood through individualistic terms such as injustice.[117] Injustice, rather than being a precondition for Atzeni's workers, was something that workers became conscious of through their participation in industrial action. The spontaneous nature of the occupation meant that the entire workforce was not fully aware of the degree of injustice caused by the changing working conditions, arguing that it is the action of mobilization that leads to a conscious and collective injustice.[118] This builds upon the arguments of Fantasia, who states that consciousness and solidarity is not a 'priori fact', but rather forged through the process of mutual association.[119] In the workplaces he analysed, Fantasia demonstrates that the solidarity of the workforce was not generated by an arbitrary moment of injustice, but was a product of the friction, anger and opposition *vis-a-vis* work relations and participation in industrial action.[120]

Atzeni further rejects the 'empiricist obsessions' inherent in mobilization theory, arguing that a broad and generalised perspective, such as Kelly's, cannot be readily applied to instances of workplace mobilization as the process is much more complex and dynamic than the 'linear' process outlined by this theory.[121] Atzeni develops Fantasia's framework, asserting that the mobilization of workers is created 'by the capitalist mode of production [which] produces crises both in the workplace and in society that give room to moments of collectivisation'.[122] In his FIAT case study, he argues that collective action was an organic response to revised working agreements, with no union control or recognised leaders within the workforce. For Atzeni, this situation is created by a number of factors. Importantly, as workers are together at work and subjected to the same conflicts with their employer, there exists an unstructured solidarity, that intertwines with the complex power structures both at work and in society. At the point of mobilization, there was a

[117] Ibid., p.7.
[118] Ibid., p.12.
[119] Fantasia, *Cultures of Solidarity*, p.88.
[120] Ibid., p.233.
[121] Atzeni, 'Searching for Injustice', p.8.
[122] Ibid., p.7.

power vacuum due to the inability of the corporation and the union to control the situation, and the 'cultures of solidarity' engineered before the dispute can lead to collective action.[123] As a result, Atzeni disputes the simplistic nature of mobilization theory, stating that action is 'rooted in the contradictions and crises generated by the capitalist labour process', arguing for a fuller analysis of the ways in which spaces are created through 'labour-process-generated-solidarity'.[124]

In their examination of the British Airways cabin crew dispute of 2009-2011, Taylor and Sian Moore provide an important contribution to the significance of the labour process, the 'social bonds and work solidarities' in the mobilization theory debate. They argue that the interconnectedness between the labour process and collective action is 'often understated in studies of industrial conflict'.[125] Therefore, as opposed to seeing mobilization as the end process created by injustice, leadership, and social identity, an alternative view is that the conditions for collective class action are constantly in the making, with mobilization theory serving as a useful 'framework for action functional for union organising'.[126] Another key aspect of Taylor and Moore's research is the ways in which latent organisational structures can impact on mobilization. Whilst a workforce may not be perceived as militant through everyday work relationships, interactions and involvement in workplace politics, the existence of a trade union – in their case the British Airways Stewards and Stewardesses Association – can become the key agency in 'articulating worker interests', a factor not given significant attention in Kelly's framework.[127]

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[123] Ibid.
[124] Ibid.
[125] P. Taylor and S. Moore, 'Cabin Crew Collectivism: Labour Process and the Roots of Mobilization'. *Work, Employment and Society*, Vol. 29, No. 1 (2015), pp.79-98, p.81.
[126] Ibid., p.93.
[127] Ibid., p.79. An interesting question for further research on mobilization that is not within the remit of this thesis and the case studies assessed is the extent to which the presence of a trade union in different work settings can influence the spontaneity of such action. All disputes in this thesis took place in workplaces with high levels of union density, therefore cannot sufficiently address this.

Whilst mobilization theory can provide important insights into trade union organisation and collective action, these limitations are significant when considering the complex interaction between the wide range of social and cultural influences on these processes. It represents a significant challenge to what may be seen as the stageist nature of mobilization theory, which understates the complex dynamics of the collectivisation of grievances at work, expressed through mobilization, and offering a limited understanding of developing class consciousness and class action. A further critique of mobilization theory which interacts with this present study is its approach to gender differences in employment. Feminist scholar Judy Wajcman asserts that Kelly's *Rethinking Industrial Relations* represents a 'missed opportunity' for engaging in a more thorough analysis of the pervasiveness of the structural differences of men and women's experiences of employment *vis-a-vis* mobilization opportunities.[128] She argues persuasively that mobilization theory fails to consider the masculine nature of institutions such as trade unions and continued power inequalities at work, resulting in the theory being characterised by 'gender blindness'.[129] This neglect is related to notions of female passivity, but also the pervasiveness of the status of work and social ideals of gendered activity and domestic ideologies, which could impact on Atzeni's notion of solidarity forming at the workplace. This research will consider the factory occupations within the framework of cultures of solidarity and mobilization theories, recognising the significance of existing employment relations, labour processes, and socio-economic structures, offering an analysis which allows for an interaction between these factors.

2.4 Factory Occupation as a Mode of Resistance

The workers at the heart of the disputes being analysed in this research utilised the tactic of workplace occupation in their resistance to closure and corporate relocation. This section will consider the historical use of occupation as a weapon

[128] J. Wajcman, 'Feminism Facing Industrial Relations in Britain'. *British Journal of Industrial Relations*, Vol. 38 No. 2 (2000) pp.183-201, p.189.
[129] Ibid., p.184.

used by workers against their employers – and governments – considering their characteristics and a review of the reasons outlined by authors as to why workers decide whether or not to occupy their workplaces in industrial dispute. There must be a clear distinction made between a sit-in by interest groups such as the Occupy movement and a worker occupation of their employer's premises. A sit-in in pursuit of the aims of a popular movement is broadly aimed at forcing changes in policy and government action through civil disobedience and disruption. A workers' occupation of their place of employment involves a much more direct confrontation between the interests of capital and labour. Whilst civic disobedience sit-ins often take place in a neutral, public space, a worker occupation takes place on the premises of the employer, and therefore requires a greater level of commitment from those involved and greater risk of sanctions and costs *vis-a-vis* dismissal, accusations of theft, and loss of pay. This distinction is important for the purposes of understanding the decision-making process of a workforce in occupation, as it carries a significant degree of risk for those involved, different from other forms of occupation as a means of protest.

It is necessary to briefly consider the dynamics of a workforce occupation before considering their historical use and the decision making processes. Put broadly, there are two types of occupation used by workers: offensive and defensive. An offensive occupation is launched in pursuit of a tangible benefit that the workers believe they can secure through taking control of the workspace. These include pay increases and improvements to working conditions and can be labelled as offensive actions as they are taken by workers for the advancement of their current employment position, seeking to gain something from management. Defensive occupations are mobilized by workers to protect their current terms and conditions in response to attempts by management to worsen them.[130] Defensive actions, such as those used in the case studies in this research, are predominantly launched in opposition to redundancy and closure plans. Workers seize the premises and

[130] See M. Gold, 'Worker Mobilization in the 1970s: Revisiting Work-ins, Cooperatives and Alternative Corporate Plans'. *Historical Studies in Industrial Relations*, Vol. 18 (2004), pp.65-106.

machinery for the purposes of defending their existing employment relationship, rather than seeking to achieve improvements.

2.4.1 Historic uses of worker occupation

In modern Europe, factory occupations became prominent in Italy during September 1920, when approximately 400,000 metalworkers occupied the factories in a direct confrontation between capital and labour as a result of the failure to diversify to a peacetime economy.[131] In his extensive analysis of the occupations, Paulo Spriano demonstrates that in centres such as Turin, Milan, and Genoa these were transformed into mass movements, and that the 'crisis of constitutional power taught the ruling classes, entrepreneurs and political establishment alike, a bitter lesson'.[132] Leon Trotsky argued that the inability of the left to capitalise on the power vacuum that existed in Italy led to the 'victory of fascism' as the establishment fought back against the threat from the left.[133] The next major incident of occupation in Europe was in France during 1936, when disputes spread to over 12,000 workplaces, three-quarters of which were under worker control.[134] The French occupations emerged from the resistance to right-wing riots in 1934 which led to the formation of the Republican Union and the election of a left-wing 'popular front' government in 1936.[135] Communists and other left-wing radicals capitalised on the favourable political environment, with occupations spreading throughout the French metal industry, and up to two million workers were out during 1936. The occupations won formal union recognition, and the labour federation exerted considerable influence in French affairs following the movement.[136] These early European examples were largely politically motivated,

[131] P. Spriano, *The Occupation of the Factories: Italy 1920.* London: Pluto Press, 1975, p.63.
[132] Ibid., p.127.
[133] L. Trotsky, *The Death Agony of Capitalism and the Tasks of the Fourth International*. Accessed at http://www.marxist.net/trotsky/programme/p2frame.htm?picket.htm on 23/08/2014.
[134] D. Sherry, *Occupy!,* p.54.
[135] M. Torrigan, 'The Occupation of the Factories: Paris 1936, Flint 1937. *Comparative Studies in History and Society*, Vol. 41, No. 2 (1999), pp.324-347, p.325.
[136] Ibid., p.328.

extending beyond grievances at the point of production and incorporating wider working-class struggle.

In the United States, the sit-down strike became a central component of the campaign for union recognition, particularly in the auto industry between 1934 and 1938, the most famous instance being the 1936-1937 occupation of General Motors' (GM) plant in Flint, Michigan. The sit down proved hugely successful, and the victory of the workers 'paved the way for both the closed shop at GM and the unionization of other mass-production industries'[137], with American historian Matthew Josephson arguing that the sit-down campaign is 'the greatest, and by all means, the most strategic victory ever won by American labor'.[138]

Despite their historic use in a range of disputes and localities, Ken Coates demonstrates that 'before 1971, the vocabulary of sit-ins was hardly ever used in Britain'.[139] One of the first moves to occupy in the UK was at the General Electric plant in Liverpool, where closure was announced in 1969.[140] An occupation was suggested as a potential tactic to force the company to reconsider their proposal, but the plans were not supported due to concerns over lost redundancy pay and possible criminal prosecution of workers.[141] Whilst the Liverpool workforce decided against occupation in the resistance to factory closure, Coates asserts that the incident gave rise to the idea of occupation to resist redundancy in the period.[142]

The occupation movement exploded into British industrial relations with the work-in at Upper Clyde Shipbuilders in Glasgow which began in June 1971. The work-in was in response to the decision of the British government to end financial support for the shipyards, threatening 6,000 jobs and the destruction of the shipbuilding

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[137] Torrigan, 'The Occupation of the Factories', p.331.
[138] Cited in Torrigan, 'The Occupation of the Factories', p.331.
[139] K. Coates, *Work-ins, Sit-ins and Industrial Democracy* (Nottingham: Russell Press Ltd., 1981, p.11.
[140] See Sherry, *Occupy*!, p.115 and Tuckman, 'Workers' Control and the Politics of Factory Occupation', p.288.
[141] Tuckman, 'Workers' Control and the Politics of Factory Occupation', p.288.
[142] Coates, *Work-ins, Sit-ins and Industrial Democracy*, p.29.

industry on the Upper Clyde.[143] Led by radical shop stewards such as Jimmy Reid, a work-in was organised to demonstrate the viability of the yards and force the government to abandon their policy of non-intervention. One key reason for the plans gaining support from the workers was the £90 million worth of orders under construction within the yards. Seizing these key assets and completing orders on time would demonstrate the potential continued success of the yards despite government uncertainty.[144] The work-in received substantial support from the immediate community and across the British labour movement, with two mass demonstrations organised in Glasgow and financial support offered from throughout the UK. Victory was secured when the government announced grants to support the yards in February, 1972. Despite concessions being agreed by the union leaders in order to achieve this, the work-in at UCS was successful in preventing the mass loss of 'redundant' jobs in Scottish shipbuilding. In their extensive study of the dispute, Foster and Woolfson note many important repercussions of the UCS dispute in Scottish politics, particularly the decline of Conservatism and rise of the Scottish National Party (SNP).[145] For the purposes of this research, UCS is important due to the impact of the work-in on British industrial relations throughout the 1970s and early 1980s.

There is a consensus within the literature that the UCS work-in sparked the occupation movement across Britain in this period, as workers increasingly seized control of private property.[146] Labour's Tony Benn – who attended demonstrations in support of UCS – argued that the action in 1971 'gave vitality to the concept of industrial democracy', expressed through the occupation and cooperative movement of the period.[147] The sit-in, as opposed to work-in, movement began at

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[143] Gold, 'Worker Mobilization in the 1970s, p.76.
[144] Coates, *Work-ins, Sit-ins and Industrial Democracy*, p.30.
[145] J. Foster and C. Woolfson, *The Politics of the UCS Work-In: Class Alliances and the Right to Work*. London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1986, p.380.
[146] See Coates, *Work-ins, Sit-ins and Industrial Democracy,* p.11; Gold, 'Worker Mobilization in the 1970s', p.76; Tuckman, 'Workers' Control and the Politics of Factory Occupation', p.284.
[147] T. Benn, 'The Industrial Context', pp.71-87 in K. Coates (ed), *The New Worker Cooperatives*. Nottingham: Spokesman, 1976, p.74.

the Plessey plant in Alexandria, where workers occupied their plant in response to closure between July 1971 and January 1972. By the end of 1972, 69,000 workers across Britain had been involved in occupations.[148] There is some disagreement over the exact number of occupations which took place in the early 1970s. Research group 'New Society' located 102 between July 1971 and March 1974[149], whereas Sherry asserts that there were over 200 between 1970 and 1972[150], and Tuckman notes 264 in the decade 1971-1981.[151] Despite this uncertainty, Gold argues convincingly that their spread represented 'one of the most remarkable developments [in industrial relations] during the early 1970s'.[152] According to Coates, this was due to occupations showing very quickly their ability to gain real concessions from management, and their success in redundancy disputes was evident by 1972.[153] Alan Tuckman argues that the shop steward movement was crucial, as the tactic was 'at odds with the formal trade union structure, which was more inclined to come to terms on redundancy'.[154] Despite this, the TUC debate on occupations in 1975 demonstrated the 'rooted support' of unions for the tactic 'when other means of protest were inadequate', ensuring that it was 'virtually inconceivable' that a union would not support an occupation by its members from the mid-1970s.[155]

2.4.2 Decision making process and occupation

In assessing the uses of occupation, many factors interact with one another as workers, individually and collectively, consider whether to undertake such action. Due to the nature of the tactic, occupations tend to be more intensive for those involved than striking. Whereas workers on strike are more able to spend their time as they wish, out-with picket line obligations and expectations, an occupation

[148] Coates, *Work-ins, Sit-ins and Industrial Democracy*, p.110.
[149] Ibid., p.110.
[150] Sherry, *Occupy!*, p.116.
[151] Gold, 'Worker Mobilization in the 1970s ', p.88.
[152] Ibid., p.75.
[153] Coates, *Work-ins, Sit-ins and Industrial Democracy* p.101.
[154] Tuckman, 'Workers' Control and the Politics of Factory Occupation', p.292.
[155] Coates, *Work-ins, Sit-ins and Industrial Democracy*, pp.101, 115.

requires them to spend a significant amount of time inside the premises to ensure a twenty-four-hour presence. The level of commitment required can significantly impact on the ability of workers to participate in this form of industrial dispute, as they may have non-work commitments which prevent them from maintaining a continual presence in the workplace. Occupations also represent a greater challenge to the rights of private enterprise than the withdrawal of labour. Trotsky argued that the occupation is fundamentally different from the strike, as it 'poses in a practical manner the question of who is the boss of the factory: the capitalist or the worker?'[156] However, the legality of occupation is one reason why workers decide against utilising the tactic, as demonstrated at General Electric in Liverpool, discussed above. Such considerations would be important as workforces analysed the costs and benefits of launching an occupation, particularly following the 1977 Criminal Law Act which increased the power of employers in utilising legislation against occupying workers.[157] Another aspect which could cause workers not to participate in an occupation to resist closure is the possibility of securing alternative employment. If faced with redundancy, members of the workforce may choose to seek employment out with their current firm, causing them to leave the dispute and weaken the strength of the occupiers. Whilst this can also apply to extended periods of strike action, occupation in opposition to redundancy presupposes the loss of work should the workers' objectives not be realised, fundamentally different from the majority of strikes.

In examining the reasons why a workforce might utilise occupation against closure, there are many practical benefits which the tactic offers. Most importantly, and as demonstrated clearly by the UCS dispute, occupation gives leverage to the workers through control of assets including property, machinery, and existing stock. This leverage is evidently crucial in a dispute over closure and corporate relocation, as the act of physically occupying the workspace and denying entry to management prevents the removal of valuable assets, halting the process of relocation. Dave

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[156] Trotsky, *Death Agony of Capitalism*.

[157] See Coates, *Work-ins, Sit-ins and Industrial Democracy,* p.127.

Sherry asserts that worker control makes bosses reluctant to launch an offensive, as the seizure of assets places the initiative with the occupying workers, forcing management to seek negotiations with the workers and their representatives.[158] It is the aspect of leverage in closure disputes which makes occupations far more beneficial for workers than strike action. Coates asserts that, in the period of accelerated closure, they 'could not be met with the withdrawal of labour, since withdrawal of labour was the precise aim intended by the opposition'.[159] His argument is supported by assertion by the union convenor during an occupation at Fisher Bendix in Kirby, 1971, who stated that it was 'better we occupy, to control from within rather to stand in the rain and the cold, the fog and the wind, trying to stop scab lorries.[160]

It can be reasonably argued, therefore, that the leverage of occupation for the workforce involved is a central factor in explaining why this tactic would be utilised in a redundancy dispute. Authors discuss a range of other factors which can provide practical benefits for the mobilization of an occupation as opposed to other forms of industrial action. Sherry argues that the occupation encourages the mass involvement of workers.[161] While it was noted above that the labour intensive nature of occupation may deter workers from launching a dispute, once the action begins, workers remain in a shared physical space with one another, which can increase their strength and solidarity, often more so than is possible during a strike when, by the nature of striking, they remain outside and often separated, notwithstanding the collectivity of the picket line. Such close contact can be significant in maintaining the momentum of the dispute, as it allows for increased moral support between the workers, physically located with one another during their labour intensive struggle. An occupation also gives workers greater visibility, allowing them to receive additional support from those outside the dispute. With workers in control of the physical space of the workplace, they determine who can

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[158] Sherry, *Occupy!,* p.28.
[159] Coates, *Work-ins, Sit-ins and Industrial Democracy,* p.21.
[160] Cited in Sherry, *Occupy*!, p.121.
[161] Sherry, *Occupy!*, p.29.

– and cannot – enter the dispute and engage with the occupiers.[162] This control gives the workforce substantial autonomy over which journalists may enter the occupation, and can allow a more sympathetic report of the dispute, as journalists rely on the occupying workers to grant them access.

Connected with the visibility of an occupation is the level of public support that occupying workers can receive from those outside the dispute. With a large degree of media interest, partly regulated by the workers, the dispute can attract local and national support beyond the traditional institutions of union, socialist, and other activist groups. Levels of support dominate the literature in studies of occupations, with the recognition by a range of authors that they are better equipped for this than actions such as striking.[163] This goes beyond controlling access, and is related to the aims and objectives of a defensive workplace occupation. As Foster and Woolfson note in their study of UCS, an occupying workforce cannot be attacked as easily in the mainstream media as a group taking offensive action over issues such as pay. As the dispute is necessarily based on the right to employment and demanding the provision of work, as well as state and corporate responsibility to provide this, occupying workers cannot be easily labelled as 'strike happy', lazy, or work shy, attacks used by the right-wing media when confronting industrial action.[164]

For the purposes of attempting to create an analytical framework through which the use of occupation in a historical context can be analysed, these practical benefits are important when considering the cost-benefit calculations of a workforce, and the individuals within that grouping. These micro-level factors, however, do not offer a satisfactory mobilization framework within which these actions can be examined, and the larger context within which occupations do or do not occur must be assessed. As Gall argues, mobilization to occupy is a complex

[162] Ibid.
[163] See, for example, Foster and Woolfson, *The Politics of the UCS Work-In*; Coates, *Work-ins, Sit-ins and Industrial Democracy*; Findlay, 'Resistance, Restructuring and Gender'.
[164] Foster and Woolfson, *The Politics of the UCS Work-In*, p.394.

interaction of a range of factors and, looking at occupations post-2008, he outlines six key stimuli in influencing a workforce to occupy: compulsory redundancy of all staff; immediate notice of redundancy; no severance pay and loss of pension rights; unionised workforce; support of the members' unions; and previous high profile occupations.[165] While useful, Gall's analysis does not sufficiently consider the broader socio-economic and political context within which occupations have historically taken place within Britain. In looking at two occupations over closure in Britain during the early 1970s, Tuckman and Knudsen conclude that 'it was clear to see' why the workers occupied, in that it was a 'spontaneous' response to 'the threat of closure and loss of jobs'.[166] However, a conclusion that focuses exclusively on the reasons for worker grievance risks minimising the importance of the social, political, economic, and organisational factors, influences and contexts that can explain why workers launch such action, particularly as occupation has historically been a minority action in instances of closure. Interestingly, Stephen Mustchin argues that worker motivations during the 1980 occupation of the Gardner engineering plant in Manchester 'broadly correspond to the framework set out within mobilization theory', through perceived injustices, confrontational management strategies and compulsory redundancies.[167] He places the occupation within a longer historical analysis of industrial relations at the plant that led to the establishment of a closed shop, and the importance of key activists in promoting collective action.[168] However, the argument is not developed concerning the significance of workgroup solidarities during the occupation, or the ways in which those participating reflect on the internal, rank-and-file dynamics of the action. Rather, he develops an institutional framework, stating that the action was a result of 'strong union organization, management's mistrust of the workforce and ongoing conflict over piecework'.[169]

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[165] Gall, 'Resisting Recession and Redundancy', pp.116-117.
[166] Tuckman and Knudsen, 'The Success and Failings of UK Work-Ins and Sit-Ins', pp.128, 136.
[167] Mustchin, 'Conflict, Mobilization, and Deindustrialisation', p.148.
[168] Ibid., p.151.
[169] Ibid., p.165.

2.4.3 Socio-economic influences and occupations

The literature on workplace occupations in Britain in the 1970s assesses their utility within the context of increasing unemployment and the options available to the labour movement. While rates of unemployment will have an impact on workforce militancy, particularly when they are faced with closure, this factor does not sufficiently explain the patterns of occupation in British industrial relations. As Gall notes in his analysis of contemporary occupations, rising unemployment following the banking crisis of 2008 did not lead to a significant increase in their occurrence. Additionally, they were not utilised in the depressed interwar period, therefore cyclical instances of depression and rising unemployment do not provide a satisfactory explanation for the increasing frequency of occupation. It is significant that the first mass use of factory occupations occurred in the 1970s, and the historical context of this period must be given consideration. Despite the occupation movement being launched in resistance to closure and redundancy at UCS, Tuckman asserts that only 69 occupations of his total of 264 between 1971 and 1981 were in response to threatened closure.[170] However, Coates argues convincingly that it was only once the tactic was demonstrably successful in opposing redundancy between 1971 and 1972 that they then spread to issues over pay and conditions.[171] In the economically depressed period of the early 1980s, Mustchin and Findlay both note that occupations again became increasingly defensive actions against closure.[172] Within the literature, therefore, a pattern emerges over the use of occupations in this period, from defensive to offensive, before becoming defensive once more in the early 1980s. Sherry argues persuasively that a key factor in explaining the general decline of the use of occupations between 1974 and 1978 was due to trade union links with the governing Labour Party, with unions exerting pressure on their membership to consider options other than occupation, with union negotiation of redundancy

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[170] Cited in Gold, 'Worker Mobilization in the 1970s ', p.88.

[171] Coates, *Work-ins, Sit-ins and Industrial Democracy*, p.101.

[172] Findlay, 'Resistance, Restructuring and Gender'; S. Mustchin, 'From Workplace Occupation to Mass Imprisonment: The 1984 Strike at Cammell Laird Shipbuilders'. *Historical Studies in Industrial relations*, Vol. 31 (2011), pp.31-61, p.33.

terms favoured.[173] Following the election of the Conservatives in 1979 and the rising number of factory closures in the early 1980s, occupations again became widely used by workforces in the fight against redundancy and unemployment. A plausible explanation for the re-emergence of the occupation as a defensive tool in British industrial relations in this period could be the accelerated contraction of industry. More notable than in periods of cyclical decline, and of greater significance than rising unemployment, it can be argued that the physically changing industrial landscape caused by these processes in areas 'fast becoming industrial desert[s]' was a significant factor in explaining the increasing mobilization of occupation in opposition to capital migration.[174] Workers, and their communities, were living through this time of dramatic industrial change, and were acutely aware that the modes of employment in which they were previously engaged were being desolated by corporate relocation. This led to an increased number of workforces realising that they had little alternative to accepting redundancy and, unlike other periods of cyclical economic decline, occupation became a crucial last resort for workers in these struggles. When analysing the occupation at Lawrence Scott in Manchester, 1981, Colin Love argues that occupations in this period 'must be interpreted as a microcosm of deindustrialisation and unemployment crisis of Britain in the 1970s'.[175] Whilst other authors researching occupations in the early 1980s have not incorporated Love's framework, it could be argued that the accelerated industrial contraction through the processes of deindustrialisation was a significant socio-economic factor in explaining the re-emergence of the British sit-in movement. There is an existing gap in the literature of British factory occupations that does not consider the micro-mobilization of the workers at the shopfloor level, and the significance of broader socio-economic developments in influencing the workers' response. This research will consider these factors when examining the occupations at Greenock, Bathgate, and Cumbernauld, analysing the significance of

[173] Sherry, *Occupy!,* p.127.
[174] C. Love, *Conflicts Over Closure: The Lawrence-Scott Affair,* Amersham: Avebury, 1988, p.29.
[175] Ibid.

these processes in influencing these factory occupations, and the accounts and reflections of those involved.

2.5 Women and Work

In order to assess the relationships between the workers involved in the factory occupations of the early 1980s and paid employment it is necessary to outline the characteristics of 'women's work' throughout the post-war period. In this section, 'work' refers primarily to structural, paid employment as opposed to all work done by women, such as unpaid domestic work. This section will begin by assessing continuity and change in women's work, before outlining the theoretical discussions focused on the relationships between women, men, and employment.

Despite ideals of domesticity, women in Britain have continuously sold their labour, with McIvor arguing that it is a 'fallacy' to suggest that working-class families have survived on a male breadwinner wage alone.[176] The number of women in paid employment increased steadily following World War Two, with 43 percent of British women in formal employment in 1951, rising substantially to 64 percent in 1964.[177] This growth was more marked amongst married women, who increasingly remained in work following marriage, with the proportion of married British women economically active rising from 12 percent in 1921 to 50.4 percent in 1977.[178] In Scotland this rise was more dramatic, with the proportion of women workers who were married increasing from 8.5 percent in 1931 to 62 percent by 1981.[179] Importantly, although Scottish women's participation in work historically had been lower than the UK, by 1982 women formed over 43 percent of the workforce in

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[176] A. McIvor, 'Women and Work in Twentieth Century Scotland', pp.138-173 in A. Dickson and J.H. Treble (eds), *People and Society in Scotland, Volume III: 1914-1990*, Edinburgh: John Donald Publishers, 1996, p.143.
[177] T. Martin, 'The Beginning of Labor's End? Britain's "Winter of Discontent" and Working-Class Women's Activism'. *International Labor and Working-Class History*, Vol. 75, No. 1 (2009), pp.49-67, p.53.
[178] Coyle, *Redundant Women*.
[179] McIvor, 'Women and Work', p.142.

Scotland, compared with 42 percent in the UK.[180] However, such generalised figures obscure the complex relationships between class, region, and employment highlighted by authors such as McIvor, Kate Purcell and others.[181] For the purposes of this analysis the most important aspect is that there was a marked rise in the proportion of women, and particularly married women, working in the formal economy as the twentieth-century progressed.

This rise in female employment in the later twentieth-century was accompanied by a dramatic decline in the 'traditional' areas of work dominated by women. As McIvor demonstrates, the traditional sectors of Scottish female employment, such as textiles, clothing, and domestic service declined massively throughout the century, ensuring that by the 1970s, 75 percent of women workers were employed in the service sector.[182] In examining this trend, Breitenbach demonstrates that the proportion of women in service work in the Central Region, Dumfries and Galloway, Strathclyde, and Tayside was higher than the Scottish average. The most prominent growth area for women's work was in sectors such as insurance, banking, and the public sector. One outcome of this changing occupational profile was the decline in the proportion of women employed in textiles and clothing, reduced from over one-third of the female labour force to one percent between 1914 and 1990.[183] Despite the general shift in employment from manual to non-manual work evident throughout this period, there remained important distinctions between male and female employment. Veronica Beechey and Purcell both argue that several important characteristics have historically differentiated women's work, and impacted substantially on their participation in the labour market: interrupted working histories; part-time work; working in a wider range of environments; and

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[180] Breitenbach, *Women Workers in Scotland*, p.7.
[181] A. McIvor, 'Gender Apartheid? Women in Scottish Society', pp.188-209 in T. Devine and R. Finlay (eds), *Scotland in the Twentieth Century*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1992, p.195; K. Purcell, 'Militancy and Acquiesce Among Women Workers' pp.54-67 in J. Siltanen and M. Stanworth (eds), *Women and the Public Sphere: A Critique of Sociology and Politics*. London: Hutchinson, 1984, p.57.
[182] McIvor, 'Women and Work', p.141.
[183] McIvor, 'Gender Apartheid?', p.198.

caring or looking after people.[184] Interrupted working histories are caused by a number of factors, most significantly, child bearing and rearing, with the expectation that the woman will temporarily vacate paid work during these periods. Breitenbach also argues that servicing others, particularly men, has been a constant aspect of women's paid and unpaid labour, with a reproduction of domestic roles outside the home.[185] Beechey argues that several interconnected variables have been significant in reinforcing historic gender divisions in the home, at work, and in education.[186] Part-time work is significant when considering female employment and has important implications on factors such as identity, consciousness and trade union organisation and activity. In 1984, 88 percent of part-time workers in the UK were women,[187] as 'almost all the increases in women's employment' between 1950 and 1980 were in part-time work.[188] In Scotland, this increase was substantial, with the proportion of female jobs that were part-time increasing from less than 5 percent to 41 percent between 1951 and 1981, whereas the 1981 figure for male employment was 7 percent.[189]

2.5.1 Status of women's employment

An important factor that threads throughout discussions of women's work is the status of their employment compared with men's, which interacts with employment patterns demonstrated above and perceptions of the significance of work. McIvor argues that, by the 1980s, women remained 'clustered into the lowest status, menial, poorest paid, part-time, undervalued and under-protected jobs'.[190] This judgement is supported by a range of authors, with Rubery and Rafferty

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[184] V. Beechey, 'Women's Employment in Contemporary Britain', pp.54-98 in V. Beechey, and E. Whitelegg (eds), *Women in Britain Today*. Milton Keynes: Open University Press, 1986, p.78; Purcell, 'Militancy and Acquiesce Among Women Workers', p.57.
[185] Breitenbach, *Women Workers in Scotland*, p.35.
[186] V. Beechey, 'Introduction', pp.1-14 in V. Beechey, and E. Whitelegg (eds), *Women in Britain Today*. Milton Keynes: Open University Press, 1986, p.6.
[187] Beechey, 'Women's Employment', p.93.
[188] R. Crompton, *Women and Work in Modern Britain*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997, p.31.
[189] McIvor, 'Women and Work', p.142.
[190] Ibid., p.168.

arguing that women have historically occupied 'buffer jobs'[191] in the secondary sector, and Coyle argues that the concentration of women workers in such low paid and low status employment created 'female ghettos' of work, with the best jobs reserved for men.[192] Breitenbach argued in the early 1980s that the concentration of women in low grade jobs in the 'secondary sector of the economy' was more evident in Scotland than it was in England and Wales, due to Scotland's tradition of heavy industry which played an important role in shaping ideologies of employment based on gender.[193] Concentration in such sectors has had important impacts on wage differentials between men and women, which, whilst narrowing throughout the twentieth-century, have remained persistent despite government legislation. In 1980 women's wages in the manual sector were 60.9 percent of males in Britain, and 59.5 percent in Scotland.[194] In her ethnographic study of women assembly line workers in the 1980s, Cavendish asserts that, in this type of work, there existed a very clear sexual division of labour which placed 'the girls' firmly at the bottom of the occupational hierarchy, a pattern which was even more marked when considering the roles of migrant and ethnic minority workers.[195] These characteristics remain an important area in the study of work and workers, and Jill Rubery and Anthony Rafferty argue persuasively that in the early twenty-first century, 'gender segregation is still a pervasive characteristic of all labour markets, including the UK'.[196] In the late twentieth-century, Rosemary Crompton argued that our understanding of the status of women's work is constrained, as many social scientists have viewed gendered division of work and pay as 'somehow natural'.[197] This judgement is supported by Dora Scholarios and Taylor, who demonstrate the ways in which structural barriers in the call centre industry ensure that women continue to face a glass ceiling, upon entering the industry and when attempting to

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[191] J. Rubery and A. Rafferty, 'Women and recession revisited'. *Work, Employment and Society*, Vol 27, No. 3 (2013), pp.414-432, p.417.
[192] Coyle, *Redundant Women*, p.3.
[193] Breitenbach, *Women Workers in Scotland*, p.34.
[194] Ibid., p.23.
[195] R. Cavendish, *Women on the Line*. London*:* Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1982, p.79.
[196] Rubery and Rafferty, 'Women and recession revisited', p.415.
[197] Crompton, *Women and Work in Modern Britain*, p.6.

develop their careers within the sector.[198] These authors demonstrate the continued significance of the historical status of women's employment in Britain, directly impacting the types of jobs undertaken by the female labour force.

2.5.2 Historiographical limitations

In the historiographical discussion of women and work, it is important to consider the argument that women's work has been neglected in the dominant discourses of labour history, argued persuasively by many authors. Breitenbach considered the developments in the field in the 1970s, demonstrating that the increased academic attention in the area of women's labour history was a result of the increased importance of female wages during the period of deep industrial decline, as well as the influence of the feminist movement.[199] Despite this increased level of academic analysis of women in the period, Roderick Martin and Judith Wallace argue that such studies did not translate into a wide ranging analysis of female employment, as the experiences of 'women, as workers' continued to be much less prominent in this area.[200] Sarah Boston also argued in the 1980s that there had been a substantial 'failure to include women in labour history'[201] and in the early 1990s, Eleanor Gordon argued that women's experiences at work continued to be largely omitted from the general narrative of labour history.[202] Despite increased historical attention given to women's employment, Hughes argued in 2010 that 'British labour historiography continues to ignore women's workplace experiences'.[203] From an industrial relations perspective, Ardha Danieli asserts that studies continue to suffer from 'gender blindness', marked by a failure by academics to integrate

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[198] D. Scholarios and P. Taylor, 'Beneath the Glass Ceiling: Explaining gendered role segmentation in call centres'. *Human Relations*, Vol. 64, No. 10 (2011), pp.1291-1319, p.1291.
[199] Breitenbach, *Women Workers in Scotland*, p.1.
[200] R. Martin and J. Wallace, *Working Women in Recession*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1984, p.47.
[201] S. Boston, *Women Workers and the Trade Unions.* London: Lawrence and Wishart, Revised Edition, 2015, p.9.
[202] E. Gordon, *Women and the Labour Movement in Scotland, 1850-1914.* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991, p.1.
[203] A. Hughes, *Gender and Political Identities in Scotland, 1919-1939*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2010, p.13.

industrial relations with personal relations.[204] In examining Britain in the later twentieth and early twenty-first centuries, Linda McDowell argued in 2013 that the narrative of work has continued to be 'largely about men', demonstrating the continuing historiographical limitations in analysing women and work in this period.[205] Furthermore, Miriam Glucksmann has argued persuasively that there has been a 'stagnation' of research into the lived experience of work and work cultures over the last two decades, further limiting the material available.[206] In considering the investigations that have been conducted into the relationship between women and work, a number of theoretical perspectives must be critiqued to allow for an understanding of the structural factors that can offer explanation for women's historic position in the labour market.

2.5.3 Radical feminist approach

As outlined above, the majority of women have historically occupied a distinct position in the labour market from their male colleagues. Ann Curthoys argues that these different experiences of employment are economically and socially constructed, and that 'the situation of man-breadwinner and woman-child-carer/housewife is not a "natural", inevitable or permanent one'[207]. The feminist movement of the 1960s and 1970s led to increased academic attention focusing on the position of women in society and employment.[208] The radical feminist critique of society put forward at this time sought to analyse women as a separate class 'in their own right'.[209] Kate Millett asserts that male domination is cross-national and ahistorical, maintained through a patriarchal family structure which socialises men and women into the 'basic patriarchal politics with regard to temperament, role,

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[204] A. Danieli, 'Gender: The Missing Link in Industrial Relations Research'. *Industrial Relations Journal*. Vol. 37, No.4 (2006), pp.329-343, p.329.

[205] L. McDowell, *Gender, Migration and Employment in Britain, 1945-2007*. Oxford: Wiley Blackwell, 2013, p.22.

[206] M. A. Glucksmann, 'Formations, Connections and Divisions of Labour'. *Sociology*, Vol. 43, No.5 (2009), pp.878-895, p.880.

[207] A. Curthoys, 'Towards a Feminist Labour History'. *Labour History*, Vol. 29 (1979), pp.88-98, p.88.

[208] M. Glucksmann, *Women Assemble: Women Workers and the New Industries in Inter-war Britain*. London: Routledge, 1990, p.9.

[209] Ibid., p.11.

and status'.[210] Christine Delphy supports this position, arguing that a Marxist analysis of class and conflict is insufficient as the 'concepts used for the Marxist analysis of capitalist exploitation… cannot actually account for women' and that the struggle between workers and capitalists is only one struggle in society.[211] She rejects the attempts of socialist feminists to integrate the oppression of women with discussions of worker oppression, as they 'cannot simply be added together'.[212] As a consequence, she argues that the working-class is 'sexed' and feminist authors must separate women from the Marxist analysis of class relationship, and consider 'men as a class of oppressors'.[213] Authors such as Millett and Delphy, however, do not provide specific analyses of the relationship between women and production, or broader subordination of women outside the patriarchal familial structure.[214] Furthermore, Joan Sangster argues convincingly that labour history has been marginalised in feminist history, as this is 'somehow seen as 'traditional' labour history', and not responsive to a broader examination of the position of women in society.[215]

An important aspect in the work of feminist writers who do examine employment is the social construction of skill, which Sangster argues is central to many feminist studies of employment, as it directly impacts the relationship between the sexes at the point of production.[216] Adopting a feminist critique of labour history, Ann Munro argues that there has been a failure to link the literature on women's work with the theoretical perspectives of women's oppression in society, limiting our understanding of the ways in which these interact with one another.[217] Wajcman argues that the system of patriarchy has ensured that women have consistently

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[210] Cited in P.T. Clough, 'The Hybrid Criticism of Patriarchy: Rereading Kate Millett's "Sexual Politics"'. *The Sociological Quarterly*, Vol. 35, No.3 (1994), pp.473-486, p.476.
[211] C. Delphy and D. Leonard, 'A Materialist Feminism is Possible. *Feminist Review*, Vol 4 (1980), pp.79-105, p.86.
[212] Ibid., p.87.
[213] Ibid., p.104.
[214] P.T. Clough, 'The Hybrid Criticism of Patriarchy', p.476.
[215] J. Sangster, 'Gendering Labour History Across Borders'. *Labour History Review*, Vol. 75, No, 2 (2010), pp.143-161, p.157.
[216] Ibid., p.153.
[217] A. Munro, *Women, Work and Trade Unions*. London: Nansell Publishing, 1999, p.7.

occupied the lowest jobs, as men have greater power in securing their interests at work.[218] In her analysis of the development of the printing trade, Cynthia Cockburn asserts that women quickly became part of the 'other' working-class, in conflict with craftsmen. The craftsmen, she argues, made specific choices to omit women from skilled trades, which was part of the 'struggle by men to assure patriarchal advantage'.[219] Whereas Ruth Cavendish asserts that women marry as they cannot survive on their own wage, Pollert claims that sexual oppression in employment is based on women's 'economic dependence on marriage', rather than different working environments creating this situation.[220] It is argued that, as women are dependent on marriage for economic security, they become exploited at work as their labour is seen as secondary to that of men. She argues that women also face a different set of problems than men at work, due to this dependence. For instance, the subtle question of 'why' women work in paid employment is not asked of men, demonstrating the pervasiveness of this hierarchy of labour and social perceptions of work and domesticity. Anna Pollert concludes that 'from the evidence available, it would seem that women workers supply a reserve army of labour', which is recruited when necessary and disposed of when no longer needed.[221] This is supported by the statistical analysis by Rubery and Rafferty, who argue that in the post-2008 recession, 'women are still often bearing a disproportionate share of job loss'.[222]

2.5.4 Limitations of radical feminism

A crucial limitation of a radical feminist perspective of work and opportunities in employment is its failure to fully consider factors other than gender in shaping relationships at work. The argument of authors such as Delphy, that women

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[218] J. Wajcman, *Women in Control: Dilemmas of a Workers Co-operative*. Milton Keynes: The Open University Press, 1983, p.9.

[219] C. Cockburn, *Brothers: Male Dominance and Technological Change.* London: Pluto Press, 1991, p.35.

[220] Cavendish, *Women on the Line,* 162; A. Pollert, *Girls, Wives, Factory Lives*. London: Macmillan, 1981, p.3.

[221] Pollert, *Girls, Wives, Factory Lives*, p.230.

[222] Rubery and Rafferty, 'Women and recession revisited', p.417.

constitute a distinct class based on an unequal power relationship with men with whom they are in conflict, fails to acknowledge the pervasiveness of a class system based on the relationship of workers of both genders to the means of production, and the impact of class in shaping opportunities in education, work, identity, and broader society.[223] This is highly significant when considering women's own views of their position in society and Annemarie Hughes argues that, in Scotland during the interwar period, working-class women were less attracted to groups such as the Glasgow and West of Scotland Suffrage Society as they refused to support female candidates of the Independent Labour Party and had close links with Liberals and Conservatives, demonstrating the significance of class in impacting on women's political perceptions.[224] Using extensive oral testimonies, Neil Rafeek argues similarly that Scottish women joining the Communist Party in the 1920s and 1930s were not motivated by gender or women's issues, but by the struggle for socialism and to build a better society.[225] Other factors that are not fully considered by radical feminist authors are the significance of region, race, and ethnicity in impacting on the forms of oppression faced by women and by workers more generally. Gill Valentine has argued for an intersectional approach to identities at work, asserting that there are important 'limitations of privileging one system of oppression… over another', and that it is not possible to explain inequalities through a singular framework.[226]

Glucksmann argues for a feminist and historical materialist framework in analysing the position of women within the labour market. She asserts that gender and sexual division must be integrated with discussions of class and employment, recognising that there are different aspects that interact with the relationship between workers and production.[227] A purely Marxist interpretation, therefore, is overly simplistic as

[223] See for example, Beechey, 'Introduction', p.7; Crompton, *Women and Work in Modern Britain*, p.7.
[224] Hughes, *Gender and Political Identities,* p.107.
[225] N.C. Rafeek, *Communist Women in Scotland*. London: Tauris Academic Studies, 2008, p.40.
[226] G. Valentine, 'Theorizing and Researching Intersectionality: A Challenge for Feminist Geography'. *The Professional Geographer*, Vol. 59, No. 1 (2007), pp.10-21, p.12.
[227] Glucksmann, *Women Assemble*, p.20.

it does not take into account the different relationships for specific groups of workers and the different 'types' of waged work, based on definitions of skill and domestic responsibilities.[228] As a result, she argues, men and women have different class relations, based on the ways in which they are able to sell their labour, recognising the complexity of the internal dynamics of economic and domestic production.[229] Most persuasive in this respect is the argument put forward by authors such as Sylvia Walby, that capitalism and patriarchy operate within the same social structure, independently but interacting with one another.[230] It is evident in these discussions that the relationship between class and gender must be examined fully to understand women's experience of employment and their relationship with production. These discussions demonstrate the expanding focus of labour and working-class history, which seeks to examine different groups of workers and the factors which shape their relationships with work and society. This argument is adopted by Silke Neusinger, who rejects the view that labour history is in decline, asserting that its content and focus has shifted from traditional perceptions.[231] This position is supported by Sangster, who argues that the emergence of women's labour history in the UK and North America has meant that writing about the working-class has 'become more diverse in theme and reach, and thus more complex.[232] This unequal power relationship between men and women in society, and its impact on employment, is important when considering the ways that groups challenge their position.

2.6 Women and Activism at Work

In considering the attention given by academics to the role of women in labour politics and workplace activism, the narrative of being 'ignored' from the discussion is – similar to the literature on women and employment outlined above – widely

[228] Ibid., p.22.
[229] Ibid., p.264.
[230] S. Walby, *Patriarchy at Work* Cambridge: Polity Press, 1994, p.43.
[231] S. Neusinger, 'Gendered Activism and the Politics of Women's Work: An Introduction'. *International Labor and Working Class History*, Vol. 77 (2010), pp.3-7, p.3.
[232] Sangster, 'Gendering Labour History Across Borders', p.153.

used by a range of researchers analysing a number of localities, time periods, and employment sectors. Writing in the 1980s, Breitenbach observed that women trade unionists had been 'virtually invisible' in academic studies, with work focused on male dominated sectors and unions.[233] Despite an increased focus given to women workers, and the changing labour market which increased participation in employment and trade unions, Dorothy Sue Cobble stated at the end of the twentieth-century that, internationally, the literature continued to minimise 'women's particular forms of collective action', particularly in the growing service sector.[234] This historiographical imbalance has not been sufficiently addressed, with a number of authors writing in the last decade continuing to note the male bias of extant research. In her work on gender and political identities in Scotland during the interwar period, Hughes argues persuasively that women's 'participation in formal and informal political struggle has largely been ignored'.[235] In examining Scottish female herring workers in East Anglia during the same period, Sam Davies argues that their activism has not received any historical attention, reflecting a continuation of women's involvement in labour politics being 'hidden from history'.[236] In analysing Communist Party members and activists in the 1920s and 1930s, Rafeek demonstrates that there has also been a failure to incorporate women's experiences in the historiography of this type of political activism, both in Scotland and in Britain broadly.[237] In looking at recent research on the post-war period, a similar historiographical narrative emerges. Liz Leicester analysed a strike by clothing workers in Leeds in 1970 and asserted that such self-activity of female workers has been 'ignored' by labour historians, as there has been a failure to integrate female activism within the broader historical reflection.[238] Tara Martin

[233] Breitenbach, *Women Workers in Scotland*, p.2.
[234] D.S. Cobble, '"A Spontaneous Loss of Enthusiasm": Workplace Feminism and the Transformation of Women's Service Jobs in the 1970s'. *International Labor and Working-Class History*, Vol. 56 (1999), pp.23-44, p.23.
[235] Hughes, *Gender and Political Identities,* p.9.
[236] S. Davies, '"A Whirling Vortex of Women": The Strikes of Scots Herring Women in East Anglia in the 1930s and 1940s'. *Labour History Review*, Vol. 75, No. 2 (2010), pp.181-207, p.181.
[237] Rafeek, *Communist Women in Scotland*, p.1.
[238] L. Leicester, 'The 1970 Leeds Clothing Workers' Strike: Representations and Refractions'. *Scottish Labour History,* Vol. 44 (2009), pp.40-58, p.42.

analysed the rank-and-file activity of women workers in the National Union of Public Employees (NUPE) during the 'Winter of Discontent', 1978-1979, and argued that women's activism is absent from the broader analyses of the period, limiting our understanding of the ways in which women interacted with this movement, and how it impacted on their own perceptions of workplace politics.[239] It is evident that there continues to be a gap in the literature of labour history focussing on the activism of women at the workplace and, as with the literature on deindustrialisation discussed above, remains the preserve of the male industrial workers. This section will now examine those themes that have been deployed in previous research, with important reflections on the interaction between women and the labour movement and the subsequent ignorance of their participation in a large section of the current literature.

2.6.1 Female 'interest' in work and trade unionism

There are common perceptions of women and workplace activism which have been historically significant in shaping the attitudes of men and the labour movement, as well as the ability of women to engage with working-class politics. Central to this has been the notion that women have been historically less interested in working-class activism and labour politics, due to their domestic responsibilities. This view was put forward by Blauner in 1964, who argued that, for women, 'work does not have the central importance and meaning in their lives that it does for men, since their most important roles are those of wives and mothers'.[240] This perception has been strongly challenged and disputed by a wide range of researchers of women's labour history, arguing that it has little relation to historical reality.[241] For the interwar period, Hughes argues that this perception was significant in shaping the response of the labour movement to women workers, as they 'identified women with passivity and political apathy'.[242] Writing in the 1980s, Purcell asserted that 'it

[239] Martin, 'The Beginning of Labour's End?', p.49.
[240] Cited in Martin and Wallace, *Working Women in Recession*, p.5.
[241] See for example, Munro, *Women, Work and Trade Unions*, p.18.
[242] Hughes, *Gender and Political Identities*, p.90.

is one of those taken for granted assumptions that women, and particularly women workers, are generally more placid than men'.[243] In this same period, Wajcman argued that there existed an 'assumption that women are passive and home-centred' based on the 'myth of women's inherent conservatism'.[244] Coyle assesses the notion of female passivity in explaining the lack of mobilization in two female dominated clothing plants in Yorkshire during the 1980s, and argued that it failed to offer any explanation.[245] Boston concluded in 1987 that these myths of female passivity and political apathy 'do not stand up to historical scrutiny'.[246]

Evident in these discussions is the rejection by a number of authors of the notion of female worker passivity. It is important to consider why such assumptions became so widespread and accepted as common sense, and the impact that this has had on women, men, and working-class politics. As Hughes demonstrates, in Scotland the 'presentation of women as an acquiescent workforce, apathetic to the trade union movement… was used to justify their exclusion from positions of power in work and most trade unions'.[247] One factor in supporting this assumption has been the historically lower rate of female trade union membership in relation to men. This pattern has been a recurrent aspect of women's engagement with trade unionism throughout the twentieth century. In the interwar period, male workers were three times more likely to be members of a union than women across central Scotland.[248] Despite women's membership in British unions increasing by 73 percent between 1966 and 1977, they remained less organised than males. Scottish women were more unionised than British averages by the late 1970s, with the proportion of women workers members at 40.3 percent and 37.6 percent respectively.[249]

[243] Purcell, 'Militancy and Acquiesce Among Women Workers', p.54.
[244] Wajcman. *Women in Control*, pp.x, 17.
[245] Coyle, *Redundant Women*, p.34.
[246] Boston, *Women Workers and the Trade Unions*, p.9.
[247] Hughes, *Gender and Political Identities*, p.199.
[248] Ibid., p.31.
[249] Breitenbach, *Women Workers in Scotland*, p.80.

2.6.2 Employment structure and unionisation

Whilst demonstrating a broadly lower level of female organisation, these generalised statistics obscure a number of significant structural factors that have impacted on women joining unions. The most significant of these is the types of jobs done by women which have historically been different to those done by men. The significance of this cannot be underestimated in shaping the opportunities for female workplace organisation. Glucksmann argued that different positions in the labour market create different relationships between workers and production, and that this differentiation will impact significantly on the ways in which women and men are able to organise. This position is supported by a range of authors in considering female worker activism, with the argument that women's over-concentration in insecure, low paid, and low skilled work has meant that their levels of organisation have been historically lower than men, who have privileged access to secure, well paid employment which allows for greater opportunities of collectivism. Wajcman argued in the 1980s that the type of jobs predominantly done by women, and not notions of female conservatism, have had a significant impact on the opportunities for union organisation, particularly as women were more likely to work in smaller workplaces and on a part-time basis.[250] Therefore, the argument presented by Breitenbach that women have worked 'in situations which place obstacles in the way of unionisation' is an important factor when examining the consciousness of women workers and their ability to organise.[251] Gill Kirton argues that the pervasiveness of the types of jobs traditionally done by women on unionisation is demonstrated by the fact that women are now proportionally more unionised than men in Britain, due to economic restructuring which has greatly diminished the manual, industrial base of male union membership.[252] Whilst this is significant, different types of jobs done and the impacts of this do not offer a full explanation as to why the labour movement has historically been unsuccessful in recruiting women into trade unions to the extent

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[250] Wajcman, *Women in Control*, p.17.

[251] Breitenbach, *Women Workers in Scotland*, p.45.

[252] G. Kirton, 'The influences on women joining and participating in unions'. *Industrial Relations Journal*, Vol. 36, No. 5 (2005), pp.386-401, p.386.

that they have with men. To offer an explanation, we must look at the literature concerning the dynamics of the labour movement in encouraging and discouraging female organisation, before analysing the ways in which women's participation in workplace politics has been impacted.

2.6.3 The labour movement and women's participation

Many socialist and feminist authors argue that, historically, the labour movement has played an important role in discouraging and preventing organisation amongst women workers, and that the pervasiveness of these attitudes persisted throughout the twentieth-century.[253] The origins of these attitudes are firmly rooted in the original development and objectives of trade unionism, but its continued significance is more subtle and complex, as unions did – officially – increasingly promote women's interests throughout the 1970s and 1980s. In looking at early trade union development in Scotland, Gordon demonstrates that women's organisation was actively opposed by the labour movement, based on the perception that work was the preserve of the male. For the labour movement, she claims that the notion of separate spheres was 'not an ideology to be challenged, but a goal to be realised'.[254] The objective of organised labour in the late nineteenth and early twentieth-century was to eliminate female competition in employment rather than struggling over issues of equal pay, based on an 'adherence to a policy of family wage'.[255] This approach directly impacted on opportunities for female worker organisation, as they were denied access to the collective strength of the movement because, as Crompton argues, trade unions 'have been organized largely by men on behalf of men'.

For the interwar period, a range of authors demonstrate that these attitudes remained dominant within the labour movement. In looking at the activism of Scottish women, Davies argues that the labour movement remained ambivalent to

[253] See McIvor, 'Women and Work', p.196.
[254] Gordon, *Women and the Labour Movement in Scotland*, p.99.
[255] Ibid., p.101.

building an active rank-and-file female membership, continuing to focus on male workers and particularly the impacts of the Depression.[256] Hughes and Glucksmann are more critical than Davies, arguing that it was hostility, rather than a lack of interest that continued to shape union opposition. Hughes asserts that, in Scotland, there was a backlash against women's participation in wartime work, as the labour movement continued to 'idealise housewifery'.[257] Glucksmann supports this position when looking at the growth of female participation in assembly-line work in this period, arguing that there was continued hostility against women working from men and the labour movement (as well as from other women), and that unions continued to reinforce traditional views on women's removal from employment once married.[258] As well as negatively impacting on membership density, Hughes argues that the hostility of the labour movement and their failure to interact with women workers was responsible for creating an ignorance of trade unionism amongst women workers. Post-1945, Boston argues that despite a massive increase in the proportion of women workers joining unions, there were little active attempts made by the movement to recruit on a large scale, and they remained unresponsive to the changing economic structure.[259] McIvor argues that the attitudes of the trade union movement were slowly beginning to alter from the 1970s, although this change did not occur at the same rate as increased female employment and union density.[260] Despite this, he also notes that the TUC recommended as late as 1980 that employers 'recognise that women must work the hours that allow them to fulfil their domestic responsibilities', further demonstrating the continuing influence of patriarchy in trade union organisation.[261]

Another aspect of low female unionisation that has been argued, particularly by authors from a feminist perspective, is that the trade union movement in the later

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[256] Davies, '"A Whirling Vortex of Women"', p.203.
[257] Hughes, *Gender and Political Identities,* p.2.
[258] Glucksmann, *Women Assemble*, pp.224-225.
[259] Boston, *Women Workers and the Trade Unions*, p.262.
[260] McIvor, 'Women and Work', p.202.
[261] A. McIvor, *Working Lives: Work in Britain Since 1945*. Basingstoke: Palgrave MacMillan, 2013, p.224.

twentieth-century did not sufficiently support women's issues at work, furthering the perception that it was not important for women workers. Hughes argues that in Scotland this developed within the interwar labour movement, as there was mutual hostility with the feminist movement, resulting in a lack of activity by unions on issues directly related to women, such as equal pay at work.[262] Veronica Beechey asserts that this hostility developed into apathy within the labour movement in the post-war period, with unions largely ineffective in attempting to address gender discrimination at the point of production.[263] Munro adopts a more radical feminist perspective, arguing that the system of patriarchy, which ensures that men and women's interests at work are opposed, created an 'institutional mobilization of bias' excluding women's issues from the trade union agenda.[264] Such bias ensured that, throughout the twentieth-century, 'women's issues [were] less likely to be taken up than men's', as the labour movement remained overly committed to improving the situation of their majority male membership, failing to interact with the specific interests of women workers.[265] Boston argues that this institutional ignorance of women's interests did shift in the 1970s, with the TUC publishing more documents related to specifically female interests between 1976 and 1986 than it did in the previous century.[266] However, such improvement is challenged, particularly in Scotland, as there was only one female member of the 21-member STUC General Council by 1981.[267] It is important to distinguish between different unions and unions operating in different sectors. Martin argues that the participation of female members of NUPE in disputes during the Winter of Discontent 'was instrumental' in advancing women's interests within the labour movement.[268] White collar unions, and unions in teaching, nursing and other professions with large numbers of women workers have historically been more innovative in advancing the interests of women at work. However, as Pollert

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[262] Hughes, *Gender and Political Identities,* p.103.
[263] Beechey, 'Women's Employment', p.128.
[264] Munro, *Women, Work and Trade Unions*, p.1.
[265] Ibid., p.25.
[266] Boston, *Women Workers and the Trade Unions*, p.312.
[267] McIvor, 'Gender Apartheid'?, p.204.
[268] Martin, 'The Beginning of Labour's End?', p.52.

asserts, this increased activity of the labour movement did not translate into greater awareness for women workers of the role that unions could play in improving their conditions, as there remained institutional 'boundaries' between men and women's worlds, with trade union business retained in the former.[269]

2.6.4 Women's participation in workplace activism

These arguments support the view that large sections of the labour movement in Britain were unresponsive or overtly hostile to the organisation of women workers throughout the twentieth-century, based on ideals of domesticity and an ignorance of the specific interests of women workers, placing significant obstacles in the way of female organisation. These ingrained attitudes of trade unionists are significant when considering the attitudes of the labour movement towards women who do actively participate in trade unionism and industrial dispute, such as those workers being analysed in this research. The literature on women's active participation will now be examined, before looking at the ways in which women have navigated between union and societal hostility to act collectively in the workplace. In looking at the active participation of workers in trade unionism, it is significant to note the arguments of Kirton and others that, historically, 'levels of participation are notoriously low among all members' regardless of gender, although this has been used to support assumptions of female-specific passivity.[270]

An important and subtle boundary for women's active participation in workplace politics is the difference between men and women's perceived social roles, which has historically placed the bulk of domestic responsibilities on women. This creates a substantial difference in the ability of male and female workers to devote non-work time to union business, such as branch meetings. As Beechey argues, women have consistently been forced to organise their employment around their expected

[269] Pollert, *Girls, Wives, Factory Lives*, p.166.

[270] Kirton, 'The influences on women joining and participating', p.388; Munro makes a similar argument that activism is the preserve of the minority. See Munro, *Women, Work and Trade Unions*, p.17.

domestic duties, impacting greatly on the freedom that they have to use their own time in the way that men can.[271] The gendered approach of trade unions to collective activism and the privilege given to the concerns of men has meant that, historically, union activity has been structured around times which suit men and are consequently more difficult for women. Munro asserts this position, arguing that meeting times have been organised around times which are not suitable for women, such as evenings, when they are expected to perform housework and child-caring duties.[272] In looking at women workers in the 1980s, Pollert found that such approaches impacted more on older, married women, and that it was these workers who were likely to be more aware of, and supportive of, the role of unions at work, highlighting the pervasiveness of domestic ideology on negatively impacting women's participation in union activities.[273] Beryl Huffinley, Secretary of the Leeds Trades Council in the 1970s, reflected on the reality of these biases, stating that 'by the time they'd [women workers] done a day's work and got home, and there's a meal to make, the washing to see to, and the house to clean… a night at the branch doesn't count very high on the list of priorities'.[274]

As with the discussions of membership, above, many writers, particularly from a feminist perspective, have focussed on the patriarchal nature of the male-dominated trade union movement in offering explanation, arguing that male unionists have been unsupportive and hostile towards women's active participation in unionism. This weak participation has been central to the notion of female passivity and many researchers argue that this has been created by the hostility of male trade unionists. The most developed and nuanced argument in support of this is that developed by Pollert, who states at the outset of her analysis of a Bristol tobacco plant that female passivity is a 'self-fulfilling prophecy', due to the attitudes of male workers.[275] Although women were becoming increasingly active and

[271] Beechey, 'Women's Employment', p.195.
[272] Munro, *Women, Work and Trade Unions*, p.19.
[273] Pollert, *Girls, Wives, Factory Lives*, p.171.
[274] Leicester, 'The 1970 Leeds Clothing Workers' Strike', p.50.
[275] Pollert, *Girls, Wives, Factory Lives*, p.79.

militant throughout the 1970s, she argues that they faced opposition from fellow trade unionists, leaving women to struggle against union hostility as well as that of the bosses. She argues that in her case study, the male workers espoused many of the stereotypes of women being less interested in employment, and subsequently less willing to participate in trade unionism, despite the women that she interacted with talking in class terms and presenting demonstrations of working-class activism within the workplace.[276] These stereotypes were pervasive to the extent that Pollert argues women had to fight '*against* the union' when they had grievances and faced all-male shop stewards.[277] She argues that, as well as struggling against their relegated position in the labour market and gendered exploitation at work, they had to 'struggle as women as being ground down by a male-dominated union hierarchy. Ignored, ridiculed and patronised, resources became doubly exhausted'.[278] As a result, women could not devote their full energies to issues of working conditions and trade unionism and many became alienated from the process which, Pollert argues, resulted in this 'self-fulfilling prophecy. The "brothers" said all along that women were "bad trade unionists"'.[279] Coyle found similar attitudes by a union official involved in a redundancy process, who defended the inaction of the union, stating that 'we've got no muscle, but you see, we're nearly all women', despite the workers openly criticising the lack of action by their representatives in fighting closure.[280] Walby supports this argument in her analysis of patriarchy and employment, asserting that the historic 'cross-class alliance' between the labour movement and the bosses 'must not be underestimated' when considering the relationship between women and men in trade union activism.[281]

[276] Ibid., p.80.
[277] Ibid., p.177, original emphasis.
[278] Ibid., p.180.
[279] Ibid.
[280] Coyle, *Redundant Women*, p.28. Whilst this quote is important in considering union perceptions, Coyle does not disclose the gender of the union official being interviewed, though it is presumed that they are male.
[281] Walby, *Patriarchy at Work*, p.243.

There are numerous examples in the literature of women's participation in labour politics and industrial dispute being met with hostility from their 'brothers' in the movement which offers support to Pollert's analysis. Offering a transnational perspective, Cobble analysed American air stewardess' in the 1970s, who complained over the sexual connotations of airline commercials and the provocative cut of their uniforms, looking to take action in opposition to this. Despite the workers being highly organised, 'their words fell on deaf ears' when presented to the male union hierarchy.[282] Such complaints, she argues, seemed petty to male union officials who were primarily concerned with increasing wages and improving terms and conditions, placing significant obstacles in the way of women's ability to act collectively.[283]

In examining a strike by clothing workers in Leeds, Leicester argued that the union, the National Union of Tailors and Garment Workers (NUTGW), was hostile to the action taken by the women and publicly stated that it was 'unofficial, against their advice'. Whereas authors such as Mike Jackson highlight the significance of unofficial action by many groups of workers in this period, Leicester demonstrates that this was part of a 'long-standing neglect of the low-paid women who formed the majority of the union membership'.[284] Such difference in expectation was outlined by Martin and Wallace when considering women facing redundancy in the early 1980s. Although the union accepted redundancy and focused on improving the terms of the deal being offered, 'the majority of the women said that they would have gone on strike if there (sic) union had advised them', demonstrating a failure of the labour movement to reflect the activism of their membership.[285] Coyle's analysis of redundancy supports this, with one female worker stating that 'they [the union] work for the bosses', allowing Coyle to conclude persuasively that

[282] Cobble, '"A Spontaneous Loss of Enthusiasm", p.23.
[283] Ibid.
[284] M. Jackson, 'Strikes in Scotland'. *Industrial Relations Journal*, Vol. 19, No. 2 (1988), pp.105-122, p.107; Leicester, 'The 1970 Leeds Clothing Workers' Strike', p.50.
[285] Martin and Wallace, *Working Women in Recession*, p.150.

‘it was their trade union that let them down’.[286] Wajcman described clear union hostility at a workforce occupation in Fakenham, during which a National Union of Footwear, Leather and Allied Trades (NUFLAT) official told the workers ‘not to be silly girls and go home’.[287] The union refused to recognise the dispute, and Wajcman argues that they ‘did nothing for them – the union officials took neither the women nor the cooperative seriously’, and prevented their own members in other plants from contributing funds.[288]

2.6.5 Rank and file relations and the limitations of feminist analyses

The arguments of these authors in considering the existence of bias against women’s participation in industrial action demonstrate that, institutionally, the labour movement continued to place obstacles in the way of women’s collective action throughout the twentieth-century, with many arguing that this intersects with broader notions of patriarchal domination and ambivalence to female workers. Whilst such perspectives are significant, it is important to note that many of these works do not offer a fuller examination of the links between rank-and-file men and women participating in industrial action.[289] For example Munro discusses ‘men’s’ and ‘women’s’ interests at work and how these conflict and are opposed, but offers minimal analysis of the ways in which working-class politics converge across gender boundaries on shared interests and may engage with one another during instances of industrial disputes. As a result, there is a lack of consideration of the ways in which shared interests, such as wide ranging economic transformation, impact on women *as workers*. Similarly, Wajcman focuses on the role of gender in industrial dispute, but mentions ‘the left’ and support from the labour movement ‘broadly’ only in passing, and does not seek to isolate rank-and-file male workers from the

[286] Coyle, *Redundant Women*, p.35, 37.
[287] Wajcman, *Women in Control*, p.48.
[288] Ibid., p.162.
[289] This is in contrast to the wide range of literature that focuses on women’s support of men in industrial dispute, with the miners’ strike of 1984-85 an increasingly rich area of research. See for example S. Morgan, ‘“Stand by your man”: wives, women and feminism during the Miners’ Strike 1984–85’, *Llafur*, Vol. 9, No.2 (2005), pp.59-71 ; M. Shaw and M. Mundy, ‘Complexities of class and gender relations: recollections of women active in the 1984–5 miners’ strike’, *Capital and Class*, Vol 87 (2005), pp.151-174.

institutional labour movement.[290] Cavendish provides an illustration of when, during a dispute in which she participated, 'all the men in the machine shop cheered and clapped as we went by' when suspended women workers chose to remain in the factory.[291] Pollert's examination of women workers, in which she is highly critical of men, does not provide an extensive examination of the existence, or otherwise, of links between rank-and-file male and female workers in periods of workforce activism more broadly than the factory in her study. This limitation is significant in much of the research which has adopted a feminist perspective, as it can be overly concerned with the role of institutional labour and fails to offer a more nuanced analysis of working-class politics. As Hughes demonstrates, although women's issues were neglected to an extent, there were women in prominent positions of the ILP in Scotland during the interwar period, actively involved in working-class politics in the early twentieth-century.[292] The nature of this relationship – whilst sometimes reflecting a lack of support by male workers – does demonstrate that there have been instances of support based on working-class collectivism. Such support further demonstrates the arguments of authors such as Sangster, referred to above, of the increasingly complex dynamics of labour history, as the experiences of women – and groups such as migrant and minority workers – are being increasingly integrated within the historical narrative and, importantly, emphasise the range of relationships and conflicts in employment and society throughout the later twentieth-century. Significantly, this approach can underplay the ways that women navigate their position between an oppressive employment environment and their own activism. The ways in which women have negotiated a space of activism within the employment relationship and sought to act collectively in the defence of their interests will now be considered, examining the arguments put forward by authors over the types of action taken and the pervasiveness of class and gender identities and relationships in shaping these processes.

[290] Wajcman, *Women in Control*, p.90.
[291] Cavendish, *Women on the Line,* p.144.
[292] Hughes, *Gender and Political Identities*, p.59; Rafeek also discusses women's political activism in the Communist Party in Scotland. See Rafeek, *Communist Women in Scotland*, pp.226-234.

2.6.6 Independent female activism

An example of the limitations of focusing on patriarchal relations in explaining the barriers to women's active participation in workplace politics is in the work of Coyle, who looked at women facing redundancy in the 1970s. She argues that the women did not launch a defence of their employment due to a combination of a 'general lack of support from their husbands at home', and limited trade union support.[293] However, she offers no evidence from interviews or survey data to support this position, presenting it as a taken for granted assumption. She then argues that without official union support, women 'fail to create alternative forms of collective organisation'.[294] In proposing these arguments, she privileges male support in creating the conditions necessary for female activism, underplaying the agency of women workers and the dynamics of their collective consciousness. Hughes argues that, rather than being dependent on men, women's consciousness during the interwar period was developed through the 'politics of everyday life'.[295] Rather than a dependency on institutional movements, the 'community was just as important in the shaping of women's political identities, in terms of class and gender'.[296] Although discussing an earlier period than the focus of study in this thesis, this judgement offers an explanatory framework for the ways in which women have acted collectively in the absence of institutional mobilization.

Gordon supports this position when considering earlier twentieth-century Scotland, demonstrating through a wide range of case studies that the history of women workers has been one of continuous struggle and collectivism.[297] Sites of struggle were often outside of traditional labour politics, further highlighting that 'non-membership of trade unions was not an index of apathy and docility'.[298] This form of action was evident in Hughes' study of interwar Scotland and, using multiple examples, she demonstrates that 'much of the action undertaken by women was

[293] Coyle, *Redundant Women,* p.35
[294] Ibid., p.38.
[295] Hughes, *Gender and Political Identities,* p.203.
[296] Ibid., p.198.
[297] Gordon, *Women and the Labour Movement in Scotland*, p.289.
[298] Ibid., p.136.

impromptu' and, rather than highlighting their dependency on male workers and family members, 'this underpinned a collective consciousness' based on both their class and their gender.[299] The case studies in the works of Pollert, Wajcman, Leicester, and Cavendish each demonstrate women workers acting collectively without support from the institutional labour movement and, in many cases, in direct hostility with their representatives. These authors' accounts and analyses challenge and undermine Coyle's argument, adding complexity to the nature of women's collective consciousness and the manifestation of this in different periods, settings, and localities.

It is evident in this analysis of the literature concerning women and workplace activism that women's labour history is significantly more complex and dynamic than is suggested through traditional, feminist, and socialist perspectives. Such complexity is not a limitation of the field, but representative of the range of female experiences of employment, their relationships with production, and the dynamics that impact upon their collective mobilization. Women's position in the labour market has hampered their organisation, and this situation has historically been supported by large sections of the institutional labour movement. That women in Britain are now proportionally more unionised than men demonstrates the weaknesses of the notion of female passivity, while also reflective of the impacts of deindustrialisation in reducing male density and increasing female unionisation in the public sector. However, the historic ramifications of this have been highly pervasive in the workplace. Despite substantial structural and societal boundaries, women have navigated between an over concentration in low paid, insecure employment and positions of weakness to create spaces of activism. Neither female docility, structural economic factors, or the lack of support from men offer sufficient explanation of the ways in which women have acted collectively in defence of their interests. What is required is an analysis which recognises these complexities and considers the ways in which these dynamics have interacted with one another

[299] Hughes, *Gender and Political Identities*, p.198.

during periods of women's industrial activism to allow this collectivism to translate into a mobilization of anger, organisation, and solidarity.

2.7 Conclusions

This chapter has outlined the key areas of previous research and existing literature that this thesis will interact with to provide the explanatory frameworks through which we can understand the factory occupations under examination. The importance of deindustrialisation as a structural factor in impacting the response of workers to capital migration in this period has been emphasised. It was argued that the responses of women to these socio-economic processes have received minimal attention in existing studies, with the vast majority of work focussed on male-dominated heavy industries. The impact of deindustrialisation on women industrial workers is therefore not fully understood, particularly the ways in which certain workers took militant action to resist global migration of capital to lower-cost economies. A strand of the argument that will flow throughout this thesis will consider the extent to which deindustrialisation can be considered an explanatory factor for the type of response of the workers, within an assessment of the reflections of those interviewed throughout this study. However, deindustrialisation cannot be seen as the only explanation for the action taken, therefore theories on mobilization have been considered. The reasons why a group of individual workers act as a collective are complex and multifaceted, involving individual rationalisation and broader factors of attribution, grievance formation, and the nature of the workforce prior to the action. It has been argued that mobilization is more complex than existing theoretical frameworks suggest as labour processes, cultures of solidarity, broader socio-economic forces, and latent organisational networks are pervasive in the process of cognitive liberation. These complexities add to the richness of our understanding of specific industrial disputes, and these factors will be teased out in the following discussions of the occupations under consideration.

Theories on mobilization do not offer an explanation of the tactics that workers use when faced with managerial actions that threaten their interests and the factors that determine the action taken. As this project is focussed specifically on three cases of factory occupation, the literature on this type of industrial action was considered. Occupations offer a range of advantages for workers, most notably the leverage of seizing control of the site and means of production from the employer. It was argued that there is a link between the historical use of occupation in Scotland and the accelerated industrial contraction of the later twentieth-century. This link will be explored throughout the thesis, aiming to ascertain why the workers mobilized against factory closure through the use of factory occupations. Closure, redundancy, and subsequent unemployment are not sufficient in explaining these mobilizations as factory occupations remained exceptions in the wider experience of deindustrialisation and closure, further illustrating the complexities of understanding workforce collectivism and the decision-making process involved in launching an occupation.

Furthermore, considerations of the factors that influence and lead to the mobilization of the workers involved in these occupations cannot be gender blind, as the workforces were predominantly female. In order to understand gender divisions at work, the experiences of women at the point of production, and the role of the trade union movement in advancing female interests at work, literature focussed on these areas was evaluated. It was argued that women have historically occupied the lowest paid jobs, and that social perceptions of skill ensured that this division continued throughout the twentieth-century. Despite the inaction of large sections of the labour movement, the argument was presented that, despite such limitations, women have historically created spaces for collective action in defence of their interests, adding even further complexity to our understandings of workforce mobilization in the case studies. The chapters following the methodological discussion will examine the industrial disputes and the reflections of those involved within the framework of the complex dynamics that interact in the

development of mobilization, the emergence of solidarity among workers and their supporters, and the challenges faced in opposing factory closure, capital migration, and the accelerated deindustrialisation of the Scottish economy in the early 1980s.

Chapter Three. Methodology

A spectre is haunting the halls of the academy: the spectre of oral history
Alessandro Portelli, 1979.[1]

Oral history is a recipe for complete misrepresentation because almost no one tells the truth, even when they intend to.
Niall Fergusson, 2009.[2]

3.1 Introduction

Before presenting the analysis of the three case studies examined in this thesis, this chapter considers the methodological approach of the research. Beginning with an examination of the philosophical basis of the work, it is argued that a critical realist approach is required to allow for the presentation of a plausible theoretical framework to understand the factory occupations. Following the philosophical discussion, the 'tools' used to reconstruct and interpret the historical events are assessed. Firstly, the documentary source analysis is described, highlighting the archives that have been consulted and providing justification and explanation. Additionally, the thesis has made extensive use of oral history testimonies and its theory and practice will be explained and evaluated. The argument is presented that the initial criticisms of oral history and the reliability of human memory sources has led to a greater awareness of the benefits that oral history offers in understanding more than facts. Utilising oral history testimonies allows for a greater analysis of the way that different people have made sense of events and the significance that they ascribe to them. Lastly, the chapter will extensively outline the Female Factory Occupations Oral History Project, and discuss the ways in which the respondents were accessed, rapport was established and maintained, before a

[1] A. Portelli, *The Death of Luigi Trastulli and Other Stories: Form and Meaning in Oral History.* New York: State University of New York Press, 1991, p.46.
[2] *The Guardian*, 18/01/2009.

consideration of the ethical implications, transcription of materials, and the use of language throughout this thesis.

3.2 Critical Realism

In considering the ontological and epistemological basis of this study, the philosophical underpinnings are influenced by critical realism, an approach that suggests the world should be perceived as 'theory-laden but not theory-determined'.[3] The thesis interacts with many areas of historical and sociological literature concerning gender, deindustrialisation, and socio-economic change, but at its core is an examination of worker mobilization and the ways in which collectivism does, and does not, develop in different contexts. Keith Sisson demonstrates that, whilst there are examples of positivism and social constructivism in employment relations studies, critical realism has consistently been the 'dominant' philosophical approach.[4] Edwards supports the adoption of this perspective, arguing that the types of questions being addressed by industrial relations researchers require the ontological approach of critical realism.[5] Steve Fleetwood critiques postmodernism as ontologically ambiguous, arguing that for studies of employee relations, 'ontology matters'.[6] For critical realists, he argues that there is a crucial acceptance that an entity can exist with, or without, human knowledge of its existence. In a persuasive argument for the ontological clarity of critical realism, he posits the position that:

> Whilst socially real entities are activity dependent, inquiring precisely into who does and who does not do what, and

[3] A.J. Fletcher, 'Applying critical realism in qualitative research: methodology meets method'. *International Journal of Research Methodology* (online), 2016, p.2. Accessed 29/11/2016 at http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/13645579.2016.1144401

[4] K. Sisson, 'Employment relations matters' [Electronic version]. Warwick: University of Warwick, 2010.
Accessed 05/10/2015 at http://digitalcommons.ilr.cornell.edu/articles/29/

[5] P. Edwards, 'The Challenging but promising future of industrial relations: Developing theory and method in context-sensitive research'. *Industrial Relations Journal*, Vol. 36, No. 4 (2005), pp.264-282, p.268.

[6] S. Fleetwood, 'The Ontology of organisation and management studies: A critical realist approach. *Organization*, Vol. 12, No. 2 (2005), pp.197-222, p.197.

> how, allows us to see which humans, and what kinds of humans, and what kind of activity are, and are not, involved in the reproduction, or transformation, of these entities.[7]

Such an ontological paradigm forms the basis of much social science research, allowing for an examination of the presence and impact of structural entities. In critical realist theory and practice, there is an acceptance of a layered ontology: the real, the actual, and the empirical. The real is comprised of social and physical structures 'with capacities for behaviour called mechanisms',[8] and these causal mechanisms can lead to events in the actual domain, which then may, or may not, be observed in the empirical.[9] Structure and agency are therefore observed as complex and interconnected phenomena, which impact on actions in the actual domain regardless of observability. For instance, critical realist industrial relations scholars have the assumption that socio-economic structures impact on workforce collectivism and mobilization, independent of what is observable in the empirical domain. In sum, the actions of individual and collective workers are inherently 'constrained and/or enabled by their circumstances'.[10]

Such studies focused on industrial relations and the development of solidarity at the workplace reject the empiricist epistemology of positivism, underpinned by an understanding that theories developed through this work are provisional, as all human knowledge is.[11] It is not possible to empirically test the conditions under which mobilization does and does not develop, as contextualisation is fundamental

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[7] Ibid., p.202.

[8] B. Bygstag and B.E. Munkvold, 'In search of Mechanisms: Conducting a Critical Realist Data Analysis'. Paper presented at the *Thirty Second International Conference on Information Systems*, Shanghai, 2011. Accessed 17 December 2013 at https://www.academia.edu/1255275/In_Search_of_Mechanisms._Conducting_a_Critical_Realist_Data_Analysis., p.2.

[9] A. Sayer, 'Why critical realism?' pp.6-20 in S. Fleetwood and S. Ackroyd, (eds), *Critical Realist Applications in Organisation and Management Studies*. London: Routledge, 2004.

[10] S. Ackroyd, 'Critical Realism, Organization Theory, Methodology, and the Emerging Science of Reconfiguration', pp.47-77 in P. Koslowski (ed), *Elements of a Philosophy of Management and Organization.* New York: Springer-Verlag Berlin Heidelberg, 2010, p.56.

[11] J. Mingers, 'A critique of statistical modelling in management science from a critical realist perspective: its role within multimethodology'. *Journal of the Operational Research Society*, Vol. 57 (2006), pp.202-219, p.204.

in offering any useful and practical understanding. Whilst critical realists do not inherently seek to 'prove' a correct and demonstrable truth, work in this field is shaped by the awareness that research can analyse the 'underlying mechanisms' that produce events and regularities, to improve our understanding for practical application.[12] The production of plausible explanation is central in the approach of critical realist-influenced study, as researchers attempt to identify and analyse the multiple factors that can be plausibly assumed to have caused the occurrence of a particular event.[13]

This present study is based on the assumptions of critical realist ontology, as it seeks to assess the ways in which labour processes, local cultures, broader economic developments, and changing social structures impacted on the mobilizations that developed in each of the disputes being considered throughout the case study chapters. It is not the aim to empirically demonstrate which factors created the necessary conditions, due to the epistemological assumption that theories are provisional and cannot be applied in different contexts and circumstances. The research is both retroductive – in that it 'investigates particular social conditions under which a causal mechanism takes effect'[14] – and abductive, considering how independent structures and experiences created the conditions for collectivism, within existing theories about these relationships, allowing for an analysis with different contextual and theoretical frameworks.[15] The agency of the workers is central in this approach, and critical realist scholars recognise the interaction between structural factors and human agency that create the events under investigation. Due to the aims of developing the most plausible theoretical framework for the occurrence of events, critical realist research does not privilege the methods used, with no prior commitment, as is normal practice in positivist and

[12] Edwards, 'The Challenging but promising future of industrial relations', p.268.
[13] S. Ackroyd, 'Methodology for Management and Organisation Studies: Some Implications of Critical Realism', pp.127-151 in S. Ackroyd and S. Fleetwood (eds). *Critical Realist Applications in Organisational and Management Studies.* London: Routledge, 2004, p.139.
[14] Fletcher, 'Applying critical realism', p.8.
[15] Ackroyd, 'Methodology for Management and Organisation Studies 2010', p.66.

postmodernist schools.[16] This use of methods has been driven by the aims of the research, with those used chosen to provide the most useful data based on the requirements of the study. The dominant approaches have been oral history and documentary source analysis.

3.3 Documentary Source Analysis

Documentary source analysis was the first method utilised to reconstruct the events and to place the occupations within their historical contexts. Local archives were the first repositories accessed, with three key centres containing archived information related to the disputes and their geographies: the James Watt Library, Greenock; the North Lanarkshire Heritage Centre, Motherwell; and the West Lothian Local History Library, Linlithgow. Each of these centres contained – to various degrees – Council, regional, and industrial records that were assessed in relation to the purposes of the research. Only the West Lothian Local History Library had a dedicated file focused on the particular dispute under investigation, and the other centres had many related documents that were crucial for a thorough analysis. Local newspapers were also analysed through these archives, with the collections of the *Greenock Telegraph, West Lothian Courier, Linlithgow Gazette,* and *Cumbernauld News and Kilsyth Chronicle* consulted. Each newspaper was used selectively based on the dates of the disputes, with analysis beginning six months before the closure announcement and ending twelve months following the conclusion of the disputes.

Trade union records were also accessed to provide an analysis of the response of the labour movement to the occupations. Firstly, the archives of the Scottish Trade Union Congress, held at Glasgow Caledonian University, were consulted with all reports, press statements, correspondence, and meetings held over the period 1980-1983 consulted for reference to each dispute. The records of the specific unions involved – the National Union of Tailors and Garment Workers (NUTGW) and

[16] Ibid., p.127.

the Amalgamated Union of Engineering Workers (AEU) – were sourced and accessed. Accessing these sources involved visits to the Modern Records Centre in Warwick and the Working Class Movement Library (WCML) in Salford, where a large body of material related to the occupations and the workers' unions were consulted. Of particular value was the WCML, which contained a substantial number of archived documents directly related to each occupation, as well as pamphlets and miscellaneous publications produced by a range of left-wing groups during the period. Other repositories accessed were the Glasgow Women's Library and the Cumbernauld Library, which were accessed to consult specific items as the project developed.

The process of consulting documentary sources inevitably evolved as the project developed, depending on the areas of the research that required further consideration. All repositories were visited on numerous occasions to ensure, as far as possible, that no source of importance was overlooked. As a result, the collection of data progressed until the end of the project, including during the writing-up of the final thesis, with archive centres visited repeatedly to re-examine catalogues and collections. Archivists were informed of the specific details of the project, and many were able to source and provide uncatalogued materials, allowing for the consultation of a greater range of documents. These repositories provided a wealth of material concerning the historical and geographical context of the disputes, public representation and the internal dynamics of the labour movement during the period (see Bibliography for a full list of primary sources consulted). However, they could not provide any meaningful data on working lives in each factory, the motivations for taking part in the disputes, decision making processes in the actions, and the personal reflections of those involved. To gain this necessary data, an oral history project was conducted to collect the testimonies of the workers involved.

3.4 Oral History

Oral history methods have become increasingly accepted within the academic pursuit of reconstructing and interpreting the past, but its application still requires some justification when utilised in research projects. It is the aim of this section to outline the development of oral history as a historical method, before considering some of the theoretical implications of using living people as a historical source, and treating memory as a subject of study.

It is important to begin any discussion of oral history methods with the awareness that orality is the oldest form of accessing the past. While 'oral history' is much different in use and application than folklore and oral traditions, Paul Thompson argues that using speech and the narratives of those present at particular times 'gives back to historians the oldest skill of their own craft'.[17] The use of oral history in academic studies emerged following World War Two, with the 'renaissance' of utilising memory as a source.[18] Many early practitioners of oral history launched their research for political ends, predominantly the recovery of the past for those groups in society not likely to leave behind written traces.[19] Importantly, it was perceived that this process of recovery history could 'change the focus of history itself and open up new areas of inquiry', beyond the traditional scope of historical analysis.[20] As Alessandro Portelli demonstrates, due to the bias of archived sources towards the rich, the powerful, and the influential, 'oral sources area a necessary (not a sufficient) condition for a history of the non-hegemonic classes'.[21] The recovery efforts of early oral historians were significant in opening up new areas for historical study including – but not limited to – narratives of work, working-class lives, ethnic minority groups, and the hitherto hidden history of women. Angela Bartie and McIvor demonstrate that the early collection of oral testimonies in

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[17] P. Thompson, *The Voice of the Past: Oral History*, 3rd Edition, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000, p.81.

[18] R. Perks and A. Thomson, 'Critical Developments: Introduction', pp.1-21 in R. Perks and A. Thomson (eds), *Oral History Reader*, 3rd Edition, London: Routledge, 2016, p.6.

[19] For further discussion on these approaches, see A. Bartie and A. McIvor, 'Oral History in Scotland'. *The Scottish Historical Review*, Vol. 92 (2013), pp.108-136.

[20] Thompson, *The Voice of the Past*, p.3.

[21] Portelli, *The Death of Luigi Trastulli*, p.56.

Scotland had a significant impact on the existing historiography, as it allowed historians to 'challenge and question the stereotypes and dominant narratives that have pervaded Scottish historiography', particularly assumptions on working-class women and the unreliability – and eventual rejection – of a pervasive separate spheres historiography.[22]

This recovery form of oral history shifted in the 1970s, partly in response to the criticisms of traditional historians who asserted that oral history would lead 'not into history, but into myth'.[23] The response to such criticism was originally met with the attempt to make rules of reliability for oral history based on other qualitative disciplines, with techniques such as representative sampling and more structured interview schedules.[24] However, a more sophisticated response used the criticisms of oral methods to argue further for their validity, with the increased incorporation of memory studies and an awareness of the subjectivities present in the interview setting. As Lynn Abrams argues, the interview became an increasingly rich area for analysis as, rather than being flawed due to the dynamics of narrative construction, they can tell us 'not just what happened but what people thought happened and how they have internalized and interpreted what happened'.[25] Portelli was a key figure in the positive response to the criticisms of oral history from traditional academic scholars and one of the most widely cited authors of oral history theory. As he states, oral sources 'are not fully reliable in point of fact' but this, he argued, is a key strength and not the perceived weakness of orality.[26] As narrators do not concern themselves with such historical facts as chronology, names and places, the 'false' memories can in fact tell us much more about the interpretation of events. Therefore, Portelli flipped the discussion of oral history theory and practice from a defensive retreat due to the criticism of traditional historians, to one that demonstrated that the value of the method is precisely how 'oral sources tell us not

[22] Bartie and McIvor, 'Oral History in Scotland', p.121.
[23] Patrick O'Farrel, cited in Perks and Thomson, 'Critical Developments, p.4.
[24] Perks and Thomson, 'Critical Developments', p.4.
[25] L. Abrams, *Oral History Theory*. London: Routledge, 2010, p.7.
[26] Portelli, *The Death of Luigi Trastulli*, p.2.

just what people did, but what they wanted to do, what they believed they were doing, and what they now think they did'.[27] This increased attention to the theoretical aspects of oral history methods has had an impact on the way in which historians use memories in their work. As Bartie and McIvor assert, the oral historian's job has extended beyond purely recovering the history of those groups absent from the historical record, towards an analysis of why 'different individuals and groups experience the same event in totally different ways'.[28]

3.5 Female Factory Occupation Oral History Project

For the purpose of collecting testimonies, the Female Factory Occupation Oral History Project was launched under the auspices of the Scottish Oral History Centre (SOHC) to provide the necessary structure and framework for such a project to produce useful data. I was the sole researcher, with access to the support networks offered by the SOHC, which constituted primarily of advice from experienced oral historians, recording and transcription hardware, technological expertise and interview space as and when required.

3.5.1 Aims and purpose

The aims of the project were clarified in the initial stages of the research. The primary purpose was to conduct interviews with workers involved in each sit-in, to gain an in-depth understanding of the micro and macro mobilization contexts as each dispute developed. Whilst documentary sources could provide such contextualisation to an extent, semi-structured interviews were required to allow for a greater understanding of decision making processes and relationships during the occupations. The oral history interviews were also essential to offer an understanding of working life in each plant prior to the industrial action under examination. An understanding of labour processes and methods of production was fundamental to allow for extensive analysis of the roots of solidarity and

[27] Ibid., p.50.
[28] Bartie and McIvor, 'Oral History in Scotland', p.127.

collectivism that emerged through each class action being examined. Whilst the sit-ins at Lee Jeans and Plessey received significant press coverage at the time, and have been the subject of some public and academic history projects previously, it was necessary to gain an understanding of life inside each factory before and during occupation to provide data for the purpose of developing plausible theoretical explanations for the action that took place. Furthermore, the project sought to examine the working histories of each respondent before beginning in the plant wherein occupation took place, as well as their upbringing and political beliefs to further illuminate the agency of each respondent and provide some contextualisation of their individual response to workplace closure and class solidarity.

3.5.2 Access and respondent sample

Non-probability sampling, the process through which the researcher selects respondents based on their judgement as opposed to a random population sample, was chosen as the most effective way to recruit respondents.[29] The decision was taken at the outset that any worker involved in the disputes could participate, ensuring that the focus did not become narrowed to 'activist narratives' or those easily accessible to the researcher.[30] There were many challenges in recruiting respondents to, and different approaches were taken as necessitated by circumstance. As the project involves disputes that took place in factories no longer operational, there was no fixed physical space where it could be assumed workers would congregate. The recruitment process was done on a case-by-case basis, primarily to ensure that the disputes remained separate events, and not to create confusion of events and themes. The first case study to begin recruitment was

[29] O. Tansey, 'Process tracing and elite interviewing: a case for non-probability sampling.' *PS: Political Science & Politics* Vol 40, No. 4 (2007), pp.765-772, p.767.
[30] For further discussion, see for example A. McIvor and R. Johnston, '*Miners' Lung: A History of Dust Disease in British Coal Mining*. Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007, pp.7-14.

Lovable, followed by Lee Jeans and Plessey.[31] For each case study, posters were distributed in the towns in which the factory was based, with the anticipation that civic spaces would still be frequented by workers involved. These included libraries, community centres, pubs, supermarkets, bingo halls and bowling clubs. The poster approach had limited success, with only two respondents being directly recruited in this way. However, poster advertising was indirectly important in the beginning of the Lovable study. When distributing a poster to the Borroughs Social Club in Cumbernauld, the barman on shift informed me that his mother, Betty Wallace, had been a shop steward in the factory and he contacted her immediately. Betty was the first respondent from Lovable to take part in an interview, which was highly significant in beginning meaningful dialogue with former workers.

In each case study, local newspapers were contacted in an attempt to raise awareness of the oral history project. Both the *Greenock Telegraph* and *Cumbernauld News and Kilsyth Chronicle* ran feature stories about the project, and the *West Lothian Courier* published a letter seeking respondents. The response to newspaper publicity varied across the cases. Interestingly, the greatest impact was in West Lothian, where the appeal was one of many 'Letters to the Editor', with the poorest in the *Greenock Telegraph*, which had published a full page story including archive images from the dispute. Once the initial interviews had been conducted, there was a degree of subsequent snowball recruitment that introduced further respondents to the researcher. Despite the success of this method, additional obstacles in the recruitment of respondents was encountered. In the Lee Jeans case, an interview conducted by the author for a previous project was utilised.[32] The respondent, Mary McGachie, was unable to participate in this doctoral project, but it was felt that the testimony she had provided was valuable to this analysis and, as she had completed a recording agreement form allowing for the archive and future use of the material, it was incorporated in the thesis. In the Lovable study, it

[31] The decision for this was based on the assumption that by knowing the locality of Cumbernauld the least, it would take most effort to become familiar with the town and the best places to attempt recruitment.
[32] Clark, "And the next thing the chairs barricaded the door".

became apparent through the interviews that the number of workers who participated in the dispute was considerably smaller than had been believed, around one-tenth of the figure that had been assumed. As a result, it was decided to use social media in an attempt to gain interest and it was this tactic that had the most success in increasing the visibility of the oral history project and establishing contact with former workers.

Facebook has increasingly become a platform for users engaging in nostalgia, particularly for viewing and discussing images of demolished buildings and transformed landscapes. The most prominent of these sites in the Scottish context is 'Lost Glasgow', which essentially represents a group of over 121,000 *Facebook* members who use the site to reminisce about areas of the city which have undergone substantial alteration.[33] Such sites are not confined to large cities, and I contacted the administrator of the 'Old Cumbernauld Pictures' site and asked if they could highlight the project and publish my contact details.[34] Over the next three days, over 8,000 users had seen this advert, with 235 people directly engaging with it, as shown in Figure 3.1:

Figure 3.1 Breakdown of interactions with respondent advert on 'Old Cumbernauld Pictures' *Facebook* page. Provided by page administrator with consent for use.

[33] Accessed 21/09/2016 at https://www.facebook.com/lostglasgowofficial.
[34] Accessed 20/01/2014 at https://www.facebook.com/OldCumbernauldPictures/

Robert Perks and Alasdair Thomson highlight that the digital revolution has had a substantial impact on the ways in which oral histories are stored and accessed, and greater attention must be given to social media as a way for oral historians to directly engage with the groups that we seek to participate in our research as, despite its pitfalls, such platforms can dramatically increase the profile and visibility of a project.[35] Put crudely, it is much more convenient for a potential respondent to click a link to the researcher's public profile than it is to compose an email or call them directly. Following the success of social media in the Lovable case study, this was then used for Lee Jeans and Plessey, with varying levels of success, but both leading to increased visibility and respondent recruitment.

A key issue that became apparent once the recruitment process for the Plessey occupation began was that of mortality. In her contemporary analysis of the occupation, Findlay asserted that the vast majority of the workers were 'middle aged' which differentiated it substantially from Lee Jeans and Lovable.[36] As Plessey (formerly the Telegraph Condenser Company) had operated in Bathgate since 1947, many of the workers who remained following the downsizing of the 1970s were older, unlike Lee's and Lovable where the factories had operated for a short period of time and therefore had a younger workforce. Common responses to advertisements were children and grandchildren of former workers informing me that their parents and grandparents had passed away. This represented a significant problem in the development of the research as all avenues to recruit respondents had not – and clearly could not – be successful in significantly increasing the cohort. Due to limitations of time, I approached my academic advisors to discuss the possibility of dropping the Plessey case study from this project and continuing with a comparative analysis of Lee Jeans and Lovable. It was decided, however, that this would limit the composite scope of the study and, as some workers had been contacted, it was perhaps more important to record and interpret those narratives

[35] R. Perks and A. Thomson, 'Making Histories', pp.445-457 in R. Perks and A. Thomson (eds), *Oral History Reader*, 3rd Edition, London: Routledge, 2016, p.456.
[36] Findlay, 'Resistance, Restructuring and Gender', p.74.

available before the passage of time made this entirely impossible. As Bartie and McIvor argue, oral history in Scotland is faced with the 'real urgency to address gaps in areas of research before those who lived through the periods we wish to know more about unfortunately pass away'.[37]

The limitations imposed by mortality were also mitigated as Plessey, and Bathgate broadly, have received more academic interest than the other case studies, so there were extensive materials that could be used to supplement the testimonies collected. These consisted of Findlay's contemporary study, as well as the Bathgate Oral History Project coordinated by the Workers' Education Association in 2011 which, whilst focused primarily on car manufacturing in the town, contains testimony relevant to Plessey and the occupation that took place. Additionally, it was possible to access people who were indirectly involved in the occupation. These were Jim Swan, shop steward at the nearby British Leyland plant who co-ordinated their dispute with the Joint Shop Stewards Committee at Plessey, and Kenny MacAskill, the lawyer who represented the workforce when the company sought an interdict to evict them from the plant. These additional respondents meant that there was a satisfactory cohort of respondents involved in the Plessey occupation and, supplemented with material in previous studies, allowed for an in-depth assessment of work in the plant and the occupation that developed. The breakdown of respondents by case study is presented in Table 3.1, and short biographies of each respondent are presented in Appendix A.

[37] Bartie and McIvor, 'Oral History in Scotland', p.132.

Table 3.1 Respondents by case study.

Case Study	**Cohort Number**
Lee Jeans	9
Lovable	11
Plessey	5 (2)[38]
TOTAL	**27**

3.5.3 Establishing rapport and intersubjectivity

Central to the collection of useful oral history narratives is establishing a positive relationship and rapport with respondents from the outset.[39] The approach taken in this project followed similar guidelines as those outlined in previous research. In order to put respondents at ease before the interview began, small talk and chit chat was used to begin a conversational dialogue with the interviewee and allow them to talk freely about topics not necessarily related to the interview. Topics included weather and my travel to meet respondents, which also allowed for humour in complaining about rail operators and inclement weather, again with the objective of putting the respondent at ease. A key ice-breaking question that many respondents asked was why I was interested in the sit-ins that took place. This initial discussion was highly beneficial in establishing a positive relationship, as it allowed me to fully explain my interest in labour history, and the reasons why I felt that these disputes were important, demonstrating to the interviewee my interest in their narratives and the significance that I ascribed to their experiences.

The decision was taken to allow the interviewee to be in control of the situation at all times in the relationship. Firstly, they chose where the interview would take place to ensure that they did not feel threatened in any way. The majority were happy to conduct the interview in their homes, and other locations included local pubs and cafes, with one respondent meeting me at their place of work, and one

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[38] Five respondents worked in the factory, and two external supporters.

[39] Abrams, *Oral History Theory,* p.10.

choosing to visit the SOHC.[40] Valerie Yow argues that the oral historian should insist on a silent place to conduct the interview so as not to disrupt the recording, going so far as to state that we should 'request in a firm, serious tone that the television be turned off'.[41] However, she does not discuss the ways that this could negatively impact the relationship that develops between the interviewer and respondent. For instance, if an interviewee wishes to meet in a public place to conduct the interview, how would refusal of this request due to possible background noise impact the rapport and subsequent interview? Limitations of time meant that it was not possible to meet with narrators before the actual interview, with all correspondence done by phone, email, *Facebook,* and post.[42] To maintain a positive relationship and allow the respondent to control the environment as much as possible, I did not demand a silent space or request in a 'serious tone' that the television be turned off or telephone unhooked, as this could cause unnecessary unease and negatively impact the respondents' willingness to narrate, particularly as the standard of recording equipment ensured that voices would be clearly audible for accurate transcription.

The relationships forged between the interviewer and interviewee during these processes is an increasingly important area of analysis in oral history studies. In any interview, all respondents bring their individual subjectivities, that is their social, cultural, personal, and political biases, and these interact during the interview to create intersubjectivity that shapes the development of the discussions and narratives.[43] In recognising the significance of intersubjectivity, it is necessary to briefly outline the key personal characteristics of the interviewer. I am a white male, born and raised in Greenock, Scotland and have no religious beliefs, although I was

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[40] This respondent, Margaret Cairney, had studied at Strathclyde University in the 1990s, and the interview gave her the opportunity to see how it had changed in the years since.

[41] V. Yow, 'Interviewing Techniques and Strategies', pp.153-178 in R. Perks and A. Thomson (eds), *Oral History Reader*, 3rd Edition, London: Routledge, 2016, p.154.

[42] A 'pre-meet' also requires greater commitment from the respondent which could lead to them being less willing to participate if they have limited free time.

[43] A.J. Gilmour, *Examining the 'hard-boiled bunch': work culture and industrial relations at the Linwood car plant, c. 1963-1981*. PhD Thesis, University of Glasgow, 2010, pp.32-38.

baptised and schooled in Catholicism. I was in my mid-twenties when conducting these interviews, making me significantly younger than my respondents, as is common in oral history projects. I speak with a west of Scotland working-class accent in most situations, and this is evident in the interview transcripts. The most distinct difference between the respondents and the interviewer is the gender of those in the interview, with the vast majority of respondents female. Gendered intersubjectivities can have an important role in influencing the construction of narratives in the oral history interview, an aspect discussed extensively by Hilary Young through her experience of interviewing older men in Glasgow. She found that their narratives were impacted by concepts of feminism and the 'new man' when interviewed by a young, female academic.[44] Juliette Pattinson noted similarly that her relationship differed with male and female respondents when investigating the Special Operations Executive in World War Two, stating that she would be in the company of the women for a much longer period of time as they extended a high level of hospitality to her.[45] Many of my respondents afforded me similar levels of hospitality, with tea, coffee, sandwiches, and biscuits offered. However, the male respondents also extended this level of hospitality, suggesting a level of superficiality in the discussions of gendered differences in the relationships forged during oral history interviews.

Pattinson goes on to argue that, when reflecting on the interview experience more closely, social class and social status was much more important in explaining the significance of the intersubjectivities in her research interviews.[46] I had a similar experience and perspective as Pattinson. The importance of class in shaping the relationships with respondents and the ways in which we interacted in the interview process appeared much more significant than gender and generational

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[44] H. Young, 'Hard Man, New Man: re/composing masculinities in Glasgow c1950-2000'. *Oral History,* Vol. 35 (2007), pp.71-81.

[45] J. Pattinson, '"The thing that made me hesitate…": re-examining gendered intersubjectivities in interviews with British secret war veterans'. *Women's History Review*, Vol. 20, No. 2 (2011), pp.245-263, p.248.

[46] Ibid., p.260.

differences. Indeed, as all but one of the respondents could be broadly labelled as being from a working-class background, the most consistent aspect of the relationships formed was the way in which they were built on a commonality of background and experience. My role as an academic researcher from a similar social background allowed respondents to be more relaxed in the interview process and to enjoy the experience, with some interview situations having a significant social aspect. Respondents took me to their local pubs and social clubs, and it can be asserted that my background made it much more likely that they felt that this type of meeting would be agreeable once we had initially made contact. There was no observable power imbalance based on status with any of the female and male trade unionists interviewed. A power dynamic was evident when interviewing Kenny MacAskill, and it was clear from the beginning of our meeting at the Scottish Parliament that his experience as a politician and Scottish Government Minister placed him in a position of power and authority in the relationship. This difference was not expressed through any rudeness or reluctance to afford me his time, but he took control of the interview at the outset, beginning his narrative before I had provided the customary preamble or turned on the recorder. Therefore, in the experience of collecting oral history narratives in this research, class and social status was much more significant than sex, gender or age in shaping relationships, intersubjectivities, and the dynamics which interacted before and during the interviews conducted.

3.5.4 Ethics, transcription and storage

In thinking about the ethical implications of this research, standard SOHC procedures were followed throughout the collection of interviews. Ethics approval was sought and granted by the University of Strathclyde School of Humanities and Social Sciences following the completion of a detailed outline of the objectives and procedures that would be followed. Each respondent was presented with an 'informed consent' document that outlined the aims of the research and the reasons why they had been approached to participate. It stated that they had the right to withdraw their participation at any time, and required that they sign to

confirm their consent before the interview could begin. After the interview, respondents were asked to complete a recording agreement form that detailed how the recording and transcript would be used and stored in the SOHC Archive, and respondents could choose to remain anonymous in the usage of their testimonies. No respondents sought anonymity.

Once the interviews had been recorded and stored safely, it became necessary to transfer them to a form that could be used in this thesis. The process of transcription requires significant discussion and consideration, as it has a transformative effect on the source material collected. One must always reflect that the material presented is the result of an oral dialogue between the researcher and respondent. Abrams argues that 'we should not ignore the orality of an oral history source', and doing so can lead to the material becoming 'like any other' archived document.[47] Portelli supports this, asserting that there are numerous complications of writing the oral and attempting to convey the meanings and performances that make oral history different from traditional documentary analyses. Portelli demonstrates clearly that there is no such thing as a 'neutral' transcript, as 'each comma is an act of interpretation' by the transcriber.[48] In considering this, it was important that I fully transcribed all interviews conducted, ensuring that each interview drawn upon within this thesis is the result of my interpretation of the spoken word and performance of the narrator. Due to the necessity of transposing the spoken word to written text, the excerpts of interview presented in the following chapters will not have been able to 'avoid obliterating some meaningful marks of regional, class, or personal identity and history', as all transcription inherently does this.[49] That said, the original audio recordings are archived and can be consulted at the SOHC Archive.

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[47] Abrams, *Oral History* Theory, p.20.
[48] A. Portelli, *They Say in Harlan County: An Oral History*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012, p.10.
[49] Portelli, *The Death of Luigi Trastulli,* p.83.

The presentation and use of language through interview transcription is also an important discussion among oral historians in academia and community history groups, particularly concerning colloquialisms and the use of non-standard English. Guidelines vary in this area. In a guide to transcription for the British Library and University of Sheffield, Alec Patton asserts that, whilst colloquialism is common in oral history, '"gonna" / "wanna" should not be transcribed… transcribe them fully as "going to" or "want to"'.[50] Similarly, the Historic Columbia River Highway Oral History Project advised their researchers to 'avoid using phonetic spellings to indicate dialect… in general, try to use "yes" for "yeah"'.[51] However, such an approach only succeeds in presenting the narrative as a mechanical document and stripping it of its orality. The approach taken in this project is that advocated by Portelli, having left in all colloquialisms 'to remind the reader that these words originated in a dialogic oral performance, not a monologic text'.[52] This also ensures that the regional and class backgrounds of respondents are more evident to the reader, although this is not a substitute for the spoken word performance of the recordings. It can also be argued strongly that it is not the role of a university-educated academic to 'polish' the language of the working-class respondents who have allowed them time and access to record their narratives.

As the project was conducted with the support of the SOHC, all materials were stored using the facilities of the Centre. The SOHC Archive provided the best repository that could store the recordings and transcripts collected throughout the research.[53] A section of the Archive was created to host the materials, with the Female Factory Occupation Oral History Project assigned the label SOHCA/052/. This is important in academic oral history, as there should be a recognition by the researcher that the recordings do not 'belong' to them and their research, but are

[50] Dr A. Paton, 'Theatre Archive Project transcription style guide'. British Library and the University of Sheffield. Accessed 10/09/2015 at http://sounds.bl.uk/resources/tap_style_guide.pdf.
[51] Oregon Department of Transportation Research Division, Guide to Transcribing and Summarizing Oral Histories. Accessed 08/11/2015 at http://tinyurl.com/zege2ta
[52] Portelli, *They Say in Harlan County*, p.10.
[53] All respondents were given the opportunity to restrict access to their interviews, and none chose this option.

the intellectual property of the respondents that the researcher has been authorised to use for the purposes of their research. It is hoped that these will represent an important contribution to the available materials focused on the everyday experiences of working-class women in the later twentieth-century, and the ways in which they reflect on changing socio-economic structures through the processes of deindustrialisation.

3.5.5 Use of narratives

The testimonies collected in this research have been used in different ways in the reconstruction of the factory occupations being analysed. The reconstructive mode of oral history, through which narratives are used to inform the researcher of events, was significant. As discussed in section 3.4, the recovery mode of oral history is still used despite increased focus on the study of memory itself. Abrams and Bartie and McIvor demonstrate that recovery and reconstructive oral history is still necessary to allow for the examination of those groups with little archival presence, and female workers are a key group within that.[54] This recovery mode allowed for a detailed examination of the labour processes in each factory, as the interviews aimed to give respondents the opportunity to explain their roles, the organisation of production and the cultures that existed among the workforce. Although each dispute received coverage in contemporary media reports, testimonies were essential in assessing the dynamics of the sit-ins, the relationships among the workers, the decision making processes, and the ways in which individuals participated in the furtherance of their struggles. This approach to narrative analysis can be generally considered as thematic, aiming to reconstruct events based on what is said and what respondents tell the interviewer. As Catherine Riessman argues, this type of narrative analysis is highly useful when 'theorising across a number of cases', which this thesis aims to achieve.[55] Thematic analysis is also suited to projects that interview a larger cohort of respondents and

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[54] See Abrams, *Oral History Theory*, pp.3-5 and Bartie and McIvor, 'Oral History in Scotland', p.134.
[55] C.K. Riessman, 'Narrative Analysis', pp.705-712 in M.S. Lewis-Beck, A. Bryman & T. F. Liao (eds), *The SAGE Encyclopaedia of Social Science Research Methods*. London SAGE Publications, 2004, p.706.

do not conduct life history interviews, which aligns with this project as the oral history interviews were predominantly situational.[56]

The oral history testimonies were also interpreted through considerations of nostalgic representations of factory life, working in manufacturing, and the influence of public and shared narratives, representative of a structural narrative analysis approach. Focus was given to the way in which events were remembered and reflected upon, with a consideration of the narrators' structuring of narrative, illuminating the terminology deployed.[57] The language used by interviewees when discussing the impacts of deindustrialisation is highly significant in attempting to understand the individual and communal meanings ascribed to the end of the industrial era and the impacts of economic restructuring.[58] There was also significant interpretation of the reflections of the respondents on the action that they took, the support – or lack of – from those outside of the factory, and the reasons why they felt it was necessary to seize control of their workplace. The use of narratives and testimonies was not overly concerned with ascertaining the facts of the disputes as dates, places, and times could be established through contemporary reports. Of importance to this research was the way in which respondents thought about the action that they took, why they felt this way, and the influences that shaped the perspectives, experiences, and construction of these narratives, recognising that they 'do not mirror, they refract the past'.[59]

Narrative analysis was conducted without the use of specifically designed software such as NVivo. It was felt that codifying areas and themes within the completed transcripts would be overly time consuming for this project, therefore a range of alternatives were used to analyse the testimonies. This examination was conducted during the transcription of recordings, utilising the tracked comments feature in Microsoft Word while transcribing to pinpoint key themes, phrases and repetition.

[56] Ibid., p.707
[57] Ibid., p.709.
[58] See for example Rhodes, 'Youngstown's Ghost'?
[59] Riessman, 'Narrative Analysis', p.710.

Following transcription, all testimonies were compiled into a single Word document, allowing for the use of the 'find phrase' function to isolate certain identified key phrases. Most of the analysis was conducted by repeatedly assessing the transcripts, becoming familiar with the testimonies and identifying key excerpts for further analysis. From this process, reconstructive and interpretive areas of the testimonies were isolated and assessed in-depth, allowing for an explanation of work in the plants, the occupations that took place and the recollections of the respondents.

3.6 Limitations

The most important limitation in this study has been the result of mortality. This limited the respondent cohort from Plessey, and also meant that two of the three leaders of the occupations (Sadie Lang, Lovable and Ina Scott, Plessey) could not be interviewed. In contrast to Lee Jeans, where the testimony of shop steward Helen Monaghan provided a wealth of data regarding the decision making processes before and during action, her relationship with union officials, and her own reasons for seeking the support of the workers to occupy, such in-depth testimony has not been possible for the other cases. In all aspects of the disputes, documentary sources and the reflections of those interviewed have been extensively assessed in order to account for those areas that a shop steward would be most capable of addressing, but the limitation remains notable.

An additional limitation is that no representatives of management were interviewed to provide their perspectives on the actions. While this thesis is concerned primarily with the mobilization of the workers, it is recognised that interviews with management could have provided further illumination on the organisation of production in the plants and the approach of the companies when faced with occupation. Attempts were made to trace in-plant managers, however, the complexities of each firm's UK and global management structures meant that many of the plant bosses were not from the immediate localities in which the firms were

based, and were likely to have relocated once production ended. While senior members of management were not contacted, a number of line supervisors took part in the oral history project, providing important insights into the organisation of worker supervision at each plant.

3.7 Conclusion

This chapter has described, assessed, and justified the methodological approach of the research presented in the following discussions. It has been demonstrated that critical realism is the dominant philosophical approach of employment relations studies, and this work has also been underpinned by its ontological and epistemological assumptions. The aim of the research is to present plausible theoretical frameworks that can help to explain the actions that took place. There is no presumption of absolute fact, as this fails to allow for an assessment of contextualisation which is fundamental in helping us to understand the mobilization of workers at a specific place and time. Another key aspect of critical realism is the rejection of method privilege, as the methods used are determined by the research questions and the best ways to collect the most useful data to address these. As a result, this study has taken a mixed-methods approach with an extensive documentary source analysis and an oral history project launched under the auspices of the SOHC. The archives and documentary sources consulted were explained, and the way in which these materials were analysed justified.

Reconstructive oral history is the necessary approach to recording and presenting the histories of those whose archival documentation is thin. In considering the initial backlash against the use of orality in academic history, the argument was developed that the perceived weaknesses of oral history are some of its key strengths, as using memory allows for a fuller examination of the reflections of respondents, their emotions, and their feelings about particular experiences. Following the necessary justification of using oral history methods, the Female Factory Occupation Oral History Project was discussed extensively, detailing the

techniques used to collect, store, use, and analyse the narratives. Problems of recruitment were highlighted, and it was argued that social media can play an increasingly important role in increasing the visibility of an oral history project and that this approach was very successful in this research. The problems faced with the Plessey case study due to mortality were outlined, with the argument developed that these limitations were addressed through the incorporation of other research into Bathgate, and conducting interviews with those indirectly involved. In considering the interview situation, the techniques used in establishing rapport were outlined, and it was demonstrated that the respondents maintained control of the interview environment at all times. The process for securing ethics approval and providing respondents with informed consent and recording agreements was then illustrated. These steps are essential in allowing respondents to retain autonomy over their narratives when they are recorded, transcribed, and archived. It was then argued that the most important dynamic in the creation of intersubjectivity in the interviews was based on the class of the researcher and respondent, demonstrated clearly with the contrast in interviewing a former Scottish Government Minister. Lastly, it has been asserted that the interviews have been transcribed, and presented in this thesis, *verbatim* in an attempt to maintain some form of the oral performance and the nuances of language.

Chapter Four. 'It happened before we realised, wit have we just said here?': The Lee Jeans sit-in, 1981[1]

It started off in Greenock,
It's where we make Lee Jeans.
The factory is closing,
No jobs for us it seems.

But we demand the right to work,
We won't give up our fight!
So we've started building links on the chain, on the chain.
Started building links on the chain.

'Lee Jeans Sit-in Song' by Catherine Robertson, 2015.[2]

4.1 Introduction

The seven-month factory occupation at the V.F. Corporation's Lee Jeans site in Greenock is the first case study considered. Beginning with a review of the historic development of Greenock and the district of Inverclyde, the socio-economic position of the area in the early 1980s is illustrated. The discussion then focuses on V.F. Corporation, detailing their growth throughout the 1960s and '70s, and examining their operations in Greenock. Oral testimonies are utilised to analyse the experiences of workers in the factory. The labour process that existed in the plant is considered, and it is demonstrated that production was highly gendered, with women working to sew material cut by men in the production room. Supervision and management was similarly gendered, with an immediate line of female supervisors and predominantly male senior management. The reflections of respondents working in the plant are then analysed, and the argument is developed that a shopfloor culture existed among the machinists, forged through their shared experiences of the labour process and their common position as women and as workers. This culture meant that the shopfloor became a key site of feminine

[1] Interview with Margaret Brown conducted by Andy Clark, 28/08/2015. SOHCA/052/005.
[2] Interview with Sadie Hotchkiss and Catherine Robertson conducted by Andy Clark, 10/09/2015. SOHCA/052/010.

sociability for the machinists. Following this, the sit-in at the factory is examined, outlining the ways in which it began and how the workers became highly organised as it developed. The argument is presented that the high level of mobilization that developed through the action was the result of a number of factors that interacted before and during the sit-in, including the bonds of solidarity forged through the production process and the position of the workers, as well as grievances directed towards the company. In addition, the decisions made by the occupation's leadership facilitated mobilization. Lastly, the support received by the workers from the labour movement and the local community is assessed, and the significance of this solidarity on their participation and reflections is examined. It is argued that due to key decisions made by the occupation leadership, and the traditions of collectivism that existed in Greenock and other industrial areas, the workers received substantial levels of local and national support. However, the testimonies and available documentary material suggests that the role of the workers' union requires critical analysis, and this evaluation is provided before the conclusions are outlined.

4.2 Greenock and Inverclyde

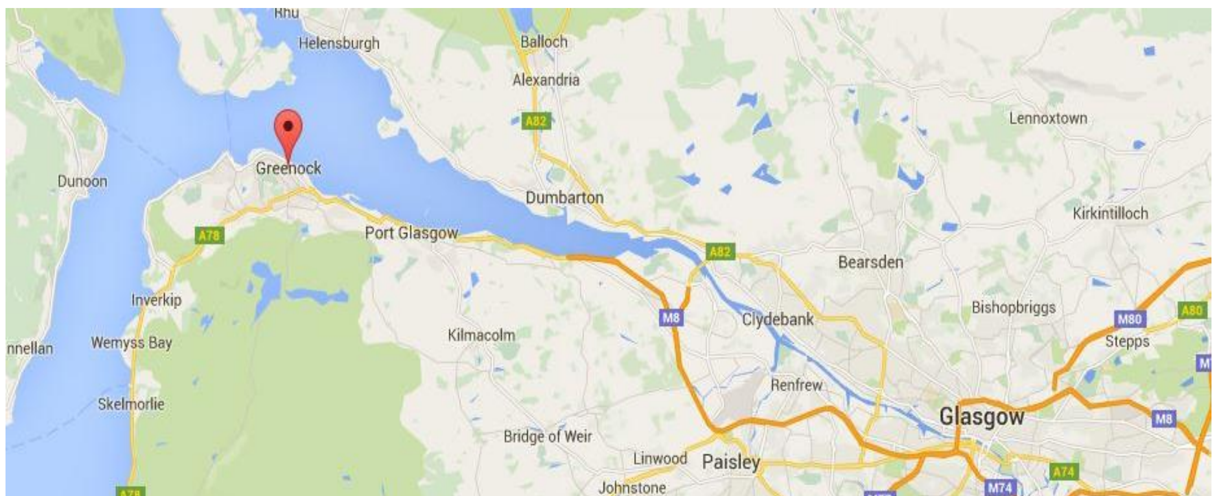

Figure 4.1 Map of Glasgow and Inverclyde with Greenock highlighted[3]

[3] Copyright Google Maps, 2016.

The district of Inverclyde is located twenty-five miles down the River Clyde from Glasgow as it flows west towards the Atlantic Ocean. Inverclyde is composed of three towns, Greenock, Gourock, and Port Glasgow, and a quartet of smaller villages. Greenock is the largest and most populated town. A historic burgh of Renfrewshire, it sits on the coast between Gourock and Port Glasgow, and remains the centre of local government in Inverclyde. The area expanded significantly due to increasing trade with the Americas in the eighteenth-century, growing from a relatively small conurbation focused on fishing to a large industrial centre with high levels of inward migration, particularly from Ireland and the Scottish Highlands.

Table 4.1 Population of Inverclyde (approximate)[4]

Date	**Population**
1800	22,000
1840	45,000
1921	112,000
1961	106,000
1980	100,000
2012	80,680

The figures in Table 4.1 highlight key population trends in the historical development of the area. Increased trade with the Americas led to a doubling of the population between 1800 and 1840 before the growth of heavy industry saw the area's population increase to its highest figure of approximately 112,000 in 1921. The geographical position also made it an area with high levels of migration from Ireland, demonstrated by 30 percent of the town's population identifying as Roman

[4] 1800, 1840, 1921 and 1961 figures from Watt Library Archive [henceforth WLA], uncatalogued, University of Glasgow Department of Social and Economic Research. 'Greenock Area Local Employment Survey, Final Report'. Glasgow, 1966, p.7; 1980 figure from WLA, uncatalogued, Inverclyde District Council Department of Housing, 'Housing Plan 1988-1993'. Greenock, 1987; and 2012 figure from *Greenock Telegraph,* 6/10/2014.

Catholic in 1965 compared with a Scotland-wide figure of 8 percent.[5] Economic contraction and industrial decline throughout the post-war period led to a substantial decrease in population, with estimates that 10,000 people emigrated from the district in the decade 1951-1961.[6] A report by the Chief Sanitary Inspector in 1967 highlighted a 'present trend in loss of population', with Greenock having a decrease of 3,375 residents in the five year period 1962-1967 caused predominantly by outward migration.[7] The population of the area is closely related to developments in the wider area of Strathclyde, with the population in 1981 being as much as 250,000 lower than had been projected when the new towns of Livingston and Irvine were designated in the 1960s.[8]

As indicated above, historic fluctuations in Inverclyde's population have been intrinsically linked to economic developments. The first period of substantial expansion in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries was a result of Greenock becoming one of the country's primary sugar refining centres for transatlantic trade.[9] With the increase in industrial production, however, Greenock and Port Glasgow became centred on the shipbuilding industry, with the world's first commercially viable steamship, *Comet*, being built in Port Glasgow in 1812. By the mid-nineteenth century, there were twenty-one shipping companies based in Greenock[10] and, despite fluctuations in output throughout the twentieth-century, Inverclyde based shipbuilders such as Scott Lithgow played an important role in Scottish shipbuilding before nationalisation in the 1970s.[11] Employment in Inverclyde remained concentrated in manufacturing throughout the twentieth-

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[5] WLA, uncatalogued, University of Glasgow Department of Social and Economic Research. 'Greenock Area Local Employment Survey, Final Report'. Glasgow, 1966, p.7.
[6] Ibid., p.142.
[7] WLA. LGI/6/1/3/6. A.M.M. Connell, Chief Sanitary Inspector, 'Report on Housing and Town Planning Survey 1967, Burgh of Greenock', p.11.
[8] WLA, uncatalogued, The Planning Exchange, 'Proceedings of the Conference on the West Central Scotland Plan', Glasgow 1975.
[9] P.G. Clark, *The Greenock Labour Movement and the General Strike*, B.A. Dissertation, University of Strathclyde, 1986, p.1.
[10] R. M. Smith, *The History of Greenock.* Greenock: Orr, Pollock and Co., 1921, p.22.
[11] L. Johnman and H. Murphy, *Scott Lithgow Déjà Vu All Over Again! The Rise and Fall of a Shipbuilding Company*. St. John's, Newfoundland: International Maritime Economic History Association, 2005, p.54.

century, with 51.3 percent of workers in the sector in 1964, compared with a UK level of 38.1 percent.[12] In this same period, 41.2 percent of women worked in manufacturing, a significantly higher proportion than the UK average of 33.9 percent, with a report by the University of Glasgow's Department of Social and Economic Research concluding that there existed a 'bias towards manufacturing in both male and female employment'.[13] Within manufacturing, shipbuilding and 'related activities' dominated male employment opportunities throughout the 1960s and 1970s, with 64 percent of male manufacturing workers employed in the industry in 1964, and accounting for a quarter of the entire employed labour force.[14] For women, textiles and clothing was the third largest source of employment in the 1960s with 15.5 percent in the sector, behind distribution and public administration.[15] Partly due to the dominance of shipbuilding and related trades, employment opportunities for women were limited, with a report in 1973 indicating that up to a quarter of those registered as 'housewives' would work if suitable part-time employment was available.[16]

The dependence of Inverclyde on heavy industries and a limited economic diversification also meant that, by the mid-1970s, Livingstone and Greensted concluded that the area had gained 'a reputation, deservedly, as an unemployment blackspot'.[17] This situation became increasingly severe as modernisation and economic fluctuations impacted on the area's key industries; by 1964, there remained two sugar houses from a pre-war total of 10, and total employment in shipbuilding decreased by 17 percent between 1956 and 1964.[18] Throughout the

[12] WLA, uncatalogued. University of Glasgow Department of Social and Economic Research, 'Greenock Area Local Employment Survey, Final Report'. Glasgow, 1966, p.27.
[13] Ibid.
[14] Ibid., p.30.
[15] WLA. LGI/6/1/3/6. A.M.M. Connell, Chief Sanitary Inspector, 'Report on Housing and Town Planning Survey 1967, Burgh of Greenock', p.14.
[16] WLA, uncatalogued. 'Glasgow School of Art, Department of Planning Job Creation Project. 'South West Greenock Improvement Strategy: Survey Report and Recommendations', Glasgow, 1978, p.6.
[17] WLA. LH1/P. J.M. Livingstone and C.S. Greensted, 'Inverclyde: a social and economic survey. Bath: Bath University Press, 1974, p.8.
[18] WLA, uncatalogued. University of Glasgow Department of Social and Economic Research, 'Greenock Area Local Employment Survey, Final Report'. Glasgow, 1966, p.37.

1960s, unemployment in Inverclyde was on average six percent higher than the UK as a whole, and four percent higher than Scottish rates.[19] These problems led to Inverclyde being designated a Development District in 1960, a locality 'in which a high rate of unemployment exists… and is expected to persist, whether seasonally or generally'.[20] With these economic developments, Inverclyde was a microcosm of wider developments in west-central Scotland where most districts, and all new towns, were designated Development Districts, as traditional heavy industries contracted.[21]

The recession of the late 1970s and early 1980s further impacted on the employment opportunities for Inverclyde residents. Between 1976 and 1980, 4,580 redundancies were notified in the area, resulting in 18 unemployed persons for every vacancy in Greenock by 1981.[22] Statistical data regarding the direct impact of manufacturing job loss on men and women is difficult to ascertain through the repositories consulted. However, unemployment figures for men and women when compared with national figures highlight the extent of the situation. In May 1981, unemployment for men and women in Greenock was higher than Scottish averages and, more significantly in the context of the Lee's workers, female unemployment was 13.3 percent, fifty percent higher than the Scottish figure of 9.6 percent.[23] Evidently, Greenock, and Inverclyde generally, was facing multiple socio-economic challenges in the early 1980s, with a decreasing population caused primarily by outward migration, and a significantly contracting economic base leading to increased redundancy and unemployment. It was within this context that the workers at Lee Jeans were informed that their factory was to close and that they

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[19] Ibid., p.45.
[20] Ibid., p.48.
[21] WLA, uncatalogued. The Scottish Council (Development and Industry), 'A Future for Scotland'. Edinburgh, 1973, p.97.
[22] WLA. LH1/G. Strathclyde Regional Council and Inverclyde District Council, 'Proceedings of Conference on "Coping with Unemployment" held 8th March 1986 at James Watt College, Greenock', 1986.
[23] War On Want (WOW), *For a Few Dollars More: Lee, the Ultimate Rip-off.* London: WOW Publications, 1981, p.3.

would be facing similar prospects as Inverclyde's increasing numbers of unemployed searching for decreasing numbers of available employment opportunities.

4.3 V.F. Corporation, Lee Jeans and Greenock

V.F. was originally established in Pennsylvania as the Reading Glove and Knitting Manufacturing Company at the end of the nineteenth-century. Expansion into sectors including lingerie and workwear led to the renaming as 'Vanity Fair Mills Inc.' after World War Two. They purchased Berkshire International Corp. before acquiring H.D. Lee in the late 1960s, at which point they rebranded as V.F. Corporation.[24] These acquisitions had a massive impact on the scale of the company's operations and subsequent business performance, with annual sales increasing from $68 million to $297 million in the four year period 1968-72.[25] This increase was largely a result of the performance of the Lee Jeans division of the business, with its sales accounting for 73 percent of VF's total, as Berkshire International and Vanity Fair contracted. V.F. operated 34 plants in the United States and 10 abroad, with Canada, Hong Kong, Belgium and the UK their primary international manufacturing centres.[26] Their UK activities included three plants in Northern Ireland – in Newtonards, Dundonald and Derry – as well as one in Cork, Eire.[27]

V.F. looked to Scotland to further increase their UK operations, coinciding with a growth in Scottish clothing manufacturing in the 1960s and 1970s, paralleling UK trends.[28] H.D Lee of Scotland Ltd. opened in Greenock in 1970, setting up production in the Upper Larkfield Industrial Estate, which was created by the Scottish Development Agency to attract migrating firms in the 1960s. The Industrial Estate was located in Larkfield, a largely residential area dominated by council tenements built following World War Two that had become characterised by high levels of

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[24] http://www.vfc.com/one-vf/company-history Accessed 04/07/2016.
[25] WOW, *For a Few Dollars More*, p.13.
[26] Ibid., p.3.
[27] Ibid., p.17.
[28] WLA, uncatalogued. The Scottish Council (Development and Industry), 'A Future for Scotland'. Edinburgh, 1973, p.80.

overcrowding and a general ‘poor environment’.[29] With Inverclyde designated as a Development District, V.F. capitalised on the range of government grants and subsidies made available to incoming manufacturing businesses. They occupied a local authority-provided factory and received free rents and rates in their first three years of production, with half rent and rates for the following three. Investment grants meant that the government paid 40 percent towards the costs of plant and machinery, and the Regional Employment Premium entitled them to a payment of £1.50 per male worker per week, and 75p per female, which was later adjusted to £2 per worker per week under Equal Pay legislation.[30]

4.3.1 Beginning work in the factory

In analysing how workers came to become employed in Lee Jeans, a number of important themes emerge through the respondents’ narratives. As mentioned above, the factory was located in Larkfield, a predominantly residential area in the south of Greenock, and the convenience of the factory was important for many. Helen, Maggie, Tricia, and Margaret all lived in and around the Larkfield estate and this proximity was a significant attraction for them in seeking employment in Lee’s. Margaret Brown had worked for 10 years in the Playtex Bra factory in Port Glasgow, approximately six miles away, and sought work in Lee’s as:

> Ah didnae like travelin’ fae Larkfield tae the Port [Glasgow] right enough… ah left Playtex, ah wanted a job closer… an’ that [Lee’s] wis only, well, ah wis in Cambridge Road, it wis only ten minutes up the street.[31]

Helen also says that she began working in Lee’s as ‘it was just convenient’, being easily accessible from where she lived at the time.[32] Due to social expectations of women’s domestic roles, proximity has historically played a key role in influencing

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[29] WLA, uncatalogued. ‘Glasgow School of Art, Department of Planning Job Creation Project, ‘South West Greenock Improvement Strategy: Survey Report and Recommendations’, Glasgow, 1978, p.68.
[30] WOW, *For a Few Dollars More*, p.14.
[31] SOHCA/052/005.
[32] Interview with Helen Monaghan conducted by Andy Clark, 26/08/2015. SOHCA/052/008.

the jobs that they undertake. In their study of the Burberry clothing plant in South-Wales, Paul Blyton and Jean Jenkins illustrate that many workers chose that factory for employment as they were nearby in the event of a domestic emergency and they had sufficient time in mornings and evenings to fulfil the roles ascribed to them as wives and mothers.[33] Consequently, many workers at Lee Jeans lived close to the factory, leading to some overlap between their work and non-work lives. Tricia Arkley reflects that she began in Lee's immediately after leaving school after being told by her mother that 'if yer gonnae leave school, yer naw sittin' aboot the hoose on yer arse, ye'll get a job', and she completed an application for the factory, starting soon after.[34] Maggie McElwee was also told that she had to begin work immediately once leaving school, as:

> We never had a choice. Em, there winsae such a thing as, "oh right, take yerself off tae uni", or "let's go tae college"… you had tae be oot there makin' that money. And that's the way it wis grounded… there wis nae way ye'd be allowed tae sit aboot a hoose wi' nae job.[35]

Maggie's reflections highlight that opportunities for continuing education were limited for some young people in Greenock's working-class communities, representing the significance of earning a wage for the family economy. Sadie sought work in the factory as she had been working as a telephonist in a Greenock garage and was bored with that work and felt that it was not a skill that would be useful in future.[36] None of the respondents interviewed in this research discuss any specific desire to become a sewing machinist, or to work in a factory environment. Chiming with Cowie and Heathcott's argument, the dominant theme emerging is that Lee's was convenient and offered the opportunity of full-time employment.[37]

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[33] P. Blyton and J. Jenkins, 'Life after Burberry: shifting experiences of work and non-work life following redundancy'. *Work, Employment and Society*, Vol. 26, No. 1 (2012), pp.26-41, p.31.
[34] Interview with Patricia Arkley conducted by Andy Clark, 30/07/2015. SOHCA/052/006.
[35] SOHCA/052/007.
[36] SOHCA/052/010.
[37] Cowie and Heathcott, 'The Meanings of Deindustrialization', p.5.

A significant aspect in the workers' recollections of beginning in the plant was the pre-existing relationships that they had with others in the factory. Tricia recalls that:

> Ma neighbour two doors doon, Isabelle Gillen, she got me the application form for Lee's, cos she wis in it, she wis in it aboot a year… she helped me fill it in, put it in for me.[38]

Maggie had two older sisters in the factory when she left school, and recalls that it was the perception that she would also become a sewing machinist as, 'ye didnae have tae have any skills, if yer sister wis a sewin' machinist, ye automatically became a sewin' machinist'.[39] Cathy Robertson's mother worked in the factory and got her a job when she left school, whilst a friend of Sadie Hotchkiss' mother was a supervisor and helped to secure them employment as machinists when they wanted new jobs.[40] A range of family and friend relationships thread throughout the testimonies, with instances of a mother and her three daughters all working in Lee's and, for Helen, the factory also provided employment for her son and daughter.[41] Those who went into Lee's once leaving school also discuss that many of their friends from school also began in the factory at the same time, with Maggie saying that 'some ae ma ain pals that ah wis in school wi' gradually started tae drift in'.[42] Margaret reflects that:

> When ah went in [to the factory], ah met a lotta ones that ah'd known, like Sheila Linn, and Maggie Wallace, her sister Cathy, eh, Sheena McCabe. There wis quite a lot that ah did know… when ah first went in.[43]

From this consideration of the respondents' reflections of beginning work in the factory, it is evident that many workers knew friends or family inside the plant who they would work alongside during the production process. The new workers were

[38] SOHCA/052/006.
[39] SOHCA/052/007.
[40] SOHCA/052/010.
[41] SOHCA/052/008.
[42] SOHCA/052/007.
[43] SOHCA/052/005.

not entering an environment wherein they did not know anyone, meaning that there were support networks once they began in Lee's and opportunities for social interactions.

4.3.2 Labour process in Lee Jeans Greenock

When beginning work in the Lee Jeans factory, new workers were trained in how to use the machinery and to work with the raw materials that would make up the final product. Most of the respondents struggled to recall what the training entailed, with Tricia saying:

> Ah cannae remember how many weeks' trainin' ye had, ye had so many weeks' trainin' and, ance ye done yer trainin' that wis you… [at first you were] given a wee block ae wid [wood], and it had some wee nails comin' oot, and ye'd washers at that side. Wis like wee kinda halter things at the end, ye had tae put the washer and the bolt on, tae see how quick ye were'.[44]

The most detailed account of the training process was provided by Maggie, who remembers it more clearly as she was not enjoying working the machines and almost lost her job:

> For the first six weeks, they gie ye so many weeks trainin', right. And, you don't pass that yer oot the door. An' right up tae aboot the fifth week, ah wis really, ah wis like, ah'm naw interested in this… an' that final week Andy, ah had tae kinda put ma heid doon, and really concentrate, an' finally ah done it.[45]

Helen recalls that additional training procedures were put in place at her insistence in her role as union convener (further discussion below). She reflects that, once she had been appointed, she 'got trainin' charts an' aw that made oot tae make sure

[44] SOHCA/052/006.
[45] SOHCA/052/007.

that they wur properly trained'.[46] Once workers were trained in the machinery that they would be using they began working on the factory floor. In considering the process of producing Lee Jeans within the factory, the interviews sought to examine the layout of the factory and the way in which the material travelled from a raw cut of denim to a complete garment for distribution. Before 1980, the cutting room was based at the Greenock site, and it was in this area that batches of denim material were cut into the different sections that would be sewed together to make pairs of jeans. Maggie says that the factory floor was a rectangular shape, with the cutting room running 'the full length of the flair' at the back end of the plant. It was here that 'this material wis aw' cut oot for you [to sew]. Everythin' fae the back end, the front end, pockets, waistbands'.[47] The cutting room was a male dominated section of the plant, with the material that they cut then being taken onto the factory floor in 'bundles' for the female machinists to begin the production. Production in the factory was not organised on an assembly line system of automated movement; the materials were moved, as Cathy reflects, by workers via 'a trolley. They wur called dollies. Call it a dolly. And the denim used tae go over' the top of the trolley that was then transferred throughout the plant.[48]

The first job that was undertaken on the cut denim was for the edges to be serged, which 'means yer goin' roon aw the material so it'll naw fray… then they would start tae put it the gither'.[49] The layout of the factory floor was organised by production sections and, whilst the respondents could not recall the specific order of movement of the material in this process, the narratives do provide ample material for a discussion of the different elements of production. The front and the back end of the jeans would go through the factory separately and would be transferred to the necessary 'parts' sections.[50] From the respondents that worked in the parts section, it emerges that they sat at their machine, attaching their specific part to the

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[46] SOHCA/052/008.
[47] SOHCA/052/007.
[48] SOHCA/052/010.
[49] SOHCA/052/007.
[50] SOHCA/052/007.

material that was passed to them, and that it was up to them as to the speed that they worked, ensuring that they met the base target demanded. The parts included back pockets, front pockets, hip pockets and watch pockets, zips, labels and any pattern required for the specific product design.[51] Once both ends of the jeans had been completed, they would then be joined together with the waistband, where Tricia worked, who says that the they would use a chopper, 'a big blade that would come doon… and cut it… [we then] turned it in and sewed it on tae the back part ae the jeans'.[52] With the front and back side of the jeans now joined together with the waistband, the next part of production was to cut and seam the legs. Once the inseam and outseam were stitched, the final part of the process was to hem and sew the cuffs at the bottom of each leg. After this, the finished product would go to inspection, where Helen worked, then to the package and distribution centre, at the opposite end of the plant from the cutting room where the process began. Tricia reflects that, when discussing all of these aspects, it was 'quite a lot, ye know, tae make ane pair ae troosers!'[53] The workers were assigned a specific job in the plant and worked on one particular aspect of the production. Within the different parts sections, however, workers were trained to be able to work on all the different parts that would be added to the denim. As Sadie reflects, 'ye could jump aff ae ane thing and go ontae another thing if somebody wisnae there' when working in the different parts sections.[54]

The wage structure for machinists in the plant was based on piecework, with Helen stating that 'ye went in an' ye worked a basic wage an' then anythin' over that wis bonus'.[55] Tricia also recalls that:

> Ye got bonus on tap ae it [base wage]… They had a certain number that ye had tae dae. They called it bundles [of denim], ye had so many bundles ye had tae dae a day and

[51] SOHCA/052/007; SOHCA/052/005.
[52] SOHCA/052/006.
[53] Ibid.
[54] SOHCA/052/010.
[55] SOHCA/052/008.

> then wit you done over that, say for talkin' sakes you had tae dae the pockets, say for talkin' sakes, 70 bundles a day… Ance you got tae that 70, anythin' over that 70, you put doon or yer sheet, that wis your bonus for the followin' week.

As Coyle and others have illustrated, this system of payment was highly common in the clothing manufacturing sector.[56] In Lee's, bonuses were calculated through a 'ticket' system, as each worker would attach a ticket with their staff number to each bundle of denim that they had completed. Cathy says that, once completing their specific part, 'ye had tae cut yer ticket aff. 293 wis ma number, ah always remember it'.[57] These would then be assessed at inspection and, if each part had been properly produced, this would be approved and calculated by payroll.[58] This is important, as it demonstrates that the workers were not producing on an automated production line. The organisation of work and the workplace is highly important. As Sally Westwood demonstrates, the labour process in factories 'has major implications for sisterhood and worker resistance'.[59] The intensity of their work in the factory was determined by the speeds that they wanted to work at, so long as they met the base production targets set by plant management. This arrangement allowed the workers some level of autonomy in the production process, particularly when compared with the factories examined by Glucksmann, Cavendish and others.[60] Many of the respondents reflect that the opportunity to make a good bonus was a key factor in motivating them to work as fast as possible on the floor. Cathy recalls that: 'ah remember tae, ye'd be on, honest tae god, ye'd be as fast an anythin' and ye'd 'hink, "ah'm naw makin' ma bonus"'! Another tactic used by management to try and increase the speed of the workers was the public display of their performance. Cathy states that:

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[56] Coyle, *Redundant Women*, p.8.
[57] SOHCA/052/010.
[58] SOHCA/052/007.
[59] S. Westwood, *All Day, Every Day: Factory and Family in the Making of Women's Lives*. Illinois: University of Illinois Press, 1985, p.11.
[60] See Glucksmann, *Women Assemble*; Cavendish, *Women on the Line.* In these works, the lack of control over the speed of the line exercised by women workers is highlighted as significant in their exploitation at the workplace.

> They had poles on the machine. Where the wires went intae. But everybody wis tae put up wit percent [of the base target] they wur, and that's wit you wur expected tae dae, that's the kinda thing ye built yersel up tae. Ye know, you were workin'.[61]

When an order needed completed quickly, the machinists could also take advantage of working overtime. Tricia recalls that this was not something that she did often, but she:

> Used tae work a couple ae nights. Ah think we worked a Saturday mornin' as well… you'd maybe work tae six, half past six, aw' depended on what it is ye needed done, if they needed an order done, an order finished, or whatever.[62]

Summarising the labour process at Lee Jeans, the workers were not regulated by the speed of a production line, but by the need to make their basic wage with the opportunity to make additional bonuses. Another motivating factor for the workers was the display of their performance next to their machine, an attempt by plant management to encourage quicker production. Whilst not working on automated assembly, the female machinists at Lee's had a very particular place in the production process, which constituted a crucial gender division of labour within in factory.[63] This chapter will now further explore industrial relations at Lee Jeans, looking firstly at the organisation of the workforce, before considering the approach of plant supervisors and management.

4.3.3 Trade union organisation at Lee Jeans

The campaigning charity *War on Want* argued that it was V.F. and Lee Jeans' policy to site plants in locales where worker collectivism was limited. Their US operations were concentrated in the states of Alabama and Mississippi; Alabama was a 'right to

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[61] SOHCA/052/010.
[62] SOHCA/052/006.
[63] Glucksmann, *Women Assemble*, p.4

work' state, with substantial limitations on the ability of workers to organise and management efforts were successful in keeping out the Amalgamated Clothing and Textile Workers Union (ACTWU), the 'strongest American textile and clothing union'.[64] The right to organise in a trade union became a key early struggle between the workers and management once they began producing Lee Jeans in Greenock.

Helen Monaghan began working in Lee Jeans as an inspector of finished products in 1970 and, although she had never been a union member in her previous employment, she was central to the organisation of the workers at Lee's. She recalls that when the factory opened, officials from the NUTGW visited the site looking to recruit, but that the management 'wouldn't even let them near the factory'.[65] This decision appears to have been largely accepted by the workers, many of whom had little previous experience of unionism, until they began to perceive that grievances were not being fairly handled by management and workers began to be victimised for raising issues concerning employment conditions. Helen recalls how the recognition strike in 1971 originated:

> When ah went tae the factory ah noticed, it wis terrible, an' it wis young lassies. An' wit happened wis, ye would be maybe a Friday night and somebody would say, "aw such and such a ane got her books". "How"? "Cos she never did her numbers"… An' then, ah wis sayin' ah don't think that's right… Then the other thing wis, up the top ae the factory… they wur aw' cauld, and they were sayin' they were cold. An' ah says tae them, eh, "we cannae sit in this"… An' ah went up tae the manager and ah says, "ye'll need tae dae something aboot that, they cannae work in that in the efternoon"… And, eh, so he took me in and he says tae me, "ah'm sorry tae tell ye but ah'm gonnae huv tae let ye go… ye're a trouble maker"… And the next thing aw' the machines stopped an' they came oot. Well then we wur aw' oot on the street. And then they still wouldn't recognise the union.[66]

[64] WOW, *For a Few Dollars More,* p.15.
[65] SOHCA/052/008.
[66] Ibid.

Through this testimony, it is evident that Helen's age was important in legitimising her authority among the younger, less experienced workers. While Helen discusses the background to her trade union politics throughout the oral history interview, and the importance of a deprived background, she had no prior involvement in formal labour organisation. Therefore, her initial activism and the assignment of a leadership role was not a continuation of individual militancy in a different setting, but a result of her age, experience, and concern for those more susceptible to aggressive management styles.[67] The strike was successful in forcing the reluctant management to accept union organisation and, following arbitration, the NUTGW began organising workers in the plant with a closed shop system. Helen became the convener, with Bridie Bellingham and Ina Anderson becoming shop stewards. William Knox and Alan McKinlay demonstrate that struggles over recognition were common in US-based multinational plants. As these firms were anti-union in principle, Knox and McKinlay argue that it was such instances of organised 'grassroots pressure' that ensured that there was 'little success' for migrating firms in opposing organisation in Scotland.[68] Despite this victory for the workforce, Helen recalls that there remained tensions with what she perceived as a hostile management. As outlined above, she had training charts made, and this was an attempt to hold management to account when disciplining workers for low productivity. She states that the purpose was:

> Tae make sure that they [workers] wur properly trained. An' it meant that from then on he [manager] couldn't sack anybody, [he] would need tae prove tae me that she wis properly, she wis trained right and she still wasn't daein' her bit.[69]

This attitude shifted when the company changed their European management system with the original management, from Belgium, being replaced by Americans

[67] For a discussion of the importance of previous experiences of militancy in new employment sectors, see Gilmour, *Examining the 'hard-boiled bunch'*.
[68] W. Knox and A. McKinlay, 'American Multinationals and British Trade Unions, c. 1945-1974. *Labor History*, Vol. 51, No. 2 (2010), pp.511-529, p.225.
[69] SOHCA/052/008.

in the mid-1970s. After this point, industrial relations in the plant tended to focus on wage negotiations and individual grievances, conducted in a largely cooperative manner. Bridie Bellingham, a shop steward in the plant, could not recall a significant degree of hostility between the union and management, and that her role was 'just takin' tae dae wi' problems that they [workers] had, ye know. Although they never had many problems, ye know'.[70] Retired NUTGW Area Officer, John Easdale, was involved in a number of wage negotiations and grievances at the factory and recalls that discussions were not characterised by a significant level of worker-management animosity.[71] Once V.F. was established in the UK, another round of restructuring in Greenock saw the American management replaced by management from the North of Ireland, a structure that would remain in place until the sit-in was launched in 1981.[72]

In addition to the reflections of the convener and the shop steward, the interviews delivered the recollections of other workers. Yet an important observation is one of omission, in that many respondents struggled to remember anything significant about the union's active role in the plant other than that Helen was the convener. Such views are illustrated in this exchange between Sadie and Cathy:

> Andy: So before the sit-in when ye started in the factory, were ye's a member of the trade union?
>
> Cathy: Naw, had nae idea wit a trade union wis.
>
> Sadie: Naw.
>
> Cathy: We knew aboot unions and aw' that,
>
> Sadie: Aye, don't think ah ever. But, when we started, wur we in the union?
>
> Cathy: Naw.

[70] Interview with Bridie Bellingham conducted by Andy Clark, 08/10/2015. SOHCA/052/011.
[71] Interview with John Easdale conducted by Andy Clark, 05/06/2016. SOHCA/052/009.
[72] SOHCA/052/008.

> Sadie: So when did we join, how did that aw' happen?
>
> Cathy: Ah think we aw' gradually came intae the Tailor and Garment and we wur aw' asked… But we're like, "aye, we'll join the union", it wis like 2 pence a week or somethin'. Ye know, everythin' came aff yer wages.[73]

This discussion during the interview is significant. As discussed above, the factory was a closed shop after 1971 – before Cathy and Sadie began – therefore they automatically joined the union. That they felt that they had not been members indicates that, before the sit-in, their involvement in union business and interaction with the NUTGW had been minimal. Margaret had a similar perspective and, when asked why she had joined, replied 'ah don't know exactly… cos then, ah didn't know much about how it went about… ye just, well they took the money off yer wages'.[74] None of the respondents other than Helen and Bridie recall any significant role played by the union before the occupation. There are vague recollections of workers meeting to discuss wages, or Helen accompanying workers into meetings with management, but there is little discussion of workers actively taking a role in the union, or of significant instances of worker-management confrontation for the majority of their time working there. Mary McGachie reflects that she just 'paid ma dues and more or less let the union reps take to do with it'.[75] This is not indicative of anything distinctive about relations in the plant, as trade union activism and participation in periods of regular employment has historically been conducted by a minority regardless of the size or composition of a workforce.[76] It is significant in the context of the mobilization that emerged through the sit-in as, while there had been a strike for recognition in 1971 that the workers had won, there had not been any other event that led to them mobilising and forging solidarity *vis-a-vis* taking collective action over the following decade. Most of the workers in the plant in 1981

[73] SOHCA/052/010.
[74] SOHCA/052/005.
[75] Interview with Mary McGachie, conducted by Andy Clark, 22/10/2010. SOHCA/036/003
[76] See Kirton, 'The influences on women joining and participating', p.388.

had not been employed in 1971 as the workforce had expanded, so the majority of workers had never participated in industrial action whilst working at Lee Jeans.

Another important aspect that emerges through these oral history testimonies is the gendered way in which the respondents discuss trade unionism:

> Cathy: Cos yer daddy wis in the shipyards and aw' that. "We're goin' oot on strike". That's the only time ah heard ae a union.[77]
>
> Helen: Ye know, they wurnae, it wisn't so, ah mean, the [ship] yards had it [unions], but naebody ever mentioned, eh, trade unions in thae days.[78]
>
> Margaret: Well, ah don't know exactly [how I became a member]. Ah know ma dad, he wis always a trade union member.[79]
>
> Tricia: The day that ah started work up in Lee's, the first 'hing [my dad] said tae me when ah left the hoose that mornin' wis… "As soon as ye get in there, shop steward will come tae ye, you sign that bit ae paper". Ok. An' that wis it.[80]

These excerpts are significant in examining the formation of respondents' views on trade unions when working in the plant, and in considering their reflections on this. For these workers, trade unions were something that the shipyards had, that their fathers were involved in and advised them on. Despite working in a predominantly female factory where every worker was a union member, with female conveners and shop stewards, they portray a gendered perception of trade unionism. This perspective becomes more salient when we then consider that each of these respondents participated in a long-lasting and militant industrial dispute through seizing the means of production from their employer, occupying predominantly with other women. Despite these experiences, for the interviewees participating in this research, trade unions were – and are reflected upon as – a male arena. This is

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[77] SOHCA/052/010.
[78] SOHCA/052/008.
[79] SOHCA/052/005.
[80] SOHCA/052/006.

perhaps reflective of public representations of trade unions and class activism in this period. Breitenbach argued in 1982 that very few instances of women's industrial activism in the 1970s had received the level of publicity afforded to male disputes, and this appears to have had an impact in shaping the perspectives of the respondents on unionism as fundamentally male.[81]

4.3.4 Management and supervision in Lee Jeans

In assessing the structures of management in the plant, it is useful to begin with an analysis of the workers' direct supervisors on the line, with whom they had greatest interaction. Tricia recalls that 'each section had a supervisor… Eh, but they just supervised tae make sure their section runs smoothly… And make sure that they get their numbers oot at the end ae the day as well'.[82] Inevitably, it was this layer of in-plant management that the machinists had most dealings with and that the respondents can recall most clearly. These supervisors were predominantly female, with no recollections of male supervisors on the production line, representing a layer of mediation between female machinists and male management.[83] Relationships between workers and supervisors were largely dependent on the characteristics of the latter, with testimonies containing stories and anecdotes about individual supervisors. For instance, in discussing her supervisor, Sadie says that 'god rest her, ah wis shit scared ae [her]', with Cathy concurring that 'everybody wis feart ae her.'[84] Maggie also recalls run-ins with supervisors, stating that 'ah wis always in trouble… Ah wis always in trouble, trouble for talkin''.[85] Helen's role as union convener and in organising the recognition dispute of 1971 brought her into conflict with her supervisor, who she felt the manager had sent out 'to do his dirty work'. She says that her relationship 'wasn't good. We had one particular supervisor

[81] Breitenbach, *Women Workers in Scotland*, p.4.
[82] SOHCA/052/006.
[83] Westwood, *All Day, Every Day*, p.32.
[84] SOHCA/052/010.
[85] SOHCA/052/007.

and she was… ah just couldn't believe how unjust she wis… couldn't believe it. And, eh, her and I just didn't hit it aff at all'.[86]

Despite these reflections on the different approaches of individual supervisors, the responses do indicate that the supervision of workers was not petty and systematically unfair. Maggie concedes that she was often in trouble because she 'still didnae want tae be a sewin' machinist, end of', rather than through the unfair treatment by supervisors.[87] Most of the respondents highlight their perception that the supervisors were, overall, fair in their dealings with the machinists and that the workers and supervisors generally got on well.

> Tricia: [Supervisors would be] goin' roon' checkin, kinda makin' sure things were runnin' the way it's supposed tae… Didnae really have much dealins… Margaret Gillen wis ma supervisor, she wis great… but nah, they wur awrite.[88]
>
> Cathy: Supervisors were fair, they were like wurselves… Cos the onus wis on her at the end, when the jean finished, that wis her.[89]
>
> Sadie: Ah think like, cos see wee Maggie Gillen, big Maggie Gillen [her supervisor], ah would be in her daughter's, and be in their hoose, like, goin' aboot wi' Maggie. Ye know that way, it's yer pal's mammy.[90]
>
> Margaret: Ah think they [supervisors] were okay… ye could still talk tae them… they would talk aboot things in general, how ye were, an' different things like that… But sometimes, of course, they had tae put their bosses hat on… But, that's only natural… Especially when we're tryin' tae get an order out. But, on the whole it wis okay.[91]

[86] SOHCA/052/008.
[87] SOHCA/052/007.
[88] SOHCA/052/006.
[89] SOHCA/052/010.
[90] SOHCA/052/010.
[91] SOHCA/052/005.

These testimonies suggest that the day-to-day supervision of the production process was not characterised by aggressive, tightly controlled management. The supervisors of each section worked with the machinists on the shopfloor, and therefore shared the physical site of production, and the key space of social interaction among the women in the plant. Whereas Helen and Maggie both spoke of having instances of confrontation, these are rationalised by the respondents as being related to initial managerial hostility towards trade unionism and a dislike of the job respectively. Emerging from the testimonies more broadly is an understanding that supervisors could be strict when required, but were predominantly 'awrite' to work alongside. A narrative emerges of supervisors on the floor being in a position of power, but not being detached from the workers. They interacted with one another on their shared space of the factory floor, spoke with one another, and engaged outside of the workplace. Workers knew who their supervisor was, what they were like, and how they could work together in the plant and, importantly, that they were different from the senior levels of management.

Unlike the reflections on immediate supervisors, in which respondents could recall names and events, there is much less clarity when discussing senior plant management. The managerial offices were located away from the factory floor, and the majority of the respondents cannot recall having any significant interaction with senior management. Helen, who had most dealings with senior management, states that their approach changed when the structure of the company changed. The original management from Belgium were openly hostile to union organisation in Lee's, which led to the recognition strike of 1971. However, Helen recalls that once they were replaced, a much less hostile management meant that there was little further confrontation. Tricia has a similar perspective, saying that:

> Never really seen much ae them… The only time ye would see them, management, ye'd see management maybe comin' in and oot, talkin' tae the supervisors… Big Norman [wages manager] would maybe come in an' oot the office, come over tae ye wi' yer, yer timesheet and see, ye know,

> wit ye, ye clocked aff yer machine at that time and ye never clocked back on again tae that time, wit time did ye go back on an' that, that wis aboot it.[92]

The senior management in the factory had little overt interaction with the workers on the shopfloor, with supervision conducted by female supervisors at each section on the line. That the respondents struggle to recall anything of significance when discussing senior plant management demonstrates that they had little perceived impact on their daily working lives. For the machinists, all issues of significance were handled by their supervisors who they note were, overall, approachable. The lack of reported hostility between workers and management post-1971 is exemplified by the fact that there was no further instance of industrial dispute and, as discussed in the previous section above, there little recollection of the role of the union in the plant.

4.3.5 Working at Lee Jeans

In considering perspectives of the respondents regarding their employment as machinists for Lee Jeans, and their perceptions of the work that they were doing, it emerges that they did not have a significant level of what occupational psychologists Allen and Meyer term affective commitment, defined as an emotional attachment to, and identification with, their employment and the organisation that they worked for:[93]

> Cathy: We just went intae get a wage. We didnae know wit wis goin' on in the backgroon, as long as they make oor wages up, that wis yer concern. At that age in yer life, you're naw thinkin' anythin' at all.[94]
>
> Sadie: Meant ah could make money. Every weekend… ah'll huv money tae go oot, buy clathes an' things like that…

[92] SOHCA/052/006.
[93] N.J. Allen and J.P. Meyer, 'The measurement and antecedents of affective, continuance and normative commitment to the organization'. *Journal of Occupational Psychology*, Vol. 63 (1990), pp.1-18, p.4.
[94] SOHCA/052/010.

> wisnae a case that ye wanted tae dae, it wis just, it wis there'.[95]
>
> Tricia: It wis a job… ye just… got up and went tae yer work. Ye got yer wages at the end ae the week… wis a job, ye know, ye worked in the Lee Jeans factory makin' Lee Jeans… that wis it'.[96]

Through these narratives, the concept of 'the wage' is dominant in shaping the perspectives of why they were committed to their employment. No notion of pride of working for a well-known and fashionable brand was expressed, and Margaret is the only respondent to reflect that she gained some satisfaction from sewing as she had sewn at home and in school. However, she also says that 'it didnae really make much difference' that they worked in Lee Jeans as opposed to any other clothing manufacturer.[97] For the majority of these respondents, working in the plant was due to convenience, economic necessity, and not representative of any form of organisational, affective commitment. It provided them with a wage, and there is no indication of a nostalgic reassessment of the monotony of working on the production line.

The respondents reflect positively on their time in Lee's, with the common view that, overall, they thoroughly enjoyed working in the plant. In juxtaposing this with their assessment that they were there to earn a wage, and that the work could be intense and monotonous, it emerges that there existed a shopfloor culture based on camaraderie and friendship among the machinists. Whereas the labour process was alienating, the workers found reward through the social relationships that were created at the workplace. Similar with Clarke's analysis of women in the Moulinex plant, the interviews with Lee's workers are dominated by sentiments and reflections about the people that they worked alongside, becoming a crucial shared narrative among the respondents:[98]

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95 SOHCA/052/010.
96 SOHCA/052/006.
97 SOHCA/052/005.
98 Clarke, 'Closing Time', p.7.

> Cathy: Ah just loved eh, ma, ma wee crowd ae friends an' 'at. Ah loved goin' up knowin' ah wis goin' in seein' the lassies, wonder wit's on the agenda the day, ye know… Ye know, we wur aw' like, we wur wur ain wee kinda family. That wis oor ain wee section, the parts.[99]

> Maggie: So, ah enjoyed goin' tae work because yer pals were there an' we had good fun, even when we're meant tae be workin', we had a great wee sorta, it became like a great social life for us, because at the end ae the week ye had a wage. An' aw these new pals… Ah enjoyed goin' tae work, and ah enjoyed bein' in there wi' ma pals, but ah hated the actual [job].[100]

> Tricia: No, it wis actually quite a good tae work wi'. Quite a good place tae work in. An' everybody aw' stuck the gither… Ye know, like, the older anes looked efter us younger anes an aw' that as well, ye know yon way. Naw, naw it wis actually awrite tae work in.[101]

> Mary: It was a good factory to work in. Most of the girls I worked with were, um, we all worked really well together. It was a very happy place tae work, with good company… Most of us would say it was probably one of the best places tae work in all wur workin' lives, we enjoyed it.[102]

Helen and Bridie, the two oldest respondents to participate in these interviews also state that they enjoyed working with the people alongside them on the production line. It is important to examine the significance of this key shared narrative due to its prominence within these testimonies. Many of the workers had pre-existing relationships prior to employment and, due to their common position on the shopfloor as production workers, these relationships extended and developed into the workplace. Maggie states that many of her own school friends began in the plant and, through meeting those that they worked alongside, she made new friends

[99] SOHCA/052/010.
[100] SOHCA/052/007.
[101] SOHCA/052/006.
[102] SOHCA/036/003.

at tea breaks and dinner time.[103] The existence of friendships in the workplace, particularly a predominantly female factory environment is central to understanding the ways in which workers can forge a shopfloor culture in work settings viewed as monotonous. This is supported by Westwood, who highlights that such relationships are formed 'out of the shared experience of being women and workers' at the point of production.[104]

The respondents extensively discuss the 'social' aspect of their work in the factory; Christmas dances, celebrations for birthdays and marriages, and a number of rituals inside and outside of the plant. Margaret, Maggie, and Cathy recall that each Thursday – payday – a number of workers would go into Greenock town centre for a few drinks with their recently received pay packets. Margaret states that a number of older workers would go for their 'messages' [shopping], before meeting with the others in a local pub.[105] It is clear that not all workers would have participated in such events. However, the prominence of these reflections in the testimonies indicates that it was a central aspect of working in the factory. Through working in Lee Jeans, the women workers were brought into a shared space during production. With a number of extant relationships threading throughout the plant, those who wanted to could readily make new friends and engage in the 'banter' of the floor or engage with others outside of work. The factory became a crucial site of social interaction for many of the female machinists, something reflected on extensively. This shopfloor culture allowed them to forge a space away from home, family, and plant management above the supervisory level. As Margaret says, it wasn't that the workers loved going into the factory as 'sometimes ye didn't want tae go in... Yer like that "aw god, ah don't want tae go in here today"', but that once they were in, there existed a culture which they were a part of and that they valued.[106]

[103] SOHCA/052/007.
[104] Westwood, *All Day, Every Day*, p.95.
[105] SOHCA/052/005.
[106] Ibid.

The manner in which the forging of a shopfloor culture occurred among the women at Lee Jeans has been detailed by Pollert, that they were 'making the best out of bad circumstances'; they were at the bottom of the occupational hierarchy in the plant, but had friendship groups and had created a space for positive interaction.[107] That these respondents readily discuss the aspects of working there that they did not like and overall reflect upon their experiences in a largely positive manner, illuminates the significance of those they worked with, the culture that emerged and the non-production aspect of employment in Lee Jeans. It is a narrative of workers looking out for one another, in any aspect of their life, of socialising and celebrating, and working alongside one another on the line. In his analysis of garment workers in the 1960s, Tom Lupton demonstrates that these social relationships made life in the factory tolerable and played a significant role in contributing to their positive experiences of manufacturing work.[108] The workers at Lee Jeans had forged a space based on their position in production and through the gendered organisation of the workplace, with female machinists separate from male cutters and management, their shared experiences as women in that process.

4.4 'New jobs blow for District!': Lee Jeans Closure[109]

The beginning of the 1980s was a period of crisis in the British clothing industry. Throughout the 1970s, job losses in the sector averaged two percent per annum and grew to 12 percent in 1980, representing 40,000 jobs lost due to the closure of around 200 medium and larger sized plants.[110] Registered unemployment in the industry rose by 18,000, including 5,000 job losses in Scotland.[111] These closures prompted officials from both the NUTGW and the British Clothing Industry Association to travel to Brussels for urgent talks with EEC officials over the future of British clothing manufacturing in early 1981, the 'first time that the two sides in the

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[107] Pollert, *Girls, Wives, Factory Lives*, p.131.
[108] T. Lupton, *On the Shop-Floor: Two Studies of Workshop Organisation and Output*. Oxford: Oxford Pergamon Press, 1963.
[109] *Greenock Telegraph,* 31/01/1981.
[110] MRC. MSS.192/TGW/3/1/46. NUTGW. *The Garment Worker* (March, 1981).
[111] MRC. MSS.192/TGW/3/2/1/44.'NUTGW Circular to FTOs and Branches. 'Crisis in Clothing – the employment slump' (January, 1981).

industry… joined together in such representation' reflecting 'the alarm at the number of factory closures and the rate of redundancies'.[112] Helen recalls that, at the NUTGW Annual Conference in 1980, General Secretary Alec Smith was 'bangin' the table' that the industry had to take a stand in opposing this decline.[113] Smith argued in January 1981 that 'after nineteen months of Mrs Thatcher at the helm, the good ship "Britannia" is heading for the rocks', with the NUTGW estimating that 'as many as one in two clothing workers had faced redundancy or short time working in the course of the last year'.[114]

Helen first became concerned over the future of the Greenock factory when the cutting room and distribution centre were closed in August, 1980, relocating to the company's Irish plants.[115] This relocation meant that the material was being cut in Northern Ireland, sent to Greenock for making up, and then returned to Northern Ireland for distribution. Helen recalls querying this arrangement with a member of management, who dismissed her concerns. Other issues caused her anxiety, such as the quality of produce that was being allowed to leave the factory, as 'they were lettin' a lottae things go [that they normally would not]… there wis a big order tae go oot, and they were push, push, pushin'.[116] It was also during this time that Helen and the NUTGW officials were negotiating their annual wage rise, and discussions were proceeding at a slower rate than normal, with management reluctant to offer any increase to the workers. It was while these negotiations were ongoing, on January 30th, 1981, that the management informed Helen that, due to a fall in sales and the increasing value of Pound Sterling, V.F. was ceasing their operations in Greenock and the factory would close in the coming April.[117] Helen and her union's

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[112] MRC. MSS.192/TGW/3/2/1/44. 'Statement issued on behalf of the NUTGW and the British Clothing Industry Association (January, 1981).
[113] SOHCA/052/008.
[114] MRC. MSS.192/TGW/3/2/1/44. NUTGW Press Release. 'Britain heading for the rocks' (January, 1981).
[115] SOHCA/052/008; WOW, *For a Few Dollars More,* p.4.
[116] SOHCA/052/008.
[117] *Greenock Telegraph,* 31/01/1981.

Full Time Officer (FTO), John Howard, offered a range of alternatives to prevent closure, to retain the factory in Greenock. She explains that:

> We offered tae dae a three day [week]… Well, if we dae a three day week, things should pick up an' oor jobs, at least oor factory's still here and we can work. We had tae put aw' these things in, because eh, ye wurnae gonnae gie up, and obviously it wis tryin' them… An' eh, job share, offered everythin'. An' every time, right, we'll put that tae them, then you'd go back and the answer wis naw.[118]

A dominant theme across the testimonies, particularly in Lee's as will be discussed further, is the use of possessive language, such as 'oor jobs' and 'oor factory' by Helen when discussing the initial negotiations with management. This use of terminology illuminates the perception of the factory belonging to the workers who produced the denims and engaged on the shopfloor, rather than the property of the holding company. As was common practice in multinationals operating subsidiaries in Scotland, all issues of 'strategic decision making' remained with the US-based centre firm.[119] The management in Greenock assured Helen that they would consider these proposals before reporting back with a final decision from V.F. The report compiled by War on Want argued that 'it seemed that the Company had dug their heels in – they were not interested in any alternative to a complete shutdown.[120] On Thursday, February 5th, Helen was informed that the company had rejected the proposals put forward and that the factory would close as planned.

4.5 The Lee Jeans Sit-In

Immediately following this announcement, Helen and John Howard gathered the other shop stewards, and all other 240 workers in the canteen. Helen believes, although is not certain, that it was Howard who first suggested the idea to her that the workers could 'haud ontae' the factory, with the machinery and stock inside.[121]

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[118] SOHCA/052/008.
[119] Knox and McKinlay, 'American Multinationals', p.214.
[120] WOW, *For a Few Dollars More,* p.5.
[121] SOHCA/052/008.

Sadie and Cathy recall that, as the canteen was not designed to hold all of the workers at once, 'everybody that could get seats got seats, and everyone else was standin'.[122] After explaining the situation to the workers, they were offered the choice of what their action should be, to accept redundancy or refuse to leave the plant in an attempt to reverse the decision. Tricia states that 'ye could feel the atmosphere with excitement', with Margaret recalling that 'they had a vote, an' then everybody that had put [up] their hands, said right that's it'.[123] As Coates demonstrates, workers facing closure and subsequent redundancy have a limited number of options, with much dependent on what action the workforce are willing and able to take.[124] The workers at Lee Jeans voted instantly, by majority, to occupy the plant in opposition to the company's plans, with the sit-in beginning immediately.

2.5.1 The early stages of occupation

The suddenness with which the Lee Jeans sit-in began dominates the reflections of those who participated, becoming a significant shared narrative of the dispute. Shop steward Bridie recalls that Helen 'just came in and said wit they wur gonnae dae and, all of a sudden it just, [we] blocked the doors',[125] with Margaret reflecting that 'ah think it happened before we realised, wait a minute, wit have we actually just said here'?[126] Maggie has similar recollections, saying that they decided:

> We're gonnae barricade us in. So it aw' happened Andy, but it wis aw' happenin' quick before we even had a chance… before we knew it that wis us barricaded in the factory.[127]

The decision to occupy came at the end of the normal working day, meaning that the workers had not made any plans for remaining in the factory. The spread of

[122] SOHCA/052/010.
[123] SOHCA/052/006; SOHCA/052/005.
[124] Coates. *Work-ins, Sit-ins and Industrial Democracy*, p.11.
[125] SOHCA/052/011.
[126] SOHCA/052/005.
[127] SOHCA/052/007.

information was the first key issue for the workers, primarily to inform their family members that they would not be home that night. Margaret recalls that the use of the one payphone in the plant was immediately organised by priority; she was one of the first to contact her family as her mother was in hospital and she 'wis tae go for the shoppin' for the house that night'.[128] The demand for the payphone was so great that, by the time Maggie went to use it, it had become jammed.[129] A key decision by Helen at this early stage was to ensure that Tricia's sister, Christine, was one of the first to use the phone to contact her father, Pat Arkley. Pat was a key figure in the Inverclyde trade union movement as a shop steward with the Transport and General Workers Union (TGW) in Walker's sugar refinery in Gourock and Tricia recalls that, as a result of this, her 'faither wis ane ae the anes that got things rollin'… Gettin' in contact wi' trade unions, the media, and aw' that'.[130] This decision by the occupation leadership is highly significant as it ensured that, from the outset, the Lee Jeans sit-in was not a dispute localised to one factory in a residential estate over two miles from Greenock's town centre. Utilising the contacts of the workers in the plant, they were able to inform the local trade union movement of their action, and this would be fundamental in the development and continuation of their mobilization.

The first night of occupation is recalled with reflections on the discomfort of their situation and the suddenness of their action. As it had not been pre-organised, there were no provisions for food, with the canteen kitchen closed, or sleeping facilities. Margaret recalls that the 'first night wis terrible. It, ah don't think anybody expected it tae be wit it was, but it wis really terrible'.[131] Workers who could sleep lay on the floor and at tables, in cloakrooms and storage cupboards, 'tae get yer heid doon anywhere'.[132] Food was provided through a group of workers, including Maggie, climbing out of a window and sourcing fish and chips from nearby takeaway

[128] SOHCA/052/005.
[129] SOHCA/052/007.
[130] SOHCA/052/006.
[131] SOHCA/052/005.
[132] SOHCA/052/006.

shops and, when word began to spread to families and friends, provisions were brought to the factory and passed in through the same window.[133] Maggie recalls her initial perspective being a sense that remaining in the factory 'wis a big adventure' and a delight in standing up to the plant management.[134] This is shared by Tricia, who recalls a feeling of 'excitement' as she had 'never done this before, never [even] hud a strike before'.[135] A dominant shared narrative of the workers when reflecting on the origins of the sit-in is the view that it would be resolved quickly. Margaret states that 'we thought it wis only gonnae be an overnight thing', whilst Cathy felt 'next day they'll negotiate and everythin' will be back tae, hunky dory.[136] Helen also shared this view, believing that after 'giein' them a fright', by remaining in the factory overnight, management would talk to them again in the morning and reconsider their proposals.[137]

4.5.2 The organisation and development of the Lee Jeans sit-in

Two crucial developments in the early stages of the sit-in provided the workers with the means to continue occupying the factory. After the first night of unorganised occupation, Helen was called into the management office and asked if she could prevent the workers from walking around the factory floor and to keep them contained in the canteen. She used this to her advantage, and agreed on the condition that they opened the canteen kitchen which, in her view 'wis the worst thing he coulda did, cos then we organised wursels wi' oor cookin' and everythin''.[138] This action ensured that the workers would have access to food and drink preparation facilities, meaning that the problems faced on the first night of occupying could be prevented. The second significant development was the workers gaining access to a set of factory keys sourced from a maintenance worker whose

[133] SOHCA/052/007.
[134] SOHCA/052/007.
[135] SOHCA/052/006.
[136] SOHCA/052/007; SOHCA/052/010.
[137] SOHCA/052/008.
[138] Ibid.

‘wife wis on the other side’, giving them access to the entire factory.[139] These early successes for the occupying workers gave them further leverage over the company and it allowed the occupation leadership to ‘demonstrate its ability to exercise power’, which Fantasia demonstrates is a fundamental aspect in the development of collective solidarity.[140]

Helen and the two shop stewards then formed a committee to oversee the organisation of the sit-in, along with the head mechanic, head of maintenance and office staff. The first job for the committee was arranging the logistics of maintaining a 24-hour presence in the factory. Tricia recalls that:

> They decided, right, we’re gonnae hiv tae put it intae shifts. Ye had day shift and night shift. So ane day ye were on fae 8 o’clock in the mornin’ say tae 8 o’clock at night. And then yer next shift wis 8 o’clock at night tae 8 o’clock in the mornin’. But ah think, if ah remember right, the way they worked it, there wis three. Because ye always got a shift aff tae.[141]

These key early decisions made by the sit-in leadership, with advice from trade union officials, ensured that the factory would be occupied round-the-clock, the workers had access to cooking materials, and were given adequate time away from the factory, with groups occupying in shifts. To prevent accusations of theft, workers were searched when leaving the factory, and the on-site mechanics maintained the machinery in working order, preventing accusations of worker vandalism.[142] There were jobs for the workers, including cleaning the premises and preparing food, with much of the rest of the time was spent playing cards and doing hobbies such as knitting.[143] The level of organisation was noticed by John when he visited after they had been in occupation for a number of weeks, stating that:

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[139] SOHCA/052/008.
[140] Fantasia, *Cultures of Solidarity.* p.92.
[141] SOHCA/052/006.
[142] SOHCA/052/010.
[143] SOHCA/052/011; SOHCA/052/005.

> They were well embedded in the factory by that time. They had a wee system of their own… it wis run quite strictly, Helen and her team ran it quite strictly… it wis well organised.[144]

The key demand of the workers in pursuing their occupation was that an independent assessor should examine the financial viability of the Greenock factory. This crucial request was repeatedly refused by the company, with a management spokesperson stating in mid-February that 'the company will not change its mind. We will close on 30th April'.[145] The workers felt justified in their claims that the factory was profitable and could be retained. Productivity figures showed that the factory consistently outperformed V.F's Dundonald and Derry plants during 1980.[146] Such evidence intensified the demand of the workers for an independent assessor to review the plant, a demand continually refused by management.

As the sit-in continued, steps were taken to increase the morale of the workforce. Workers were sent around the UK to speak with others (further discussion below), and some entertainment was provided including bands, film screenings and comedy acts.[147] Whilst Cathy recalls that there 'were times when ye're like 'at, "wit we daein"'?, the overall 'atmosphere was good', a key shared narrative in the testimonies.[148] The workers composed and sang songs about their dispute to keep up their spirits. There was also a good relationship between the older and younger workers. Tricia reflects that 'the older wummin taught us a lot… they looked efter us… ah didnae just huv ma mammy doon the road, ah hid another 50, 60 mammies up in that factory', highlighting the perception of the older women acting as caring, support figures, and Bridie acknowledges that the younger workers were 'brilliant'

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[144] SOHCA/052/009.
[145] *Greenock Telegraph*, 19/02/1981.
[146] WOW, *For a Few Dollars More*, p.4.
[147] SOHCA/052/008.
[148] SOHCA/052/010.

and 'really respected' the older members of the sit-in.[149] Cathy asserts that, whilst workers did leave, those who remained became stronger and more determined as the sit-in progressed. Margaret recalls a similar view, as 'we kept the belief that we wur gonnae get wur jobs back. And that's just, we were gonnae keep goin', for no matter how long it took'.[150] The committee attempted to monitor morale as best as possible and, when it was felt that the workers were feeling down or agitated, they would organise entertainment, or give certain workers a weekend off so that they could maintain social contacts with others.[151] This camaraderie that developed is exemplified through the continued participation of Sadie, who discovered that she was pregnant once it had begun. Although she was told that she was not required to participate in the dispute, Sadie still went into the factory for a few hours most days, sitting with the workers and helping with the preparation of meals. She was partly motivated by a sense of guilt that she was receiving some of the money that was donated and redistributed among the workers, but also to show support with her friends and colleagues in the plant, and she did this until she was around seven months pregnant.[152]

The number of workers in the sit-in did decline over time. From the entire 240 workforce at the beginning, there were approximately 140 at its conclusion. Helen asserts that there were 'no hard feelins' towards those who left for other work, stating that she was 'fightin' here for jobs, and ah'm naw gonnae tell somebody tae gie a job up'.[153] Sadie and Cathy also recall that, on the most part, there was little animosity towards those who left.[154] This general view of little animosity to those who left could be different at the personal and familial level. As highlighted above, there were several family connections throughout the plant, and Tricia's sister left the sit-in shortly after it began after getting another job. Tricia recalls that this:

[149] SOHCA/052/006; SOHCA/052/011.
[150] SOHCA/052/005.
[151] SOHCA/052/008.
[152] SOHCA/052/010.
[153] SOHCA/052/008.
[154] SOHCA/052/010.

> Caused riots in oor hoose. Oh, ah wis goin' aff ma heid. How dare she, she wis a scab. Walkin' oot and leavin' us. Oh, called her aw' the names under the sun. Ma dad fell oot wi' her. Caused riots in oor hoose for aboot 6 weeks… Ah wis just, how dare she huv the audacity tae leave this sit-in and leave us in the lurch?… When ah think aboot it noo, ah go, well, aye in a way ah don't blame her. Cos she did need the money.[155]

Tricia's testimony stands in contrast to the shared narrative of the other respondents that there was little bitterness towards those who left for a variety of reasons, highlighting the dynamics that operated within different contexts and situations. However, Mary left the occupation before its conclusion to begin seasonal employment on the Isle of Man, and recalls that there was no anger directed towards her:

> Ah actually left aboot four week before it finished. Ah decided "ah've had enough of this"… So aye, ye start gettin' fed up, it's hard… There wasn't any, any bickerin' or anythin' at the time… anybody that left got support, because everyone that left had different things to do… ah always kept in contact [with the occupation].[156]

There is a general consensus, however, that participation in the sit-in was more difficult for some than for others. Bridie acknowledges that she was 'lucky', as she had only herself and her husband at home, whereas Maggie reflects that:

> There wis anes that left, there wis anes who couldnae dae it. So, ye know, ye did have anes driftin' oot, anes that went intae other jobs, anes that couldnae afford it, anes that said, ye know, "ah've got responsibilities". So it didnae suit everybody.[157]

[155] SOHCA/052/006.
[156] SOHCA/036/003.
[157] SOHCA/052/007.

For some workers, the fear of being dragged out of the factory and facing criminal charge deterred them from continuing their participation, and there was an instance of a worker being removed by her parents during the first night, as they 'didnae believe in strikin' and worker militancy.[158]

With the workers occupying the factory and the company unwilling to consent to an independent assessment of its viability, the dispute continued with neither side ready to concede. The actions of the workers became a *cause celebre* within the labour movement, with figures such as Tony Benn and Michael Foot visiting the factory to offer their support. V.F. were consistently on the defensive as public support swung behind the workers, with Helen repeatedly challenging them through the media to allow them access to the information, asking 'have they something to hide'?[159] Constant criticism of the approach of the company to the demands of the workers led to them becoming increasingly defensive in their public statements, with John Usher, Vice President of V.F.'s European Division stating that 'hell, we don't take that kind of decision [factory closure] lightly!'.[160] With V.F. holding firm, and the idea of a cooperative being rejected by the workers, the only option remaining was a hope that the factory and its machinery could be purchased and reopened by another company.[161] There was hope that this would be the case when London-based clothing manufacturer Nigel Wright expressed an interest in the plant during July. Workers from Lee's were shown his London based operations, as Wright began formal negotiations with V.F. over the sale of the plant.[162] This deal collapsed, however, when Wright argued that he had two 'reasonable' bids rejected by the company, asserting that the asking price of £795,000 was substantially greater than it had been valued by an independent assessor, and stating that this

[158] SOHCA/052/008; SOHCA/052/006.
[159] *Greenock Telegraph,* 18/03/1981.
[160] *Greenock Telegraph*, 16/07/1981.
[161] Wajcman. *Women in Control,* p.187. The respondents recall little concerning the discussions of running it as a cooperative, highlighting that it was not given serious consideration.
[162] *Greenock Telegraph*, 31/07/1981.

position was further complicated by the 'considerable government financial support' given to V.F. in Greenock.[163]

At the beginning of August, seven months after the sit-in began, it was reported that a 'mystery businessman' was in negotiations with V.F. over the sale of the plant; this was revealed to be Bob Charters, the V.F. manager who had informed the workers that the factory was to close that sparked the dispute. On August 24th, the *Greenock Telegraph* front page exclaimed 'Jeans Jobs Saved!' as V.F. had agreed to sell the plant to Charters for an undisclosed fee, believed to be significantly below the initial asking price.[164] On September 21st, production began in the factory under the name Inverwear Ltd.

Figure 4.2 'The sit-in's over hen!' Painting presented to the workers following the Lee Jeans occupation at a civic ceremony, Greenock Town Hall, December 1981. The 'Dirty Dozen' was the collective name given to a group of younger workers including Cathy and Maggie.[165]

[163] *Greenock Telegraph*, 3/08/1981.
[164] *Greenock Telegraph,* 24/08/1981.
[165] Bridie Bellingham, personal collection.

4.5.3 The mobilization of the workers

The sit-in at Lee Jeans mobilized a large number of workers, representing a significant example of worker collectivism. In examining the reasons why mobilization and solidarity developed and was maintained by the majority of workers over this seven-month period, the beginning of the dispute must be highlighted. The final decision that the factory was to close was delivered to the workers at the end of their shift, with everyone crammed into the canteen, and it was at this point that Helen put forward the option of an occupation, with the workforce voting in favour. That the dispute began so suddenly with the entire workforce 'barricaded in' on this first night ensured a high level of immediate involvement, rather than closure being implemented through a gradual downsizing of operations, or being announced when only a section of the workforce were on the shift.[166] The mobilization therefore supports McAdam's concept of the significance of 'suddenly imposed grievance' in his micro-mobilization analysis of collective action.[167]

Central to the testimonies when reflecting on individual reasons for continued participation is the sense of unfairness over the decision to close the plant. The impetus for the initial occupation was a mixture of willingness to take action and 'adventure'; however, this would only have maintained commitment for the short period that the workers believed they would actually occupy the plant. As the sit-in progressed, it was crucial that the workers developed a shared grievance against the management sufficient to keep them committed to action. Whilst closure and redundancy provided a grievance, the repeated demands to allow an independent assessor to examine the viability of the plant increased the workers' anger against V.F., with the sit-in committee constantly communicating these refusals to the workers.[168] The view that the factory was productive emerges in the

[166] SOHCA/052/011.

[167] D. McAdam, 'Micromobilization Contexts and recruitment to activism' pp.125-153 in B. Klanderman, H. Kriesi and S. Tarrow (eds), *From Structure to Action: Social Movement Participation Across Cultures*, Greenwich: JAI Press, 1988, p.131.

[168] See, for example, SOHCA/052/008; SOHCA/052/010.

testimonies when respondents are asked why they participated, with Bridie stating that it 'wis a payin' factory. We knew it, because the orders wur there'[169] and Cathy's recollection that:

> We were sittin' wi' a big order on the flair… we had the orders comin' in, ye know, like, [the] back store wis sky high… wi' orders... it wisnae as if we're sittin' there wi' nae work.[170]

This sense of anger that the factory was productive and closure unfair was further heightened by the grants and subsidies that V.F. received in Greenock, and the emphasis placed on this by the occupation's leadership meant that it became a fundamental aspect of the dispute. The perception that V.F. had utilised the available assistance in Greenock and were leaving in pursuit of higher levels available in Northern Ireland was stressed by the workers during the sit-in, with accusations that Greenock was deliberately made to look less efficient than other UK plants and that closure was purely due to 'subsidies and geography' repeatedly conveyed.[171] This emerges as a dominant theme in the narratives of those involved when considering their own mobilization and commitment, as reflected in these excerpts:

> Bridie: [They] said they wur gonnae take the work we had, close oor factory, and get it done in Ireland… they wur just takin' it tae Ireland. An' shuttin' us doon… Wit right had they tae come an' say they were takin it tae Ireland, ye know?[172]
>
> Helen: Northern Ireland wis offerin' them rent free… The 10 years [assistance in Greenock] wis up. So wit they wur gonnae day wis take aw' that machinery over tae Northern Ireland. And it wis the taxpayers here that paid for it. And ah kept askin and askin' and askin', there wis somebody in the

[169] SOHCA/052/011.
[170] SOHCA/052/010.
[171] *Greenock Telegraph* 12/02/1981.
[172] SOHCA/052/011.

> council at that particular time to stand up and be counted and nobody did it.[173]
>
> Margaret: Basically, they'd come in, they'd got aw' the grants, they'd done everythin' an' as soon as they had tae start payin' their way, they wanted tae up sticks and go somewhere else. Then they would do the same thing aw' over again.[174]
>
> Maggie: How these big multinational companies could come in, take their grant, sit there for 10, 20 year or whatever they were daein', an' then they can just move tae somewhere else and get another freebie… So that wis what was annoyin' us.[175]
>
> Tricia: It wis the idea ae them takin' the work aff ae us an' giein' it tae Ireland. Whereas oor, oor factory wis mair feasible. Is that the word?... Wis mair feasible fur them. An' yet they're still takin' the work aff us. Naebody wants tae lose their job so why, why the hell ye takin' the job aff me and giein' it tae someone else? Naw, yer on tae plums there mate. I'll sit here, and I'll fight for ma job.[176]

There are key themes that thread through these testimonies such as the perceptions of '*oor* work', '*oor* factory', and '*ma* job' that highlight right to work. With these phrases, the respondents illustrate the perception that their employment in Lee Jeans was rightfully theirs, a site of feminine and class sociability not belonging to, or dependent on, the corporation. As a result, the sudden decision to close the plant and take this space away from the workers expanded beyond the single act of capital mobility, helping to create the conditions necessary for a sustained campaign of collective resistance by the workers. The sense of unfairness felt by the workers represents the primary injustice, argued by Kelly and others as a central component in the mobilization process.[177] The emphasis placed on the narrative of V.F. using Greenock and its workforce to secure subsidies before closing

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[173] SOHCA/052/008.
[174] SOHCA/052/005.
[175] SOHCA/052/007.
[176] SOHCA/052/006.
[177] Kelly. *Rethinking Industrial Relations.*

and relocating ensured that this grievance was directly attributed to the company and its management, providing the moral indefensibility of their actions.[178]

However, the injustice that the workers felt in this decision does not offer sufficient explanation in understanding their prolonged mobilization. In explaining the manifestations of solidarity through this action, the shopfloor culture that existed in the plant is highly significant. As Roscigno and Hodson argue, 'social relations on the shopfloor play a meaningful role in prompting collective and individual manifestations of class resistance', and the importance of this cannot be understated in the Lee's sit-in.[179] The testimonies are threaded with recollections of a positive atmosphere during the sit-in and that, when workers did feel that they wanted to leave, an important reason for them remaining involved was that their friends and family were part of the dispute. As Tricia reflects, it became 'ma second hame… ye left ane hame and went tae the other hame'.[180] The significance of this in maintaining the dispute and the support of the workers was emphasised by Maggie, who argues that a key error made by management was that 'they thought, "they'll naw last long". But they're forgettin' the bond that we hud on that flair wis wit took us through'.[181] Through the analysis of the labour process and shopfloor cultures, above, the bonds of solidarity that emerged and were sustained throughout the occupation can be seen as an extension of the factory as a 'space of class and gender solidarity' that had been negotiated by the women through their shared space on the floor, and was transformed into solidarity through industrial dispute.[182]

This bond extended beyond the female machinists, with male mechanics and technical staff joining the machinists through the occupation. This support is crucial in our understanding of the Lee Jeans sit-in. Whereas authors from radical feminist perspectives discuss women and men as distinct, opposing classes, there is no

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[178] Folger and Crompanzano, *Organizational Justice and Human Resources*. p.45.
[179] Roscigno and Hodson, 'The Organizational and Social Foundations of Worker Resistance', p.32.
[180] SOHCA/052/006.
[181] SOHCA/052/007.
[182] Clarke, 'Closing Time', p.11.

discussion in archived documents or in the narratives collected here of male opposition to the female-led action. In contrast, Cathy sought to redress the historical bias that has understated the role of the male workers participating in the sit-in. In contemporary and subsequent popular accounts, the occupation is highlighted predominantly due to the majority of the workers being women, based on perceptions of militancy being male dominated, as highlighted throughout this thesis.[183] However, in discussing her reflections of the beginning of the action, Cathy interrupted her narrative to highlight this to the researcher:

> And she [Helen Monaghan] just came in [to address the workers], her and big… John Howard. An' he came in, and he stood wi' Helen. Helen said "listen folks, girls, boys". Cos we've got tae remember the boys tae. The boys hardly got a mention, and it's a sin.[184]

It can be assessed that Cathy recognised the significance of the terms that she was using in this excerpt and deliberately clarified her meaning to redress the lack of acknowledgement of the role of the men. The other respondents make reference to 'the boys' that participated in the action, with no evidence or discussion of male workers refusing to cooperate with Helen Monaghan and the other female leaders of the dispute.

The role of the occupation's leadership was also crucial in ensuring its continuation. The initial successes of gaining access to the canteen and securing keys was crucial in transforming the initial act of resistance into an organised occupation of the premises over three shifts, ensuring a constant worker presence. As well as shifting the balance of power towards the workers, this dramatically increased the comfort of those in the factory, a key advantage of occupation as a form of dispute.[185] Through taking the decision to inform the local labour movement and prominent

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[183] For examples of the emphasis of the gender of the workers in more recent, popular accounts, see; R. Alderson, 'Lee Jeans women remember seven-month sit-in success', BBC News, 2011. Accessed 15/04/2014 at http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-scotland-12366211

[184] SOHCA/052/010.

[185] Coates, *Work-ins, Sit-ins and Industrial Democracy*, p.115.

local trade unionists at the earliest opportunity, the leadership also contributed to the success of the workers' mobilization, as they had access to a network of class activists and engaged directly with local cultures of solidarity and collectivism. Whilst increased media attention means that it is common for occupations to gain support for a 'wider offensive against the employer', the Lee's leadership was proactive in seeking this, as opposed to waiting for solidarity to come from others, significantly extending the reach of their action.[186]

4.5.4 Support for the Lee Jeans sit-in

The support and solidarity that the workers received from a wide range of groups emerges as a dominant narrative in the respondents' reflections. Contemporary accounts also demonstrate the significance of the support given, with frequent reports in local and national press about financial assistance offered. Financial support was given by shipyard workers locally, as well as from Upper Clyde, with a levy on workers' wages of 50p per worker agreed, amounting to £2,500 per week.[187] A spokesperson for the shop steward committee at local shipbuilders, Scott Lithgow, argued that the sit-in was 'one of the most significant [struggles] that has yet taken place to save jobs in this area'.[188] Further donations were received from Rolls Royce in Hillington and the Talbot car plant in Linwood, which was also facing closure at this time.[189] In receiving these collections, the leadership was again proactive, with workers sent into workplaces to explain the reasons behind the sit-in and seek solidarity. Maggie recalls that Helen selected those whom she felt were becoming 'hemmed in' the plant to go out and speak.[190] The workers travelled across Britain, visiting workplaces and conferences organised by socialist organisations, and this had an important impact on those who travelled. Cathy recalls that this led to her own radicalisation, stating that 'SWP [Socialist Workers

[186] Sherry, *Occupy,* p.27.
[187] *Greenock Telegraph*, 25/08/1981.
[188] *Greenock Telegraph*, 13/02/1981.
[189] *Greenock Telegraph*, 24/03/1981.
[190] SOHCA/052/007.

Party], ah supported everythin' they done, oot sellin' the papers an' that'.[191] Maggie recalls 'the buzz' of addressing a large crowd, that it was 'brilliant, absolutely… on a stage and… the buzz… that wis great.[192] For those who went and spoke, it was also an opportunity to engage with other workers and communities facing similar situations, and Maggie reflects that:

> We wurnae sure wit we wur daein' at the beginnin'… but noo yer startin' tae realise, the mair you listen tae people, the mair you realise wit actually wis happenin' tae us, ye know, so it made ye aw' the mair determined.[193]

The support of the labour movement extended to those remaining in the factory, with Bridie reflecting that 'there wis hunners [of workers] came up tae the factory. Stewards fae different places'.[194] This included the official planned day for closure, April 30th, when over 200 local shipyard workers protested at the plant, to oppose any attempts to forcibly remove the workers.[195] The financial support also meant that workers could receive a weekly payment for the duration of the dispute, independent of any assistance offered from their own union. This support was based on need, with Helen stating that 'hardship cases' were given priority, helping to ensure as many people as possible had the means to continue their participation.[196] The importance of support in maintaining the commitment of the workers to the action is reflected by Maggie:

> Well, we could've been up there [in the factory] and naebody could've cared. Naebody would've gave a toss… But we seen how it did matter. Know, like, dae it, went on rallies and that as well. Eh, ye know, it wis, the support ye were gettin'. Ah mean, if people didnae believe in wit ye were daein' Andy, they wouldnae dae donations, they wouldnae…

[191] SOHCA/052/010.
[192] SOHCA/052/007.
[193] Ibid.
[194] SOHCA/052/011.
[195] *Greenock Telegraph*, 30/04/1981.
[196] SOHCA/052/008.

> when ye stood up in the hall and people were giein' ye standin' ovations…ah mean ye don't dae that for nothin'.[197]

With the support of the local and national rank-and-file trade union movement, the broader significance of their dispute was emphasised and, through engaging with others in similar situations, Margaret states that:

> It did give [us] a boost. [We] felt, well, we're daein' somethin' right… people are supportin' us, because there was too much [industry] startin' tae disappear then.[198]

Support extended beyond the trade union movement, incorporating a community-wide struggle against the planned closure. This was directly linked to the financial assistance received by V.F. when they began operating in Greenock. When possible closure was announced, before the beginning of the workers' action, the Chief Executive of Inverclyde District Council asserted in the press that 'this was a company that we fought very hard to bring to Greenock and to keep here', demonstrating that these discussions were occurring from the beginning of the dispute.[199] Additionally, Greenock has a long tradition of trade unionism and radical politics, being described in *The Times* as a 'seething mass of communists' in 1925.[200] The electoral dominance of the Labour Party following World War Two and the presence of highly unionised shipyards and sugar refineries furthered this culture, with respondents frequently recalling how important collectivism was in their families and the wider area. The community collectivism and solidarity manifested itself in a number of ways. Goods were provided to the workers from small businesses including meat from the butcher, groceries from a local shop, and the bus company that had previously taken the workers to their jobs carried them to the sit-in, at minimal cost to the occupation.[201] A demonstration held in Greenock attracted a crowd of approximately 600 people and representatives from across the

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[197] SOHCA/052/007.
[198] SOHCA/052/005.
[199] *Greenock Telegraph*, 31/01/1981.
[200] *The Times*, 28/09/1925.
[201] SOHCA/052/007; SOHCA/052/008; SOHCA/052/006.

political spectrum.[202] When workers were not occupying the factory, they received a number of small gestures from people in the area. Tricia recalls travelling for free on local buses and in taxis, with the drivers refusing to take payment as 'that's ma wee donation tae ye's'.[203] In local pubs and clubs, Margaret states that 'Ye got taken in and if ye wanted yer drink [you got it bought for you], an' ye would get yer binga books, an', ye know, ye never paid for anythin'.[204] The significance of the support that the workers received from fellow workers, trade unionists and the community of Greenock must be emphasised due to its dominance in the narratives of the respondents interviewed, as demonstrated below:

> Bridie: The people oot the yards and everythin' were really good. It wis them that kept us goin', because they used tae, two girls used tae go up tae the yards on a Friday and wait for them come oot wi' a hat, and put the money in. That's wit kept us goin.[205]
>
> Helen: if you were up there… and naebody supported us, you would've said 'ah'm ah daein' the right thing'?[206]
>
> Tricia: People ae Greenock, they're good people… they will, they'll help anybody… Naw, the people ae Greenock, an' Gourock an' Port Glesga wur good. We wur looked efter well… ye needed the support… support ae the toon, an' the support ae the trade unions efter the Tailor and Garment Workers walked oot on us.[207]

A key aspect that emerges from the narratives regarding the support received is the recognition from those involved that it was a crucial factor in legitimising the action taken and further demonstrating to the workers the moral validity of their dispute. Due to the decisions made by the occupations' leadership in actively seeking the support of the labour movement, and the cultures of solidarity drawn upon and

[202] *Greenock Telegraph*, 01/04/1981.
[203] SOHCA/052/006.
[204] SOHCA/052/005.
[205] SOHCA/052/011.
[206] SOHCA/052/008.
[207] SOHCA/052/006.

actively sought by the workers, they had the necessary level of support to sustain the occupation, financially, physically and emotionally.[208] Such reflections dominate the testimonies of the workers, and were promoted during the sit-in with frequent reports of workers offering support and, on the day that the takeover was announced, Helen asserted that 'the generosity of so many people has meant we have won our fight to keep our jobs and our factory in Greenock'.[209]

4.5.5 The NUTGW and the Lee Jeans sit-in

In considering the workers' union, John Howard, Area Officer for the NUTGW, was present at the factory when the workers decided to occupy, and Helen believes that occupation may have been his idea originally. A week into the dispute, John Easdale wrote to Alec Smith, informing him that the Paisley and Port Glasgow branch had unanimously adopted the resolution that:

> Urges the Executive Board to make the dispute at V.F. Corporation, Greenock, an official dispute… this Branch considers that a failure to make this dispute involving the defence of jobs official would reflect very badly upon our union and would greatly detract from the fight to maintain employment in the industry.[210]

Despite the argument of Coates that, after 1975, it was 'virtually inconceivable' that a union would not support occupying workers, and the appeals of the local branch for the Executive Board (EB) in this letter, General Secretary Alec Smith pointed out that 'the dispute would not be officially supported as the procedures set out in the Rule Book governing disputes and grievances had not been complied with'.[211] Reflecting the arguments of Hyman that union officials can become overly committed to bargaining machinery, rather than fighting against it in the interest of

[208] Fantasia, *Cultures of Solidarity*, p.15.
[209] *Greenock Telegraph*, 25/08/1981.
[210] Working Class Movements Library [henceforth WCML]. TU/TAILORA/6/C/25 – Box 2 – VF Dispute Folder. Letter from John Easdale to Mr A. R. Smith, General Secretary NUTGW, 12/02/1981.
[211] Coates, *Work-ins, Sit-ins and Industrial Democracy,* p.115; WCML. TU/TAILORA/2/A/50 (L09/07) NUTG&W Executive Board Minutes, 10/U: Minutes of Executive Board Meeting, 19/02/1981.

worker struggle[212], the EB argued that they were not in a position to offer official support, but stated that they would await information and consult with solicitors if required.[213] Adopting the position led to criticism of the EB from other branches, with the Manchester branch calling for 'the Executive Board to take immediate steps to ensure the Unions full official backing for the workers' in Greenock.[214] Six weeks into the dispute, Fred Dickson – Divisional officer for Scotland – was in special attendance at the monthly EB meeting to discuss the occupation, and reported that it was his view that a ballot should be taken of the workers on the issue of an independent assessment on the viability of the factory.[215] This was resolved, with Smith also asserting that legal advice would be taken to 'if necessary… safeguard the interests of himself and other officers'.[216] This ballot took place on March 18th, with the workers given the options of authorising the Union's officers to negotiate redundancy, or seeking the official support of the EB in attempting to force an independent assessment of the plant. The option to secure official support was supported by 97 percent of the workers, achieving the Union's required two-thirds majority, and this was then approved by the members of the EB in writing to the General Secretary.[217] Once this approval was given, Smith informed V.F. manager Bob Charters that 'unless you are in a position to reverse the decision to close down all operations at Greenock, this official dispute will commence on Monday, March 30th 1981'.[218] Despite assertions that the EB would seek legal support at their meetings in February and March, this was not sought until May. The Union's solicitors asserted that, as V.F. had not demanded that the workers leave the plant 'it is quite possible that the occupation is lawful', but that the Union would be held

[212] Hyman, *Industrial Relations: A Marxist Introduction* p.108.
[213] WCML. TU/TAILORA/2/A/50 (L09/07) NUTG&W Executive Board Minutes, 10/U: Minutes of Executive Board Meeting, 19/02/1981.
[214] WCML. TU/TAILORA/6/C/25 – Box 2 – VF Dispute Folder. Letter from D. N. Cattell to Mr A. R. Smith, General Secretary NUTGW, 12/03/1981.
[215] WCML. TU/TAILORA/2/A/50 (L09/07) NUTG&W Executive Board Minutes, 11/U: Minutes of Executive Board Meeting, 17/03/1981.
[216] WCML. TU/TAILORA/2/A/50 (L09/07) NUTG&W Executive Board Minutes, 10/U: Minutes of Executive Board Meeting, 19/02/1981.
[217] WCML. TU/TAILORA/6/C/25 – Box 2 – VF Dispute Folder. Letter from the General Secretary to members of the Executive Board, 19/03/1981.
[218] WCML. TU/TAILORA/6/C/25 – Box 2 – VF Dispute Folder. Letter from the General Secretary to Mr R. Charters, 23/03/1981.

liable for any damages caused.[219] There is little record of official conversations taking place between the Union and V.F, as the company repeatedly refused the request for independent assessment. The Union was proactive in alerting workers globally to the situation at Greenock. On June 1st, Smith wrote to Charles Ford, General Secretary of the International Textile, Garment and Leather Workers' Federation (ITGLWF), stating that 'For such an occupation to happen in our industry is quite unusual… I would be most grateful the next time you are writing to affiliates if you could include this item'.[220] On June 5th, the ITGLWF sent a circular to all affiliates welcoming expressions of international solidarity, an appeal that led to letters of support from unions in Kenya, Belgium, Germany, Japan, and Nigeria.[221]

However, as the dispute continued, the EB began to consider the options available to them, as 'it was felt that the time was approaching when the Executive Board must consider drawing this dispute to a close'.[222] It was resolved that members of the EB would visit Greenock on the 30th of June. After a number of meetings involving EB members and Scottish officers, and various meetings with workers, it was resolved that the EB delegation would meet in Glasgow on July 20th and that:

> The dispute be wound up. That Union representatives [would] meet with the officers of the STUC and workforce to inform them of the Executive Board's decision and the meeting be held on the 21st July and the last payment of benefit be made on Friday, 31st July'.[223]

After the workers ended their dispute successfully, the Union claimed that official support was withdrawn as it became clear that negotiations to buy the plant were

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[219] WCML. TU/TAILORA/6/C/25 – Box 2 – VF Dispute Folder. Letter from Milners, Curry and Gaskell Solicitors to Mr A. Smith, NUTGW, 7/05/1981.
[220] WCML. TU/TAILORA/6/C/25 – Box 2 – VF Dispute Folder. Letter from the General Secretary to Mr C. Ford, 1/06/1981.
[221] WCML. TU/TAILORA/6/C/25 – Box 2 – VF Dispute Folder.
[222] WCML. TU/TAILORA/2/A/50 (L09/07) NUTG&W Executive Board Minutes, 15/U: Minutes of Executive Board Meeting, 23/06/1981.
[223] WCML. TU/TAILORA/2/A/50 (L09/07) NUTG&W Executive Board Minutes, 16/U: Minutes of Executive Board Meeting, 02/07/1981.

at 'an advanced stage'.[224] This reflection is also put forward by John, who states that it was 'a sorta political move fae the Tailor and Garment Workers. Ah think it wis recognition ae the fact that there wis a buyer comin' in'.[225] However, this interpretation is complicated, as the EB stated in their meeting of May 18th that they were giving 'active consideration in order to bring the dispute to a satisfactory conclusion'.[226] At no point during private discussions by the EB did they mention or highlight the existence of a potential buyer of the plant. When informing branches and officers of the decision to withdraw official support, there was also no indication that a successful conclusion was imminent, stating rather that:

> The objectives on which the dispute was made official, ie to force an independent enquiry into the possibility of short-time working etc., was no longer appropriate and indeed could not be achieved.[227]

The support of the NUTGW for the action taken by the workers is further complicated through Helen's reflections, as she asserts that their approach changed when it became clear that 'we weren't goin' awa' efter a couple ae weeks'.[228] She was 'summoned' to London to speak with Smith, where he offered the workers a caravan so as to end their occupation of the plant, and instead prevent the movement of stock and machinery from a picket outside. As outlined above, the NUTGW had received legal advice informing them that the action of the workers was very possibly legal and there are no records of V.F. demanding that the workers leave the plant; only that the trade union would be held accountable for any damage caused.[229] Margaret reflects that 'ah don't think they agreed, basically, what we wur doin'… they just kinda gave up on us… but we just got on'.[230] In

[224] MRC. MSS.192/TGW/3/1/46. NUTGW. '*The Garment Worker*, December 1981.
[225] SOHCA/052/009.
[226] WCML. TU/TAILORA/2/A/50 (L09/07) NUTG&W Executive Board Minutes, 15/U: Minutes of Executive Board Meeting, 18/05/1981.
[227] MRC. MSS.192/TGW/3/2/1/44.'NUTGW Circular to FTOs and Branches'. (17/08/1981).
[228] SOHCA/052/008.
[229] WCML. TU/TAILORA/6/C/25 – Box 2 – VF Dispute Folder. Letter from V.F. Corporation to Mr A. Smith, General Secretary NUTGW, 01/05/1981.
[230] SOHCA/052/005.

examining other instances of closure in the clothing industry in this period, Coyle argues that it was the NUTGW 'that let them [workers] down'.[231] The interviewees who spoke to Coyle have similar reflections as Helen, with the view that 'they just more or less told people that they had to accept it [redundancy]'.[232] This chimes with Tuckman and Knudsen's assertion that, in instances of factory closure, unions 'saw their role, and perhaps felt most comfortable, negotiating redundancy terms rather than resisting'.[233] That the Paisley and Port Glasgow branch urged the EB to recognise the dispute is highly significant when considering different traditions and approaches of the branch from the main union. However, the experience at Lee's supports Leicester's analysis that the NUTGW, at national level, had a 'long standing neglect of the low-paid women who formed the majority of their membership'.[234] The decision by the union to withdraw official support, along with their initial delay in recognising it, had important ramifications for the perception of the union from the public, and its membership. A number of handwritten letters in the union's archives of the dispute convey a sense of anger and betrayal at their decision. The Secretary of the Oxford and District Trades Union Council expressed 'our disappointment and disgust over your national executive's decision to withdraw official support of the Lee Jeans occupation'.[235] From within the membership, a letter to the Board stated that:

> I as a member and elected representative of this union N.U.T.G.W am sick and disgusted to learn of you withdrawing support so desperately needed in the VF dispute… it is not only myself asking this question but my workmates too. To say you have dashed the hopes of every worker in this industry must be a great understatement.[236]

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[231] Coyle, *Redundant Women*, p.37.
[232] Ibid., p.38.
[233] Tuckman and Knudsen, 'The Success and Failings of UK Work-Ins and Sit-Ins', p.134.
[234] Leicester, 'The 1970 Leeds Clothing Workers' Strike', p.42.
[235] WCML. TU/TAILORA/6/C/25 – Box 2 – VF Dispute Folder. Letter from Marie Smith to Mr A. Smith, General Secretary. 24/08/1981.
[236] WCML. TU/TAILORA/6/C/25 – Box 2 – VF Dispute Folder. Letter from Kath Morris to Mr A. Smith, General Secretary. 12/08/1981.

This sense of abandonment, disappointment, and anger comes through in the narratives of the interviewees:

> Helen: Ah wis so disillusioned… Ah thought if ye were a shop steward, and ye believed in the workers, ye did everythin' in yer power tae support them. And that's, ah wis disillusioned.[237]
>
> Tricia: Ah wis ragin'. Oh ah called John Howard for everythin'… ah called him aw' the bastards under the sun… That's the only time ah ever remember bein' angry durin' the whole time, the whole duration of the sit-in, wis when we were told the Tailor and Garment Workers had walked oot an' left us, abandoned us… Naw the company. Mair the union. The Tailor and Garment Workers Union… Got mair angry at them. Ah don't think ah even gave the company much thought.[238]

In these testimonies, a sense of disillusionment and incomprehension between workers taking independent action and the institutional framework and approach of their trade union is evident. Following the reopening of the factory under Inverwear Ltd, the workers organised themselves as members of the Transport and General Workers Union. In December, 1981, the NUTGW held a special meeting in Glasgow to discuss the 'handling of the VF dispute [as], without wishing to reopen the matter, a number of members of the Executive Board felt that the Union had never been in effective control of the dispute'.[239] The significance of this will be discussed further when considering the sit-in at NUTGW-organised Lovable in Cumbernauld.

4.6 Conclusions and Discussion

This chapter has provided a detailed account of the Lee Jeans factory occupation, placing it within its historical, geographical and mobilization contexts. Greenock, the town in which the plant was based and from where most of the workforce

[237] SOHCA/052/008.
[238] SOHCA/052/006.
[239] WCML. TU/TAILORA/2/A/50 (L09/07): NUT&GW Executive Board Minutes. 18/U Meeting Held in the Glasgow Office, Friday December 4th, 1981.

originated, was suffering the very real effects of industrial decline and capital migration, demonstrative of Cowie's argument that 'no location has a lock on industrial investment in a free market economy', regardless of the incentives offered to business.[240] With increasing unemployment and a decreasing population, firms establishing in the locality had access to substantial government assistance, but with little in place to retain them in the long-term. Lee Jeans took advantage of such subsidies and grants when opening their plant in 1970, at a time when North American owned plants operating in Scotland had doubled and accounted for 15 percent of total manufacturing employment.[241] The workers won an important victory in 1971, with a strike over the victimisation of Helen Monaghan resulting in trade union recognition and the organisation of the workers through the NUTGW, representing a key grassroots challenge to the hostility of US-based firms towards organisation.[242]

In considering the labour process in the plant, it was highlighted that the production process was highly gendered. Men were cutters, mechanics, and plant managers, and women were machinists and machinist supervisors, reflecting what McIvor has termed the 'customary segregation and gender division of labour' within manufacturing plants in the later twentieth century.[243] As a result, the factory floor was a predominantly female space, reflective of an entrenched 'social construction of skill' in the clothing industry, and manufacturing more broadly.[244] The production process was not based on an assembly line model, in which women had been increasingly positioned in the era of mass production, and allowed them some level of autonomy over their work.[245] More importantly, the gendering of production and labour allowed for the emergence of a shopfloor culture among the machinists,

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[240] J. Cowie, *Capital Moves: RCA's Seventy Year Quest for Cheap Labour.* Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1991, p.183.
[241] N. Hood and S. Young, 'US Investment in Scotland – Aspects of the Branch Factory Syndrome'. *Scottish Journal of Political Economy*, Vol. 23, No. 3 (1976), pp.279-294, p.280.
[242] Knox and McKinlay, 'American Multinationals', p.215.
[243] McIvor, *Working Lives*, p.95.
[244] Sangster, 'Gendering Labour History Across Borders', p.148.
[245] Cavensih, *Women on the Line,* p.162.

based on their common position in the plant as women and as workers at the bottom of the occupational hierarchy. Friendships, social interactions inside and outside of the workplace, as well as the experiences of everyday life contributed to this culture, demonstrated as a significant shared narrative among the respondents. These bonds of solidarity, formed 'by the process of mutual association' on the factory floor, must be emphasised when considering the networks among workers that can give impetus to action during periods of crises and the suspension of normal behaviours.[246]

In examining the sit-in that developed at the plant following the closure announcement, a number of factors have been emphasised and outlined that deserve further discussion. Firstly, the suddenness with which the workers took their action was discussed by the respondents, and this is important in understanding the mobilization that developed. This context ensured that the workers were together, in the plant, immediately giving them leverage over their employer and providing crucial enthusiasm among the occupiers. In supporting the arguments of Atzeni, the workers did not occupy on the first night due to the grievances that developed throughout the occupation regarding grants, subsidies, and capital migration, but was the immediate decision taken to oppose the closure announcement that had been made.[247] The injustice felt by the workers against the level of assistance that VF had received in Greenock dominates the narratives of the respondents, representing a grievance that 'grew out of the interactive process of negotiation between workers in their confrontation' with the firm.[248] Leadership was fundamental to the continuation of the occupation with important decisions taken to allow access to food and drink preparation facilities, access to the full factory, and the division of the workers into shifts of occupation. It was then demonstrated that a significant aspect of the dispute was the importance of the shopfloor culture that existed before the closure announcement was made. As the

[246] Fantasia, *Cultures of Solidarity*, p.11.
[247] M. Atzeni. 'Searching for Injustice', p 9.
[248] Fantasia, *Cultures of Solidarity*, p.88.

workers developed the collective, oppositional consciousness through their engagement in the dispute, they drew upon 'pre-existing networks' and 'work group cultures' to cement their class action solidarity.[249] Each of these factors, and the broader socio-economic situation in Greenock, contributed to the mobilization of the workers, demonstrating the complexity in understanding and explaining the actions that took place. It was not a linear process that began with the sense of injustice at the closure announcement, but a fluid negotiation of work cultures, extant support networks and the necessities of oppositional actions, framed within a context of accelerated industrial contraction.

The chapter also highlighted the significance of the support that the workers received throughout their dispute. As Cowie argues, working-class communities can 'function as a fundamental source of both power and resistance in industrial relations', and this was evidenced at the Lee Jeans sit-in.[250] The workers at Lee's received a substantial level of support from local and national trade unionists, class activists, and their own community. Reflections on this solidarity dominate the testimonies collected, and is a key shared narrative among the respondents. This support transcended gender, with the male workers in the plant supporting the action, and assistance offered from male and female workforces, undermining arguments that the interests and struggles of men and women are in constant opposition at the point of production. The response and support given to the workers at Lee's should be examined through a lens of communal, working-class opposition to the conscious decision-making process to relocate a factory from one area to another.[251] The support of the workers' own union was also highlighted, and it was demonstrated that the workers fought against both employer and a union that did not support them at the national level. Despite the arguments of Gall and Coates, however, support from the workers' own union was not a pre-requisite in

[249] Ibid.
[250] Cowie, *Capital Moves*, p.8.
[251] Bluestone and Harrison, *The Deindustrialization of America*, p.15.

determining solidarity during the dispute.[252] The mobilization of the workers was therefore not dependent on the traditional structures of trade unionism, but shaped through the complex dynamics operating in Inverclyde, on the factory floor before the dispute, and forged through the active agency of the workers and their support networks when faced with industrial crises.

[252] See Coates, *Work-ins, Sit-ins and Industrial Democracy* and Gall. 'Resisting Recession and Redundancy'.

Chapter Five. 'It's not a new town, it's a buroo town!': The Lovable sit-in, 1982[1]

There's a place that's so easy to reach by road, air or rail,
over 500 companies have made it their home.
What's it called?
There's a place where so many people are settling. 1,000
new homes will be built by 1990.
What's it called?
There's a place where the future is so bright, over 40 new
companies moved in there last year.
What's it called?

Cumbernauld!

Cumbernauld Promotional Advert, 1987[2].

5.1 Introduction

The Lovable Bra factory opened in the new town of Cumbernauld in 1964 and, by 1980, had become the second largest employer in the town with 480 workers. In 1982, the workers were faced with closure as the company claimed that an unpaid order had led to a fundamental cash-flow crisis, and they decided to take similar action as those in Greenock a year previously. This chapter examines the dispute at Lovable within the dynamics of the mobilization of the workers and the historic development of the area. It begins with an extended analysis of Cumbernauld, a new town designated in 1956, with an examination of population growth, the origins of the migrating population, and the development of industry before the onset of recession in the early 1980s. Following this, the Lovable company is examined, with oral testimonies utilised to consider why respondents chose to work there and their experiences inside the factory. The development of the Lovable dispute is then outlined. It is illustrated that the final closure decision was the culmination of a staggered downsizing and redundancy process, which impacted significantly on the resulting mobilization of the workers. There was not a

[1] Lovable worker Kathy Platt, quoted in *Evening Times*, 18/01/1982.
[2] Accessed 19/10/2015 at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ytjg627OGrU

substantial level of worker mobilization at Lovable, due to the nature of the closure announcement, the acceptance of limited redundancy by the workers' representatives, as well as the macro-mobilization that developed, or failed to develop, among the workforce at Lovable. Drawing comparisons with the dispute at Lee Jeans, it is asserted that the workers did not receive a comparable level of support from the local community and the labour movement. This limited support from the immediate locality is considered within the framework of Cumbernauld's history and traditions, arguing that its status as a new town had a substantial impact on the support offered to the occupying workers.

5.2 Cumbernauld: The growth of a new town

Figure 5.1 Map of Central-Scotland with Cumbernauld pinpointed[3]

Cumbernauld is located in Scotland's central belt, approximately thirteen miles east of Glasgow. It was one of five new towns established in Scotland following World War Two, being designated in 1956 following East Kilbride and Glenrothes in the

[3] Copyright Google Maps, 2016.

late 1940s, with Livingston and Irvine in 1962 and 1966 respectively.[4] The land surrounding Cumbernauld Village was initially proposed by the Clyde Valley Regional Planning Advisory Committee in April, 1954, under the terms of the 1946 New Towns Act, after the preliminary findings of the 1951 Census indicated that the city of Glasgow would exhaust the available land within its geographical boundaries by 1957.[5] As Gavin McCrone outlines in his seminal *Regional Policy in Britain*, new places 'had to be built up to receive overspill from Glasgow whose rebuilding programme required the housing of a substantial portion of the city's population'.[6] There was a significant challenge to these proposals as the Conservative Government had stated that they would not support the creation of more new towns following their election in 1951.[7] The key issue for the Government regarded the substantial costs of designating another new town in the Clyde Valley, despite Glasgow struggling with severe overcrowding of population and industry. Glasgow Corporation then entered into prolonged negotiations with the Secretary of State for Scotland to seek a solution and the designation of Cumbernauld became a matter of party-political wrangling. Glasgow Corporation was reluctant to make a deal with the Government due to ideological differences over issues such as home ownership and the kinds of industries that would be established in the new town.[8] Similarly, the location was largely the result of political calculation by the Government. Ian Levitt argues that Cumbernauld was given preference over the village of Houston, as Houston was located in the marginal Conservative constituency of West Renfrewshire, and the relocation of large numbers of Labour supporters from Glasgow would likely see them losing this seat.[9] Despite these obstacles, Cumbernauld was officially designated under the 1957 Housing and Town Development Act (Scotland), which Scottish Secretary James Stuart referred to as

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[4] North Lanarkshire Archives [henceforth NLA] UT/58/5. Industry Department for Scotland, 'The Scottish New Towns', July 1989, p.22.
[5] C. Carter, *Innovations in Planning Thought and Practice at Cumbernauld New Town 1956-1962*. Milton Keynes: Open University Press, 1983, p.15.
[6] G. McCone, *Regional Policy in Britain*. London: Allen and Urwin, 1969, p.211.
[7] Carter, *Innovations in Planning Thought* p.16.
[8] I. Levitt, 'New Towns, New Scotland, New Ideology'. *The Scottish Historical Review*, Vol. 76, 2 (1997), pp.222-238, 238.
[9] Ibid., p.235.

the ‘largest planned movement of population and industry that Britain had ever seen’[10]. Designation was approved after an agreement was reached whereby the Corporation would make substantial contributions to the initial costs of designation, under the condition that Cumbernauld would serve primarily as a site to which Glasgow-based firms would relocate, as opposed to attracting international migrating industries.[11] As with all new towns designated in the post-war period, the administration of Cumbernauld was coordinated by a Development Corporation, as it was believed that the establishment of housing, industry and continued investment in a new town was ‘beyond the capacity of traditional local authorities both administratively and financially’.[12]

Colin Carter argues that Cumbernauld was ‘responsible for quite a number of remarkable innovations’ in urban planning in its early proposals.[13] Due to land restrictions in the area, a high density New Town was essential. Whereas the first wave of new towns following the 1946 Act were designed to have 15 – 40 persons per acre, Cumbernauld was designed for 60 – 100.[14] There was to be a single town centre as opposed to sub centres common in first wave towns, with Cumbernauld having the world’s first multi-level indoor town centre.[15] The ambition of the town’s planners was recognised in 1967, with the Cumbernauld Development Corporation (CDC) being awarded the prestigious Reynolds Award by the American Institute of Architects.[16] The town was designed for the age of car ownership, with transportation orientated towards travel by private vehicles rather than public transportation. Carter highlights that these innovations ‘really did represent a major break with tradition’, the aim of which was to fully design Cumbernauld as a new

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[10] Ibid., p.223.
[11] Carter, *Innovations in Planning Thought*, p.20.
[12] E. Brooks. ‘Development Problems of the Inner City’. *The Geographical Journal*, Vol 141, No. 3, (1975), pp.355-362, p.361.
[13] Carter. *Innovations in Planning Thought*, p.6.
[14] Ibid., p.7.
[15] Ibid., p.11.
[16] STV, ‘Cumbernauld: The Town for Tomorrow’. Accessed 12/05/2015 at http://news.stv.tv/west-central/23299-cumbernauld-the-town-for-tomorrow/

town for the future.[17] There were criticisms of these proposals from the outset, with *The Scotsman* highlighting the potential problems of such high density, arguing that planners 'must beware of building the new slums of tomorrow in the new towns of today'.[18] Levitt argues that Cumbernauld was Scottish Secretary Stuart's 'antidote to socialism: the physical symbol of new Scotland based on market corporatism. The tenants may have been Labour, but they moved to Conservative-built homes at Conservative-priced rents'.[19]

Due to the housing problems facing Glasgow, the primary aim of Cumbernauld was to relieve pressure on its overcrowding crisis, with the initial aim to have 80 percent of the new town coming from the city.[20]

Table 5.1 Origin of Cumbernauld households as a percentage of total population.[21]

Origin	Dec 1975	Mar 1981
STRATHCLYDE	91.1	91.5
Glasgow	71.9	67.6
Cumbernauld	9.1	14.4
Dumbartonshire	3.9	3.1
Lanarkshire	4.3	4.7
CENTRAL	2.7	2.7
LOTHIANS	1	0.9
TAYSIDE	0.4	0.5
England, Wales and Ireland	2.3	2.3

As Table 5.1 indicates, despite not reaching the set target, the vast majority of residents in Cumbernauld throughout the 1970s and 1980s had relocated from

[17] Carter, *Innovations in Planning Thought,* p.15.
[18] *The Scotsman*, 17/12/1964.
[19] Levitt, 'New Towns, New Scotland, p.223.
[20] NLA. UT/58/5. Industry Department for Scotland, 'The Scottish New Towns', July 1989, p.22.
[21] NLA. UT/92/19. Cumbernauld Development Corporation, 'Cumbernauld Statistical Trends 1981-1982'. Totals do not equal 100% as some places of origin omitted for brevity.

Glasgow, and nine out of ten had originated from within Strathclyde. Betty Wallace discussed the attraction of the town when she moved from the city due to houses built with a front and back door stating that 'everybody wis lookin' for a wee front an' back door in thae days', seeking a change from tenement living.[22] Karen Steel moved from Drumchapel, a working-class scheme in the south of Glasgow, and recalls that her parents wanted to own their own home and took advantage of the Glasgow overspill programmes to buy a house at a cheaper cost than they could have in the city.[23]

The initial target population of Cumbernauld was to be 70,000 by 1982, with an expectation that this would eventually increase to 90,000 following initial settlement.[24]

Table 5.2 Population growth of Cumbernauld, 1957 – 1990[25]

Date	Total Population	Increment
December 1957	3,000	
December 1960	5,000	2,000
December 1965	18,460	13,460
December 1970	31,084	12,624
December 1975	41,937	10,853
March 1980	47,968	6,031
March 1985	49,739	1,771
March 1990	50,600	861

Table 5.2 indicates that, despite substantial initial relocation and an average annual intake of 1,920 between 1959 and 1982, Cumbernauld failed to reach its population

[22] Interview with Betty Wallace conducted by Andy Clark, 15/01/2015. SOHCA/052/001.
[23] Interview with Karen Steel conducted by Andy Clark, 04/11/2015. SOHCA/052/012.
[24] NLA. UT/92/15. Department of the Environment, 'The New Towns', 1978.
[25] NLA. UT/92/22. Cumbernauld Development Corporation, 'Cumbernauld Statistical Trends 1985-1986'. March 1990 figure from UT/92/14. Cumbernauld Development Corporation, 'Labour resources study, Cumbernauld', 1990.

targets as increases became markedly reduced during the 1980s. This was impacted by the first negative net migration in the town during 1980 – 1981, with a population decline of 1,100 following a decade of consistent increase.[26] The relocation of residents from Strathclyde in search of employment offered in the new town had a significant impact on the age structure of the population, with 69.9 percent of residents below the age of 40 in 1981, and only 17 percent above 60, making the town particularly vulnerable to cyclical unemployment.[27] The planning of Cumbernauld ensured that the population would have easy access to amenities. Unlike housing programmes built within Glasgow, in areas such as Casltemilk and Milton, Cumbernauld was designed as a 'whole town' as opposed to a collection of neighbourhoods, with a distinct and easy to access town centre providing leisure activities such as a theatre, cinema and retail outlets to provide for the growing population.[28]

5.2.1 Industry and economy in the new town

The principal attraction for many people relocating to Cumbernauld was the employment opportunities offered. Residents such as Irene Steele, who moved to Cumbernauld with her family in 1964 after her husband began employment in the Burroughs plant, left Glasgow in the hope of employment and better living conditions. It became the first new town in a British Development Area to construct purpose-built factory units to attract Glasgow-based industrialists through offering ready-made, sub-dividable units.[29] Throughout the 1960s, however, the role of the Scottish new towns shifted from overspill towards the increased attraction of migrating, modernised industry.[30] US direct investment was highly significant during the period of Cumbernauld's growth, with a doubling in the number of North

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[26] NLA. UT/58/7. Strathclyde Regional Council, '1981 Base Projections to 1988: Population, Households, Housing Main Report', 1982.
[27] NLA. UT/92/19. Cumbernauld Development Corporation, 'Cumbernauld Statistical Trends 1981-1982'.
[28] Carter, *Innovations in Planning Thought*, p.7.
[29] Ibid., p.13.
[30] J.N. Randall, 'New Towns and New Industries, in pp.245-270 R. Saville (ed), *The Economic Development of Modern Scotland 1950-1980*. Edinburgh: John Donald Publishers Ltd., 1985, p.246.

American plants in Scotland between 1963 and 1973.[31] The archives of the CDC demonstrate the importance of attracting industry to the new town's administrators, with a range of brochures and marketing materials designed to highlight the benefits of operating in the area. In a study aimed at the US industry market in 1969, these benefits are discussed extensively. The tradition of skilled labour in Glasgow was emphasised, along with the high standard of education of the available workforce.[32] The geographical location of Cumbernauld also made the town attractive, with both Glasgow and Edinburgh within 45 minutes by road and three major airports within a 50-mile radius. The exportation of goods was also promoted with nearby ports such as Grangemouth and a container terminal six miles away, at Coatbridge.[33] As well as labour and geographical benefits, the financial and material assistance available for relocating firms was repeatedly emphasised by the Corporation. In an appeal to Japanese investors in 1981, it was noted that Regional Development Grants of 22 percent towards the costs of new factories, plant and machinery were available for firms migrating to the town. For companies utilising the ready-built factory space, a rent free period of up to three years was offered. Further grants were available for training costs through in-plant training schemes, which would cover the wages of the workers and instructors, and firms could also negotiate 'selective financial assistance' through the 'Locate in Scotland' office.[34]

John Randall argues that in addition to financial incentives, incoming firms were attracted by the idea of 'integrated urban development' with settlements and industries coordinated by a New Town Corporation.[35] Michael Danson also argues that multinationals were attracted to establishing branch plants outside of large

[31] Hood and Young, 'US Investment in Scotland', p.280.
[32] NLA. UT/92/2. 'The Promotion of Cumbernauld in the U.S. Industry Development Market. A Communications Study & Programme Prepared By Brook-Hart, Ruder & Finn', 1969, pp.3-4.
[33] NLA. UT/92/28. Cumbernauld Development Corporation, 'Cumbernauld: The Facts and the Figures, 1982-1983', 1983.
[34] NLA. UT/58/21 – Cumbernauld Development Corporation, 'Portfolio Information on Westfield Site in Cumbernauld', 1981.
[35] Randall, 'New Towns and New Industries', p.246.

cities as they could lower wages due to reduced competition for labour and a lower skill base, particularly among women.[36]

Industrial relations in the area were highlighted by the Corporation when appealing to investors, with an attempt to disassociate Cumbernauld from the historic strength of the trade union movement in Glasgow. In an area study aimed towards American industrialists, it was noted that 'in the case of labour relations, one of the Development Corporation executives said to us "there are still a lot of people who come up here calling the place 'Red Clyde'"'.[37] Despite this tradition among those moving to Cumbernauld, the document highlights that communities like Cumbernauld enjoyed 'good' labour relations, and in the Twenty-Second Annual Report of the Corporation in 1978, the Corporation boasted that 'our excellent industrial relations record has been maintained'.[38] When appealing to investors, the Corporation treated trade unionism with caution, stating that 'it is quite possible to operate without a Union', particularly for small firms as 'less than half the companies [in Cumbernauld] recognise unions'.[39] Despite this, the presence of large, unionised firms meant that two thirds of the total local workforce were unionised, and the Corporation 'recommended that any company intending to employ several hundred should give serious consideration to the possibility of recognising a single union' and that, even with a large level of unionisation, between 1971 and 1981, there were 'no strikes of any significance in Cumbernauld'.[40]

[36] M.W. Danson, 'The industrial structure and labour market segmentation: Urban and regional implications'. *Regional Studies*, Vol. 16 No.4 (1982), pp.255-265, p.261.
[37] NLA. UT/92/2. 'The Promotion of Cumbernauld in the U.S. Industry Development Market. A Communications Study & Programme Prepared By Brook-Hart, Ruder & Finn', 1969, p.6.
[38] NLA. UT/86/1. Reports of the Cumbernauld, East Kilbride, Glenrothes, Irvine and Livingston Development Corporations for the year ended 31st March 1978 – Cumbernauld Development Corporation, Twenty-Second Annual Report', 1978, p.9.
[39] NLA. UT/58/21. Cumbernauld Development Corporation. 'Portfolio Information on Westfield Site in Cumbernauld', 1981.
[40] Ibid.

The Scottish new towns enjoyed success in attracting manufacturing as the sector became central to their economic performance. In 1976, manufacturing accounted for 48 percent of employment in new towns, compared with a Scottish average of 29 percent, with manufacturing jobs increasing by 3.6 percent per annum between 1967 and 1976, as opposed to a 1.8 percent annual decline across Scotland.[41] This was primarily due to manufacturing being substantially less reliant on declining heavy industry, as light electronics and modern modes of manufacturing dominated. There was a significant level of capital migration to the Cumbernauld, with the establishment of over 200 firms within the industrial units over the period 1960 – 1980.[42] There was also a broadly consistent increase in employment within manufacturing during this period, with total numbers employed increasing from 1,425 to 8,452.[43] However, Cumbernauld was vulnerable to significant drops in sector-specific employment due to individual factory closure. Between 1970 and 1975, for instance, the number of workers employed in engineering decreased by 36 percent, before recovering slightly by 1980.[44] Female manufacturing employment increased significantly between 1960 and 1975, from 330 to 2,910, before decreasing to 2,805 in 1980 despite an overall increase in town employment.[45] This change can be partly explained by the decrease in employment in textiles, clothing and footwear between 1975 and 1980, from 1,120 to 872. This decline increased the male:female ratio in industrial employment from 2:1 to 2.4:1, 1980-1983.[46]

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[41] NLA. UT/99/14. RA. Henderson, 'The Employment Performance of Established Manufacturing in the Scottish New Towns. Economics and Statistics Unit Discussion Paper No. 16. Scottish Economic Planning Department, Edinburgh, 1982, p.1.
[42] NLA. UT/92/19. Cumbernauld Development Corporation, 'Cumbernauld Statistical Trends 1985-1986', 1986.
[43] NLA. UT/92/19. Cumbernauld Development Corporation, 'Cumbernauld Statistical Trends 1981-1982', 1982.
[44] Ibid.
[45] NLA. UT/92/19. Cumbernauld Development Corporation, 'Cumbernauld Statistical Trends 1985-1986', 1986.
[46] 1983 figure from NLA. UT/92/28. Cumbernauld Development Corporation, 'Cumbernauld: The Facts and Figures, 1982 – 1983', 1983. 1980 figure from NLA. UT/86/3 – Reports of the Cumbernauld, East Kilbride, Glenrothes, Irvine and Livingston Development Corporations for the year ended 31st March 1980 – Cumbernauld Development Corporation, Twenty-Fourth Annual Report', 1980, p.13.

Table 5.3 Origins of manufacturing firms operating in Cumbernauld, 1983[47]

Origin of Firm	Percentage of firms
Overseas	9
England	39
Cumbernauld	22
Glasgow	15
Scotland (other)	15

Table 5.3 demonstrates that Cumbernauld was able to attract a substantial level of investment from firms with headquarters based in areas other than Glasgow, with the majority of manufacturing firms originating in England, along with 9 percent from overseas. Evidently, the CDC had been able, through marketing the potential benefits for industry in relocating to the town and promoting the subsidies available, to attract a significant level of inward investment, developing a large manufacturing base in the town with consistently increasing numbers of workers employed in the sector. The economic base of the town was also heavily dependent on US direct investment, with 45 percent of Cumbernauld's manufacturing employment located in three American firms.[48]

The early successes of manufacturing in Cumbernauld were first seriously challenged by the onset of recession in the early 1980s. In the year ending March, 1981 there was a net loss of 1,123 industrial jobs, compared with a gross gain of 806 the year before.[49] The Corporation noted in their annual report that 'Cumbernauld has been exposed, like everywhere else, to the chill winds of world

[47] NLA. UT/92/28. Cumbernauld Development Corporation, 'Cumbernauld: The Facts and Figures, 1982 – 1983', 1983.
[48] Knox and McKinlay, 'American Multinationals', p.214.
[49] 1981 figure from NLA. UT/86/4 – Reports of the Cumbernauld, East Kilbride, Glenrothes, Irvine and Livingston Development Corporations for the year ended 31st March 1981 – Cumbernauld Development Corporation, Twenty-Fifth Annual Report', 1981, p.10.1980 figure from NLA. UT/86/3 – Reports of the Cumbernauld, East Kilbride, Glenrothes, Irvine and Livingston Development Corporations for the year ended 31st March 1980 – Cumbernauld Development Corporation, Twenty-Fourth Annual Report', 1980, p.13.

economic recession'.[50] Unemployment increased by 22 percent during 1981,[51] which prompted Cumbernauld's Labour MP to seek a meeting with the Secretary of State for Scotland to discuss the town's 'job crisis', noting that 'the decline of our manufacturing industry is extremely worrying'.[52] At an unemployment demonstration in Glasgow during February, 1981, two demonstrators from Cumbernauld argued that there was a severe lack of jobs for young people in the locality.[53] In a report to Strathclyde Regional Council, the Corporation recognised the difficulty that the new town would face in recovering from this first major threat to its manufacturing sector, predicting 'high rates of unemployment and poverty for those aged 25-29', as unemployment was 'likely to continue at very high levels'.[54] They were confident, however, that there existed a 'sense of common purpose and a satisfaction of Cumbernauld as a place to live' among the population increasingly facing job loss.[55] Despite brief hopes of a potential 'oil boom' in the town,[56] towards the end of 1981 the weekly editions of the *Cumbernauld and Kilsyth Chronicle* carried frequent stories of factory closures.[57] In January, 1982, the Cumbernauld Right to Work campaign group was established, protesting and picketing outside of the local job centre at the rapidly increasing rates of unemployment in the town.[58] It was within this context of rising unemployment that the workers at the Lovable plant were faced with the closure of their factory and the loss of full-time employment.

[50] NLA. UT/86/4. Reports of the Cumbernauld, East Kilbride, Glenrothes, Irvine and Livingston Development Corporations for the year ended 31st March 1981 – Cumbernauld Development Corporation, Twenty-Fifth Annual Report', 1981, p.10.
[51] *Cumbernauld News and Kilsyth Chronicle*, 31/12/1981.
[52] *Cumbernauld News and Kilsyth Chronicle*, 31/12/1981.
[53] *Women's Voice*, Issue 50, March 1981.
[54] NLA. UT/58/7. Strathclyde Regional Council. '1981 Base Projections to 1988: Population, Households, Housing Main Report', 1982, pp.7-8.
[55] NLA. UT/58/7. Strathclyde Regional Council. '1981 Base Projections to 1988: Population, Households, Housing Main Report', 1982, p.8.
[56] *Cumbernauld News and Kilsyth Chronicle*, 05/11/1981.
[57] See, for example: *Cumbernauld News and Kilsyth Chronicle,* 1/10/1981; 8/10/1981; 12/11/1981; 31/12/1981.
[58] *Cumbernauld News and Kilsyth Chronicle*, 13/01/1982.

5.3 'Underneath they're all Lovable': Lovable Lingerie[59]

Lovable Brasserie Co. entered into discussions with the CDC regarding 'new standard factory number 8' in November, 1964.[60] By the end of that year, the factory had been officially listed for the firm and production would begin early in the New Year.[61] Importantly, shortly after this the Corporation agreed that 'until further notice, no more enquiries [would] be considered for clothing firms' due to predictions of high levels of female employment in the town.[62] The Lovable Brasserie Co. was founded by Frank Garson in Atlanta, Georgia in 1926 and, throughout the twentieth-century, became one of the largest private bra manufacturers in the US, and sixth-largest in the country overall.[63] Lovable UK was a subsidiary of the centre firm, Lovable Atlanta, and was half owned by Atlanta and half by Lovable Atlanta owner Alexander Pelican and his wife.[64] Attracting Lovable to Cumbernauld was seen as a major success for the Corporation, with their economic advisors stating that the presence of the firm in the town would be important in attracting more US-based multinationals to Cumbernauld.[65]

The company enjoyed a good level of success in Cumbernauld once production had commenced. By the end of March, 1965 they employed 299 workers and this rose to 351 in September of that year, with Lovable forecasting that this would increase further to over 1,100.[66] Throughout their first year, Lovable requested more space to be made available, including warehouse facilities which the Corporation treated 'sympathetically as the company will be moving to purpose built premises about the

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[59] Lovable advertising slogan, 1970s & 80s. See *The New Statesman*, 19/02/1982.
[60] NLA. UT/84/2. Minutes of the Industry Committee of Cumbernauld Development Corporation, 1962 – 1964, meeting of 1/12/1964.
[61] NLA. UT/84/2. Minutes of the Industry Committee of Cumbernauld Development Corporation, 1965 – 1969, meeting of 19/01/1965.
[62] Ibid.
[63] *Atlanta Business Chronicle*, 05/01/1998.
[64] *The New Statesman*, 19/02/1982.
[65] NLA. UT/92/2. 'The Promotion of Cumbernauld in the U.S. Industry Development Market. A Communications Study & Programme Prepared By Brook-Hart, Ruder & Finn', 1969, p.6.
[66] NLA. UT/84/2 – Minutes of the Industry Committee of Cumbernauld Development Corporation, 1965 – 1969, meetings of 06/04/1965 and 16/08/1965.

end of 1966'.[67] By March, 1968, Lovable had moved to their own purpose-built plant in the Wardpark Industrial Estate and had warehouse premises in the Blairlinn area of the town. Employment continued to rise, with 380 workers in September, 1969 of which approximately 93 percent was female. Despite not achieving the forecasted number of workers, by 1981 the company had become the second largest employer in Cumbernauld, with a workforce of approximately 480.[68]

In examining the reasons why workers sought employment in Lovable, the testimonies demonstrate a multitude of factors and motivations. Irene had had a number of different jobs after moving from Glasgow to Cumbernauld, which were fixed around looking after her children outside of school hours. Once her children were old enough, she recalls that:

> It wis just… suited me, full time. That time it must just, been a job, an'. Noo, other people, ah think maybe Ellen wis in it first… And she kinda says come, an' ye got a job easy then, didn't ye? Ye know so, so that wis aboot it.[69]

Betty Wallace worked part-time when she first moved to Cumbernauld; however, she says:

> Ah wis oot here, ah had a wee job up in, eh, Sword's the bakeries first, that's up the road there as well… And, eh, they offered me a full-time job but ah didnae want it, cos ah didnae fancy it up there. So, ah put in, ah applied for a job in the Lovable and ah got it.[70]

Josephine King began working in the Lovable when she was 16 as she felt that it was important to learn a trade that could provide her a secure, well paid job, with it her perception that 'there wis loadsa sewin' factories' in the area.[71] Alison Cairns reflects that Lovable 'were always lookin' for people' when she began working there

[67] NLA. UT/84/2 – Minutes of the Industry Committee of Cumbernauld Development Corporation, 1965 – 1969, meetings of 06/04/1965.
[68] *Cumbernauld News and Kilsyth Chronicle*, 22/10/1981.
[69] Interview with Irene Steel conducted by Andy Clark, 12/03/2015. SOHCA/052/002.
[70] SOHCA/052/001.
[71] Interview with Josephine King conducted by Andy Clark, 26/02/2015. SOHCA/052/003.

in 1975[72] and Theresa Coulter states that, whilst she wanted to be a hairdresser, 'ah always done sewin', ma mum wis a sewer as well, and always kinda done that… and ah went down and got a job right away, started like the next week'.[73] Lovable attracted workers from beyond the new town, with Agnes Quinn commuting from nearby mining village Moddiesburn, from where there were a sufficient number of workers to organise a minibus to take them into the factory.[74] Alison travelled from Denny to the plant, and recalled that a number of workers travelled from the village and nearby Dunnipace.[75] Complementing the discussion in the previous chapter, the dominant narrative emerging from the testimonies is that the key factor in motivating the female workers to seek employment was economic necessity.[76]

As with Lee Jeans, the testimonies illustrate the significance of pre-existing relationships with those in the plant when beginning employment in Lovable. Margaret Cairney was brought up in Croy, a village on the outskirts of Cumbernauld and she reflects that many people of her age were working in the factory when she and her twin sister left poorly paid office junior jobs to begin in Lovable in the 1970s.[77] Alison also knew many in the plant, recalling that many she had been in school with had already began in Lovable when she entered in 1975, stating that 'everybody ye knew, knew somebody that worked there… and they were always lookin' for people'.[78] Sandra Docherty got an interview through her father, who was the contracted plumber in the factory, but she also reflects that 'when ah went there wis five ae us that aw' went… aw' ma pals'.[79] Although many of the respondents interviewed in this research had relocated to Cumbernauld from other areas, they did have pre-existing relationships with other workers in the plant that could then develop and extend once they commenced employment.

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[72] Interview with Alison Cairns conducted by Andy Clark, 18/11/2015. SOHCA/052/015.
[73] Interview with Theresa Coulter conducted by Andy Clark, 17/10/2015. SOHCA/052/013.
[74] Interview with Agnes Quinn conducted by Andy Clark, 04/02/2015. SOHCA/052/004.
[75] SOHCA/052/015.
[76] Martin and Wallace, *Working Women in Recession*, p.122.
[77] Interview with Margaret Cairney conducted by Andy Clark, 18/11/2015. SOHCA/052/016.
[78] SOHCA/052/015.
[79] Interview with Sandra Docherty conducted by Andy Clark, 05/11/2015. SOHCA/052/014.

5.3.1 Labour process in Lovable Cumbernauld

In looking at the organisation of work in the factory, a number of themes emerge through the testimonies that are significant when considering the nature of relationships formed on the shopfloor. When entering the factory, all machinists were given full training regardless of any previous sewing experience.[80] There was a dedicated training room on-site, where new workers would spend their first days running a piece of paper under a machine to learn how to sew in a straight line.[81] Margaret recalled that there were around 20 machines in the training room and that she felt the company 'put a lotta money intae trainin' people. That wis good'.[82] When first working the sewing machines in the training room, mistakes could cause accidents and, although she had had previous experience of working with a machine, Sandra was taken to hospital on her first day. She recalls that:

> The first day ah started ma pal came up, and she went, "how's it gaun"? and the needle went doon, in through that finger, broke through ma finger and the nurse had tae drive me tae Falkirk Royal, cos she couldnae get it oot…. And ah've done it a couple ae times, the spool thing, because they were quite powerful machines and ah got caught.[83]

Once new workers had got used to the equipment that they would be using through simple tasks such as these, they would then begin to sew with thread in the training room before then being assigned to the section of the factory where they would begin working on production. Margaret recalls that, once on the factory floor, training staff continued to monitor their development. However, she believes that informal 'mentoring' from older, more experienced workers was also important in acclimatising new workers to the production process. She recalled how an older woman close to her on the line acted in this way:

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[80] SOHCA/052/014.
[81] SOHCA/052/016.
[82] SOHCA/052/016.
[83] SOHCA/052/014.

> Betty Dunn she wis… she looked after me, she told me exactly what to do, and what speed to do it at… And how tae work at our best advantage… she wis teachin me how not tae get exploited…. aw' they [older] wummin did it, ah don't know ae anybody that didnae experience it.[84]

This excerpt highlights the significance of the relationships that developed on the factory floor at the earliest stages of employment. Margaret's narrative also relates such assistance directly with the idea of exploitation at work, indicative of a form of solidarity among the machinists that operated outside of formal trade unionism. Whereas the company provided the training necessary to operate the machines and produce the garments, this narrative indicates that once workers were on the shopfloor, they were initiated to the process through the relationships and associations developing at the point of production.

The Cumbernauld plant was a key production centre for Lovable, meaning that all aspects of production were undertaken in the plant until closure, unlike at Lee's where aspects of production were moved to other sites. The factory floor was rectangular, large enough to accommodate almost 500 workers at the peak of its production. When entering the factory floor from the corner of the plant, the first section was the cutting room where patterns were put onto material which was then cut to the shapes and sizes required for assembly.[85] The cutting room was one of the male dominated sections in the factory, an aspect of production taken for granted by the respondents interviewed.

Once the material had been cut, it was separated into plastic boxes with material to produce 24 bras and taken onto the main factory floor.[86] The floor had two lines of machines running the length of the factory which were separated by an automated roller. The machines were divided into the different parts for production, through

[84] SOHCA/052/016.
[85] SOHCA/052/014.
[86] SOHCA/052/014.

which each box would be passed until the garment was completed. The first point for production was the assembly of the strap, which would be threaded and hooked onto the bra. Theresa recalls that it was often new workers that were assigned to this section, as 'that wasn't sewin', that was just threading… that was just where ye started off and then ye moved ontae a different job'.[87] Once the straps were attached, the material was passed to the bine bust section where the cups were put in, which involved:

> Liftin' a band… for yer cups tae go in. And ye'd yer two cups and a box at yer side, and the [bra] band went over yer knee… and ye would lift yer cup up, and ye would insert it through a folder… An' ye would sew it round. Then ye would lift yer other cup up and sew the other cup in and then that wis it.[88]

Once the cups had been sewn, the next section attached the bottom elastic to complete the shape of the bra, with the fabric cut according to length and the elastic stretch required for each size and style. Following this, the final steps of production were made, including bar tacking areas of possible material weakness, attaching bows to the front, securing fastening hooks, and sewing labels at the back of the elastic strap.[89] Once completed, the garments were passed to inspection at the opposite end of the factory from where the process began before being packaged for distribution.

A large majority of the machinists worked in a specific section of the plant, focused on one aspect of production. There were a number of 'switch' workers who were competent in several sections and would work where required. Alison was one of these, explaining that 'ah was one ae these people who, if someone was off and the job needed done, they'd get me to do it, if there was a repair needin' done, get me

[87] SOHCA/052/013.
[88] SOHCA/052/004.
[89] SOHCA/052/001.

tae dae it'.[90] All of the machinists on the production line were women, with men's role in the cutting room and machine mechanics, also employed by Lovable and based in the Wardpark factory. As was the case in the Lee Jeans plant, a clear gender division of labour existed within the production process, with men in the cutting room and the skilled mechanical sections, and women working on machines. The respondents did not attribute any significance to the mechanics being all male, demonstrating that this gendered division of labour was an entrenched, taken for granted assumption in the trade. This was commonplace in clothing manufacturing, supporting the argument of Westwood that 'women [machinists] were made dependent upon male skills and expertise and they were, as a result, subordinate'.[91] The machinists did not work on an automated assembly line; the garment moved through the factory by a combination of rollers and workers employed as runners. Sandra explains that 'ye had a conveyer belt thing next tae ye' that workers would place their box onto once they had completed their section.[92] The roller then transported these boxes to the bottom of the line, where the runners would collect and forward them onto the next stage of production. Irene was a runner, and states that 'ah got the bras, ah got the machinists their thread, their bras, an' then the box came doon and ye lifted it in, then ye took it roon' tae them tae… pass it on'.[93] Margaret explains that runners:

> Would bring yer work, sit it on yer left hand side, and when ye wur finished with it, ye'd put it on the box and put it on this, it wis just a giant roller… On yer right hand side. It wisnae an, a production line in as much ah had tae ask tae go to the toilet because if ah left ma post it would hold up the work, it didnae work like that.[94]

As a result of this method of production, the wage system for machinists in the plant was based on piece rates, which could give workers additional autonomy over their

[90] SOHCA/052/015.
[91] Westwood, *All Day, Every Day*, p.23.
[92] SOHCA/052/014.
[93] SOHCA/052/002.
[94] SOHCA/052/016.

own performance. In discussing the significance of experienced workers further, Margaret recalls that they were crucial in teaching the newer women 'what speed' to work at when being timed for the costing of a job:

> If somebody's standin' timin' ye, ye tend tae work hard, faster in the mornin' anyway… Yer buoyant, the chemistry slowed down and yer body, in the afternoon ye didn't dae as many [garments]. So what tended tae happen wis management would come in the mornin' tae set prices when yer at yer fastest. So the more experienced people [were] sayin' "if somebody's timin' ye, this is what ye do, and be careful when ye do it".[95]

Margaret's testimony represents a sophisticated analysis of the ways in which management attempted to maximise production to reduce costs, and highlights that the workers were engaged in this process and took action to reduce its impact. Although the piecework system did allow for some autonomy and ensured that the workers were not mastered by the line to the same extent as assembly line systems, the testimonies highlight that the opportunity for higher earnings was a key factor in motivating them to work faster and harder. Theresa states that the 'money wis pretty good because it wis piecework, so it aw' kinda depended on how hard you worked… how much money ye got'[96], and Josephine develops this perspective further:

> Ye were at it [production] aw' the time, as fast as ye could go, cos, ye know, the faster ye went ye made more money… if ye were quite happy wi' the basic wage, well, ye just didnae batter in.[97]

The chance to make higher earnings through increased production was evidently significant in motivating these respondents to produce quicker, a point supported by Margaret who recalls that 'every time ah done a box of work ah'd go, "well, that

[95] SOHCA/052/016.
[96] SOHCA/052/013.
[97] SOHCA/052/003.

means ah can do this wi' that money or that", ye know?'.[98] Switch workers were paid a higher rate than those who had an assigned section, as 'obviously ye couldnae go on everybody's job and do the, the speed they did it, doin' it everyday'.[99] Despite the higher rate for the job, Sandra reflects that when she was moved there for a period she 'hated it… yer production would go down, cos ye couldnae dae it as fast as ye could dae yer ain job… ye got a percentage on tap, but ah hated it'.[100] These reflections of working in the plant highlight that the labour process in Cumbernauld allowed the workers to retain some control over the speed of their production, but that the remuneration available through the piecework system was a key motivation for working harder and faster. Another aspect that must be considered in an analysis of the relationships that developed in Lovable is the supervisory and management structures, and the ways in which interviewees reflect on their relationships with those above them, as they were at the bottom of the organisational hierarchy.

5.3.2 Management and supervision

The management and supervision structures in the Lovable factory follow a similar pattern to those in Lee's, and other factories with a predominantly female production workforce.[101] Sandra explains that there were many immediate supervisors on the floor, with each style of garment having a supervisor to oversee its development and production.[102] The vast majority of line supervisors had been machinists and were therefore predominantly female, with Alison stating that it was predominantly 'the bosses… above the supervisors [that] were mostly men'.[103] Four of the respondents – Josephine, Agnes, Theresa and Betty – went on to become supervisors for a period whilst working in the plant, both before and after

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[98] SOHCA/052/016.
[99] SOHCA/052/015.
[100] SOHCA/052/014.
[101] See Westwood, *All Day, Every Day;* Glucksmann, *Women Assemble*; Cavendish, *Women on the Line*; Coyle, *Redundant Women* for examples.
[102] SOHCA/052/014.
[103] SOHCA/052/015.

occupation, demonstrating the prevalence of supervisory appointments from the floor. Perhaps as a reflection of a previously shared experience in the production process, the respondents largely spoke positively when reflecting on the supervision on the line. Betty states that supervisors were 'great', with very little recollection of confrontation.[104] Agnes had a similar view, saying that supervisors were 'fine. As long as ye made yer money, ye were fine… as long as ye sat and did yer work, ye were fine'.[105] Theresa shared this view, believing that 'most of them wur great… most ae them wur brilliant, they wur really fair and good tae get along wi''.[106] Irene also explains that the managerial system in Lovable was not characterised by micro-management and petty restrictions, with workers able to stop their machines and get a drink of water or use the bathroom, and that bosses 'let ye have the wireless, it wis good'.[107]

Tensions between workers and supervisors discussed by the respondents were much more based upon individual characteristics rather than systematic petty management. As Theresa outlines, 'some ae them wur bitches, ye've got tae say… Thought they wur runnin' the flamin' Titanic or somethin', it wis a sewin' factory!'[108] Sandra recalled similar perspectives, that there were 'a couple ah didnae get on wi'. But the ane on ma line, she wis fair'.[109] Alison further felt that supervisors were more able to relate to the workers, as working on the floor they 'just kinda worked along wi' everybody, had a bit ae banter… There was no strictness, or pullin' ye up and aw' the rest ae it.'[110] This extended beyond the workplace, with Josephine being good friends with supervisors when she worked on the line and Irene recalling that 'ye could go oot at night wi' them [supervisors]… even though they're your boss, they were awrite'.[111] It can be argued, based on the evidence of these

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[104] SOHCA/052/001.
[105] SOHCA/052/004.
[106] SOHCA/052/013.
[107] SOHCA/052/002.
[108] SOHCA/052/013.
[109] SOHCA/052/014.
[110] SOHCA/052/015.
[111] SOHCA/052/002.

narratives and reflections that, as the majority of supervisors and machinists had shared, and continued to share, the common experience of working on the factory floor, these relationships could be maintained once they had become members of the supervisory staff.

While the majority of supervisors were female, the management level above them was predominantly male, reflecting the continued gendering of power relations at the point of production which assigned masculine qualities to decision making, authority and control.[112] Based in an office suite away from the factory floor, plant management was more detached from the production process. Agnes states that it was the line supervisors that handled most issues with workers and that senior management was relatively removed from the actual production process.[113] As a result, the respondents recall very little in terms of profoundly unfair treatment by plant management, with most instances of conflict being over minor, petty incidents. For instance, Theresa recalls that when singing at her machine, a manager was:

> At the other side, and when ah burst oot signin, he got the fright ae his life, and he pulled me intae that office. Ah never ever got a warnin' or anythin' like that, it wis always just a talkin' tae'.[114]

None of the interviewees could recall an instance of worker confrontation with management in the period before the sit-in, with only passing reference made to a handful of 'grumpy' managers and supervisors. They were permitted to listen to the radio and records whilst at their machines and, as the process was not based on a model of automated assembly production, could leave their section when required, with no respondents recalling any instances when this caused managerial confrontation.

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[112] For further discussion See McIvor, *Working Lives*, pp.77-115.
[113] SOHCA/052/004.
[114] SOHCA/052/013.

5.3.3 Working at Lovable

In examining respondents' reflections on working in the plant, the dominant narrative that emerges is one of enjoyment and a positive shopfloor culture. As with that of Lee's, this sense of positivity is predominantly conveyed through recollections of bonds that developed among the women workers, and not through a nostalgic reflection of industrial work, with a distinction between gaining satisfaction from 'the job' and overall enjoyment of work. As indicated, the piecework system meant that workers had to 'batter in' to make the best money possible, and the intensity of working in this manner is frequently discussed. Josephine reflects that it was 'hard work… ah couldn't dae it now, naw in a million years… Really, really hard work'.[115] Sandra had a similar perspective, stating that 'ye had tae work hard in there. Ye worked hard, but ye made good money'.[116] The respondents also conceded that the work on the line was repetitive and uninteresting, again distinguishing between their enjoyment of the plant with satisfaction with the jobs undertaken. Margaret says that it was 'sittin' doin' such a monotonous job… Ah didnae get job satisfaction'.[117] Sandra also used the word monotonous when describing her work on the line, and when explaining her part in production, Theresa laughed and reflected that 'now ah'm talkin' aboot it, it sounds so borin''.[118]

Despite recognising the intensity of production and the often monotonous nature of the work, the dominant narrative that emerges is that the respondents thoroughly enjoyed their time in the factory. In examining how this is counterposed with their view of the work as boring, important themes emerge in their reflections. Firstly, the money that could be earned was significant, with strong evidence that economic drivers were crucial in maintaining their motivation to the job. Josephine reflects that she 'loved it. Made a fortune', and when asked what it was that she

[115] SOHCA/052/003.
[116] SOHCA/052/014.
[117] SOHCA/052/016.
[118] SOHCA/052/013.

'loved' about the work, Agnes replied 'the money! (laughs). Makin' good money'.[119] Sharon had similar recollections, saying that:

> Ye could make really good money. Ah made twice wit ma husband made at ane point when we had a flat… it wis a really good place tae make money, good money.[120]

Therefore, despite an acceptance that the work was intense and monotonous, workers were able to earn significant sums through the piecework system. Betty recalls that the fastest worker she had known in the plant could earn a week's wages in a couple of days by producing intensely at all times when at her machine.[121] An important aspect that did not come out through these testimonies was any difference between the wages and wage systems of the male dominated sections of production, the cutters and mechanics. It can be reasonably assumed that the trained mechanics would have been on higher rates than the machinists, as their work was demarcated as a skilled, time-served trade with opportunities to earn greater amounts. Access to these skilled mechanical trades remained informally closed to women, through the social constructs of skill and gender differentiation in the clothing industry.[122]

Other than the money that workers could earn in the plant, it is evident from the perspectives of the respondents that a shopfloor culture existed among the machinists based on friendships, sociability, and workforce rituals that contributed substantially to their view of work and working at Lovable. As highlighted, many respondents had pre-existing relationships with workers which facilitated the development of friendships and camaraderie. The machines were laid out in such a way that 'the people that was sittin' across, you were practically lookin' directly ontae them. So ye would get really tae know them, and ye would get, like the

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[119] SOHCA/052/003; SOHCA/052/004.
[120] SOHCA/052/014.
[121] SOHCA/052/001.
[122] See Leicester, 'Leeds Clothing Workers' Strike'.

people in front ae ye, and the people behind ye'.[123] Sandra, Betty and Agnes also discuss the ways in which workers in close proximity to one another would engage through the working day. There was difficulty in doing this whilst working quickly, as Sandra states that she would turn off the machine to converse with others lest potentially suffer injury. However, as they were not working on an automated assembly line, such interaction was possible and the interviewees reflect on the banter among the workers, with Theresa saying that a 'lottae it [enjoyment] wasn't about the job, it was about the banter and aw' that.'[124] The narratives are threaded with reflections of an enjoyable culture among the machinists at Lovable:

> Irene: there wasn't a lotta badness or anythin' in it, it was a good factory… Ah mean, ah've worked in factories aw' ma days… it was a good factory, it wis a good factory. It really wis a good factory tae work in'.[125]
>
> Margaret: There were obviously bad days, don't get me wrong. But the atmosphere in the factory wis really good.[126]
>
> Josephine: Loved it. Loved it… we enjoyed it. Aw' enjoyed it… ah would say ah enjoyed ma time in the factory, ah definitely wid.[127]
>
> Theresa: At the time ah loved it, ah did, ah loved it, aye.
> the place wis great… Ye know, the people ye got tae meet, and the laughs ye had wur great. Aye, it wis great. At the end ae the day, it wis a job, ye know, ye got the chance ae a day off or a holiday, then ye took it, but it wis good.[128]

The repetition in Irene's narrative is particularly interesting in this group of testimonies. Through the repeated use of 'good factory', it can be interpreted that Irene was attempting to emphasise her positive view of working in the factory, particularly in the context of an interview in which a key area of discussion was

[123] SOHCA/052/013.
[124] Ibid.
[125] SOHCA/052/004.
[126] SOHCA/052/016.
[127] SOHCA/052/003.
[128] SOHCA/052/013.

industrial dispute. Kathy also discussed the importance on the social bonds among the workers, stating that 'Lovable was not just a factory to us it was a big part of our social life as well', and she helped to organise a number of functions and social events for the workers.[129] Workers also socialised with one another at break times, with three different breaks due to the size of the plant.[130] Irene reflects that on a Friday, some of the workers would clock out at dinner time and take a taxi to the local Castlecary Hotel where they would have a pub lunch and 'maybe huv a wee (cough)… lemonade should we say? (laughs)'.[131] Such reflections of work in the factory are similar with Blyton and Jenkins' analysis of redundant clothing workers in the early twenty-first century, through which they argue that 'nostalgia for factory life was reserved for memories of events and those friendships that shaped their working lives'.[132] The narratives develop similar themes as those found in the Stirling Women's Oral History Project, in which work was recalled as a 'site for socializing, song and gossip, of friendships and contact'.[133] For the workers at Lovable, it is the people that they worked with and the relationships that were created on the shared site of the shopfloor that are pre-eminent when reflecting on their experiences of factory life.

Another aspect of the shopfloor culture at Lovable that emerges in the testimonies was the buying and selling of goods by the cleaner in the plant, with workers able to pay up the money owed. Agnes recalls that 'the cleaner…she selt everythin'. Everythin'. Anythin' you wanted, she could get'.[134] The story of the cleaner selling goods emerges as an important shared narrative among the respondents. Alison says that:

> Every day, think it wis between one and two. The toilets were aboot the length ae this room, toilets doon one side,

[129] Interview with Kathy Lawn conducted by Andy Clark, 10/10/2015. SOHCA/052/023.
[130] SOHCA/052/002.
[131] SOHCA/052/002.
[132] Blyton and Jenkins, 'Life after Burberry', p.33.
[133] McIvor, *Working Lives*, p.101.
[134] SOHCA/052/004.

> sinks doon the other. And there was a shelf above the sink. And it was like the Barras. Everythin' wis up there. Everythin' that ye could possibly imagine wantin' tae buy. Fae jewellery, tae clothes, tae toys, and she had a wee bit. She kept everybody, ye could pay it up if ye wanted, pay on the Friday when ye got paid.[135]

Alison's testimony conveys an image of a bustling marketplace selling a wide range of goods within the factory toilet, a point that she emphasises through a comparison with Glasgow's Barras Market. Karen similarly discusses the cleaner, stating that 'ye had Violet in the toilet sellin' aw' her stuff, her jewellery and everythin'. She'd come roon on a Friday shoutin "who owes me"? It wis, everybody wis just kinda close knitted and got on well'.[136] Agnes and Sandra both recall that this practice was not officially sanctioned by management, but they 'kinda turned a blind eye' to the activity and it continued unchallenged.[137] Informal economics are an important part of the shopfloor cultures outlined by Westwood, Cavendish and others, either through selling goods or borrowing and lending.[138] This is also highly gendered, as it took place on the feminine space of the factory floor, and is salient in Alison's testimony when she talks of products such as jewellery, clothes and toys, clearly aimed towards the women in the plant. The workers also socialised outside of the plant, with Christmas dances and a social committee organising events held either in the factory or local venues.[139]

At Christmas, the company would hire external caterers and provide a Christmas dinner for the workforce inside the factory, which was served by the supervisors before 'everybody left there and went tae Castlecary and got full ae it (drink)'.[140] A key social ritual was the Glasgow Fair, at which point the factory would close for a two week holiday. Agnes explains that the atmosphere on Fair Thursday was

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[135] SOHCA/052/015.
[136] SOHCA/052/012.
[137] SOHCA/052/014.
[138] See Westwood, *All Day, Every Day*, p.97; Cavendish, *Women on the Line.*
[139] SOHCA/052/023.
[140] SOHCA/052/004.

‘brilliant in the factory’ before the workers would finish with three weeks wages in their packets and go out, along with workers from other factories and pits in the area.[141] Other celebrations included weddings and birthdays, with Sandra recalling an active social aspect of the work ‘if there wis somebody gettin’ married, that line would huv a night oot… Christmas, they had a Christmas dance.[142] The shopfloor culture at Lovable was therefore forged through the common position of the workers in the plant at the point of production. As was argued in relation to Lee’s in chapter two, the factory floor operated as a space of sociability among the machinists, as working-class women, engaged in the work group social interactions of their gender and their class.

5.3.4 Trade unionism at Lovable

Lovable took the advice of the CDC in regards to trade unionism at large plants and recognised the NUTGW in organising the workforce with no record of any struggle in achieving this. The factory was a closed shop, with Agnes stating that joining the union was ‘automatic, it just came off yer wages’.[143] Kathy did experience confrontation with her manager when she joined the union, as she was no longer a machinist and worked in the office. She recalls that ‘I joined the union to spite one of my bosses… I got all the [office] staff to join… He always lost his [temper]’.[144] Despite this incident, the evidence from the testimonies suggests that industrial relations at the plant were characterised by little confrontation between union representatives and management, and a low level of participation by the workers in union business. Whilst Betty, who became a shop steward following the sit-in, claimed that shop steward Sadie Lang could ‘empty the factory in an hoor if she’d wanted her mind tae it’, there was no history of industrial dispute at the plant before 1982.[145] Alison recalled some complaints made about the temperature, with the shop steward contacted ‘if it wis too warm or it was too cold. Apart from the sit-

[141] SOHCA/052/004.
[142] SOHCA/052/014.
[143] SOHCA/052/004.
[144] SOHCA/052/023.
[145] SOHCA/052/001.

in, that's aboot the only thing ah cin remember of the union'.[146] Agnes also describes the participation of the workers at the plant as minimal, explaining that 'we aw' just kinda followed suit, what the union did, we done… if the union says jump, we would jump… if it wis against the management, aye, ye stuck wi' the union'.[147] Josephine's testimony further highlighted the significance of the shop steward, stating that the workers 'hud a good union, ye hud good a shop steward. God love Sadie, but she wis first class at her job, she knew everythin'. Josephine also highlighted the significance of local culture and traditions in shaping her approach to trade unionism, stating that 'it's just somethin' we done. Labour, we were always miners or witever ye wur and everybody wis in a union.'[148] Not all respondents had a similar background and perspective. When describing her mother and father, Sandra states:

> Trade unions and that didnae really come intae the vocabulary inawl, it wis like work, or work… And if they tried tae call a strike, ma mammy would go aff her heid, ye don't need tae strike, but ye did need tae go oot.[149]

For these respondents, therefore, the trade union existed in the plant as an organisation with which they had little involvement. They did not actively choose to join and, with union dues being automatically deducted from wages, did not actively contribute to the work done. Most had a positive view of the role of trade unions in the workplace, but it emerges that the union did not significantly impact on their day-to-day working lives. There had been no previous industrial dispute at the plant, and the interviewees recall that supervisors were largely women who had previously worked beside them and, other than personal dislikes, the management of the workers was not characterised by tight control, restrictions and regulations. The solidarity and camaraderie that did emerge among the machinists was based on their common position in the labour process and physical proximity on the line.

[146] SOHCA/052/015.
[147] SOHCA/052/004.
[148] SOHCA/052/003.
[149] SOHCA/052/014.

When discussing the social aspects and anecdotes, no mention is made of mechanics or cutting room workers. From this significant silence in the narratives, it can be argued that this was a culture that existed among the women in the plant, bound by both class and gender as expressed through the position of the machinists in the labour process at the Lovable factory.

5.5 The Lovable Dispute

It is important to begin this discussion of the dispute at Lovable with a consideration of the terminology being used here and the terms used in the reflections of those involved, as well as how it was reported at the time. The dispute at Lovable was referred to by those participating and in contemporary reporters as a sit-in, and is the term used by the respondents in the oral testimonies collected. However, as will be demonstrated, what developed at Lovable was a very different form of dispute than that at Lee Jeans, as the workforce came to operate outside the factory once it had been closed and locked by the management. This will be discussed further as this chapter examines the dispute and the mobilization of the workforce; however, for clarity this thesis has referred to the dispute as the Lovable sit-in/occupation and, with expanded explanation, these are the terms that will be used in the following discussion.

5.5.1 'Lovable Goes Bust!'[150]

On October 22nd 1981, the workers at Lovable were informed that the company had called in Receivers and that the continuation of production at Cumbernauld was in severe doubt. The *Cumbernauld News* reported that the 'first the workforce knew of the company going bankrupt was after the Receiver had been brought in', with Fred Dickson, Scottish Divisional Officer of the NUTGW arguing that the company 'never said anything to the union' prior to the announcement.[151] The suddenness of the Receivers arriving emerges through the testimonies, with Josephine stating that

[150] *Cumbernauld News and Kilsyth Chronicle*, 22/10/1981.
[151] Ibid.

‘ah cannae mind if we got much warnin’, ah really don’t think so’.[152] The involvement of Receivers in the process meant that the future of the factory was not immediately clear, and the initial announcement was followed by discussions between the Receiver and the management in an attempt to find a solution to the problems at Lovable. Local MP Norman Hogg was clear that the potential closure of the second largest employer in the town was the ‘latest in a long line of job disasters’ that had impacted on the area in the early 1980s.[153] Hogg argued in the House of Commons that:

> In my constituency, factory after factory has closed. We have redundancies upon redundancies in the factories that remain and many have introduced short-time working… Later this week, the official receiver may sell the Lovable company of Cumbernauld… many of my constituents will view these events with the gravest concern.[154]

Women’s Voice (magazine of the women’s organisation in the SWP) reported on the planned closure and similarly argued that:

> If their jobs go, there will be very little left in Cumbernauld. The new town was built to attract industry to the west of Scotland. The industry stayed to collect government grants. Once they disappear, so do many of the jobs.[155]

Following the company entering Receivership, 123 workers were made redundant, in a move that was accepted by the union as it believed that it could safeguard the remaining jobs and maintain the factory within the town.[156] Hopes remained that a solution could be found, with reports in December that there was to be an announcement that a buyer had been found for the factory and that the Receiver, Robert Smaridge, had stated that there were unlikely to be any further layoffs

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[152] SOHCA/052/003.
[153] *Cumbernauld News and Kilsyth Chronicle*, 22/10/1981.
[154] *Hansard.* HC Deb, Vol. 16, cols 757-803 (26 January, 1982) [electronic version].
[155] *Women’s Voice*, Issue 60, February 1982.
[156] *The Glasgow Herald*, 16/01/1982.

following the initial redundancies.[157] One of the first groups to be largely paid off were the runners, Irene's department.[158] She recalls that:

> The [factory] tannoy told us aw' tae go intae the dinin', or the hall. And they kinda read oot yer name and, if your name, you got, you left, that wis you. It wis ma pal Freda, she never, ye know [kept her job]'.[159]

There was no organised resistance to the first round of redundancies, the primary aim of the union being to maintain some level of production at the plant and prevent further contraction of the workforce.

On January 8th, 1982, the Receiver announced that they were in advanced negotiations to sell the plant to an associate of Lovable UK, Lovable Spa of Italy, in association with Berlei (UK) Ltd.[160] It was this announcement that led to the initial occupation of the factory in the Wardpark South industrial estate, an occupation that did involve the 24-hour presence of the workforce inside the factory, remaining behind after the end of their working day. This was due to fears that Lovable Spa and Berlei were buying the plant to secure its assets, as they had acted similarly and closed two other factories across the UK in the preceding years.[161] Kathy reflects that 'we did not want Lovable Italy to get it as that would have meant closure'.[162] Sadie Lang told *The Herald* that, whilst announcing that the factory could be sold, the Receiver had 'refused to give any assurances about the future of the workers, the factory or the warehouse'. Although it was hoped that the deal could be concluded as soon as a fortnight, Lang insisted that 'if Cumbernauld was not part of the plans, we would hang onto the machinery'.[163] Betty explains how the decision to mobilize in occupation originated:

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[157] *Cumbernauld News and Kilsyth Chronicle*, 17/12/1981.
[158] SOHCA/052/001.
[159] SOHCA/052/002.
[160] *The Glasgow Herald*, 16/01/1982.
[161] Ibid.
[162] SOHCA/052/023.
[163] *The Glasgow Herald*, 16/01/1982.

> The night we were told that wis it finished, ye know? And then we aw' got the githег and Sadie said, "wit we're gonnae dae", she said, "is we'll police the factory. We're naw let any work oot", cos we were frightened it wis aw' gonnae go abroad and that would be really us oot the factory… So many ae us got the gither. And we, we went tae the Labour Club and we wur huvin' discussions doon there, ye know... So it ended up that we got wursel fixed oot and then it wis sittin' in the factory… Just played it by ear.[164]

Betty also recalls that Sadie Lang was the one that 'really organised it aw'', with an occupation being her suggestion at the outset.[165] The main aim was to ensure that nothing could leave the factory. As Agnes recalls, 'we done overnights in it, in case anythin', anythin' got moved oot the factory'.[166] Theresa says that the workers were based in the coffee room 'where the bosses [normally] were' and slept on couches and benches.[167] Alison also discusses the coffee room, recalling that occupying workers would listen to music and play table tennis before getting into sleeping bags for the night.[168] Interestingly, the occupation was conducted overnight, before production resumed at the beginning of the next working day. Unlike Lee Jeans, and most other occupations that do not constitute 'work-ins', worker control of plant and machinery was temporary and production continued as normal while the Receivers evaluated the plant.

It emerges through the testimonies that the majority of the respondents struggle to remember the precise moment when it was decided to mobilize and occupy the factory in this manner.

> Josephine: Ah cannae mind, ah don't know [how it started]... Obviously it must've came fae the union… An' they maybe put it tae us if, the chances ae maybe gettin' it open if we

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[164] SOHCA/052/001.
[165] Ibid.
[166] SOHCA/052/004.
[167] SOHCA/052/013.
[168] SOHCA/052/015.

> done this, that's the only thing ah cin, ah cannae actually remember how it came about.[169]
>
> Irene: Ah don't know who suggested it [occupying], or who, but, ah know ah went alang wi' it, ye know, kinda thing. Ye know, if we sit-in they cannae get in, naw take the factory off us an' that. But as ah say, apart fae that, ah cannae mind.[170]
>
> Alison: Ah can't remember [how it began], no, ah just remember bein' told that's what was gonnae happen… or that's what would need to happen… to make sure somebody was always somebody, the buildin' was always occupied.[171]

This lack of clarity among the respondents is significant, highlighting the absence of a key, recognisable decision to launch resistance and the lack of a shared narrative of action being agreed. The sit-in continued throughout January, with Sadie Lang insisting that 'we are going to hold on to the plant and stock until we get a guarantee about our jobs', telling the Receiver that 'without this, all we have to look forward to is the labour exchange'.[172] This was followed by news that the Cumbernauld plant was owed £800,000 by the Libyan government after supplying bras worth £1 million, with the company claiming that this was a key factor in the difficulties faced by their operations in the town.[173]

[169] SOHCA/052/003.
[170] SOHCA/052/002.
[171] SOHCA/052/015.
[172] *Cumbernauld News and Kilsyth Chronicle*, 21/01/1982.
[173] *The New Statesman*, 19/02/1982.

Figure 5.2. Cartoon in the *Cumbernauld News and Kilsyth Chronicle*, 28/01/1982, highlighting the money owed to Lovable from Libya. The caption reads 'There's no way I can see our workers taking their wages in CAMELS!'

As the dispute entered February, reports concerning the future of the plant became increasingly negative. In early February, the workforce 'reluctantly' accepted a deal that would see a further 200 jobs lost, but would retain 100 in the short-term. Despite news that a consortium had expressed an interest to take over the plant, Lang told reporters that the morale of the staff appeared to be lowering, as it had been revealed that the consortium had planned to retain only 92 jobs in the plant.[174] The fears of the workforce were confirmed on February 17th, when it was announced that the factory was to close immediately and production would end. This ended the round the clock policing of the factory, as Betty recalls, 'we got put oot the factory… that factory wis aw' locked up'.[175]

[174] *Cumbernauld News and Kilsyth Chronicle*, 25/02/1982.
[175] SOHCA/052/001.

5.5.2 From sit-in to picket

With the factory closing, the workers were no longer able to maintain an after-work presence within the plant and did not attempt to barricade themselves inside. Crucially, this highlighted that the leadership of the dispute had a limited ability to exercise power, and could not maintain their leverage over the company.[176] With production ending, Agnes recalls that 'everythin' wis moved fae Wardpark down tae Blairlinn', the company's warehouse facility in Cumbernauld.[177] The workers refused to accept that the struggle was over, with Lang continuing to argue that 'the business is viable', and the workers began to operate a 24-hour picket from outside the warehouse to prevent £1.5 million worth of stock being removed in a bid to maintain leverage over the firm and resist closure.[178] With this shift to external picketing the dispute became more organised, and it is this aspect of the dispute which is recalled and discussed more clearly by the respondents. As it was winter and the workers could not gain access to the warehouse, it was crucial that they were able to secure shelter in order to maintain a picketing presence. This occurred fortuitously, as one of the worker's uncle was George Beattie, owner of construction firm George Beattie and Sons, based in Kilsyth. Even though Betty recalled that he 'hated unions' and worker militancy, he:

> Had this big office van, ye see them on the sites, wi' toilets in it and desks in it and wit naw. So she [member of the picket] went ontae her cousin, eh, young Georgie. So he says, ah'll give ye the van… faither wisnae tae know. So he gave us the van up and we got that aw' sorted oot.[179]

The workers used the van, along with a traveling caravan that had been provided by the NUTGW in order to picket the warehouse and prevent it being emptied of the stock within, and Irene provided a gas camping stove so that they could make hot food and drinks. Betty explains that some stock was permitted to leave the factory,

[176] Fantasia, *Cultures of Solidarity*, p.175.
[177] SOHCA/052/004.
[178] *Cumbernauld News and Kilsyth Chronicle*, 25/02/1982.
[179] SOHCA/052/001.

if it was being picked up by a customer with whom the workers were familiar. She explains that they would:

> Let British Home Stores get their order… and aw' wur good customers, we kept them goin'… but if it wis a strange name that came in, it wis "don't part wi' any orders"…[when] there wis a lorry driver tae pick stuff up… we says "this is a picket line"… [we ensured that] 'anythin' that goes oot and we don't know aboot it, it's gettin' held back', ye know. And then, one day ah went up and there wis nothin', and ah went 'nothins tae go oot the day!' So it meant that nothin' wis movin' oot the warehoose at all, ye know… So ye just got yer orders like that, ye know, whoever wis up there and sayin' wits tae go oot and wits naw tae go oot. Ah think Sadie did maist ae that.[180]

One aspect that requires some consideration is that the picketing workers did allow for the removal of some stock, dependent on the destination, limiting the control that they exerted on the movement of goods. The workers maintained a 24-hour presence at the warehouse through organising into shifts. Theresa says that picketing from the caravan was 'pretty borin'. It wis freezin'. It wis absolutely freezing… it wis kinda rubbish, it wisnae as much fun as it was when we wur aw' sittin' inside [the factory]'.[181] The respondents emphasise that the occupation and picket were not highly organised actions, with little recollection of fixed routines for participating, promoting the dispute or seeking support from other workers in the area. Alison states that, in deciding who would remain in the factory at any given time, 'everybody put their name forward who was willin' to do it. And it, just kinda worked it among wurselves really. There was a sheet up and you'd say ah can do it what night, cannae do it that night'.[182] Theresa is more vague, saying that 'ah don't even know how, who decided "awrite Theresa, it's you or that ane and this ane"… ah cannae even remember'.[183] The reflections among the respondents of the atmosphere, however, is positive, and is recalled as being an opportunity for

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[180] SOHCA/052/001.
[181]SOHCA/052/013.
[182] SOHCA/052/015.
[183] SOHCA/052/013.

interaction with one another, with Agnes' dominant reflection being that the experience was 'good. Good, good laugh, ye know, we would have a good laugh at night'.[184] Anecdotes thread throughout Agnes' reflections on the dispute, recalling that, on one night:

> The caravan was locked…but the windae wis opened. So ah climbed in the windae, and then we aw' had tae climb in the windae, cos the the caravan was locked. Somebody went away with the key. Just laughs, and things like 'at… we just had good laughs at night…. [I] Mind Josephine's bed collapsed as well. She came wi' a bed an' aw' that, and we were like 'aw, look at her, wi' her bed'… and the next thing her bed collapsed. And just, it was just, we had a good laugh. We did have a good laugh.[185]

Josephine also recalls a very positive atmosphere among the workers during the dispute, saying that it was:

> Absolutely amazin'. Honest tae God… ye know, noo when ah think back, it wis really quite a stressful time and, wit we wur daein' wis, but it wis just fun. Fur us it wis fun, it wis the only way we probably got through it. Eh, and we didnae really huv anythin' tae dae, so ah probably seein' us goin' away an' gettin' changed and then, of course, as well back up there… [We would do] not a lot. Huv a laugh. Huv a laugh, tell stories.[186]

Agnes and Josephine's testimonies highlight the significance of humour and banter as a coping mechanism throughout the occupation and picket. Despite the severity of the situation, a dominant shared narrative in these interviews is one of a positive atmosphere among those participating. The workers continued their picket throughout February and March, until a buyer was found for the plant and production resumed on a reduced scale, with 92 workers returning to work for Modewear Ltd on March 18th, with the hope and expectation that employment

[184] SOHCA/052/004.
[185] SOHCA/052/004.
[186] SOHCA/052/003.

would grow once production was resumed. Factory management were involved in the takeover, with Gordon Matheson continuing as General Manager. However, there was outside involvement in the buyout, with the Scottish Development Agency owning one-third of the business, and new Chairperson Bernard Garner coming from outside Lovable UK. This ended what was referred to in *The Herald* as a 'most unpleasant bankruptcy and sit-in', and Modewear began producing garments, still trading under the Lovable name.[187]

The news came as a surprise to the workers who remained on the picket, being delivered by Sadie, Gordon Matheson, and reporters from the *Daily Record.* Josephine recalls that 'when ah came back [to the caravan], the papers were there and the champagne and everythin', we'd won… Sadie Lang and Gordon Matheson come up, and said that wis us, we'd won'.[188] News of the workers' victory spread quickly, with family members arriving at the warehouse to offer congratulations, before they went to the Condorrat Social Club 'tae see a couple ae the lassies that we knew that would be in there, tae tell them that we'd won'.[189] Production resumed slowly, as they 'started up so many lines an'… everybody wis comin' back in dribs and drabs, they were comin' back as we needed them'.[190] This caused tension as, although Josephine states that 'obviously, we wur the first tae get wur jobs back, cos we'd done aw' that', Irene had to wait a 'couple ae weeks, even months', before returning to work, and this emerges as an important narrative in her testimony of the dispute, recalling that this was a significant grievance following her initial celebrations of victory.[191] Betty also recalls meeting one of those who had participated in the dispute who had not yet returned to work in Cumbernauld town centre, along with her mother who was 'quite kinda hard, ye know'. The mother challenged Betty to explain why she had not yet returned to work despite having participated in the dispute, but that she did get back eventually as production

[187] *The Glasgow Herald,* 22/02/1984.
[188] SOHCA/052/003.
[189] SOHCA/052/001; SOHCA/052/003.
[190] SOHCA/052/004.
[191] SOHCA/052/003; SOHCA/052/002.

increased.[192] By 1984, employment in the plant had increased substantially to 237 workers, and there were plans for further expansion.[193]

5.5.3 The mobilization of the workers

Despite conducting a sit-in and picket for over two months and succeeding in the aim of securing the future of the plant, when considering the dispute at Lovable, there was not the same degree of mobilization of the workforce and a far lesser involvement when compared with the Lee Jeans sit-in. Through the testimonies, it emerges that the main stimuli for those participating was a sense of unfairness felt by the workers in the decision to close the factory. There is an acknowledgement that the work was migrating abroad, with Agnes stating that her key motivation was not 'lettin' the work move anywhere… we wouldn't [allow it]'.[194] The perception from the workers that the factory remained productive was expressed at the time, with NUTGW official Fred Dickson arguing that order books were full and production levels had increased in the factory before the closure announcement.[195] This was also reflected by Betty, who stated that:

> As far as we wur [concerned] the order book wis quite good… never heard anythin' aboot it [potential closure]. And of course, the receivers came in… and the thought ae oor jobs goin' away somewhere else really sickened us, ye know'.[196]

Sadie Lang argued that, while there was an understanding that companies sought the highest level of profits, something has to be done 'when it's taking the bread and butter out of the mouths of ordinary men and women'.[197] Additionally, the workforce argued at the time that the company's 1981 profits were the highest

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[192] SOHCA/052/001.
[193] UT/86/7. Reports of the Cumbernauld, East Kilbride, Glenrothes, Irvine and Livingston Development Corporations for the year ended 31st March 1984 – Cumbernauld Development Corporation, Twenty-Eighth Annual Report', 1984, p.17.
[194] SOHCA/052/004.
[195] *Cumbernauld News and Kilsyth Chronicle*, 22/10/1981.
[196] SOHCA/052/001.
[197] *Cumbernauld News and Kilsyth Chronicle*, 21/01/1981.

they had been for three years, fuelling the anger and injustice felt at the decision to close.[198] A sit-in was initially proposed due to the leverage that it gave the workers over management, preventing 'stock being removed during our absence or the doors being locked'.[199]

Despite the severity of the situation and dramatically increasing unemployment in the town at this time, only a fraction of the workforce was actively involved in the dispute to prevent closure. Irene recalls that, whilst 'a lottae them, eh, were in it at the start… there wisnae that many at the end'.[200] Betty explains that:

> Naw the whole factory came oot. Ah mean, we were there, as ah say, the picket line, everybody thought, a lottae folks thought it wis a waste ae time, ye know… But they aw' had their ain ideas… [We felt] quite rotten aboot it, ye know, we didnae, we thought they should be doon helpin' oot.[201]

From a workforce of 480 before the receivers were called, Betty believes that less than 50 participated in the sit-in and 24 hour picket, whilst *The Scotsman* reported that around 30 workers had taken part.[202] Kathy puts the numbers even lower at around 15 to 20, stating that:

> When we moved outside to the picket line when the factory closed we lost almost all the support, we only had a handful of pickets… it was only a few who gave up their time and comfort to save a factory.[203]

These levels of involvement illustrates the argument of Fantasia in considering the solidarity that develops through industrial action, in that collective solidarity is not a priori 'fact', but develops through the active process of participation.[204] The

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[198] *Shropshire Star*, 20/04/1982.
[199] *Cumbernauld News and Kilsyth Chronicle*, 14/01/1981.
[200] SOHCA/052/002.
[201] SOHCA/052/001.
[202] *The Scotsman*, 18/02/1982.
[203] SOHCA/052/023.
[204] Fantasia, *Cultures of Solidarity*, p.92.

development of collectivism, from shopfloor camaraderie to solidarity during industrial dispute, was further inhibited by the defeats that the workforce had suffered *vis-a-vis* redundancy, the reduction of production and the failure of the union to successfully challenge these outcomes. The shopfloor culture that had been forged by the workers during their time working in the plant had been dramatically curtailed after the initial rounds of redundancy that saw over 200 workers lose their jobs. The solidarity on the floor among the machinists, based on their shared space in the labour process, was replaced by uncertainty over the future of their employment, and this will have dramatically impacted the developing collectivism. Irene's recollection that her best friend in the plant was one of the first to be laid off is important, as it shows the ways in which initial job losses cut through the work space interactions and relationships that could have played an important role in the manifestations of the consciousness required for class action and collectivism.[205]

The development and organisational dynamics of the sit-in could also have impacted on the ability of the workers to mobilize. As they were remaining in the factory after the working day, they had to continue their role in the daily production process. The difficulty posed by this arrangement was highlighted by Theresa, who says that 'the worst thing about it [occupying] was ye were in this factory all night and then ye'd tae go a day's work the next day'.[206] This distinction with Lee's is important in considering the nature of mobilization at Lovable, as the sit-in did not give the workers full control of the plant and machinery, as management resumed this at the start of the working day when the occupiers returned to their regular space in the plant.[207] It also meant that the regular circumstances of production were not suspended in their initial industrial dispute, meaning that there was a continuity of daily life in the plant. This is important, as authors such as Fantasia emphasise the importance of the 'creation of something new' through the process

[205] See Roscigno and Hodson, 'The Organizational and Social Foundations of Worker Resistance'.
[206] SOHCA/052/013.
[207] See Gall, 'Resisting Recession and Redundancy'.

of engaging with dispute, with new patterns of behaviour and an emergent culture framed by the action, and specific behaviours ascribed to it.[208] That the workers continued their regular routine of working in the factory substantially limited the formation of a culture of solidarity in opposition to the decisions of management and based on the collective consciousness of the workers taking the action.

In his examination of aspirational masculinities at work, McIvor argues that:

> Being a man meant standing up for your rights… ranks were closed when management or external forces were threatening the very basis of men's role as providers (wages), their prerogative to work.[209]

This idealised form of masculinity in regards to trade unionism and industrial action, particularly over the right to work, cannot be applied to the dispute that developed at Lovable, as the women participating were mocked by many of the men who worked in the cutting room of the factory. Josephine recalls that they were told '"yous are aff yer heid, ye's are mad, ye's will never get it"… they gave us it absolutely stinkin''.[210] Agnes also reflects on the approach of the cutting room workers, stating that 'if ah remember right, ah think the guys in the cuttin' room were slaggin' us aw''.[211] There was some humour to the approach of the men with Betty recalling that, on the first night that they occupied the factory:

> This guy came in fae the cuttin' room and he came in and he's makin' a joke oot it, ye know? So he [was wearing] his long holy winkie thing… and the wee hat here, ye know. That wis for the nightshift'.[212]

This relationship emphasises the significance of the labour process and shopfloor culture in shaping the resultant mobilization that did develop, despite its

[208] Fantasia, *Cultures of Solidarity*, p.174.
[209] McIvor, *Working Lives*, p.87.
[210] SOHCA/052/003.
[211] SOHCA/052/004.
[212] SOHCA/052/001.

limitations. Through periods of normal production, the women and men were separated, physically on the floor, and in the types of jobs that they performed. When the sit-in was launched, it was done so by the female machinists, who had very specific relationships in the factory based on their position as women and as workers. Whilst this was not the case in Lee Jeans, where mechanics actively joined the dispute, it did manifest in the dispute at Lovable. The nature of redundancy and the downsizing of operations would also have been important in shaping the approach of the men as with other workers. However, from these testimonies, it can be seen that 'female militancy was most likely not accepted easily or simply' by the men in the plant'.[213] There existed a degree of resentment from those who participated towards those who failed to support and mocked them, with Lang stating following victory that 'all the people that laughed at the action we took – and there were plenty – look a bit foolish now'.[214] A report into the reopened factory by *The Scotsman* the following year stated that there was a sense of bitterness regarding the numbers who participated, with the report stating that 'only a minority joined the pickets, who felt "let down"'.[215] As Coates argues, a fundamental calculation made by workers in launching an occupation is dependent on the confidence of the workforce that they can succeed. Due to the gradual downsizing of the Lovable plant and the staggered redundancies following the initial announcement, it is reasonable to argue that the confidence of the workers who remained in the plant would have been significantly lower than in cases of sudden closure. It will have given the impression to many that the prospects for the factory and potential employment opportunities provided were highly doubtful, weakening the desire of many to participate in a prolonged struggle to prevent closure.[216] The 'active process' of developing a culture of solidarity among the workers would have been impacted by this gradual downsizing, and the inability of the leadership to

[213] Fantasia, *Cultures of Solidarity*', p.175. See also Pollert, *Girls, Wives, Factory Lives*; Gordon, *Women and the Labour Movement*; Coyle, *Redundant Women;* Westwood, *All Day, Every Day.*
[214] *Press and Journal,* 15/03/1982.
[215] *The Scotsman,* 16/03/1983.
[216] Coates, *Work-ins, Sit-ins and Industrial Democracy*, p.33.

seize full control of the plant.[217] The response of the men in the cutting room also demonstrates that it was the women workers in the plant who led the occupation. This further highlights the ways in which different cultures that existed among the workers were transposed to solidarity during the process of mobilization.

5.5.4 The NUTGW and the Lovable dispute

Due to the difference in the nature and length of dispute, the Lovable sit-in did not become as problematic an issue for the NUTGW as Lee Jeans had in 1981. With the workers taking action predominantly outside of the factory and receiving significantly less attention from the wider labour movement and the national press, the EB were able to leave it to the FTOs in the area to maintain contact with the workers. There also existed tensions between the NUTGW EB and the Scottish officers following the Lee's sit-in. In December 1981, Alec Smith visited Glasgow, the main reason for the visit being 'the handling of the VF dispute'. During the course of this meeting he expressed the view that:

> Some members of the Executive Board have an impression that come what may Scotland goes its own way… each of us have to remember that we are a national Union and all officers based in Scotland were expected to behave as part of the Union's team.[218]

Smith then instructed the Scottish officers that:

> When they are written to a reply is expected, when we ask for a reply forthwith or urgently it means that, it does not mean next week, sometime, maybe, never, it does mean a quick reply.[219]

[217] Fantasia, *Cultures of Solidarity*, p.109.
[218] WCML. TU/TAILORA/2/A/50 (L09/07). NUTGW Executive Board Minutes 10/U – 19/U 1981 – 19/U, 'Meeting Held in the Glasgow Office, Friday December 4th, 1981.
[219] Ibid.

An examination of the records of the NUTGW held at the Modern Records Centre and the Working Class Movement Library highlights that the Lovable closure and dispute was not discussed at any point by the EB, suggesting that they were able to manage the situation much better than they had in Greenock. As they were outside the factory, the Lovable workers accepted the caravan that Helen Monaghan had refused a year previously.[220] However, similar to Greenock, the NUTGW were heavily criticised by the occupying workers for their lack of support during their dispute. Betty recalls that:

> We didnae see much ae the officials, we wur quite annoyed about that… Didnae see much ae the officials comin' doon. Eh, that wis before, that, we were still in the national garments union…Very little, people, very little associated wi' them, because ah think we wur aw' talkin' aboot it at the time… so they [occupying workers] were aw' quite annoyed at that.[221]

Kathy shares this view, recalling that 'they stayed away… Sadie and I were quite pleased as they were no damn good and we did better on our own… [Support was] nil'.[222] This resentment was reported following the dispute, with the belief that the NUTGW acted 'as many unions have done in the past, [and] ignored their female labour force when it needed them most'.[223] The resentment of the workers was such that, similar to the Lee Jeans workers, plans were lodged to divorce from the NUTGW and seek alternative representation.[224] However, whilst there was a 'legacy of resentment' towards the union, the workers did not vote in favour of secession and remained organised by the NUTGW.[225] These reflections on the approach of the NUTGW support the arguments outlined in the previous chapter; however, it is important to highlight that after closure, the workers at Lovable were not operating from within the factory and were not in direct confrontation with their employer.

[220] SOHCA/052/009.
[221] SOHCA/052/001.
[222] SOHCA/052/023.
[223] *Shropshire Star*, 20/04/1982.
[224] Ibid.
[225] *The Scotsman,* 16/03/1983.

Based on the silence in the records of the EB, it is evident that Lovable did not become a significant issue for the union's leadership. It can be reasonably concluded that the division and conflict between the national union and the Scottish division as a result of the Lee Jeans sit-in impacted on the approach of the area officers when confronted with a similar dispute months after the problems created in Greenock, and this contributed to the perception of the workers that their union officials stayed away. As for the officials, they successfully ensured that the workers were operating outside the factory, providing them with the means to conduct a picket of the warehouse at Blairlinn.

5.5.5 External support for the Lovable sit-in

Similar to the way in which support for the sit-in from the workers themselves was limited, the Lovable dispute struggled to gain support from the wider community, or from workers in nearby industries and the labour movement. Collections were made to support the dispute, with Agnes collecting once at nearby Cardowan Pit and Betty recalling a collection taking place outside the Cumbernauld Theatre.[226] However, there does not appear to have been a concerted and organised effort to collect the funds necessary for a prolonged campaign involving a substantial number of workers, with the sums raised used primarily for 'wee odds and ends that we needed for the, for the offices, as ah say milk, and messages and things like that'.[227] Betty is the only respondent who remembers the ways in which support was given by different groups, highlighting that this aspect of the dispute is not significant in the recollections and reflections of the other respondents involved. There is also a lack of discussion in local and national media reports of the sit-in of the support of other workers, which was a significant aspect in the reporting of the Lee Jeans dispute, and dominates the literature on occupations.[228] Betty recalls that the lorry drivers who the workers were preventing from entering the warehouse did not cross the picket line that had been established. When the workers did receive

[226] SOHCA/052/004; SOHCA/052/001.
[227] SOHCA/052/001.
[228] See Coates, *Work-ins, Sit-ins and Industrial Democracy* and Findlay. 'Resistance, Restructuring and Gender'.

support from the Socialist Workers Party, Betty says that whilst 'they wur really good', their support was not welcomed, as 'Sadie thought they wur ow'er for [far] tae the left'.[229]

From the testimonies and an analysis of contemporary reports, it emerges that there was a notable lack of support for the dispute at Lovable from other rank-and-file workers. Additionally, the leadership at Lovable did not make a concerted attempt to extend their dispute beyond the factory, with a report on the sit-in based on interviews with Lang stating that 'men from various unions arrived to tell them how it should be done but they politely declined the advice'. It also claimed that the workers 'refused to ask for financial help from fellow workers in the area' and instead 'lived on unemployment pay of £22.50'.[230] There are no reflections in the testimonies of workers going to speak about their dispute, to raise funds and awareness among other unionised workplaces, or attempt to secure broader working-class support for their action. The sit-in and subsequent picket at the Lovable plant predominantly remained a localised dispute between a minority of the original workforce and plant management.

The local government in Cumbernauld also failed to provide any significant support for the occupying workers. Despite the Corporation stating in the annual report for 1982 that they had 'intervened on the town's behalf', ensuring that 'the Lovable operation was retained', throughout the dispute, they were consistently criticised for a perceived failure to act.[231] Sadie Lang argued in January 1982 that:

> It's time the Receivers were called into the development corporation. In the three months since the Receivership was announced not one of the officials has made the effort to contact the shop stewards or the workforce even although

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[229] SOHCA/052/001.

[230] *Shropshire Star*, 20/04/1982.

[231] NLA. UT/86/1. Reports of the Cumbernauld, East Kilbride, Glenrothes, Irvine and Livingston Development Corporations for the year ended 31st March 1982 – Cumbernauld Development Corporation, Twenty-Sixth Annual Report', 1982, p.9.

> we are the second largest manufacturing plant in the town.[232]

Kathy also publically criticised the Corporation during the occupation and the decline in employment opportunities available, claiming that 'it's not a new town, it's a buroo town'.[233] She reflects that 'we went to the… Council for support and all we got was a load of nothing'. Following the public criticism, Chairman Hutchison Sneddon stated in a meeting of the Development Corporation that they would be ready to assist a workforce affected by closure, 'but that the approach must come from them [workers] in the first instance'.[234] In considering the new town more broadly, Betty states that 'ah don't think there wis very much support fae the toon', and there is a silence within the other testimonies in reflecting on the support from the people of Cumbernauld.[235] Whilst MP Norman Hogg argued that the sit-in was 'not only a fight for the Lovable workers, [but] a fight for the town of Cumbernauld', a public demonstration held in support of the occupation attracted a reported attendance of only 60, less than 13 percent of the pre-closure workforce.[236] Importantly, Sandra and Margaret had both left Lovable before the sit-in began, in 1981 and 1976 respectively and, during their interviews, when asked if the occupation was something that they knew about at the time, both struggled to remember having heard about it. Once it had been brought up in the interview, Margaret says that 'ah cannae remember much about it son, tae be honest, ah really can't remember much about it', and when asked if she remembered anything about the workers having a sit-in, Sandra replied 'did they?'[237] Both Sandra and Margaret still lived in Cumbernauld at this time, and Margaret would go back to work in the factory in the later 1980s, yet neither can offer any recollection of the dispute having taken place. Both had significant connections to the factory having worked there for a number of years and still had friends in the plant, but when

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[232] *Cumbernauld News and Kilsyth Chronicle*, 16/01/1982.
[233] *Evening Times*, 18/01/1982.
[234] NLA. UT/57. Minutes of the Cumbernauld Development Corporation, Meeting of 19 January, 1982, p.6997.
[235] SOHCA/052/001.
[236] *Cumbernauld News and Kilsyth Chronicle*, 04/03/1982.
[237] SOHCA/052/016; SOHCA/052/014.

interviewed, could not recall any detail about the sit-in. This is highly significant and distinguishes the Lovable occupation from many contemporary struggles utilising this form of defensive action. As demonstrated in the previous chapters, occupations have the ability to attract a substantial level of public interest and Love argues that this is accentuated in areas with widespread closures.[238] The lack of support offered for the workers at Lovable – in occupation and in picket – from the immediate area is significant when contrasted with these examples. In considering this discrepancy, the significance of Cumbernauld as a new town may offer a degree of explanation. Whilst those moving to Cumbernauld from Glasgow will have been familiar with traditions of collectivism, the structures that facilitate the practical expressions of solidarity that leads to the level of support exemplified in a range of examples were not sufficient in Cumbernauld to create a broader campaign against closure, as indicated through the limited support offered for the workers in dispute at Lovable.

5.6. Conclusions and Discussion

This chapter has extensively analysed the dispute at the Lovable plant, Cumbernauld, in 1982 in an effort to extrapolate the key dynamics of the mobilization of the workers and examine the nuances that interacted to influence the nature of dispute that occurred. The history of Cumbernauld was the necessary starting point. As a new town designated to relieve the burden of population and industry in Glasgow, its development was based on attracting people and industry to relocate. It was demonstrated that manufacturing was central to the economy of the town, with the Development Corporation having a good record in attracting industries from Glasgow and beyond. The recession of the early 1980s represented the first structural challenge to the town's growth, with a dramatic increase in unemployment and a decline in the number of people moving to the town for the first time in its history. The Lovable Brasserie Co. was reflective of the type of firm that the Corporation aimed to attract to Cumbernauld, being a branch plant of an

238 Love, *Conflicts Over Closure,* p.29.

American multinational aiming to establish a large production base in the town, with ambitions of increasing employment to over 1,000. Through engaging with the testimonies collected it was demonstrated that, as with the discussion of Lee's in chapter two, a positive shopfloor culture was forged between the female sewing machinists in the factory. Such cultures emerge in manufacturing plants as women attempt to make the most of their position, with embedded social constructions of skill informally blocking them from entry to mechanical trades and managerial positions away from the production line. This gendered skill segregation meant that the women in Lovable – 93 percent of the total workforce – were able to engage with one another through their common experiences as female sewing machinists.[239] Informal economic interactions, the importance of work group sociability and participation in celebrations and rituals such as the Glasgow Fair dominate the respondents' recollections of working life in the factory, juxtaposed with their memories of 'the job' as monotonous and intense.

In understanding the nature of the occupation that developed at Lovable, a number of factors have been identified which emphasise the complexities of the formations of cultures of solidarity at the point of industrial dispute and class action. There was not a recognised, single moment or event at which point the workers began oppositional action. Once Receivers had been called in, production was downsized and the workforce reduced through compulsory redundancies. Crucially, neither the union nor the workers challenged this in a militant manner, as it was argued by the union and shop steward that these short-term redundancies could maintain the plant's presence in the town, in the hope that it would recover. This was highly significant in a number of ways. It portrayed the workers' representatives as unable to resist job losses and represented an acceptance that current workforce levels were too high. As highlighted in Irene's testimony, job losses also cut through the social bonds in the plant, and significantly undermined the shopfloor culture among the machinists. When a further round of redundancy was announced, these steps

[239] See Cavendish, *Women on the Line* and Coyle, *Redundant Women* for further consideration of these arguments.

were also accepted, resulting in only 100 workers remaining in the plant, less than a quarter of the level before Receivership. It was at this point that the workers launched their occupation, and the way in which it was organised also restricted the development of a culture of opposition among the remaining workers. The plant was occupied once the workday had ended, and worker control of the premises was relinquished to management at the beginning of the next. Whilst this achieved their aim of preventing the factory being emptied of stock and machinery, it ensured that ultimate control remained in the hands of the company. It also meant that workers who sat-in overnight did so at the end of their own working day, and had to go back onto the factory floor as normal once the day began. The chapter also highlighted that the dispute reproduced the gendered nature of the shopfloor, with the action being taken only by the female machinists who were ridiculed by the men in the cutting room. Possible explanations for this, such as the numbers of jobs already lost and an unwillingness to accept female militancy were outlined, and it was argued that this was also influenced by the different bonds of solidarity that had been forged through working in the plant.

The support that Lovable workers received from their trade union, other workers, and their own locality is another important area for analysis. The NUTGW were able to control the dispute more effectively than they had at Lee's the previous year. Records of the Union's Executive Board demonstrate the tensions that existed with their Scottish officers, with a view that Scotland was acting independently of the national union. As a result, the dispute remained localised and was handled by the Scottish officers only, with no discussions of Lovable at the senior levels of the union. Consequently, many workers felt that the union had let them down, as they had not taken an active role in their dispute. It can be reasonably assumed that, following the fallout from the Greenock dispute, the Scottish officers were happy for the women to continue their external picket of the plant in their caravan.

The support that the workers received from the local area was also considered. While the literature on occupations and mobilizations against closure highlight the large level of public support provided for the workers, this does not emerge through this analysis of Lovable. The decision of the leadership not to actively seek support from the labour movement and beyond was crucial in accounting for this, as it ensured that the workers in dispute did not seek the support of workers in nearby industries. However, the number of local people showing out in support of the workers, and the inability of Sandra and Margaret to recall hearing about the dispute, make the Lovable sit-in different from that at Lee's, and the majority of those researched previously.[240] In the framework of Gall's community collectivism and Fantasia's local cultures of solidarity, it is important to examine the local traditions in Cumbernauld. As a new town, Cumbernauld did not have the same extent of traditions of collectivism and local cultures of solidarity than areas with a more entrenched history of trade unionism and industrial struggle. This 'new town dynamic' is crucial in understanding the failure of mobilization around the Lovable struggle. Whilst those migrating to the town from areas such as Glasgow brought with them traditions of collectivism and solidarity, the structures necessary to transpose these sentiments into action were limited in the town, which was designed and built upon ideas of private transportation and consumption. Increasing levels of unemployment and a contraction in the new industries that promised employment for those moving to Cumbernauld were insufficient in attracting support from displaced workers within Lovable and the wider community.[241] Despite the limited mobilization of the workers, the challenges in developing a culture of solidarity based on oppositional class action, the limited role of the union, and the lack of support offered by the labour movement and the local community, the Lovable workers were successful in opposing the planned closure of their factory. Their ability to continually mobilise adds emphasises the complexities

[240] See Coates, *Work-Ins, Sit-Ins and Industrial Democracy*; Gall, 'Resisting Recession and Redundancy'; Foster and Woolfson, *The Politics of the UCS Work-In*; Findlay. 'Resistance, Restructuring and Gender; Love, *Conflicts Over Closure.*

[241] McAdam, 'Micromobilization Contexts', p.131.

in analysing the ways in which workers have historically formed a collective in defence of their interests at work.

Chapter Six. 'We were haein' a sit-in and ken't nothin' aboot it!' The Plessey occupation, 1982[1]

> *What is at stake here, however, is management's ability to manage the production process, to direct labour and allocate other resources in accordance with its profit calculations, regardless of broader social issues or the particular needs of local communities. This ability ultimately depends on the private property right of the enterprise to exclude labour from the point of production – workers having the status of mere licensees and thus becoming trespassers on exceeding the conditions of their license.*

Marxism Today on the 'Plessey Judgement', 1982.[2]

6.1 Introduction

The third sit-in assessed took place in Bathgate, West Lothian in 1982. Launched by the workers at the Plessey Capacitors plant, the dispute was also in response to proposed factory closure. The chapter is structured in a similar manner to the preceding chapters, beginning with a review of the economic development of the area. There had not been a history of manufacturing in West Lothian, with coal and shale extraction the dominant sources of male employment before the 1960s. The opening of the British Motor Corporation (BMC) plant in the town in 1961 was heralded as the beginning of Scotland's new industrial revolution as, along with firms such as IBM and Rootes Motors setting up production in Scotland, there was a hope and belief that these new sectors would bring great prosperity to a modernised Scottish economy. The history of the Plessey plant is then considered. The site opened in 1947 under the management of the Telegraph Condenser Company (TCC), and was the first major source of manufacturing employment for women in West Lothian. The takeover by Plessey in 1965 was seen as further evidence of Scotland's move towards an attractive place for modern production

[1] Interview with Elizabeth Fairley conducted by Andy Clark, 24/03/2016. SOHCA/052/019. In parts of Scotland, particularly the East, 'ken' is a colloquialism for 'know'. This phrase is used repeatedly in this chapter.

[2] *Marxism Today* May 1982.

firms to invest. However, these ambitions were short-lived and, despite initially doubling the size of the workforce in Bathgate, a series of organisational rationalisations led to over 20,000 jobs being lost in Plessey's British plants and the substantial downsizing of the Bathgate site.

The chapter utilises the testimonies collected to analyse the nature of work in the plant. The site was made up of four factories, and the labour process differed between these with automated production lines and non-assembly line work. The workers were rotated throughout the factory, with each of the respondents having undertaken several different jobs during their employment. There existed a culture among the assembly workers based on their common organisational position in the plant, although, this was not forged through production as interaction among workers was much more restricted than in the two sewing factories, due to noise and the nature of the work. In examining the dispute at Plessey, it is argued that a number of important factors shaped the extent and nature of mobilization. Significantly, the occupation's leadership were in contact with the leaders of other sit-ins, and had been influenced in launching their action through this engagement. The dispute at Plessey had been directly influenced by a sit-in held by the workers in the BMC (by this point British Leyland) factory in the town, and the Plessey leaders had ongoing dialogue with Helen Monaghan, leader of the Lee Jeans dispute a year earlier. This interaction is significant, highlighting that the Plessey workers were engaged in national movements fighting against capital migration in this period, in Bathgate and in working-class communities across Scotland.

Lastly, the chapter considers the role of the workers' union, the Amalgamated Engineering Union (AEU), as well as the political battles that took place over the dispute. It will be argued that, although the AEU did not receive the negative publicity and anger of the workforce as was the case with the NUTGW in the previous cases, it can be seen that they placed greater emphasis on the troubled Leyland plant, despite a more perilous situation having developed at Plessey. It is

then argued that the Plessey dispute is an example of the political battle taking place between the labour movement, the Labour Party, and the Scottish National Party (SNP) over their respective roles in supporting working-class communities faced with capital migration and rising unemployment. The SNP in West Lothian, including left-wing activists such as Alex Salmond and Kenny MacAskill, sought to offer workers support and assistance through a prism of Scottish nationalism which was strongly resisted by the labour movement, leading to a public war of words between the STUC and the SNP, highlighting the contestation for working-class support that developed in later twentieth-century Scotland.

6.2 Bathgate and West Lothian

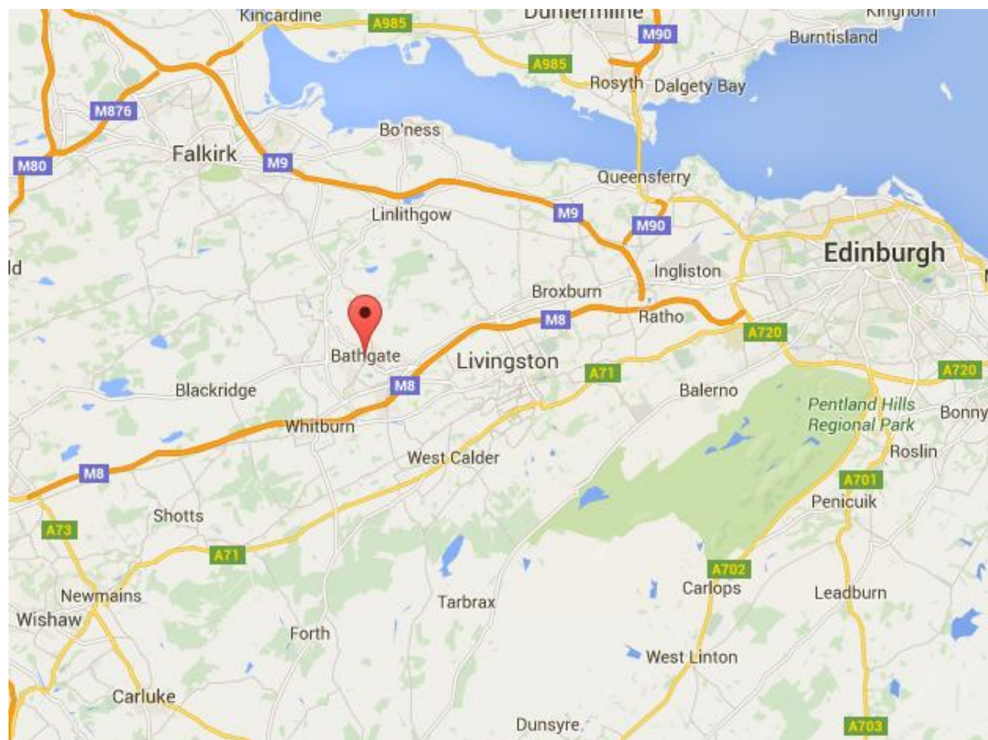

Figure 6.1 Map of West Lothian and Edinburgh with Bathgate pinpointed[3]

Bathgate is located in the county of West Lothian, approximately 18 miles west of Edinburgh. It was one of a handful of small farming villages and hamlets that

[3] Copyright Google Maps, 2016.

populated the area before the Industrial Revolution. The industrial development of the area was built on the land on which it occupied, as it became an important area for the extraction of the earth's natural resources. In 1850, Dr James Young established the world's first oil refinery in Bathgate for the extraction of shale oil.[4] The second industry that came to dominate the area in the twentieth-century was also natural fuel, with the establishment of a number of coal mining pits throughout the district, leading to the area becoming synonymous with coal and shale extraction. This is reflected in the numbers working in these industries; in the early 1950s there were around 12,000 miners at work in pits around Bathgate, with 2,400 in the shale oil industry.[5] The importance of these fuels to the local economy meant that there was not the development of a strong manufacturing base and, in 1954, almost 50 percent of West Lothian's workers were engaged in coal and shale and only 11 percent in manufacturing, compared with a Scottish figure of near 30 percent.[6] The significance of mining in the history of the area is reflected in the testimonies, as Mamie Friel, Cathy McLean, Clare Boyle, and Jim Swim all had parents who worked in the mines of West Lothian. Jim reflected further that, when he was growing up:

> There wis pits, everywhere ye looked, there wis pit mines. Most ae ma mates went down the pit, but ma dad had had his back broken down the pit, and said ah would never go down.[7]

The reflections of these respondents also highlight the difficulties faced by mining communities due to poverty, poor working conditions, and the frequent unemployment of miners. Clare lived in a house with her entire extended family in a 'miners' row', where 'nobody had any money' and she shared a single bed with her

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[4] E. Bryan (ed), *Bathgate Once More: The Story of the BMC/Leyland Truck and Tractor Plant, 1961-86.* Edinburgh: Workers' Educational Association, 2012, p.4

[5] S. Maxwell, *Bathgate on the Edge: A Scottish Community in the International Economy*. Edinburgh: Scottish Education and Action for Development, 1981, p.3.

[6] Ibid., p.6.

[7] Interview with Jim Swan conducted by Andy Clark, 24/11/2015. SOHCA/052/020.

brothers and sisters.[8] The impacts of these industries on health were severe. As noted in the testimony, Jim's father suffered serious injury and Cathy's father died at 60 with silicosis. She recalls being woken in the night as he:

> Used tae huv tae sit at the doorstep on a stool through the night. Was horrible wit used tae come up, it wis like black slime. But he was aboot the fourth or fifth person tae get his [compensation] money.[9]

Kenny MacAskill similarly describes West Lothian as 'historically, especially in the south of the county, a very poor area, ye know? Whitburn and Bathgate were blighted by poverty.'[10] The West Lothian fuel extraction industries suffered a number of crucial setbacks in the post-war period that caused even greater difficulty in the area. J. Dorothy Slater, in her 1965 Statistical Account of the Bathgate Parish, asserted that the area had suffered greatly from the vulnerability of specialisation, and there was a great level of insecurity due to the 'dying state of coalmining'.[11] In oral history interviews with the Workers Education Association, Jim Bilsborough states that 'the pits were dying' following the war, and Ian Tennant recalled that in 'the mid to late 50s, this area was depressed, really depressed'.[12] Cheaper imports of Middle Eastern oil and the end to domestic preference led to further contraction in the 1960s, with the mining labour force decreasing to 3,000 by the end of the decade, a quarter of the 1950s number.[13] The problems faced by Bathgate and its surrounding villages were further heightened by the creation of the new town of Livingston in 1962, which Findlay argues was able to attract the bulk of inward investment due to its 'clean environment, new roads and housing, and its

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[8] Interview with Clare Boyle and Catherine McLean conducted by Andy Clark, 05/03/2016. SOHCA/052/022.
[9] SOHCA/052/022.
[10] Interview with Kenny MacAskill conducted by Andy Clark, 09/12/2015. SOHCA/052/017.
[11] J. Dorothy Slater, 'Parish of Bathgate', pp.33-62 in P. Cadell (ed), *The Third Statistical Account of Scotland: The County of West Lothian*, Edinburgh: Scottish Academic Press, 1992 (chapter written in 1965), p.35.
[12] Bryan, *Bathgate Once More*, p.7.
[13] Maxwell, *Bathgate on the Edge*, p.8.

particularly energetic development corporation'.[14] Despite this, the economic prospects of West Lothian were not viewed pessimistically in the 1960s. It was a 'county on the move', and Bathgate was a 'boom town' throughout the decade following the opening of the BMC plant and the inward investment by the Plessey Company.[15]

6.2.1 Scotland's new industrial revolution

The opening of BMC in Bathgate, announced in 1960, was hugely significant in the economic development of West Lothian in the period between its opening and the Plessey occupation in 1982. Hitherto the area was dominated by coal and shale, with very little engagement in manufacturing. Documentary sources and oral testimonies highlight the delight and excitement with which the news of BMC's opening in Bathgate was received. The Provost stated that it would 'bring undreamed of prosperity' to the county, and BMC worker Tony Kizis states that 'it was a good thing. It gied us hope, it gied us a job, got us oot a rut'.[16] The siting of a motor manufacturing plant in Bathgate came as a surprise, as the area had been a 'rank outsider' when the corporation were considering possible locations.[17] However, due to the perceived over-concentration of vehicle production in the English Midlands, car-makers were urged to set-up production in Britain's Development Districts. BMC were the first to take this step through the opening of their Bathgate plant, and they were followed into Scotland by Rootes Motor Company who opened a site in Linwood.[18] The opening of BMC in Bathgate must be seen through a prism of the hoped reindustrialisation of Scotland, based on new industries and modern sectors, shifting the focus away from declining heavy industry towards the production of consumer products. Attempts were made to ensure that the opening of BMC was part of a larger process of economic redevelopment, with plans to build 1,200 new

[14] Findlay, 'Resistance, Restructuring and Gender, p.74.
[15] C.L MacDonald, *The shopfloor experience of regional policy: work and industrial relations at the Bathgate motor plant, c.1961-1986.* PhD Thesis, University of Glasgow, 2013, p.10.
[16] Maxwell, *Bathgate on the Edge*, p.8; Bryan, *Bathgate Once More,* p.7.
[17] Dorothy Slater, 'Parish of Bathgate', p.51.
[18] MacDonald, *The shopfloor experience*, p.24.

homes in Bathgate for incoming workers, and ambitions to create a direct rail network with the newly opened strip steel mill at Ravenscraig.[19] These plans meant that BMC would not be isolated from Scotland's modern economy. The *West Lothian Courier* stated in 1962, when the 1000th worker began at BMC, that 'West Lothian is now the hub of Scotland's Industrial Revolution'.[20] The importance of the siting of the plant in Bathgate was emphasised by Dorothy Slater in 1965, as she argued that 'the [Bathgate] Parish is now at the beginning of another industrial revolution… [BMC] was the manna that the Parish had been praying for'.[21] In the introduction to the collection in which Dorothy Slater stated this, written thirty-years later, the importance of BMC was described as a 'false start' in the area's economic development.[22] It closed in the 1980s, and had been significantly downsized in 1982, at the same time as workers at Bathgate's Plessey Capacitors plant were informed that their factory was closing as the company sought to reorganise its global manufacturing operations.

6.3 Telegraph Condenser Company, Plessey Capacitors and Bathgate

During World War Two, the Air Ministry requested that the Telegraph Condenser Company took over a factory in Costorphine, near Edinburgh. They operated that plant for three years before relocating to Bathgate and building a new factory in the Whiteside area of the town.[23] The opening of the factory in Bathgate was significant in a number of ways. Firstly, the plant was the first major employer in West Lothian that did not depend on the extraction of natural resources from underground.[24] The TCC also introduced the area to one of the post-war 'boom' industries, diversifying its economic base with the introduction of the telecommunications industry. Lastly, the introduction of this form of manufacturing 'opened up major new employment opportunities for women in an area where the traditional industries were male

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[19] Dorothy Slater, 'Parish of Bathgate' p.35.
[20] Maxwell, *Bathgate on the Edge*, p.8.
[21] Dorothy Slater, 'Parish of Bathgate' p.35, p.54.
[22] P. Cadell, 'Introduction', pp.i-xiii in P. Cadell (ed), *The Third Statistical Account of Scotland: The County of West Lothian*, Edinburgh: Scottish Academic Press, 1992, p.xi.
[23] Dorothy Slater, 'Parish of Bathgate', p.50.
[24] Maxwell, *Bathgate on the Edge*, p.9

preserves'.[25] This lack of diversification was highlighted by Mamie, who states that when she returned to West Lothian after living in Dundee in the late 1940s, 'there wisnae a great deal ae choice [of jobs]. Ye know, eh, cos Whitburn wis a wee, a wee mining village'.[26] Clare felt similarly, recalling that 'there wis no other work… ye'd tae either go there [TCC] or go tae Edinburgh… [there was] nae work in Bathgate'.[27] As could be expected, in examining the reasons why these respondents began working in the factory, the explanation that dominates is that the TCC offered the best opportunity for work. Elizabeth Fairley also felt that the wages in the plant were greater than in other female workplaces in the area, a key factor in her leaving work in Edinburgh to start in the TCC.[28]

In 1965, during this industrial renaissance of West Lothian, the TCC plant was taken over by Plessey Capacitors, a subsidiary of Plessey Ltd., a British-based electronics multinational. The decision by Plessey to invest in Bathgate was another outcome of the campaigns by local leaders in West Lothian to attract investment, and Plessey had aimed to substantially increase the workforce at the site based on their growing production base.[29] Plessey began as a jig and tool manufacturer in London, 1917. The company grew steadily in the interwar period, before expanding significantly post-1945 as they increasingly moved into consumer electronics.[30] A series of mergers and takeovers in the 1950s and 1960s, including companies such as the British Ericsson Telephone Company and Automatic Telephone & Electric, doubled the size of the company in 1961. They also expanded globally with takeovers of the Instrument Manufacturing Corporation of South Africa in 1964, and Rola Holdings in Australia in 1965, the same year that they took over TCC.[31] Due to this exceptional growth in the size of the company, a rationalisation review subdivided its different

[25] Ibid.
[26] Interview with Mamie Friel conducted by Andy Clark, 18/01/2016. SOHCA/052/021.
[27] SOHCA/052/022.
[28] SOHCA/052/019.
[29] McRone, *Regional Policy in Britain*, p.211.
[30] H. Culverhouse, 'A resume of the history of Plessey'. Accessed 15/01/2016 at https://sites.google.com/site/plesseyaddlestonereunion/plessey-company-history
[31] Ibid.

operations into the 'groups' of the business, including automation, components, electronics, and telecommunication, of which Bathgate was part.[32] It was the telecommunications and electronic systems that underpinned the company's growth, accounting for over 52 percent of turnover by 1967.[33]

Despite high turnover, Plessey's profit levels remained stagnant throughout the 1970s and they sought to exploit markets and regions with higher profitability. They increasingly branched into the defence sector and began production in locations in Southern Europe, Africa, and South America in pursuit of lower labour costs. Their involvement in the defence sector led to greater state contracts being awarded to Plessey, and they increasingly became involved in the political arena through contributing to the Conservative Party, with a donation of almost £75,000 in 1970.[34] This restructuring programme was hugely successful for the shareholders and achieved the aim of increasing profit levels, with their pre-tax profits doubling to £84 million between 1978 and 1980-81.[35] By 1981, Plessey was the fourth largest UK electronics company and 27th in the table of leading British multinational companies.[36] A significant aspect in this rationalisation was the cutting of the global workforce, with an overall loss of 25,000 jobs as they sought to 'eliminate the loss leaders which no longer had a place in the industrial logic of Plessey'.[37] The UK suffered greatest in this process, with almost 20,000 jobs lost in Plessey's UK operations, representing 35 percent of their total British workforce.[38] This had a devastating impact on the Bathgate plant, with total employment declining from 2,400 in 1973 to 330 in 1981.[39] As Mamie reflected, by the time the plant had been downsized to this extent, it 'was just a skeleton ae wit it had been'.[40]

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[32] Ibid.
[33] Ibid.
[34] Ibid., p.72.
[35] Maxwell, *Bathgate on the Edge,* p.10.
[36] Findlay, 'Resistance, Restructuring and Gender', p.72.
[37] Plessey Chairman Sir John Clark reporting increased profit levels in 1981-82. Cited in Maxwell, *Bathgate on the Edge,* p.11.
[38] Ibid., p.10.
[39] Findlay, 'Resistance, Restructuring and Gender', p.73.
[40] SOHCA/052/021.

6.4 Working in Plessey Bathgate

The production site at Bathgate was initially made up of three separate factories when operated by the TCC, with a fourth added by Plessey in the 1970s. The respondents discuss these as the first, second (or middle), third, and fourth (or new) factories. Esther McGinnes provided the most detailed description of the different aspects of production in each site. The first factory was winding, the process of winding wires through the capacitor, which was done both by machine and by hand. The second, or middle, factory was split between spinning, which involved wiring components and capacitors, and the male dominated production of ether tanks.[41] The third factory was inspection, packing and distribution, with the newest factory being 'the tantalum', with mini-box capacitors made with the metallic component of tantalum.[42] The size of the facility was frequently mentioned in the respondents' testimonies, with Mamie saying that it 'really, really was a big factory… really, really lottae people worked there', and Esther's perception that it seemed like 'half ae Bathgate and Armadale worked in it' when she started in 1967.[43]

6.4.1 Labour process in Plessey

In analysing the labour process where possible due to the cohort limitations discussed in chapter three, a number of themes do emerge from the narratives that allow for some consideration of the way in which the workers were engaged in production. Unlike the previous two workplaces analysed, the separate sites in the factory were organised differently meaning that there was a combination of assembly line production and machine-based work.

[41] SOHCA/052/022.
[42] Interview with Esther McGinnes conducted by Andy Clark, 01/12/2015. SOHCA/052/018.
[43] SOHCA/052/021; SOHCA/052/021.

Figure 6.2 Telegraph Condensor Company, Bathgate, 1952. © The Scotsman Publications Ltd. Licensor www.scran.ac.uk Note the pin-ups of film stars on the pillar in the background.

Figure 6.2 illustrates that, in 1952, aspects of production were organised through individual workers sitting at machines, and not by automated production. Cathy first worked in the spinning section of the factory, which was organised in a similar manner to the section portrayed in Figure 6.2 and, in describing her job, states that:

> It was a machine, and it was like capacitors. And there wis a wire there and a wire there, and ye put the one wire in this hole... that wis in… number two factory… sittin' on a stool.[44]

There were conveyor belts in both the first and fourth factories, with Cathy and Esther both recalling periods of working on automated assembly. Mamie recalls that, when automated production was introduced in the tantalum, it 'caused a lotta

[44] SOHCA/052/021.

trouble wi' the unions as well… it wis gonnae do people out ae jobs'.[45] All of the respondents worked in different sections of the factory during their employment, indicating that there was fluidity in where workers were based dependent on the requirements of the company at different times. Esther says that this could be partly influenced by the workers' enjoyment of the work. She was moved to the new tantalum section for six months and:

> Ah didnae like it up there… and if ye didnae like it, ye could go and say, "look, ah'm naw really likin' this job, is there anythin' else ah could try"?... they were quite awrite wi' ye that way, ye know?[46]

This movement of workers within the plant is highly significant in the narratives collected, with all of the respondents having a multitude of roles and experiences. The limitation for the researcher is that it is difficult through the interviews to gain a clear understanding of the production and labour processes in the separate sections. While the workers at Lee and Lovable were all working on sewing machines in a specific section in the plant and were therefore able to provide an in-depth discussion of their role in the factory, this type of concise narrative does not manifest with the Plessey workers. It can be seen, however, that production was split across three factories, with a fourth added in the 1970s, and that the process was mixed between automated and non-automated production. Importantly, all of the workers on the assembly lines were women, with men predominantly based in the production of ether tanks, further supporting the argument of Glucksmann that assembly line work outside of car manufacturing was predominantly undertaken by women in the era of mass production.[47]

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[45] SOHCA/052/021.
[46] SOHCA/052/018.
[47] Glucksmann, *Women Assemble*, p.123

6.4.2 Management and trade union organisation at Plessey

The organisation of management and supervision in Plessey shows important similarities with Lee Jeans and Lovable despite being in a different sector, highlighting the prevalence of gendered management structures in manufacturing industries across the Scottish economy. Immediate supervisors on the line were female, working alongside the production workers on the factory floor. Elizabeth recalls that the supervisors 'wur aw' nice, ah never had a bad one'.[48] However, it does emerge through the testimonies that the supervision of the workers in Plessey appears stricter than was evidenced in Lee's and Lovable, where there was little discussion by the respondents of tight managerial control. At Plessey, Esther recalls that supervisors would 'come roon' every three quarters ae an hour, an hour, would lift up some ae yer work, make sure yer work wis okay'.[49] Whereas the clothing plants only examined the work at the end of the process in a dedicated inspection section, at Plessey the work was constantly inspected throughout the day, before then being tested for their electronic functionality, where Mamie worked.[50] Cathy and Clare both felt that the supervision of the workers was tight, with both using the phrase 'very strict' when discussing in-plant management. Clare specifically discussed the regulation of toilet breaks, saying that when a break finished, 'once that bell rang, everybody had tae be oot that toilet and at their bench'.[51] Senior plant management were not often on the factory floor with the workers engaged in the production process. None of the respondents could recall the plant management in any detail other than they wore white coats when they did go onto the line, with Elizabeth recalling that it was 'just an odd time ye seen them, ken, they were never doon in the flair, ken'.[52]

In looking at trade union organisation in the plant, it was also different from the previous two case studies in that a number of unions organised the workforce.

[48] SOHCA/052/019.
[49] SOHCA/052/017.
[50] SOHCA/052/021.
[51] SOHCA/052/022.
[52] SOHCA/052/019.

These included TASS, the Electrical, Electronic, Telecommunications and Plumbing Union, and the Association of Professional, Executive, Clerical and Computer Staff. The majority of the assembly workers, and therefore the majority of the Plessey workers, were organised by the AEU.[53] This fact is significant as high levels of organisation were not prominent in modern electronic plants across Scotland, and Findlay argues that unionisation was not resisted by plant management either in the TCC or Plessey.[54] Whilst Findlay asserts that 'industrial relations in Plessey were relatively peaceful up until the 1980s', the testimonies collected indicate that there was a significantly greater level of dispute and involvement of the workers in trade unionism than was the case in Lee's and Lovable.[55] All of the workers interviewed were members of the AEU, with the shop steward of the assembly workers Ina Scott. Cathy recalls that 'she wis a fighter. [You] Dinnae get in her road'.[56] Elizabeth reflects that the union was prominent during her time in Plessey, stating that:

> We always had shop stewards, always. They were quite good, aye, they were always goin' tae different places and had quite a few rallies as well… Jim Swan, he'd come quite a bit if we wur huvin' a union meetin'… if there was anythin' tae dae wi' strikes or anythin' like that, we'd huv it in the big canteen and everybody had tae be there that was on shift that day.[57]

Esther could recall three instances of strike action between 1967 and 1982 that she participated in, mostly over pay rises and one case of unfair dismissal. Mamie also recalled that the union was very active in the plant, stating that 'the union wis very strong because at that time there wis a lotta unrest. Very strong'.[58] Findlay does state that there were some short, unofficial strikes at the Plessey plant before 1982, indicating that most of these were among the staff members of TASS.[59] However,

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[53] Findlay, 'Resistance, Restructuring and Gender', p.73.
[54] Ibid.
[55] Ibid., p.73.
[56] SOHCA/052/018.
[57] SOHCA/052/022.
[58] SOHCA/052/021.
[59] Findlay, 'Resistance, Restructuring and Gender', p.73.

the testimony of Esther and Mamie suggests that there had been instances of industrial dispute among the machinists at Plessey, and the overall narrative that emerges is of a highly organised workplace with an active union presence. Unlike Lee Jeans and Lovable, the workers at Plessey had experienced numerous instances of industrial dispute, and their union did have a significant presence in the factory. It is also significant to note that union meetings held in the plant were also attended by Jim Swan, the convener of the Joint Shop Stewards Committee at the British Leyland factory.[60] Jim recalls that:

> We were very close, some ae oor men's wives worked in Plessey and some ae the Plessey's husbands worked in British Leyland, so it wis quite a close thing.[61]

The close relationships across the two manufacturing sites is also highlighted by Harry Bradley, a former BMC worker, who participated in an oral history project of car manufacturing in Bathgate:

> I would say, oot o' B Block, which had aboot 2,500 workers in it, men and women, mostly men, the biggest majority of the men, their wives worked in Plessey… A lot ae us was married tae girls who worked in the Plessey.[62]

As MacDonald argued in her examination of the BMC/Leyland plant, the two plants were the central, focal point of the town's economy and familial relationships threaded across them, and such a judgement is confirmed by evidence from these narratives.

6.4.3 Perspectives on work in Plessey

In considering the perspectives of the respondents on working in the plant, Plessey differed from Lee's and Lovable in that it was much more difficult to engage with

[60] The BCM plant in Bathgate was merged with British Leyland in 1968.
[61] SOHCA/052/020.
[62] Cited in MacDonald, *The shopfloor experience*, p.26.

other workers during the production process. As the plant had sections of automated assembly, the extent to which the women could engage with each other at work was restricted, with Esther saying that ‘you couldnae see the girl in front’.[63] Elizabeth also recalled that opportunities to engage during production were limited, as ‘when yer windin’ yer too busy watchin’ the machines, ye had two or three machines tae watch, ye had nae time for talkin’.[64] Another restriction to engaging with other workers in sections of the plant, according to Cathy, was the noise of the machines. She worked as a spinner in the second factory, and says that ‘ye couldnae talk tae each other cos ae the noise in the factory. Ah got [compensation] money for deaf, for deafness’.[65] Esther echoes these recollections regarding the limited ability of workers to engage with one another, saying that it was ‘mostly durin’ break time, lunchtimes’ when workers could actually speak with one another during the working day.[66] Despite this, each of the respondents reflects extensively on the friendships that they made whilst working in the plant, which threads through their narratives:

> Elizabeth: Aw aye [made friends], we sat tae gither at the break and that, ken… Ah enjoyed working there, ken, as ah say ye made a lotta nice friends and that there.[67]
>
> Esther: Aye, made a lottae good friends… aye, really enjoyed it… we’d aw’ meet in the canteen and have a wee blether… Ah made quite a few friends in it.[68]
>
> Cathy: Ah liked it, ah really liked factory work. Good laughs.[69]
>
> Mamie: There’s this… bonhomie among workin’ class people where they work, ye know? A lottae laughs… and that’s what ah feel ye got.[70]

[63] SOHCA/052/018.
[64] SOHCA/052/019.
[65] SOHCA/052/022.
[66] SOHCA/052/018.
[67] SOHCA/052/019.
[68] SOHCA/052/018.
[69] SOHCA/052/022.
[70] SOHCA/052/021.

The view of Plessey as being more than a place to work was also expressed by Faye Cassidy at a workers' reunion in 1998:

> It wisnae just a case of… ye know, we worked from 9 to 5 and we collected our wages. It was part of our lives. I did most of my learning in there; I think I got most of my sex education in the toilets. It was very explicit and very well drawn.[71]

It was such friendships that shaped the views of the respondents on working in the Plessey plant. They all reflect that they enjoyed their time, and this enjoyment is consistently framed through the relationships that developed during their day, despite the restrictions due to the production process. From these narratives, therefore, it can be asserted that friendships did develop among the workers throughout the factory, despite the limitations on worker engagement during production. Each of the respondents also engaged with other workers outside of the factory. Elizabeth says that 'we used tae have nights oot, aye, the girls aw' had nights oot', and Mamie also reflects that 'a lottae the women where ah worked used tae have nights out. Just the women, and they were hilarious'.[72] Clare 'used tae go tae the social events', and Esther also recalls that there were company organised social events throughout her time in Plessey, particularly at Christmas. She also describes how they 'used tae hold a beauty pageant… Miss Plessey… Aw it wis quite a big thing then… aye, it wis good fun at the time, used tae huv it in the Cooperative in Bathgate'.[73]

[71] West Lothian Local History Library (henceforth WLLHL). BB.338.09 – Plessey Information, newspaper cuttings etc. on the Plessey Sit-in & Closure etc. c.1979-1982. 'Text of a speech given by Faye Cassidy at the Plessey Reunion', 23/04/1998.
[72] SOHCA/052/019; SOHCA/052/022.
[73] SOHCA/052/019.

Figure 6.3 'The Condenser Queen' contest, 1954. © The Scotsman Publications Ltd. Licensor www.scran.ac.uk

Figure 6.3 highlights that the company's beauty pageant among its female workforce had a long tradition in the factory, through the 'Condenser Queen' and then 'Miss Plessey' contests. While a clear example of the objectification of women at work based on appearance, the narrative of Esther that it was viewed as a 'big deal' highlights the significance of workgroup traditions, and the ways in which workers interacted with one another inside and outside of the factory.

The wages in Plessey were not based on piece rates, with fixed rates of payment for the women in the plant. There is also a view from the respondents that the wages were good, with many of them highlighting that the company offered far greater remuneration than other employment opportunities in West Lothian. Elizabeth states that Plessey offered the 'best money oot. The BL [British Leyland] wis the same. That wis the best paid places, ken, at the time.[74] Esther had a similar reflection, stating that when began employment in Plessey, 'it was like "aw great, ah'm gonnae be workin' in Plessey, makin' big money". Cos, oh ma goodness, it wis

[74] SOHCA/052/019.

double wit a wis gettin' in the shop'.[75] For those workers not in sections of automated production, if they did not meet their target during the regular times of work, they would make this up during their breaks or at the end of the day to ensure that they produced the level set by management.[76]

Despite the limitations imposed by the scarcity of respondents who worked at Plessey able to participate in this research, the analysis outlined here does offer important insights into the nature of working life in the factory throughout the post-war period. Work was organised through assembly line production and non-automated assembly. The testimonies demonstrate that the workers were employed across the production site, with all of the interviewees engaged in a number of different sections throughout the four factories. Management and supervision regarded as strict by the interviewees, with tight controls on production and the workers had minimal autonomy over the speed of production. They were also unable to engage with one another whilst working, with the noise of the factory and the organisation of production both restricting communication and interaction. Despite such limitations, all of the respondents interviewed reflected positively on the friendships that they made with the other female assembly workers in Plessey. They interacted mainly during breaks and lunchtimes, meeting in the canteens to 'have a laugh' and speak with the friends that they had made. The shopfloor culture in Plessey was therefore not forged during the production process, but in the spaces available to the workers in the factory when they were not working. They also socialised outside of work, going out with friends and attending company-sponsored events. Consistent with the evidence of the previous case studies, friendships have been central in the formation of cultures among women manufacturing workers through their common position at the bottom of occupational hierarchies. By the late 1970s, however, production had been reduced substantially at Plessey's Bathgate plant, with rounds of redundancies cutting the workforce significantly. Mamie was made redundant in the late 1970s, and believes

[75] SOHCA/052/018.
[76] Ibid.

that it had become apparent that the future of the factory was in severe doubt at that point.[77] In December 1981, it was announced that the Bathgate plant would close in March 1982. Despite having seen the workforce decline from 2,400 to 330, the announcement that the plant would close completely led to the decision of the workers to occupy the plant in opposition.

6.5 The Bathgate Occupations

The closure announcement did not immediately lead to occupation. As Findlay notes, given the levels of redundancy, it perhaps should not have come as a surprise to the workforce when the final closure announcement was delivered.[78] However, her research highlighted that it had not been considered by the rank-and-file workforce that production would end fully. This view is reflected in the narratives of the respondents. Esther described it as 'devastatin' news… just unbelievable… we wur aw' devastated at the final meetin' that said Plessey was closin', eh, aw, just couldn't believe it'.[79] The suddenness with which Plessey announced site closures was not limited to Bathgate. David Towler argued following the closure of their South Shields plant in 1984 that local management were kept in the dark until the announcement was made, and a plant manager stated that sudden closure was 'typical of the way Plessey handle redundancy, they have closed places with no hint in the past', demonstrating that this was a feature of the way in which the company operated.[80] Plessey insisted that the capacitor market in the UK was 'flooded' and that their operations in Bathgate had never been profitable, losing £500,000 a year since they took over the site in 1965.[81] However, as they entered 1982 and before launching occupation, the workers and their union representatives increasingly rejected the reasons given by Plessey for the plant's closure. They argued that Bathgate had been systematically discriminated against, with structural disinvestment to justify such a decision. A meeting held by the STUC argued that,

[77] SOHCA/052/021.
[78] Findlay, 'Resistance, Restructuring and Gender', p.76.
[79] SOHCA/052/018.
[80] WCML. PP/THESES/60. D. Towler, 'Plessey Company', Ruskin College, 1983-85.
[81] *Marxism Today*, May 1982.

whilst Bathgate produced capacitors only for the British market, their Italian factories were able to produce for the rest of Europe, and it was the aim of Plessey to relocate to the lower cost sites in Italy.[82] The argument of relocation, and not productivity, was used consistently during the time of the closure announcement, with the view that they were pulling out of the area based on fabricated figures. As one of Findlay's respondents stated, 'I just didn't believe them – there was a lot of our work going down to England, and Plessey were deliberately diverting orders.[83] Cathy reflects similarly that the workers' opposition to full closure:

> Wis really aw fae the work, we were told it was goin' down tae England, and they all got up on their high about it. Ina Scott wis always in the canteen shoutin' her neck about it.[84]

Cathy's testimony highlights that it was the movement of production that created grievance among the workers before their action. Following the announcement that the plant would close, the workers continued to meet in the workplace and discuss the reasons given for the closure. It was argued further that the opening of the fourth plant, the tantalum minibox production site, had represented an investment of over £3 million, and £200,000 worth of new machinery had been installed in 1981.[85] Furthermore, the production output of capacitors at Bathgate was three times greater than at their site in Northamptonshire, putting further doubt on the management case that the factory was inefficient, obsolete and unprofitable.[86] The workforce argued further that Plessey's claim to have been running at a loss in Bathgate every year since taking over the site could not be plausible, as they would not have invested in the way that they had throughout the 1970s. Their injustice

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[82] STUC Archive. Minutes of the General Council, December 1981 to February 1982. 'Report of a Meeting Regarding the Proposed Closure of Plessey Capacitors Limited (Bathgate Plant), 6th January 1982.

[83] Findlay, 'Resistance, Restructuring and Gender', p.79.

[84] SOHCA/052/022.

[85] STUC Archive. Minutes of the General Council, December 1981 to February 1982. 'Report of a Meeting Regarding the Proposed Closure of Plessey Capacitors Limited (Bathgate Plant), 6th January 1982.

[86] STUC Archive. Minutes of the General Council, December 1981 to February 1982. 'The proposed closure of Plessey Capacitors Ltd., Bathgate: A Trade Union Report', March 1982.

was also fuelled by their belief that, had the situation at the factory been as bad as Plessey were arguing, they would have closed the plant much sooner.[87] Findlay also demonstrates that the workers were 'able to demonstrate that these losses were deliberately engineered by the company', with the accounts for the factory including provision for redundancy and the costs associated with leaving the site.[88] The losses reported at Bathgate were therefore inclusive of the costs of closing the site, which the company had attributed to the losses at the Bathgate site. However, the leverage remained with the company, and they were unwilling to discuss a change of course in the rationalisation of their UK operations.

The options faced by the workforce were thus restricted. As one worker stated, 'we couldn't go on strike and we couldn't go on a go slow – what was the point?'[89] However, the action of the workers at Plessey was highly influenced by developments in the local area as, on January 24th 1982, the workers at the Bathgate British Leyland plant occupied their premises in response to rationalisation that was proposing the selloff of the agricultural tractor plant and shifting production to Lancashire.[90] Jim Swan, convenor of the Joint Shop Stewards Committee at BL, recalls that the day after this, he received a phone call in the office from Ina Scott, who sang down the line that '"anything you can do, I can do better"'.[91] The workers at Plessey had also decided that they would occupy their factory, a last resort for the workers in arguing their case that the reasons for closure were fabricated and unjust. With unemployment rising significantly in Bathgate and West Lothian, supportive groups such as *Women's Voice* argued that 'the workers at Plessey know they have no option but to fight for their jobs'.[92]

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[87] *Women's Voice*, Issue 61, March 1982.
[88] Findlay, 'Resistance, Restructuring and Gender', p.78.
[89] Cited in ibid., p.79.
[90] Bryan, *Bathgate Once More,* p.45.
[91] SOHCA/052/020.
[92] *Women's Voice*, Issue 61, March 1982.

The idea of the sit-in was put to the workers on January 25th by Ina, no doubt influenced by the developments at the Leyland plant the previous day, and in Esther's recollection, the workers then voted on the question of 'are we prepared tae fight for wur jobs and have a sit-in?... and the biggest majority said "aye, lets dae it"'.[93] Findlay's respondents highlighted that the initial stages of occupation were chaotic, due to the scale of the operation that they were undertaking. As one worker told her:

> We had to cover the factory for 24 hours a day, and we needed someone on the factory gates at all times. We also had to find transport and organise cooking and cleaning.[94]

This sense of chaos is reflected in the narratives of the occupiers collected in this research. It was illustrated most clearly by Elizabeth, who recalls that:

> Folk went tae work that mornin' and the gates were locked and everythin', and they were aw staundin' in a row and ye couldnae get in… we wur haein' a sit-in and we ken't nothin' aboot it, and it wis us that wur daein' it, ken?... Didnae ken wit wis happenin'.[95]

Following the initial decision to occupy, the workers became more organised and embedded themselves in the factory. They were split into three shifts – day shift, back shift and night shift – and workers were told when they would be in the plant and also given adequate time away.[96] As one worker commented at the time, 'people were willing to do shifts for the sit-in, but they would never have worked shifts in Plessey'.[97]

[93] SOHCA/052/018.
[94] Plessey worker, cited in Findlay, 'Resistance, Restructuring and Gender', p.87.
[95] SOHCA/052/019.
[96] SOHCA/052/018.
[97] Plessey worker, cited in Findlay, 'Resistance, Restructuring and Gender', p.87.

Figure 6.4 The Plessey workers in the factory kitchen during their occupation of the plant. © The Scotsman Publications Ltd. Licensor www.scran.ac.uk

Committees were set up among the workers to coordinate the dispute, including finance and the handling of correspondence coming into the factory.[98] Mass meetings were used by the occupation leadership to remain in constant dialogue with the workers. Esther states that there was a 'lotta meetins as well, even through the night, a lottae meetins'.[99] The workers interviewed by Findlay also shared this view of the close communication between the occupation's leadership and the workforce, and the opportunity of the rank-and-file to contribute to the decision-making process as 'everyone got their say'.[100] The spontaneity and organisation of the occupation was reflected on by those outside who visited the plant:

> Jim: The [Plessey] women were absolutely brilliant, they stuck the gither, they worked at it… Ina wis the ane that

[98] Findlay, 'Resistance, Restructuring and Gender', p.88.
[99] SOHCA/052/018.
[100] Plessey worker, cited in Findlay, 'Resistance, Restructuring and Gender', p.88.

> organised it aw', eh, they organised themselves intae three shifts, there wis always somebody in the factory.[101]

> Kenny: The courage and bravery that they showed, cos they could've just walked but they didn't'… I just kinda recall it bein' spontaneous in some ways… from the outside perspective it just kinda seemed to go from there, from zero to sixty in a short period of time… they knew that the stuff was just gonnae be cleared.[102]

The workers reflect on their time in the sit-in in much the same way as those in Lee's and Lovable in that they predominantly passed time by playing games, engaging in hobbies and performing jobs around the site. Esther says that they 'had wee portable televisions, playin' at cards, somebody brought in their bingo machine. Just stuff like that tae pass the time. Readin', a lottae readin'.[103] Clare recalled knitting a lot during the occupation, including when she was in the gatehouse at the entrance to prohibit any lorries entering the site.[104]

6.5.1 Plessey's countermobilization

The Plessey occupation became a significant marker in the legal history of this form of industrial dispute due to the response of the firm to the action of the workers. As Kenny Miller stated, it was the Plessey sit-in 'which for the first time tested the legitimacy of such action in Scotland'.[105] In contrast to English law, in which an application for an order of possession could be invoked, in Scotland a firm would require an interdict served to every member of a sit-in to prevent the continuation of 'unlawful occupation'.[106] The cumbersome and legally complicated manner of this process meant that it had not been used by any company in Scotland to force an end to a workforce occupation. However, in 1982 there were two cases of an

[101] SOHCA/052/020.
[102] SOHCA/052/017.
[103] SOHCA/052/018.
[104] SOHCA/052/022.
[105] Miller, 'Plessey Co Ltd. V. Wilson', p.116.
[106] Ibid., p.116.

interdict being sought – at British Leyland, Bathgate and Plessey Capacitors, Bathgate. The case made by Plessey was presented to court as follows:

> On 1 February 1982 the petitioners served a written notice on the respondents requiring them to leave the factory on the following day. The respondents refused to comply with the terms of the notice, and thereafter the petitioners presented a petition in which they averred that the actings of the respondents constituted a trespass, and were accordingly unlawful. It was further averred that if the "sit-in" was to continue, the petitioners were likely to suffer serious damage. In particular the petitioners complained that no production work could be carried out, that orders could not be completed timeously, that they were being denied access to their business records and that they were unable to pay creditors and employees. In the prayer of the petition the petitioners sought to "suspend the proceedings complained of, and to interdict, prohibit and discharge each of the respondents from entering or remaining upon any part of the petitioners' premises at Whiteside Works, Birniehill, Bathgate".[107]

Both injunctions sought were granted, with the Leyland workers obeying its terms and ending their occupation. The workers at Plessey, however, defied the court ruling and remained in the factory and, as a result, every one of them was summoned to appear at the Court of Session. Esther recalls this clearly, saying:

> Ah'll never forget that day. They put on a big bus for us tae meet up at the factory. And ah think there wis aboot, there musta been aboot 3 or 4 different double decker buses on… cos we aw' got a letter in the post tae go for sittin' in the factory withoot permission. [108]

The workers were offered legal support from Kenny, who at the time was a lawyer with Edinburgh-based Levy McRae and also an active member of the SNP's '79

[107] Ibid.
[108] SOHCA/052/018.

Group', who campaigned for 'a Scottish Socialist Republic'.[109] He had been visiting the workers before the interdict had been served to offer support on behalf of the SNP, and recalls how the idea to use a legal loophole against the firm originated:

> Ah remember chattin' away to Jonathan Mitchell, now QC, who had said "aw naw, there's a loophole in factory occupations". And ah remember maself, ah went and spoke tae them [workers]… Ah, and said there was a way out of it… But to be fair, it wis Jonathan Mitchell that knew about the chance to use it.[110]

The loophole in Scottish Law used by the representatives of the Plessey Workers was Section 13 of the Trade Union and Labour Relations Act 1974, with the argument put forward that the sit-in was part of an action 'carried out in furtherance of a trade dispute'.[111] At the hearing on February 26th, Lord Kincaid agreed with this legal interpretation and 'held that the sit-in might be protected by the terms of section 13 of TULRA 1974, and was of the view that the balance of convenience lay with recall of the interdict'.[112] The victory of the Plessey workers was perceived as not only significant for their own action, but for the broader labour movement, with local Labour MP Tam Dayell stating in jubilation that 'Boardrooms throughout the city of London will have to take cognisance of this decision'.[113] It was huge news across Scotland, with news of the decision appearing on the front pages of national newspapers including *The Scotsman, The Herald* and the UK-wide *Morning* Star.[114] Despite this success, Kenny described it in hindsight as a 'pyrrhic victory… because they changed the law the first time they could thereafter' as the loophole exploited was closed.[115] The occupation continued for a short period after this before the plant was sold to Arcotronics, with the workers

[109] This was the masthead of the *79 Group News*, the monthly newsletter of the 79 Group. See http://www.scottishrepublicansocialistmovement.org/SiteImages/Pub%2079%20Group%20News%201.jpg, accessed 13/09/2016.
[110] SOHCA/052/017.
[111] Miller, 'Plessey Co Ltd. V. Wilson', p.116.
[112] Ibid.
[113] *Marxism Today*, 1982.
[114] *The Scotsman, The Glasgow Herald* and *Morning Star*, 27/02/1982.
[115] SOHCA/052/017.

voting to accept a deal that would guarantee 80 jobs at the site for at least one year. Whilst the occupation was therefore a success in preventing the full closure of the plant, the number of jobs lost meant that it is not reflected on as a victory by the respondents:

> Elizabeth: Ah cannae remember how it wis decided we'd gie it up. Cannae mind how long it lasted, ken, tae tell ye the truth, ken… Aw we wur sad. We wur sad cos we got wur cheques, we got wur redundancy, but that wisnae the same.[116]
>
> Cathy: After [occupation] it still stayed open, but it was another works, now, it started wi' an A, the other firm that came in. Ah cannae mind the name ae it now… ah didnae stay, ah went away.[117]
>
> Esther: But it [occupation] didnae dae any good. We thought it would've, but unfortunately it didnae… Efter oor loyalty aw' thae years.[118]

6.5.2 The mobilization of the workers at Plessey

The mobilization of the Plessey workers through launching and participating in factory occupation evidently offers interesting points of comparison and contrast with those at Greenock and Cumbernauld, and these will be explored further in the following discussion chapter. As with the other occupations, it was argued that the reasons to close the plant and relocate production were fabricated. George Wilson, co-convenor of the Joint Shop Stewards Committee argued that 'since taking over the factory we've found that the order book is bulging', and the *Linlithgow Gazette* stated that 'Plessey is not closing owing to recession but because company policy has decided to move the plant elsewhere'.[119] A statement issued by the Joint Shop Stewards Committee in the Court of Session put forward their reasons for opposing the decision of the company and justifying the action that they took:

[116] SOHCA/052/019.
[117] SOHCA/052/022.
[118] SOHCA/052/018.
[119] *Linlithgow Gazette*, 5/02/1982.

> From the start, Plessey has stated that their decision to close the factory was irrevocable and no discussions with the workforce or the community could change that decision. Plessey stated that all the machines and products were obsolete; we have now exposed that as a lie and they have admitted that there are viable products in the factory, and certain machines are going abroad – machines that were bought with huge government and SDA hand-outs over the years.[120]

This statement also highlights the importance of government grants given to corporations to purchase machinery, which the workers felt placed a moral responsibility on them to maintain production in Bathgate. Evidently, therefore, the workers dismissed the reasons given by the company for closure and such rejection was a key factor in launching their occupation in resistance.

Significantly, the Plessey sit-in can be seen to have been demonstrably influenced by local events, being mobilized a day after similar action was taken at the Leyland plant. In her analysis of Plessey, Findlay does not highlight this as a key factor. However, the testimony of Jim indicated that the shop stewards at Plessey were aware of the developments in the tractor plant and were engaged with their occupation's leadership from the outset. The importance of this familiarity is further illustrated as, while the Plessey workers opposed closure and disagreed vehemently with the company's arguments regarding the viability and profitability of the plant, they did not organise militant resistance until four weeks after the closure announcement had been made, and only after the Leyland workers had launched their action. Additionally, while the workers interviewed in this research stated that they were not aware of occupations having taken place at other sites at this time – a point also made by the respondents at Lee's and Lovable – there was dialogue between the leaders of the occupations at Plessey and Lee Jeans.

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[120] WLLHL. BB.338.09. Plessey Information, newspaper cuttings etc. on the Plessey Sit-in & Closure etc. c.1979-1982. 'Statement by Plessey Shop Stewards in the Court of Session on 4.2.82'.

Figure 6.5 Demonstration in support of the Plessey occupation, Bathgate 1982. © The Scotsman Publications Ltd. Licensor www.scran.ac.uk

Figure 6.5 shows a demonstration held in Bathgate in support of the Plessey dispute led by shop steward Ina Scott (middle, waving to the camera) with Helen Monaghan by her side (right, holding paper). In Helen's narrative, she recalled that she went to many workplaces following the Lee Jeans sit-in, in Scotland and abroad, but could not remember specific details of each. The image presented above demonsrates that the leadership at Plessey were engaged with the female workers who had occupied their plant in Greenock a year before. An examination of contemporary newspaper reports provides further illustration of this relationship. The *West Lothian Courier* reported that Scott contacted Monaghan once the Plessey occupation began to seek advice on how to undertake this form of action.[121] Additonally, following the court case, Monaghan told the *Morning Star* that 'when we heard about the women at Plessey's winning in court, we did a dance in the canteen'.[122] It is therefore clear that the decision by the shop stewards to ask the workers to vote on whether to occupy the plant was heavily influenced by the ongoing occupation at Leyland and the recent Lee Jeans dispute. This is important, as it demonstates that workers do not operate in a vaccum when considering their

[121] *West Lothian Courier*, 29/01/1982.
[122] *Morning Star*, 26/04/1982.

options in resistance to management attacks on their employment relationship. The mobilization of the workers at Plessey must be considered through the relationships that developed on the factory floor and the action of the shop stewards, within the context of an occupation taking place less than a mile away, and the recent successful action taken by the Lee Jeans workers. The importance of Lee's and Leyland in the action taken at Plessey represents an example of a 'demonstration effect' in employment relations. Paul Blyton and Peter Turnbull assert that the actions of other workers, and the success or failure of those actions, can affect the decision making process of workgroups in similar situations, through demonstrating the impact that particular forms of resistance can have.[123] Such an effect is most clearly evident through the Plessey occupation, as these relationships were explained at the time and reflected on by respondents.

In examining the motivations of rank-and-file workers, a range of factors emerge that offer an understanding of why they participated in the dispute. Central to these was the restricted prospects of alternative employment for the workers in the area. As emphasised in the discussion of the economy in West Lothian, opportunities for women were limited due to its historical dependence on shale and coal. Additionally, at the end of January 1981, unemployment in Bathgate was over 25 percent, and Maxwell argued that 'Bathgate was living on the edge of social and economic collapse'.[124] The workers in Findlay's analysis reflected this sense of depression, with one stating that 'we had watched the place go down through the years and there wasn't any other employment in the area… this was the major employer of women in the area'.[125] Esther commented that Bathgate at that time was suffering due to the contraction of its manufacturing base, as employment was 'either in the BMC, or Plessey'.[126] Elizabeth felt similar, saying that 'they were shuttin' it and that was it. But ye hud tae make a stand… ah wis just angry that it

[123] P. Blyton and P. Turnbull, *The dynamics of employee relations*. Basingstoke: Palgrave MacMillan, 1994, p.337.
[124] Maxwell, *Bathgate on the Edge*, p.11.
[125] Plessey worker, cited in Findlay. 'Resistance, Restructuring and Gender, p.87.
[126] SOHCA/052/018.

shut doon cos ae the folk that needed a job, ken'.[127] Unlike the situation at Lovable, where it was argued that mobilization was restricted due to the gradual downsizing of production once the receivers had been called, Findlay's analysis of Plessey and the oral history narratives of the workers confirm that the decision to fully close the plant did come as a shock to the workers. Despite the redundancies that had been implemented throughout the 1970s and early 1980s which shrunk the workforce by 1982, the perception of Esther and Findlay's respondents that full closure was a devastating, unbelievable shock is reflective of the argument of Strangleman, Rhodes and Linkon that the workers had developed an 'illusion of permanence' towards the plant.[128] The TCC and then Plessey had become a significant, integrated part of Bathgate, particularly for the female manufacturing workers still employed there. With the closure of Plessey and the downsizing of British Leyland it can be observed that, in examining the dynamics that contributed to the mobilization of the workforce, the broader economic position of the area and illusions of permanence regarding the continuation of manufacturing, played a key role in the decision of the workforce to occupy the plant.

In considering the reasons why the workforce remained committed to the dispute, an important aspect that requires discussion is the impact of Plessey's countermobilization through taking workers to court. Taylor and Bain define countermobilization as 'employers' strategies of repression' against trade unionists and collective action, and Plessey's legal approach is clearly consistent with that.[129] Mustchin discusses the importance of countermobilization in the reprisals taken against occupiers following the dispute at the Manchester Gardner plant, and argues that it is an aspect of mobilization theory that has received minimal attention.[130] The anger expressed by the workers at the approach of Plessey was narrated by Esther, who stated that 'we felt like criminals! And we wurnae, we wur

[127] SOHCA/052/019.
[128] Strangleman, Rhodes and Linkon, 'Introduction to Crumbling Cultures', p.10.
[129] Taylor and Bain, 'Call centre organizing in adversity', p.171.
[130] Mustchin, 'Conflict, Mobilization, and Deindustrialisation', p.148.

just fightin' for wur job!'[131] The celebration and coverage of the workers' victory can therefore be seen as having had an important impact on the continuation of the dispute. While closure created the original injustice for grievance formation, the offensive launched by the Plessey management in attempting to criminalise workers would have had a substantial impact on their individual and collective determination, and this event is a key aspect in the narratives and reflections of respondents.

Another important aspect of the Plessey dispute was the lack of support given to the occupation from some the men who worked in the plant. As with Lovable, the gendered division of production in the plant was replicated through the dispute, with approximately one-eighth of male workers participating in the action.[132] One Plessey worker believed that the skilled male workforce would not 'be dictated to by semi-skilled people… skilled men are very petty, they always have been'.[133] The lack of support from some of the men in Plessey for the occupation launched by the female assembly workers further illustrates the ways in which gendered work space cultures can be replicated through the active process of mobilization, and the impacts of this on emergent cultures of solidarity.

6.5.3 External support for the Plessey occupation

Due to the relationships between the workers at Plessey and British Leyland, the support between the two workforces was discussed frequently by the respondents. Jim, Esther, Clare and Elizabeth all reflect on the ways in which the two work groups supported one another in the initial stages of dispute. Throughout these reflections, it emerges that these relationships were highly gendered:

> Jim: We had a situation for aboot a month where, eh, the women fae the Plessey factory would come over and make stovies for oor guys protectin' the factory, and their boiler

[131] SOHCA/052/018.
[132] Findlay, 'Resistance, Restructuring and Gender', p.79.
[133] Plessey worker, cited in ibid., p.87.

> wisnae workin', so oor boiler guys went over and sorted their boiler, and it wis like that.[134]

Cathy also recalls stovies being cooked for the Leyland workers, demonstrating that when the male and female dominated factories in Bathgate were engaged in industrial dispute at the same time, ideals of domesticity were represented in the relationships that developed. It should not be understated, however, that Leyland and Plessey both in occupation at the same time can be seen as a community-wide struggle against capital migration and accelerated deindustrialisation. Kenny reflected this view in his narrative, stating that 'it was actually scary in many ways, because we were being deindustrialised before our very eyes… it did seem war almost'.[135] Esther reflects similarly, asserting that the difficulties faced by the two plants 'wis big news then. That eh, British Leyland and Plessey wis [closing], Bathgate would be a ghost toon so tae speak'.[136] This perception was reflected in the support for the sit-in from the local community. Demonstrations were held through the town that attracted crowds of over 2,000, and the workers actively sought support from local businesses.[137] Esther recalls this clearly, and reflects that:

> Aw aye, we went roond the shops for tae get support, em, wit ye call it, money. Eh, wits that, wit ye call that? Went in wi' yer boxes like… aye, would ye like tae donate tae the Plessey sit-in… Ah'll always remember only one in Bathgate refused tae dae it point blank, it wis Williamson's the florist… and fae that day tae this ah've never went intae Williamson's florist shop.[138]

The significance of the one florist that did not provide support for the dispute in Esther's narrative illustrates that, for the most part, the workers received a very positive reception when they went into Bathgate to campaign on behalf of their occupation. Food supplies were delivered to the factory from local people and

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[134] SOHCA/052/020.
[135] SOHCA/052/017.
[136] SOHCA/052/018.
[137] *West Lothian Courier*, 5/03/1982.
[138] Ibid.

businesses, crucial for the continuation of the action.[139] Findlay's respondents also highlighted that the support of the community was based on a recognition that 'the community was going down and down… everyone was worried there wasn't going to be any work left'.[140] This support was physical as well as financial. When a rumour spread that the workers were to be forced out of the factory, 'within minutes, the factory… was surrounded by people', with Ina Scott commenting that 'the BMC boys were down, the miners and the people who happened to be passing joined the lines', amounting to around 250 people in the space of half an hour.[141] Support was also received from across the labour movement, with donations of over £6,000 a week being received by the workers, meaning that those occupying the plant 'got a wee bit ae money every week'.[142] There was also some coordination with workers at other Plessey sites in the UK. Workers at the South Shields Plessey site refused any work transfer from Bathgate during the occupation, provided financial donations, and arranged visits to offer support. Additionally, there was a one-hour sympathy strike to 'force Plessey to rethink their closure plan', which was hailed as a huge success.[143] The occupation at Plessey, as had been evidenced in Greenock during the Lee Jeans sit-in, was not localised to the plant in which the dispute was taking place, but incorporated a community response to capital migration, a markedly declining manufacturing base, and accelerated deindustrialisation which gained support from across the labour movement.

6.5.4 The AEU, Plessey, and Labour–Nationalist friction

There is no evidence from the testimonies or the documents consulted that there was the level of anger from the workers towards their union that was expressed at Lee Jeans and Lovable, with the AEU seen as playing a limited, but overall supportive role. Esther summed up this view of the union, stating that 'ah cannae

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[139] *Linlithgow Gazette*, 5/02/1982.
[140] Plessey worker, cited in Findlay, 'Resistance, Restructuring and Gender', p.93.
[141] *The News Line*, 8/08/1982.
[142] *Women's Voice*, Issue 62, March 1982; SOHCA/052/017.
[143] WCML. PP/THESES/60. D. Towler, 'Plessey Company', Ruskin College, 1983-85, pp.18-19.

say a bad word against them, never had anythin' but praise for them'.[144] Extensive reports were produced regarding the situation at Plessey by the union that compiled data on the production levels at Bathgate, the company's profit margins, and their wider processes of corporate restructuring. These were submitted to the STUC and discussed by the General Council throughout the duration of the occupation.[145] Meetings were held with representatives of the West Lothian Trades Council to provide updates of the ongoing situation, with brief notes made such as 'the situation had not altered and it was understood that the shop stewards were considering the position [of occupation] in some detail'.[146] Letters were sent from AEU officials to the General Secretary, James Milne, also with the aim of informing the STUC of developments at the site. In explaining the action, one letter states that the workers occupied the premises to prevent the removal of valuable components, as they 'saw their bargaining power being eroded'.[147] Through an analysis of the archives of the AEU, there appears to be little note of discussions at the National Committee level regarding particular instances of industrial action. Mention is made in the Report of the annual National Committee held in April 1982, which stated:

> Executive Council gave backing to the action taken by the workers at Plessey's, Bathgate, when management attempted to close the plant and our members resisted but, of course, they did not accept redundancy payment. The Executive Council called a Delegate Conference of all Plessey plants, and obtained support for their colleagues at Bathgate… on behalf of the Executive Council, I pay full tribute to our members in that struggle.[148]

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[144] SOHCA/052/018.

[145] See for example, STUC Archive. Minutes of the General Council, December 1981 to February 1982. 'The proposed closure of Plessey Capacitors Ltd., Bathgate: A Trade Union Report', March 1982.

[146] STUC Archive. 'Minutes of the General Council. December 1981 to February 1982', 3rd February 1982, p.1476.

[147] Ibid. 'Letter from the AUEW to James Milne regarding situation at Bathgate, 2/02/1982', p.1630.

[148] WCML. TU/ENG/3/A/16 – AEUW National Committee Reports, 1981-1983. '1982 Report of the 64th AUEW National Committee, April 1982, p.213.

The documentation in the archives of the AEU demonstrates that the National Committee was supportive of the dispute, taking action such as arranging meetings of Plessey plants and co-ordinating action, which led to the one-hour strike at South Shields referred to above. As little other information is contained in the archives, and with the silence in the narratives of the role of the national union, it can be reasonably assumed that the occupation was organised by local shop stewards with support from union officials where necessary.

One aspect of the discussions of the Plessey occupation at the union and STUC level that requires further critical assessment is the way in which it was presented along with the dispute at nearby British Leyland. As the Leyland workers were facing the closure of the tractor section and had launched an unsuccessful one-week occupation in resistance, discussions on Plessey tended to consider the broader situation in Bathgate. The evidence from the documents available suggests that the section closure at Leyland was viewed with more concern and given greater significance by officials in the labour movement. The disputes were often discussed by the STUC General Council under the agenda-heading of the 'Bathgate situation' and greater attention was consistently given to the future of the Leyland plant, despite there being no plans for its full closure.[149] In the 1982 Report of the AEU National Committee, the occupation of Plessey was first discussed under a motion titled 'British Leyland, Bathgate'.[150] It is important not to ascribe undue significance to the ways in which the 'Bathgate situation' was presented in these meetings, however it is a point of interest. The perception that the Plessey dispute was being subordinated to that of Leyland in the public representation of the crisis at Bathgate was expressed by the feminist magazine *Spare Rib*, which stated in March 1982 that:

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[149] See for example, STUC Archive. Minutes of the General Council. December 1981 to February 1982, 'Letter from the AUEW to James Milne regarding situation at Bathgate, 2/02/1982', p.1630.
[150] WCML. TU/ENG/3/A/16 – AEUW National Committee Reports, 1981-1983. '1982 Report of the 64th AUEW National Committee, April 1982, p.99.

> While the national press has focused on the impending closure of the tractor division at British Leyland at Bathgate, we're wishing to draw attention to a redundancy less than a mile away at Plesseys [sic]… we want to stress that this is an important women's struggle. We don't want it overshadowed by events at Leyland.[151]

Spare Rib's argument indicates that, while the workers in Plessey had been in occupation throughout February and March, it was perceived that Leyland remained the focal point of national attention on Bathgate. That the union and the STUC consistently discussed Plessey as an 'add-on' to conversations on Leyland could have had an important impact on this. It is not possible to fully ascertain the cause and effect here. However, it is important that, in discussions of the Bathgate situation, the STUC and the AEU consistently gave prominence to the proposed closure of part of the Leyland plant, rather than the full closure of Plessey and the militant resistance of the workers.

The Plessey occupation also led to a public war of words between the Labour Party, the labour movement, and the SNP. Kenny, the workers' representative and activist with the SNP 79 Group, recalled that the union officials were wary of allowing the nationalists to interact with the workers at the plant. He states that:

> There was still some element of distrust, if ye could put it that way, by the union very much against the SNP… It was the beginning of the SNP earning its spurs as a, as a left of centre party, post the 79 election, uh, it was the SNP gettin' involved in the union movement… It would be fair to say that it was the FTOs that tried to shuffle us out the door… Oh they wur, eh, "don't listen to that lot", basically… they were wary of us, and they were always tryin' to pull the workforce back, because their thing was to defend the union, not defend the jobs.[152]

[151] *Spare Rib: A Women's Liberation Magazine*. Issue 116, March 1982.
[152] SOHCA/052/017.

Kenny's reflection on the friction between the labour movement and the SNP is also evident in the STUC archives, where evidence exists of a conflictual relationship between the General Council and left-wing SNP members. Following the end of the occupation, when only a fraction of jobs were saved, the SNP's Jim Sillars publicly attacked the STUC, leading to a strong response from the General Council:

> The STUC was not involved in the negotiations [to end the dispute]. Mr Sillars would be better engaged in doing something constructive about Scotland's future instead of wasting the time of those who are attempting to do so.[153]

Evidently, left-wing nationalists believed that they could win support in traditional Labour heartlands, and these attempts were resisted strenuously by the broader labour movement, offering an interesting precursor to the shift in support from Labour to the SNP in the twenty-first century. The *79 Group News* stated clearly that the visibility of an SNP presence at Plessey was 'of far greater importance than any press coverage that has come the SNP's way'. They believed that their interaction with the workers, and the way in which it had been accepted, would give SNP members 'the confidence to stand up to the Labour Party on their own ground'. There was clear political gain being sought, as they argued that:

> If the SNP is to win over the working class in Scotland, we must be prepared to identify with, and support, their struggles. Then, and only then, will we have any claim to their allegiance.[154]

The arguments between the labour movement and the SNP are interesting when considering the development of politics in Scotland in the later twentieth-century. While there is not sufficient space in this thesis to conduct an in-depth examination of the changing nature of identity-based politics in Scotland, the reflections of Kenny and the materials available in the STUC collections demonstrate that there

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[153] STUC Archive. Minutes of the General Council, March 1982 – April 1982. 'STUC Press Statement, 1/04/1982.

[154] *79 Group News*, April 1982.

was a ‘turf-war’ between the two groups that was fought out during worker mobilizations and class actions. However, it is important not to over-estimate the significance of these arguments at the shop-floor level, as they are not discussed by the respondents involved, nor is there any evidence of contemporary statements made by the workers themselves concerning the political dynamics in the background of their action.

6.6 Conclusions and Discussion

The dispute at Plessey is hugely significant in the legal history of occupation as a mode of resistance in Scottish industrial relations. Following the disputes at Lee’s and Lovable in the previous fourteen months, Plessey was the first instance where the employer went on the offensive against the workers and attempted to have them forcibly evicted. As a result of support from lawyers sympathetic to the workers’ position, the interdict was overturned, demonstrating the legality of occupation in industrial relations, albeit for a relatively short period.

Placing the dispute in its historical and geographical context, the economic development of West Lothian meant that there was not a substantial manufacturing sector in the area before 1960, with shale and coal dominating the industrial landscape. The opening of the BMC plant and the takeover of the TCC by Plessey in 1965 were seen as evidence that Scotland was reindustrialising, based on the diversification of the economy in new, modern manufacturing sectors and that Bathgate was at the centre of this process. The relationships that developed among the workers in Plessey were assessed insofar as the evidence allowed, and it was argued that there did exist a shared culture among the female assembly workers based on their position in the plant, which was expressed through friendships and social events, as was the case in Lee’s and Lovable.

The Plessey sit-in, while being in response to a specific closure and the contestation of the reasons given by the employers, was part of a wider community resistance to

the proposed migration of capital that was impacting West Lothian. The 'Bathgate Occupations' of early 1982 demonstrate the importance of broader socio-economic forces in influencing the mobilization of workers when faced with plant closure. It is representative of Love's argument that the defensive occupations launched in the early 1980s should be viewed as a microcosm of the wider deindustrialisation of the British economy.[155] Threading throughout the narratives collected, and illustrated in the contemporary reports utilised, is that the workers at Plessey fully understood the gravity of the situation in West Lothian at this time, and this was expressed by the wider community through their support of the action taken. The factors that contributed to the mobilization at Plessey, and the ways in which class-based resistance was expressed throughout the dispute further highlight the complex dynamics that interact at the point of class action. Such processes are not representative of a linear process of grievance formation, but the product of relationships during production and expressed through dispute, influenced by wider socio-economic forces. Lastly, it was demonstrated that the Plessey dispute represents an important example of the struggle between the Labour Party and the SNP to mobilize the anger of working-class communities for the advancement of party political interests. While Labour continued to dominate Scottish politics throughout the later twentieth-century, the role of the SNP in articulating the anger of deindustrialised, working-class communities was one factor that contributed to their electoral successes in the early twenty-first century.[156]

[155] Love. *Conflicts Over Closure*.

[156] For more detailed discussions of the rise of nationalism in Scotland, and the importance of deindustrialisation in this process, see G. Hassan. *Strange Death of Labour in Scotland*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2012; R. Johns and J. Mitchell. *Takeover: Explaining the Extraordinary Rise of the SNP*. London: Biteback Publishing, 2016.

Chapter Seven. Synthesis and Discussion

> *Unemployment in our third world are very great indeed… However our union would like to support you very fully, and wish to maintain that the closure of such factory should be reopened for our sisters to resume work due to bad situation of unemployment effecting workers in that particular area.*
>
> Letter from the Kenya Shoe and Leather Workers Union to the Lee Jeans Occupation, 17th June 1981.[1]

7.1 Introduction

The occupations at Lee Jeans, Lovable, and Plessey represent an important period in Scottish labour history. Over fourteen months between February 1981 and March 1982, three manufacturing sites with predominantly female workforces witnessed militant resistance to closure through the use of factory occupations. It is important to recognise that despite the close proximity of these actions in terms of geography and time, occupations in resistance to closure remained the exception to the rule, as the vast majority of closures at this time of accelerated contraction occurred with minimal resistance by the workers affected.

In this chapter, the factors that contributed to the mobilizations are considered, with an assessment of the way in which these also led to the development of very different types of disputes across the three occupations. Adopting a critical realist analytical approach, the layers of explanation that allow for the development of plausible theoretical frameworks are assessed. Following from the consideration of the collectivism of the workers as expressed through action, the chapter analyses the use of occupation and argues that it is overly simplistic to assert that the workers occupied because they were opposed to closure, and that factors such as the nature of closure announcement and external influences must be recognised as having had an impact on action taken. Lastly, the support that the workers received

[1] WCML. TU/TAILORA/6/C/25 – Box 2 – VF Dispute Folder. Letter from Kenya Shoe and Leather Workers Union to the NUTGW concerning Lee Jeans Occupation, 17th June 1982.

is contrasted, considering the support from the labour movement, the communities in which the factories were based, and the workers' own trade unions. It is demonstrated that the nature of support and the extent of solidarity that the workers received differed across the disputes, and the reasons for such differences are considered.

7.2 The Mobilization of the Workers

7.2.1 The reasons for action

The clearest relationship between the three occupations examined in this thesis is the reason for the action taken. Each site experienced either the real threat of closure, or announcements that closure would take place imminently. Workers faced with closure have very limited options when considering the actions that might be taken to prevent this outcome, and their unions are traditionally more likely to negotiate benefits such as higher redundancy payments.[2] Crucial to the resistance to the closures was the perception by the workers that the reasons given by management were unjust and untrue. In all three cases, it has been demonstrated that the workers and the leaders of the occupations powerfully articulated their view that the factories were productive and profitable. The reasons for closure could not be justified, a crucial factor of injustice that is central to Kelly's concept of grievance formulation, necessary for the development of collective action. In each of the factories, contemporary reports and respondents' narratives illustrate that it was their perception that the plants were viable. As Kelly asserts, grievances must be attributed to managerial actions in order to mobilize collective opposition, and such attribution is evident in these cases rooted in the corporate decisions to move production from one site to another.

[2] See for example H. Levie, D. Gregory and N. Lorentzen, 'Overview', pp.9-71 in H. Levie, D. Gregory and N. Lorentzen (eds), *Fighting Closures: Deindustrialisation and the Trade Unions, 1979-1983*. Oxford: Blackwell, 1986, p.12; Tuckman, 'Workers Cooperatives', p.292.

In examining the process of collective action further, the beginning of each dispute and the ways that they developed highlight that grievance formation through the injustice of decisions to close the sites was a more complex process than the linear assumptions inherent in mobilization theories. At Lee's, the injustice felt by the individual shop steward was evident when closure was announced, with immediate mobilization. It is unlikely that, in the short period of time between Helen Monaghan being informed of the final closure and the workers barricading the doors that this personal grievance, based on her knowledge of the proposals put forward by the union to maintain reduced production, had been rapidly transposed to a shared collective injustice. At Lovable, the grievance of the workers was not directly based on closure, but related to their opposition to the plant and machinery being sold to asset stripping companies when they launched their action, illuminating a more complicated set of relationships between workers and capital. Lastly, at Plessey, the workers took four weeks before mobilizing in opposition to closure, demonstrating that the emergent solidarity through oppositional collective action was not a priori fact when the company announced their plans. An important narrative in the testimonies that illustrates the multifaceted process of grievance formation throughout the occupations is the ways in which the workers reflect on the initial action that they took. Each respondent was asked if they felt at the beginning that they knew what would be involved in their action, and each stated that they had no idea what an occupation would consist of, how long it would last, or what the outcome would be. Rather, they reflect on their early action as being a confused response to a very particular set of circumstances, with little coherence in explaining their immediate grievance and how that transposed to action:

> Agnes Quinn (Lovable): Never done anythin' like that in wur life... hadn't a clue [what would be involved]… we just kinda done wit the, our union reps asked us to do. And that's what we done.[3]

[3] SOHCA/052/004.

> Betty Wallace (Lovable): Ye just played it by ear. Eh, we knew wit we wur wantin', we didnae want anythin' goin' oot the door. Eh, and we had tae stop the vans comin' in. And take care ae things as well, ye know.[4]
>
> Bridie Bellingham (Lee Jeans): Helen Monaghan wis in at the meetin'. And she just came in and said wit they wur gonnae dae and, all of a sudden it just, blocked the doors… we didnae know anythin' aboot it.[5]
>
> Tricia Arkley (Lee Jeans): Seriously, nup, didn't have a clue. Didn't have a clue about it. Ah just thought, aw, aw, have ah got enough fags, shoutin' oot tae the windae, "ye'll need tae get me cigs". That wis aw ah wis concerned aboot, gettin' ma cigs and ma juice… And then. Ance things kinda settled doon and we got intae it.[6]
>
> Elizabeth Fairley (Plessey): Ah cannae mind that much aboot it [beginning], ken… Didnae ken wit wis happenin'. Just that you were dayshift, you were nightshift.[7]

As these narratives illustrate, workers' own consciousness in launching the action was much more complex than the injustice felt over closure. A linear explanation that emphasises how the workers' perceived injustice over the decision to close may then manifest in occupation is not supported through the evidence collected. As Atzeni asserts, individualistic factors such as injustice are insufficient in offering a satisfactory explanation of collective action, as the formulation of a collective grievance is constantly being negotiated and renegotiated through the process of acting together in oppositional action.[8] Thus, while the respondents speak clearly about their anger against the company's decision to close the plant, a more nuanced analysis of the testimonies regarding the action taken illustrates that these sentiments were in constant development, and that the emergence of a collective grievance was a much more convoluted process, before and during the

[4] SOHCA/052/001.
[5] SOHCA/052/011.
[6] SOHCA/052/006.
[7] SOHCA/052/019.
[8] Atzeni, 'Searching for Injustice', p.14.

mobilization. Such factors illustrate that there were important structural dynamics that facilitated the expressions of solidarity among the workers at the points of action.

7.2.2 The leadership of the workers

The importance of leadership in the development of collectivism among workers has been emphasised by several researchers, including Kelly, Badigannavar and Kelly, Darlington, and Taylor and Bain, who emphasise its importance within the literature on mobilization.[9] At each occupation, the importance of the leadership has been made explicit. Helen Monaghan, Sadie Lang and Ina Scott played crucial roles in leading the disputes and representing the women in their resistance to factory closure. In considering the three occupations, the importance of the shop stewards was emphasised by the respondents interviewed. At each site, the workers reflect that the decision to remain in the plant came from the shop stewards, who put the idea to the workers and sought a vote. The importance of this leadership role must be emphasised, as it indicates the significance of the agency of the stewards in deciding that the course of action was viable and justified, before seeking the support of the workers. As Helen states, her position in the plant meant that she could perceive that the reasons given for closure were unsubstantiated, allowing her to challenge management over their position.[10] From the interviews with workers at Lovable and Plessey, a similar situation emerges and, in assessing contemporary reports, it can be seen that the shop stewards provided detailed arguments against closure as the disputes continued. Evidently, the shop stewards' belief in the position that they took in resisting closure, based on their views of plant viability and their involvement in discussions with management, provided their impetus in seeking to organise the occupation of the premises following the announcements. The influence of shop stewards on leading occupations was highlighted by Tuckman when considering the occupations of the

[9] Kelly, *Rethinking Industrial Relations*; Badigannavar and Kelly, 'Why Are Some Union Organizing Campaigns More Successful Than Others?; Taylor and Bain, 'Call centre organizing in adversity'.
[10] SOHCA/052/008.

early 1970s, and the evidence gathered in this study of the defensive occupations of the early 1980s demonstrates the continued importance of individual shop stewards in leading collective action through worker occupations.[11]

The position of the shop stewards prior to the disputes is central to an understanding of how they were able to lead the collective mobilizations that developed. Each respondent was asked about their views of the union in the plants and it was demonstrated that, at each site, the involvement of the rank-and-file membership was low and that the shop stewards were the sole representatives of their interests in negotiations with management:

> Maggie McElwee (Lee Jeans): Helen wis sick ae comin' intae the office wi' me, aye. She would say, "ah'm yer union rep" and em, so aye, ye always felt that if ye got taken intae the office for some reason, Helen wis wi' ye.[12]
>
> Josephine King (Lovable): We hud a good union, ye hud good a shop steward. God love Sadie, but she wis first class at her job, she knew everythin.[13]
>
> Elizabeth Fairley (Plessey): We always had shop stewards, always. They were quite good, aye, they were always goin' tae different places and had quite a few rallies as well.[14]

Other respondents discuss the shop stewards similarly and, while some were also critical of their individual traits, these reflections on the effectiveness of the stewards and their role as the workers' representative are important when assessing their positions of influence before they sought the support of the workers to occupy the factories. Within studies of mobilization theory through action, there is little consideration of the significance of the latent structures of organisation among workers, in which shop stewards play a central role.[15] For instance, Anne-

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[11] Tuckman, 'Workers Cooperatives', p.292.
[12] SOHCA/052/007.
[13] SOHCA/052/003.
[14] SOHCA/052/019.
[15] For an example of this discussion, see Taylor and Moore, 'Cabin Crew Collectivism'.

marie Greene et al. demonstrate that perceptions of union leadership have an important impact on the development of collective consciousness, but do not develop this position further through an analysis of oppositional action.[16] In each of the disputes considered in this thesis, the ability of shop stewards to legitimise their position of leadership and to represent the workers before occupation had a substantial impact on the development of mobilization:

> Margaret Brown (Lee Jeans): Naw we didn't have any idea what was involved. Helen just said it and everybody kinda had a couple minutes thought and then they asked, are we gonnae take redundancy, we gonnae give up the factory, or we could have a sit-in… An' of course, Helen Monaghan, she wis wit ye called top dog.[17]
>
> Betty Wallace (Lovable): An' then Sadie, she became a union, eh, rep, as well… And then the night we were told that wis it finished, ye know? And then we aw' got the gither and Sadie said, "wit we're gonnae dae", she said, "is we'll police the factory".[18]
>
> Cathereine McLean (Plessey): We were told it was goin' down tae England, and they all got up on their high about it. Ina Scott wis always in the canteen shoutin' her neck about it… she was the head woman for the union. She wis a fighter.[19]

These reflections highlight the crucial role played by the stewards in launching the occupations, and the importance of their position in the plant prior to these crucial episodes of conflict. The agency of individual stewards represents the first manifestations of the decisions to occupy, and this was then transposed to collective action by the workers due to their perception that the stewards' opinions were legitimate and the action could be successful as a result.

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[16] A. Greene, J. Black and P. Ackers, 'The Union Makes Us Strong? A Study of the Dynamics of Workplace Union Leadership at Two UK Manufacturing Plants. *British Journal of Industrial Relations,* Vol. 38, No. 1 (2000), pp.75-93, p.91.
[17] SOHCA/052/005.
[18] SOHCA/052/001.
[19] SOHCA/052/021.

The pervasiveness of the legitimacy of the stewards' belief that resistance could succeed in influencing the action taken is demonstrated further through the Lovable occupation, where the level of mobilization among the workers was much lower. Chapter five highlighted that a key reason for lower levels of collective mobilization was the acceptance of three rounds of compulsory redundancy by the union and the stewards when the company first entered Receivership. This occurrence supports the arguments of Greene et al., Fantasia, and Poole that the cognitive liberation of workers in launching action is heavily influenced by the belief that their action can be successful, based on their perception that their leaders can – and will – act in their best interests.[20] As Michael Poole argues, groups of workers must have some notion of underlying power that impacts directly on the prospects for that group in challenging the power of employers.[21] At each plant, the legitimacy of the shop stewards was crucial in translating their individual grievances over proposed closure into collective action in resistance with different levels of success. Their actions were a prerequisite for the workers' own sense of injustice against the decisions taken, and their in-plant position was key in legitimising their views. Importantly, the collective action that developed through the mobilization of the workers was based upon workgroup collectives that developed on the factory floor.

7.2.3 In-plant relationships

While much work on mobilization theory focusses on the circumstances at the point of action, the research presented in the three case study chapters demonstrates the significance of pre-existing relationships among the workers during production. The testimonies highlight the importance of shopfloor cultures in each of the plants based on the labour process, friendships that developed, and the rituals among them as working-class women. These elements are significant in understanding the ways in which the workers formed a collective during the disputes, as there was a

[20] See Greene et al, 'The Union Makes Us Strong?'; Fantasia, *Cultures of Solidarity*, p.109.

[21] M. Poole, *Workers' Participation in Industry*. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1978, p.46.

large degree of informal collectivism based on their common position in the plant before the closures were announced. Respondents discuss their working environment very favourably, despite their acceptance and recognition that the work was monotonous, intense and boring. Further, none of the respondents discuss a particular pride in their trade, attachment to the job, or loyalty to the company for whom they worked. In the terms of Meyer and Allen, therefore, affective commitment was minimal.[22] All of the positive expressions of working in the factories are based on the money that they could earn and, more significantly in the narratives, the relationships that developed. Westwood, Pollert, and others highlight the significance of the shopfloor culture in manufacturing plants dominated by women, but do not extend this towards an analysis of collectivism in periods of dispute.[23] In looking at three instances of collective mobilization in the US, Fantasia argues persuasively that the actions 'relied on the mutual trust based on the pre-existing shop-floor relations' in the workplaces before disputes began.[24]

Clarke provides an in-depth analysis of the importance of shopfloor cultures in the manifestation of class actions in specifically gendered terms which requires further consideration when assessing the female factory occupations in Scotland, 1981-1982. In her research of the closure of the Moulinex plant in Normandy, 2001, the respondents' narratives highlight that the shopfloor was a key 'space of feminine working-class sociability and solidarity'.[25] As with the testimonies presented in the previous chapters, the perception of the Moulinex workers that the plant was close-knit and 'like a family' did not extend to the company, but specifically those whom they worked beside.[26] Clarke demonstrates that it was these relationships that contributed to the wave of post-closure activism by the redundant workers, being the latent collective consciousness that was transposed into solidarity in opposition to management. As with Moulinex, the workers at Lee's, Lovable, and Plessey did

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[22] Allen and Meyer, 'The measurement and antecedents', p.4.
[23] See Westwood, *All Day, Every Day* and Pollert, *Girls, Wives, Factory Lives*
[24] Fantasia, *Cultures of Solidarity*, p.110.
[25] Clarke, 'Closing Time', p.5.
[26] Ibid., p.7.

not reflect on being proud of their skill or of their firm, but framed their enjoyment of the plant through their view of the factory floor as a 'site of social integration – a space of class and gender solidarity'.[27] At the point of mobilization, particularly in Greenock and Bathgate, these existing workgroup solidarities developed into collective action in response to proposed closure.

This mobilization context differed at Lovable, and the explanation for such difference can once again be seen through the nature of the closure announcement. As the workforce was reduced through compulsory redundancy following the company entering Receivership, the relationships and cultures formed through the production process were significantly eroded, impacting on the potential for solidarity that could have been developed.[28] It can be reasonably assumed that such attacks on these relationships would have impacted on the collective consciousness that developed as the production-based collectivism had been weakened. Therefore, the relationships that were forged among the workers in the plant during the production process based on friendships, rituals, and their common position in the labour process cannot be separated from the mobilization of the workers when faced with closure and the loss of their employment. Whilst there was anger and a sense of injustice against the reasons for closure upon which the shop stewards were able to promote action, the degree of collectivism that was expressed at the point of dispute was built upon the collectivism of the women, as women and as workers, in their position inside the factory.

7.2.4 Socio-economic factors and mobilization

It is clear through this cross-case analysis of the female factory occupations that occurred between January 1981 and March 1982 that multiple factors inside the factory before and at the point of action each contributed to the development of the workforce mobilizations, supporting Fantasia's statement that class

[27] Ibid., p.16.

[28] While Plessey had also been downsized, at no point was this restructuring related to the future of the plant's presence in Bathgate, unlike at Lovable.

consciousness is the 'expression of the lived experience' that 'arises in the same way at different times and places, but never in just the same way'.[29] The research into these occupations highlights that individual agency, labour-process-generated-solidarity and the pre-existence of latent forms of collectivism among the workers each contributed in crucial ways to the development of oppositional action. The significance of these explanatory factors demonstrates that solidarity through industrial action is fundamentally built upon solidarity through working together in the conflictual employment relationship, which can be 'central to attempts to organise workers'.[30] However, attempts to explain industrial action without taking into account the broader socio-economic factors of the time risks ignoring key structural motivations and limitations that can influence the action, and the type of action, that workers take in response.[31] The complexity of explanations in understanding the disputes that took place, and the reflections of those involved, is demonstrative of the layered ontology that characterises critical realist studies of the employment relationship. The social structure of socio-economic transition created the causal mechanisms that interacted to lead to events in the actual domain, regardless of observability and recognition. Those events were shaped through the leadership of the workers, their perspectives on collectivism and the relationships that developed on the shopfloor.

As assessed in chapter two, the accelerated contraction of Scottish industry in the 1970s and early 1980s and the increased global mobility of capital marks the period as distinct from other cycles of recession and increased unemployment. The iconic image of the inter-war depression in Scotland is that of the cruise ship, *Queen Mary,* sitting incomplete, in John Brown's shipyard in Clydebank.[32] In the period of deindustrialisation, such images were replaced by the continuous movement of capital, the closure, and destruction of the sites of production, signifying the end of the industrial era. An analysis of the testimonies and contemporary statements

[29] Fantasia, *Cultures of Solidarity*, p.14.
[30] Atzeni, 'Searching for Injustice, p.15.
[31] See Ackroyd, 'Critical Realism', p.56.
[32] See T.C. Smout, *Century of the Scottish People: 1830-1950*. Glasgow: Harper Collins, 1986, p.114.

made by the workers demonstrates that economic decline was a significant factor in contextualising the circumstance of the actions taken. The stark industrial situation was frequently commented upon in contemporary reports of the closures and the resistance of the workers. In discussing Lovable, *The Evening Times* wrote that: 'Cumbernauld has been rocked by a series of closures since the beginning of the year. If the Lovable Bra factory closes almost 1800 jobs will have been lost'.[33] At Lee Jeans, the Chief Executive of Inverclyde Council told the *Greenock Telegraph* bluntly that 'the chances of replacing these jobs are very low'.[34] At Plessey, with the closure occurring at the same time as the closure of the Leyland Tractor Division, the *West Lothian Courier* repeatedly highlighted the severity of the situation in Bathgate, and particularly for the female workforce due to the dearth of alternative employment.[35]

An examination of the public statements issued by the shop stewards from each dispute also highlights their awareness that the closures were part of a wider process of contraction, and that their disputes were in response to these:

> Sadie Lang: We will maintain a presence in the factory until we are given assurances that the jobs will be secured and that the plant remains in Cumbernauld.[36]
>
> Helen Monaghan: There is nothing there for us and nothing for the future in Greenock… we are going to battle – we are not moving.[37]
>
> Ina Scott: This is an appeal to save Bathgate. The town faces disaster because of the job losses at the two factories.[38]

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[33] *The Evening Times*, 20/10/1981.

[34] *Greenock Telegraph*, 30/01/1981.

[35] See for example, *West Lothian Courier*, 19/02/1982.

[36] *Cumbernauld News and Kilsyth Chronicle,* 14/01/1982.

[37] WCML. TU/TAILORA/3/27 (L17/01). 'National Union Of Tailors and Garment Workers: General Conference, Blackpool 1981, Report Of Proceedings', p.285.

[38] *Daily Record*, 15/02/1982.

Within each of these statements, the significance of the impact of broader economic decline is evident when explaining their action. Of course, it must be recognised that in such public statements leaders of industrial action may attempt to extend the significance of their dispute to attract greater levels of support. However, when the statements are considered alongside the perilous state of the local economy in each area, a demonstrable link between the action taken and the economic decline of Scotland's manufacturing sector can be observed. For Sadie Lang at Lovable, these arguments were also expressed through the promises that had been made to those who relocated to Cumbernauld from Glasgow and across Strathclyde:

> The workers were enticed to the town on the promise of a better future for themselves and their children and now we are being written off. Many of our children have had to emigrate to find employment.[39]

This sense that there was a need to attempt to retain manufacturing sites in these localities is further reflected in the testimonies of the occupiers collected in this research:

> Elizabeth Fairley (Plessey): Ah wis just angry that it shut doon cos ae the folk that needed a job, ken… Ah mean, that wis a tragedy, wi' the BL closin' doon, it wis an awful tragedy.[40]
>
> Esther McGinnes (Plessey): British Leyland and Plessey wis, Bathgate… Bathgate would be dead [if they closed] … ah wis on the dole for a full year efter it, couldnae get a job.[41]
>
> Agnes Quinn (Lovable): A lottae thae women an' all, had worked in there fae the sixties… Ah just, ah just felt nervous as anythin' and it wasn't nice, it was horrible… tae go look for another job. And that's, kinda things like that do things to people. Ah mean, you think ye're gonnae be there for the

[39] *The Glasgow Herald*, 16/01/1982.
[40] SOHCA/052/019.
[41] SOHCA/052/017.

> rest ae yer life, then these people come along and shut yer factory down.[42]
>
> Betty Wallace (Lovable): Right away we wurn't too pleased aboot wit wis happenin'. And the thought ae wur jobs goin' away somewhere else really sickened us, ye know… [Sat in] Tae keep the factory here.[43]
>
> Marggie McElwee (Lee Jeans): Tae begin with, we're sayin' tae wurself, well, we're fightin' fur wur job, right. But ah don't think we realised what that really meant... it wisnae until through the sit-in that yer realisin' wit we're daein' and why we're daein' it… No way could ye go intae another job.[44]
>
> Catherine Robertson (Lee Jeans): We're daein' this cos we feel wur jobs goin' tae Ireland. They wanted tae take the machinery, but that wis oors. Everythin' in the factory wis oors. They were goin' away wi' nothin'.[45]
>
> Helen Monaghan (Lee Jeans): There wis nae jobs… It wis aw' two and three sisters and, it wis aw' family wi' two or three in the factory. So that wis wages lost oot, and there wis nae other jobs goin'. And we thought, naw.[46]

Through these narratives, the respondents reflect on their action as being part of the process of maintaining the physical production site in their locality and the implications that closure could have on those living and working there. Elizabeth and Esther both discuss the 'tragedy' of the simultaneous situations at Bathgate's main manufacturing sites. Esther's terminology of the town dying due to these closures signifies the importance that she ascribes to industrial decline. Elizabeth, Agnes and Helen discuss the devastating impact that losing the jobs would have, highlighting that closure would be a tragedy for those needing a job, beyond their own, individual situations. Therefore, multiple explanations are offered in explaining the importance of preventing the plants and machinery from physically

[42] SOHCA/052/004.
[43] SOHCA/052/001.
[44] SOHCA/052/007.
[45] SOHCA/052/010.
[46] SOHCA/052/008.

moving. Through the contemporary statements of the shop stewards and press reports, along with the reflections of the respondents, it can be argued that, beyond increased rates of unemployment, the physical closure of production sites and the increased mobility of capital were crucial factors in the mobilization of the workers. The statements and reflections regarding the closures and disputes are representative of the 'doomsday talk' that followed the waves of factory, mill and mine closures throughout the 1970s and 80s and, in some cases, directly led to militant worker resistance.[47] In the period of increased capital mobility to lower-cost economies, industrial communities such as those in Bathgate, Cumbernauld, and Greenock were faced with the realisation that no location had a 'right' to industry investment in the globalised economy, central to understanding why militant action was taken in resistance.[48]

7.3 The Use of Occupation

In assessing the factors that contributed to the forms of disputes taken, the clearest reason for the workers occupying the factories was that it was the only viable action that could realistically prevent closure and the clearing of stock and machinery, by giving the workers some form of leverage over their employer. As Coates argues, in disputes over closure the other tactics available to workers – primarily through the withdrawal of labour – are insufficient.[49] To re-emphasise the quote from a Plessey worker in Findlay's study, 'we couldn't go on strike and we couldn't go on a go slow – what was the point'?[50] Despite the use of occupation being prevalent in each dispute, they differed significantly in the way that they began and the way in which they were conducted, and the factors that account for these differences require greater consideration to understand the historical use of defensive factory occupations.

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[47] High, '"wounds of class"', p.996.
[48] Cowie, *Capital Moves*, p.183
[49] Coates, *Work-ins, Sit-ins and Industrial Democracy*, p.21.
[50] Findlay. 'Resistance, Restructuring and Gender p.79.

7.3.1 Immediate occupation and delayed action

Across the disputes we can see three distinct ways in which they began: at Lee Jeans, there was immediate occupation following the breakdown of negotiations with management; at Lovable, a 24-hour policing operation was implemented following the proposed sale of the site to perceivably hostile owners; and at Plessey, four weeks passed between the announcement to close the plant and the occupation beginning. In explaining these differences, an important starting point, therefore, is the way in which the decision was announced to the workforce and its influence on the mobilization of the occupations. At Lee's, when the idea of closure was relayed to Helen and her FTO, they were allowed time to put forward a range of alternatives that could maintain the site with reduced production. As Helen states, these were to demonstrate that the plant was viable in the longer term, and that the main reason for closure was relocation to Northern Ireland in the pursuit of lower costs.[51] This context is crucial in explaining the reasons why the Lee's workers were in a position to occupy immediately. Once she had been informed that the proposals had been rejected and that closure would proceed, Helen had a heightened sense that the corporation were acting unjustly towards the workforce as she firmly believed that the proposals given would have kept the plant open. With this belief, she perceived the management's action as morally unjustifiable, providing her with sufficient motivation to attempt to mobilize the workers in the only manner practical in their position.

When Helen conveyed the idea of occupation to the workers, the factors outlined in section 7.2 contributed to the latent collectivism and solidarity of the workers mobilizing in occupation. As she states in her testimony, Helen believes that the initial idea for occupation came from John Howard, demonstrating the sense of confusion and lack of clarity that surrounds her memory of the very first steps towards occupation. Such factual uncertainty is of little significance, however. What is clear is that she was able to convey the arguments that she had put forward to

[51] SOHCA/052/008.

management concerning the viability of the plant to the workers. She then utilised the position of trust that she had established when acting as their representative before this point to convince the workforce that closure was unjustifiable and that an occupation was the only option available in resistance. Importantly, the decision was relayed while all workers were on shift, meaning that their position was strengthened through the numbers available for the immediate seizure of the plant. As Catherine reflects, 'when Helen came intae the canteen, wit else [were] we gonnae dae? Well, we don't leave the place, we occupy the factory.'[52] With a strong leader and a clear reason for action, the workers were in a position to begin immediate resistance.

At Plessey, the situation is more complex as the workers did not occupy the site for four weeks after the initial announcement. The cohort limitations of this research restrict a thorough examination of the reasons why the occupation was launched and the internal dynamics that contributed to this. The importance of the action taken at Leyland must be emphasised, and this will be discussed further below. It is important to note, however, that the delayed resistance to closure further demonstrates the complexities in assessing worker mobilization and the use of occupations in resisting closure and redundancy.

In contrast, the situation at Lovable led to the development of a very different form of dispute. The crucial difference with the announcement at Lovable was that closure was not inevitable. This gave shop stewards and workers significantly less clarity over the future of their factory, and meant that there was no 'immediate notice of immediate redundancy' that Gall argues is crucial in the decision making process of occupying in resistance.[53] These dynamics also meant that the actual occupation that was launched was much different from the other cases examined. The Receivers did not say before the occupation began that the factory would close, with the possibility of the plant and machinery being bought by Lovable Spa of Italy,

[52] SOHCA/052/010.

[53] Gall. 'Resisting Recession and Redundancy', p.117.

in association with Berlei (UK) Ltd, who the stewards felt would strip the assets and then close it down. Therefore, the workers at Lovable were not opposing guaranteed closure in the initial stages of their dispute, but rather preventing the removal of machinery based on the perception that this takeover would eventually lead to full redundancy. The difference is evident in the narratives, as there is no recollection of the specific point at which their action began, how it was decided, or how the majority of workers responded. There is no recollection of a specific spark of injustice that led to action. The leadership at Lovable also operated their occupation whilst regular production continued, with workers remaining in the plant after the working day and resuming production the following morning. *Women's Voice* criticised this decision at the time, stating that 'they should occupy now to ensure that they are safe, instead of continuing to produce goods which the receiver can sell'.[54] This approach further weakened the position of the workers in asserting their control and authority over the plant and machinery, as the leverage that they exerted was always temporary and consistently relinquished to management. It can be argued that, as a result of these factors at the outset of the action, when closure was confirmed, the shop stewards were not in a position to maintain full control of the plant or to demonstrate to the remaining workers that oppositional action was likely to be successful, as rounds of redundancy had been unopposed, and their policing operation had ultimately been unsuccessful in preventing closure. The result was that the workers were forced to picket the warehouse from outside to prevent the removal of stock and machinery, with very low levels of participation.

Through this discussion, it is evident that a multitude of factors influence the decision of a workforce to resist closure through occupation which then impact substantially on the nature of the action taken. In discussing two occupations launched in Britain during the 1970s, Tuckman and Knudsen assert that both were

[54] *Women's Voice*, Issue 60, February 1982.

'spontaneous' responses to factory closure.[55] This description of occupations appears overly simplistic and a generalisation of the factors that contribute to workforces taking such action and, certainly in the evidence presented here, does not provide a sufficient depth of understanding to explain collective action through defensive occupation. The differing circumstances at the three plants illustrate the complexity in explaining the contexts in which a workforce will choose to occupy their workspace, and the significance of demonstrating the capacity to exercise power.

7.3.2 External influences on occupation

The in-plant dynamics offer some explanation of the reasons why the workers chose to occupy, but attention must also be given to external influences that contributed to the actions. Gall asserts that a key factor in explaining why workers occupy is recent high profile instances of similar action and this aspect was most evident at Plessey, where the workers launched their action the day after workers at British Leyland had done likewise.[56] The occupation at Plessey, four weeks after the closure announcement, was therefore directly influenced by events at Leyland, where most of the workers were organised in the same union and the shop stewards across the plants had a collaborative relationship. However, assessing such influences and inspirations at the other plants is much less clear, exacerbating the complexities of the decision making processes at each site.

In looking at Lee Jeans, there was no mention in local and national contemporary reports of other high profile occupations in Greenock or the surrounding locality at the time, and an analysis of industrial relations publications and reports show no indication of this type of action taking place in nearby industries in the lead up to the closure announcement. Both Helen and Catherine mention Jimmy Reid and the work-in at UCS, twenty-miles upriver in 1971, but neither discuss it through having

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[55] Tuckman and Knudsen, 'The Success and Failings of UK Work-Ins and Sit-Ins', pp.120, 128.
[56] Gall. 'Resisting Recession and Redundancy', p.117.

had a direct influence on their own action.[57] While UCS was a major turning point in British industrial relations and one of the most high profile industrial disputes in Scotland in the post-war period, it took place ten years before the action at Lee's and was under very different circumstances. At UCS, the workers were directly challenging the economic policy of the government, and did so through demonstrating that the workers could continue production in a viable way. Rather than being seen as directly influential, the UCS work-in is significant in understanding the Lee Jeans action in much the same way as it was for British industrial relations more broadly, in that it gave validity to the idea of occupation, legitimising its use by workers as a last resort in struggles against closure.[58] Additionally, UCS can be seen as a residual background influence, representing a legacy demonstrative effect of utilising occupation in Scotland. However, it would be overly simplistic to assess the Lee Jeans sit-in as being directly influenced by UCS and seeing Helen Monaghan as taking inspiration from Jimmy Reid in opposing redundancy. Such an approach would also underestimate the role of the stewards and the workers in the process of occupying in resistance to their particular set of circumstances.

Following from this consideration of the influences on the action at Lee's is an assessment of the extent to which the subsequent disputes were inspired by the action taken in Greenock. It was stated at the time that Lee's set 'a precedent' for the action at Lovable and Plessey, but the actuality of the disputes requires greater analysis in attempting to observe a causal link.[59] The most evident link between these disputes is the role that Helen played in offering advice to Ina Scott at Plessey. As chapter six demonstrated, as well as being directly influenced by the action at Leyland, Ina sought guidance from Helen as soon as the occupation began. While this does not demonstrate the influence of Lee's before the decision to occupy was

[57] SOHCA/052/010; SOHCA/052/008.
[58] Foster and Woolfson, *The Politics of the UCS Work-In*, p.14.
[59] *The New Statesman*, 19/02/1982.

made, it does highlight that Scott was aware of the action that they launched a year before, and recognised important links between the two struggles.

In the Lovable dispute that occurred between Lee's and Plessey, there is no note in contemporary reports of Sadie Lang and the other workers referencing the action in Greenock, or of a dialogue between the steward and the leadership in Greenock. Each respondent was asked if they had heard, or were aware, of similar action taking place elsewhere, and there is no mention of Lee Jeans. The following responses were given when asked if they had heard of similar action taking place before:

> Agnes Quinn: Nup. Nut, the only thing that ah ever knew, eh, growin' up, wis like the miners' strike, that's really all I can remember, and that went on for a while. And then shuttin' aw' the pits. Tories… Say no more.[60]
>
> Betty Wallace: Naw. Naw, we just thought we were the first, ye know, apart fae Jimmy Reid, ye know… he wis the first ane ah think that had did the sit-ins.[61]
>
> Irene Steel: Ah think some other sewin' place done ane, didn't they? Ah don't know if that wis efter us or before us. Think it wis doon in England some place… Ah think there wis a kinda sit-in, the same kinda idea.[62]

The silence of the Lee's dispute, or an awareness of any occupation launched by Scottish women other than their own, exemplifies the importance of oral history in assessing beyond facts, and highlighting 'the wider social and cultural context within which remembering takes place'.[63] When considering the plausibility of the Lovable respondents having no knowledge of the Lee Jeans sit-in when beginning their own action despite belonging to the same union, operating in the same industry, and the

[60] SOHCA/052/001.
[61] SOHCA/052/004.
[62] SOHCA/052/002.
[63] A. Green. 'Individual Remembering and 'Collective Memory'?: Theoretical Presumptions and Contemporary Debates'. *Oral History*, Vol 32, No. 2 (2004), pp.35-44, p.35.

attention given to Lee's at the time, the likelihood is questionable. Similarly, that the action by miners and the UCS work-in are mentioned, and UCS was also readily discussed by the respondents from the other disputes, highlights the impact of cultural discourses on individual remembering. As Green argues persuasively, the interesting point to note in such examples is which events are remembered, discussed, and why.[64] The action taken by miners in the 1970s and 1980s, the work-in at UCS, and the figure of Jimmy Reid are engrained in Scottish public consciousness of industrial dispute in this period, significantly more than these occupations and their leaders.[65] Therefore, the recollections of the workers in considering occupations that took place before, and other than their own action, can be seen to be shaped by the dominant Scottish public narrative that places UCS and Reid at the centre of discussions on taking 'militant' industrial action to resist closure. The same narratives have evidently relegated those launched by the women factory occupiers during the early 1980s to the margins. Therefore, while there is no mention of Lee Jeans in the reflections of the Lovable workers, it can be plausibly argued that the action taken had an impact and an influence on the workforce when they were also faced with closure. The importance of this should not be overstated, as the occupation by the Lovable workers was their collective response to the specific situation that arose, as was also the case at Plessey. While Lee's was important in highlighting occupation as a viable mode of resistance, we should not consider it as a template for the other actions, or consider the distinctive occupations as being a connected process of worker activism, notwithstanding similarities. Rather, the action of Helen Monaghan and the Lee Jeans workers is further reflective of the demonstrative effect of industrial action in convincing other workers of the viability of similar action.

[64] Ibid., p.42.
[65] For instance, see coverage of Reid's passing, *Daily Record, The Scotsman*, both 10/08/2010.

7.4 Support for the Occupations

A further contrast that has emerged over the three case study chapters is the support that the workers received for their action. In considering the support and solidarity from the broader labour movement and the localities in which the workplaces were based, the Lovable dispute is distinct in that the workers were largely struggling on their own for much of the dispute, with little support from other workers and the town. As examined in chapter two, a key factor in the historical use of occupation in British industrial relations is the way in which they are able to attract greater levels of public sympathy and support than other forms of industrial action. The reasons given for defensive occupation – the right to employment – often puts management on the defensive and can increase support for the workers from other workers, the labour movement, and from within their localities.[66]

7.4.1 Support from the labour and socialist movements

The occupations at Lee's and Plessey received substantial support from across the British labour and socialist movements. In considering why they received such support, the nature of the dispute is significant. In a period of accelerated contraction and industrial decline, it can be reasonably expected that militant resistance would be supported by other workers, as it illustrated the action that could be taken when faced with capital migration and redundancy. A key aspect in understanding this support is the role of the press in reporting that the disputes were taking place. As a range of authors demonstrate, a key benefit of using occupation for workers facing closure is the high levels of press coverage that their action receives.[67] However, it is overly simplistic to assert that the workers only received support due to the nature of the action that they took and the press coverage that they received.

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[66] Foster and Woolfson, *The Politics of the UCS Work-In*, p.394.

[67] See Foster and Woolfson, *The Politics of the UCS Work-In*, p.414; Findlay, 'Resistance, Restructuring and Gender' for examples.

Central to considerations of the wave of support received at Lee Jeans and Plessey from across the British labour movement is that, not only was their action visible through contemporary press reports, but that the militant action of *women workers* was visible. The myth of female passivity has been rightly dismissed in academic discussions of women's labour history, as it was outlined in chapter two that women workers by women have historically created spaces for collectivism and resistance. However, the pervasiveness of *perceived* gender norms remained significant in the late twentieth-century. As Breitenbach demonstrated in her assessment of Scottish women's increased class activism in the 1970s, strikes and traditional forms of resistance were largely ignored by the mainstream media in print and broadcast, which led to the continued invisibility of women's militant action.[68]

Therefore, when the workers in these studies took the unusual – for male and female workers – step of occupying their workplace to resist closure, the press coverage that they received would likely have had a greater impact as it gave visibility to the action of women. As a result, despite women's historic mobilization and participation in collective actions, as these were continuously relegated in public representations of activism, the actions taken in 1981 and 1982 appeared to be doubly unique, in that women were acting collectively, and that they were doing so through factory occupation. The hitherto hidden forms of resistance by Scottish women to managerial offensives and attacks on their employment was suddenly a major news item in local, regional, and national press, which led to the action at Lee's and Plessey becoming *cause celebres* in the British labour movement, perhaps to a greater extent than had traditionally militant, male workers launched such action. There are numerous examples of this narrative in contemporary reports. The *West Lothian Courier* argued that 'what Bathgate has on its doorstep is a predominantly female workforce growing confident in their ability not to be pushed

[68] Breitenbach, *Women Workers in Scotland*, p.4.

around'.[69] In discussing Lee's, *The Glasgow Herald* asserted 'they highlighted a new weapon that few women workers had thought of before – occupation'.[70] In a report on the Lovable occupation that considered it along with a discussion of Lee Jeans, Edwards wrote in *the New Statesman* that 'Scotland's recent wave of factory sit-ins, mostly dominated by women, has taken the male establishment by surprise'.[71] In these statements, the disputes are highlighted for their uniqueness primarily based on the gender of the workers taking the action, which played a major role in spreading the news of the occupations far beyond the factory gates and the immediate localities, contributing to the large level of support that the workers received.

Despite the importance of the representations of the dispute in the media and the perceptions of the action taken, it is important to note that the workers, and their leaders, were active agents in the process of spreading awareness of their action and securing the support necessary to continue. This is evident in Helen Monaghan's recollection of the initial stages of the action at Greenock. Discussing her approach to the media she asserts that, initially, it was not an aspect that she was eager to pursue:

> People were comin' up, newspapers an' askin' tae see me. And ah said "naw, ah don't want". Ah didnae want tae be in the front ae a paper or anythin' like that… Ah just thought this would've been over in a few days… And then, eh, ah realised that naw, that wasn't gonnae happen, we'll need tae look for support somewhere else.[72]

Helen's testimony demonstrates the importance of the role played by the leadership of an occupation in actively securing the coverage from the media. As noted previously, Foster and Woolfson demonstrate that workers have greater autonomy over the flow of information in occupation, as they have control over the

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[69] *West Lothian Courier*, 19/02/1982.
[70] *The Glasgow Herald*, 05/02/1982.
[71] *The New Statesman*, 19/02/1982.
[72] SOHCA/052/008.

workspace and can therefore grant entry to journalists much more easily than during strikes.[73] As outlined in chapter four, Helen also developed plans for sending workers from the sit-in across Britain to visit workplaces and socialist meetings to further highlight their struggle. Many of the respondents in this research participated in such visits, and reflect that they were crucial in collecting moral support, financial donations and, as Maggie and Tricia state explicitly, to legitimise the action that they were taking.[74] At Plessey, Ina Scott acted similarly and the relationship between her and Helen was evident in this aspect. As *The Scotsman* reported:

> Mrs Scott acknowledges her debt to Helen Monaghan's advice in organising the sit-in – which involved everything from printing pamphlets and touring other factories, to "getting squads cleaning the loos"'.[75]

Following from the advice given, Ina Scott also sent workers from Plessey to other workplaces to secure support, illuminating the significance of the shop steward in actively seeking the support of other workers, as well as the willingness of the occupiers to visit other workplaces.

The significance of the role of the stewards in actively seeking support is further highlighted in the case of Lovable which, as has been argued, was an anomaly in the historic uses of occupation in that there was no significant report of other workers offering support, nor is this reflected in the respondents' narratives. In considering that Lovable was also reported in the national press and had the same characteristics that made Lee's and Plessey unique in public perceptions of workforce activism, the role of Sadie Lang in not seeking support, and declining it when offered, is a key explanatory factor. As demonstrated in chapter four, the

[73] Foster and Woolfson, *The Politics of the UCS Work-in*, p.415.
[74] SOHCA/052/006; SOHCA/052/007.
[75] WLLHL. BB.338.09. Plessey Information, newspaper cuttings etc. on the Plessey Sit-in & Closure etc. c.1979-1982. Photocopy from *The Scotsman*, 24/03/1982.

Lovable occupiers refused to ask other workers for donations, and Lang dismissed offers of guidance from trade unionists and socialist groups. Therefore, the support given to the workers in these factory occupations from across the labour and socialist movements was based on multiple factors. At Lee's and Plessey, the workforce, under the instruction of their shop stewards, actively sought the support of other workers, and their campaigns ignited large sections of the labour movement, which was also influenced by the unique nature of their action in public representations of workforce militancy. At Lovable the occupation's leadership developed a policy of localising their action to the workforce and management meaning that, while the press reported on the occupation, their dispute did not become a *cause celebre* of the labour movement.

7.4.2 Local support for the workers

Defensive occupations also have the ability to attract support from beyond the traditional structures of class solidarity, incorporating local struggles against industrial decline. Extensive examples of community solidarity were presented in the chapters considering Lee Jeans and Plessey, whereas there was an absence of evidence suggesting extensive local support at the Lovable dispute. As with the support from workers, the role of the leadership is influential as the leaders in Greenock and Bathgate had developed strategies for sending their workers into the towns to collect money and increase awareness of the actions, whereas at Lovable the dispute remained localised to the plant. Demonstrations were held in Greenock and Bathgate to support the cause of the workers and attracted hundreds to turn out in support. Additionally, the importance of what could be termed spontaneous gestures of solidarity, such as the provision of meat and vegetables to the factory, or a worker receiving a free drink in the local pub, also thread through the narratives of the Plessey and Lee's workers. The absence of such expressions of support for the Lovable workers from within their locality is further complicated as attempts were made to extend its significance. A demonstration was organised in the town at which the local MP stated that theirs was a struggle not only for the

workforce, but for Cumbernauld. Less than seventy people attended, and it is not stated in reports how many of these were part of the occupation. As stated in chapter five, many workers expressed their disappointment in this response at the time and in the respondents' narratives, which leads to further questions as to why Lovable appears as a curious case in the historic use of defensive occupation.

A possible explanatory factor in considering such questions is the uniqueness of Cumbernauld as a locality in comparison with other high profile occupations. In the occupations during the 1970s, over 75 percent took place in, or very close to, established centres of working-class activism such as Glasgow, Manchester, Liverpool and Sheffield.[76] Such areas share a similar socio-economic history as Greenock and Bathgate, being dominated by heavy industry and developing structures of class collectivism through traditions of solidarity. In the literature examining the factors on workforce mobilization, particularly through occupation, a factor that is stressed is the importance of local political cultures and recent examples of other high profile disputes.[77] However, an aspect that is not given sufficient consideration is the impacts that such traditions, or the lack thereof, can have on the support that workers receive during struggles against closure. The bulk of research into the mobilization of workers in opposing redundancy has been conducted in such areas with long traditions of collective action, meaning that our understanding of localities where these are not as embedded is limited. Cumbernauld represents an example of this type of area, being a planned community specifically designed to attract people and industry, with the action at Lovable taking place less than twenty years after the development of any significant industrial base. As a result, while there had been some instances of industrial action in the town, there had not been a prolonged and militant dispute between worker and employer that incorporated a wider response from the people of the town in

[76] Foster and Woolfson, *The Politics of the UCS Work-in*, p.395.
[77] See Kelly, *Rethinking Industrial Relations*, p.32-33; Fantasia *Cultures of Solidarity*, p.161; Mustchin, 'From Workplace Occupation to Mass Imprisonment', p.59.

solidarity.[78] Despite the workers having largely moved from Glasgow, an area with established traditions of trade union activism, the ways in which individual notions of collectivism and solidarity can be expressed through sympathy and support are influenced by the structures in which they operate. As Gall argues, areas with a history of class activism and industrial action can develop what he terms ‘communities of collective action’, through which areas they develop and maintain the traditions associated with collectivism over time which contribute to communal mobilization in industrial dispute.[79]

The pervasiveness of these structures is evident in the respondents’ testimonies, as those in Greenock repeatedly refer to the shipyards as their point of reference to local class politics, while the respondents in West Lothian do likewise for mining and the motor industry. The respondents from Lovable discuss trade unionism in terms of Glasgow-based industry rather than sites in Cumbernauld such as Burroughs Machines, the town’s largest manufacturing employer. The evidence from contemporary reports on the Lovable dispute and the recollections collected in this project suggest that there was something fundamentally different about the support that was given to the workers from those in their community, and the most plausible explanation for this is based on the limited history of expressed class collectivism before the workers took their action. For Helen Monaghan at Lee Jeans, contacting the Inverclyde Trades Council put her in direct contact with the local cultures of solidarity that had been developed in the area over several decades, and at Plessey, workers had direct communication with the motor plant, as well as links to West Lothian’s mining industry. In Greenock and Bathgate, local shops and butchers provided goods for the occupying workers because that is how sections of these working-class areas had historically responded to situations of threatened job loss and resistance to closure. When demonstrations were held, people from across the areas came out in support, not just due to being sympathetic to the particular

[78] An examination of the archives of the *Cumbernauld News and Kilsyth Chronicle* presents little evidence of any significant industrial action being launched in the town throughout the 1970s.
[79] G. Gall, 'Trade Unionism and Industrial Relations in Scotland Since UCS'. *Scottish Labour History*, Vol. 38 (2003), pp.51-73, p.61.

action being taken, but because public demonstrations had an established tradition, politically and socially, as Ewan Gibbs demonstrates became increasingly manifest during the anti-Poll Tax campaign at the end of the decade.[80] The support received for the occupiers from fellow workers and local communities can be seen as representative of E.P. Thompson's 'moral economy of the mob' in legitimising action against injustice. In examining food riots in England during the nineteenth-century, Thompson argues that communal rebellion developed as opposition to starvation gained a 'wider consensus of the community', which can be seen in Greenock and Bathgate during the occupations.[81] At Cumbernauld, there was a much more limited history upon which the town's working-class could draw.

7.4.3 Support from the workers' trade unions

The last aspect of the support that the workers received that requires assessment is from their own trade unions. It is significant that all of the workplaces had a closed shop union organisation, as this provided a structured form of collectivism that became mobilized through their action. As discussed, there is a consensus among many academics that have considered the use of occupation in Britain that, by the mid-1970s, union support for the use of the tactic in resistance to closure was common practice and generally provided before such action was taken.[82] Support was offered to the workers in these disputes, and the archives of the NUTGW and the AEU, particularly the records of their annual conferences, contain much positive information regarding the role of the union in facilitating the action taken. However, there are important caveats that must be considered when analysing the extent to which the workers in Greenock, Cumbernauld, and Bathgate could fully rely on their unions at national level to vigorously support their action.

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[80] E. Gibbs, '"Civic Scotland" versus Communities on Clydeside: poll tax non-payment c.1987-1990'. *Scottish Labour History*, Vol. 49, 2014, pp.86-106.
[81] E.P. Thompson, 'The Moral Economy of the English Crowd in the Eighteenth Century,' *Past and Present*, Vol. 50, 1971, pp.76-136, p.77.
[82] See Coates, *Work-ins, Sit-ins and Industrial Democracy*, p.115.

In looking at the NUTGW, the union at both Lee's and Lovable, it can be seen that different areas of the union had markedly different approaches during the disputes. Support can be seen in the press statements issued by the union's officials, as well as public statements made at their annual conferences in 1981 and 1982. However, throughout the Lee Jeans occupation, it has been demonstrated that the union received strong criticism from the workers in dispute, as well as from their members across Britain. It took the union six weeks to officially recognise the action, despite local officers being present from the outset and this official backing was withdrawn before its conclusion. Through an analysis of the meetings of the Executive Board and the correspondence between national and branch levels, no clear explanation is given for their approach. Mention is made of the possible illegality of the action and the belief that their reasons for eventually supporting the occupation expired as it wore on. However, there is no detailed reason stated for why they would not initially offer recognition and why this was revoked. In considering the strong backlash to these decisions, the lack of a concise explanation is particularly peculiar. A more plausible explanation for the conflicted approach of the NUTGW during the occupation at Greenock is that the union's hierarchy did not know how to handle the action and, due to the support immediately offered from across Inverclyde, it was quickly out-with their control.

This position is supported by the strong appeal made by the Paisley and Port Glasgow branch to the EB to make the dispute official one week after it began, in which the branch stated that further delay would result in a negative public image for the union. That it took a further five weeks for this to be forthcoming suggests that the EB did not have a strategy for dealing with the situation as it developed, and that it soon became evident that continued refusal to act would significantly undermine the confidence of the wider membership in their handling of redundancy. Leicester demonstrates that the NUTGW were traditionally a conservative union at executive level, and the tensions between their approach to

seeking resolution through negotiation and the independent activism of rank-and-file members faced with closure are evident in the dispute at Lee's.[83]

The relationship is much less evident in the Lovable action, which could be seen as a direct result of their handling of the occupation in Greenock. At Lovable, there was no public debate regarding the union officially backing the action of the workers and no evidence that offering support had been an issue at the executive-level. However, the development of the action from after-work occupation to external picket should also be considered significant in explaining how the Lovable occupation did not cause the same level of difficulty for the NUTGW, as it was not as militant or as public as the immediate occupation that occurred in Greenock. Despite a lower level of notable public discontent, chapter five illustrated that there was still anger from the workers towards their union, with the perception that their officials were not as involved as was expected. Again, the experiences at Greenock a year previously are important in offering explanation, as the fallout between the EB and their Scottish officers would have impacted on their direct involvement with the workers. Thus, at Lovable and Lee Jeans, the internal politics of the union played a significant role in limiting their effectiveness in representing two workforces where their membership faced the prospect of redundancy and joblessness.

The respondents from Plessey did not express discontent with their union (the AEU) and its role, an interesting aspect when considering that their occupation could be viewed as the least successful in maintaining the jobs under threat. It is accepted that the limited cohort of respondents directly involved in the dispute restricts the similar level of analysis of testimony afforded to Lee's and Lovable. Despite contemporary reports that the workers were disappointed and angered by the failure to prevent redundancy, these were not attributed to the AEU or the occupation's leaders. However, the proposed closure of the Plessey plant was consistently presented in meetings and press statements along with the proposed

[83] Leicester, 'The 1970 Leeds Clothing Workers' Strike', p.50.

closure of the tractor division at Leyland, and often appeared as being considered less important in the business of the union and the STUC.

Therefore, what do these disputes illuminate about the relationship between the institutional labour movement and instances of independent female activism? Firstly, it is clear that such relationships must be seen as complex and influenced by a range of factors including the action taken and the union(s) involved. At the same time, it is important to note that responses to activism differed greatly. It is overly simplistic to assert that the labour movement was characterised by inherent and systematic patriarchal attitudes that left women struggling against both union and employer in the early 1980s, as there are numerous examples of support from across the institutional union movement in each of the occupations. However, it must also be stressed that, when occupations were conducted in the 1970s in male dominated industries such as at UCS and the engineering industries in Sheffield, a range of authors argued that the issue of union support was not one for debate, as it was readily provided and not a matter of consideration. Lee Jeans demonstrated that for the NUTGW, a historically conservative union with a largely female workforce, offering support was a long and drawn out process involving internal debate, disagreement, and argument, which resulted in the women not receiving the level of support that could be expected. For the AEU, the occupation by the women at workers at Plessey can be seen as being viewed with less concern than the developments at Bathgate's male dominated manufacturing plant.

The limitations of the support from the workers' national unions illustrates that while sections of the institutional labour movement were not explicitly unsupportive of the independent action of their female membership, the support that they did offer requires in-depth critical analysis. This is particularly notable as these occupations were three of the strongest and most successful responses to proposed closure in Scotland during the early 1980s, highlighting the continued preference for many union officials to focus on the terms of closure rather than to

resist the mobility of capital.[84] Despite officials such as Alec Smith angrily protesting against the desolation of Britain's manufacturing industries, it can be seen that some unions, at least, had little appetite for a drawn-out struggle against the systematic process of deindustrialisation. On the other hand, the support of rank-and-file workers, male and female, across Scotland and the UK was substantial when sought by the occupying workers, demonstrating that struggles against closure in the socio-economic context of the early 1980s involved the resistance of large sections of the working-class, beyond the factory gates where a particular dispute was taking place.

That the activism of the workers began and continued with varying levels of support from their union representatives is significant when considering the role and importance of institutions when assessing the activism of Scottish women workers. In the work of Coates and others assessing the occupations of the 1970s, trade unions play a crucial role in the beginning and organisation of such cases of resistance.[85] Additionally, Gall maintains that a key factor in explaining workforce occupation is the support of their union, arguing that it is a pre-requisite for such action taking place.[86] The instances of occupation at Greenock, Cumbernauld, and Bathgate can be seen as being much less coerced or constrained by institutional support due to the limitations of such assistance discussed throughout. Rather than seeing these occupations through the organisational structures of the workers' institutions, it can be argued that the key point of analysis is the support structures that existed within the plant. The role of the shop stewards, while being part of the formal trade union structures, was crucially distinct from those at senior union officer levels. The stewards worked in the plants alongside their members and, as a result, for the workers the stewards were the union, a factor particularly exemplified in the way in which the stewards at Greenock and Cumbernauld continued and developed their action despite union hostility or low levels of

[84] Hyman, *Industrial Relations*, p.109.
[85] Coates, *Work-ins, Sit-ins and Industrial Democracy*, p.128.
[86] Gall, 'Resisting Recession and Redundancy', p.117.

practical union assistance. The occupations that occurred in Scotland between 1981 and 1982 therefore illustrate the continued significance of women workers creating spaces of independent activism and resistance through their own self-activity and resistance at the point of production.[87]

7.5 Conclusions

Emerging from this extended discussion of the mobilization, the dynamics of occupation, and the support received by the workers is that a wide range of factors interacted before the point of action and throughout the disputes that have to be fully considered when attempting to explain and contextualise these factory occupations. In considering the mobilization of the workers, it is evident that the linear basis of Kelly's mobilization theory, and the stages of injustice, attribution, leadership and grievance formation, is insufficient in explaining such instances of resistance to closure. Indeed, with the extensive closures taking place across Scotland throughout the early 1980s, such an approach would have inherently led to widespread factory occupation at the time, but it remained a unique response. As authors such as Atzeni have posited, the formulation of grievance and injustice occurs during the action that is launched, rather than being a pre-requisite. The significance of leadership, however, cannot be underestimated in these disputes. Helen Monaghan, Sadie Lang, and Ina Scott approached the disputes differently, but each steward had a strong belief that their action could be successful and closure was unjustifiable. Their positions of leadership among the workers before closure was announced were fundamental in ascribing to them a sense of underlying power and legitimacy from the workforce.

The importance of in-plant relationships have also been emphasised across the three factories, highlighting that the collectivism expressed at the point of action was based on the solidarity generated through working together, supporting the

[87] For examples from different periods, see Leicester, 'Leeds Clothing Workers', p.42; Gordon, *Women and the Labour Movement in Scotland*, p.288; Hughes, *Gender and Political Identities*, p.102.

arguments of Fantasia, Atzeni, Taylor and Moore, and others that social relationships at work are highly significant in explaining why mobilization does, and does not, develop. Significantly, these relationships were highly gendered, supporting Clarke's argument that resistance and activism amongst women is often rooted in the importance of the factory floor as a space of class and feminine interaction.

In considering the reasons for the use of occupation, it is evident that such questions are more complex than the tactic being the only last resort to closure. The argument was developed that the nature of the closure announcements had a substantial impact on the action that was taken, directly impacting the ways in which the workers felt they could best oppose the plans. Further, external influences cannot be isolated, most notable at Plessey, but also salient in the narratives of the workers at Lee's and Lovable. Lastly, it can be seen that support for the workers was also dependent on a range of factors. The press coverage that the disputes received was clearly crucial, and this marked the workers as particularly distinct from standard accounts of industrial militancy, as the activism of women was being given prominent coverage and focus. Importantly, however, the support of workers in instances of dispute cannot be considered purely through the response to media focus. Structures of class activism, the agency of the leaders of the disputes, and the approaches of different trade unions, with different perspectives, agendas, and traditions, had a fundamental impact on the levels of support that the workers received. As a result, to varying degrees, these disputes represent a continuation of Scottish women's independent activism, based on their position as female workers and the bonds of solidarity forged at the point of production.

Chapter Eight. Conclusion

> *Em, and ah can't even remember how long we did the sit-in either… Can't remember. Em, but ah think it wis in the winter that we done it, cos ah think it wis, ah remember it bein' cold… February, March? Wis it February, March?... Ah think that's wit it wis. We wanted wur jobs. We wanted tae fight for wur jobs.*[1]

Agnes Quinn, former Lovable worker, 2015.

Historians and social scientists researching the impacts of deindustrialisation on working-class communities have increasingly emphasised the need to look at the longer-term impacts of these processes, 'beyond the body count' of factory closure and unemployment.[2] It is argued by some that narratives of closure and redundancy are insufficient in offering an understanding of the complexity of factors that impacted workers, as these were not fully realised until the processes had slowed down during the 1990s and into the twenty-first century. However, the experiences of job loss and the resistance of workers and working-class communities remain important sites for historical examination in contributing to our understanding of the complex relationships that determined what action, if any, workers could take in response. Additionally, an examination of the expanding literature on deindustrialisation demonstrates that the voices of female workers continue to be omitted from our understandings of the ways in which people have perceived socio-economic change, responded to the decline of working-class towns and neighbourhoods, and the impact that this has had on individual and communal identities.[3]

This thesis has presented a thorough and substantial investigation into three hitherto under-examined instances of Scottish women's direct, militant, and independent resistance to capital migration and resulting compulsory redundancy.

[1] SOHCA/052/004.
[2] Cowie and Heathcott, 'The Meanings of Deindustrialization', p.5.
[3] Clarke, 'Closing Time'.

The period between February 1981 and March 1982 should be considered as one of the most significant episodes in twentieth-century Scottish labour history, with three successful factory occupations taking place during a time of widespread industrial closure. No previous study has focused on the occupations at Lee Jeans, Lovable, and Plessey, which are unique cases of militant response in the period as they were successful, and they were conducted by women. The gender composition of the workforces and the leaders of the occupations is a pervasive reason why the disputes have suffered from previous under-examination, as the narrative of deindustrialisation and militant opposition in Scotland is one of the deaths of 'dinosaur' heavy industries such as shipbuilding, coalmining, and steel.[4] Public perceptions of resistance to economic decline across central-Scotland have been framed around the public imagery of leaders such as Jimmy Reid and the sentiment that 'we don't only build ships, we build men'.[5] Within the public representations and academic analyses of deindustrialisation in Scotland, the image of the industrial male worker has been central, leaving the unemployed garment producers, textile workers, and light electronic assemblers at the margins, 'hidden from history'.[6]

The extensive analysis of documents held in repositories across Britain and the production of original oral history testimonies presented throughout the previous chapters allows the thesis to make a substantial contribution to our understandings of deindustrialisation and resistance in Scotland. Importantly, the research has reconstructed each occupation based on contemporary reporting and the reflections of leaders, participants, and external witnesses. Despite an increased focus on interpretive narrative investigation, reconstructive oral history remains an important pursuit for researchers in Scotland.[7] The thesis has therefore placed significant focus on presenting a detailed outline of the workplace relations and subsequent occupations at these three factories, consistently placing the workers'

[4] Tom Devine, cited in *The Guardian*, 17/08/2014.
[5] Cited in *The Evening Times*, 07/09/2013.
[6] S. Rowbotham, *Hidden from History: 300 Years of Women's Oppression and the Fight Against It.* London: Pluto Press, 1997.
[7] Bartie and McIvor, 'Oral History in Scotland', p.134.

own narratives at the centre of its analysis, allowing them to convey, in their own words, the events that took place before investigating their reflections further. It is argued that this form of mixed-methods oral history investigation still holds validity when analysing groups marginalised in the existing historical literature. The workplaces and disputes that form the focus of this investigation are now incorporated within the Scottish labour and working-class historiography, and the experiences of the workers can complement existing, and future, research into changing working lives in the later twentieth-century. Additionally, the oral history recordings and transcripts have been stored with the Scottish Oral History Centre Archive for use by any researcher, representing one of the most extensive sources of narrative data in recording women's experiences of work, industrial action, and changing Scottish society since c.1950.

This important practical impact of the dataset collected is complimented by the contribution that the thesis makes to our knowledge and understanding in numerous areas of historical and sociological investigation. Women's experience of manufacturing employment is inevitably the first area in which the thesis contributes. The research project did not seek to extensively analyse the everyday nature of women's manufacturing work at the outset, as it was felt such inquiry would detract from the aim of investigating industrial action. However, due to the paucity of rich, qualitative material on Scottish women's perspectives on industrial work and a general decline in historical and sociological investigation of factory work, this analysis was necessary to contextualise the reflections of the respondents. It is argued that this had added to the academic value of the thesis. It has been demonstrated that a number of previously asserted notions of women's role in manufacturing sites have been attested to throughout this current project. The data shows that women's place in factory work was overwhelmingly concentrated in the poorest paid and lowest skilled jobs, with strict gender restrictions to skilled trades and managerial positions.[8] Missing from Scottish

[8] McIvor, *Working Lives* and Breitenbach, *Women Workers in Scotland.*

analyses of these factors is the way in which women themselves perceived their roles in manufacturing plants, and how they felt about their work. This thesis has contributed to these areas through probing the motivations for the interviewees going to work and their experiences inside the factories. It is evident through this analysis that the geographical proximity of the plants and the wages available were the reasons why the women sought work at the sites, and this perspective can reasonably be assumed to be generally applicable to many others. The dismissal in the literature of female employment being 'pin money' in working-class communities has been reinforced through the narratives of these workers. Additionally, there is little evidence of the respondents seeking employment in the plants due to the type of work that they would do, or the companies for which they worked. Some of the workers spoke of having a desire to get into some kind of trade when they left school, but there was no significant attachment to the work, or to the skills of their trade. It has therefore been shown that these respondents had minimal affective commitment to their employment, with the principle motivations being financial, a necessary contribution to household incomes. That questions were raised concerning motivations to work could lead to this research being critiqued as representative of a continuation of investigations into women's experiences of work that begin with the presumption that they are inherently different to men's, as such questions are not given prominence in studies of men's work, as Pollert argues.[9] In countering this, it is argued that due to the dearth of previous qualitative studies of Scottish women's manufacturing employment, this investigation has been necessary to place the resulting industrial disputes, worker mobilization, and narrative reflection in the context of the employment relationship. It is therefore a valid line of inquiry in framing the disputes in their micro-mobilization contexts.

Women's lived experience of working in manufacturing sites, described at length in the thesis, is a crucial contribution to our current knowledge, addressing an

[9] Pollert, *Girls, Wives, Factory Lives*, p.3.

additionally neglected area in Scottish labour historiography. Investigations conducted throughout the 1970s and 1980s by Westwood, Pollert, and others were based on the English experience, whilst there is a consideration of French narratives in Clarke's analysis. The data presented in this thesis allows for a more comprehensive understanding of Scottish women's experiences of industrial employment, contributing to an area of literature largely informed by speculation. It has been demonstrated that the workers in these plants extracted substantial value from their employment, based predominantly on the workgroup bonds forged at the point of production and the shopfloor solidarities among the women. It is crucial to recognise the factory floor at these sites as gendered spaces, and as sites of feminine interaction in factories managed and controlled by men. At each plant, it has been shown that the workers participated in informal traditions and workgroup rituals, reflected on by the respondents through their extensive discussions of social interaction among the workers during their working day, informal economies, and festivals such as Fair holidays. This interaction should be considered as a way for the workers to make the most of their relegated position in the gendered occupational hierarchies within Scottish manufacturing sites, complementing investigations into English experiences. In interpreting the oral history testimonies, the emphasis placed by the respondents on social engagement and anecdotal reflections on positive workgroup cultures must be considered as demonstrative of such processes. Through the interviews, participants did not offer any substantial reflection on their position as unskilled, low-paid women working in sites of male, managerial control and, without prompting in the interview schedule, they predominantly reflected positively on their experiences based on the relationships with those that they worked with on the shopfloor.

The occupations have been discussed through a consideration of the factors that explain the mobilization of the workers, assessing the reasons why they occupied in resistance to closure. It has been stressed that these processes are complex, and the thesis has highlighted the significance of dynamics operating before and during

action, as well as crucial structural factors in influencing the development of the disputes. The in-plant relationships and the shopfloor cultures among the workers prior to dispute have been emphasised, and it has been demonstrated that these factors played a meaningful role in the process of cognitive liberation, therefore adding to critiques of the narrow focus of Kelly's mobilization theory.[10] While opposition to unjust factory relocation inherent in disputes over closure appears to offer a satisfactory explanation of the reasons for collective action, it has been demonstrated that this factor should not be considered as the single prerequisite for action being launched, as the process of grievance formulation was in constant negotiation at each occupation. It is argued that solidarity through action is crucially influenced by the latent forms of collectivism forged through the imbalances of power and conflicts inherent in the employment relationship. For these dynamics to transpose to collective action there are crucial factors that influence whether workers will act collectively, and the nature of resistance that they take. Leadership has been argued as significant in these processes, with the agency of Helen Monaghan, Sadie Lang, and Ina Scott fundamental in the process of occupation, and in influencing the occupations that developed. Crucially, their legitimacy as leaders of the workers was built upon their roles in the plant during periods of regular production. This insured that, to different extents, the workers believed that the action proposed by the shop stewards had the capability to prevent the closure of the plants, based upon their previous role of representing the workers, further illustrating the importance of workers' experiences during periods of regular employment relations. As the thesis has demonstrated, the reflections of the respondents on the action that they took are discussed collectively, with minimal expression of individual cost-benefit analyses. The importance of these perspectives is subtlety indicated in the narratives presented throughout this work, with consistent references to 'oor work' and 'oor factory'. Inherent in such discussions is the importance of a latent source of solidarity and collectivism within the

[10] Atzeni, 'Searching for Injustice'; Taylor and Moore, 'Cabin Crew Collectivism'.

workforces, an area that does not receive sufficient focus in studies utilising mobilization theories.

Each of these factors contributed to the occupations being launched, but do not offer sufficient explanation for their subsequent development, and it has been demonstrated that the dynamics inside the plants and among the workers cannot be isolated from the social and economic contexts of each locality at this time. The workers and their spokespersons consistently stressed that their disputes were in opposition to unregulated and unaccountable capital mobility, and their actions were part of broader resistance to industrial closure, drastically increasing unemployment levels, and the limited prospects of replacing manufacturing jobs. These perspectives have been emphasised in the oral history testimonies collected in this research, strengthening the argument that the three occupations were significantly influenced by broader socio-economic forces in Scotland through the process of deindustrialisation. The clearest example of this was at Plessey, where the action was directly influenced by the proposed closure of a section of the British Leyland plant in the town. The actions taken at the three sites should therefore be seen as the last resort available to the workers in opposing individual plant closure, as well as an attempt to demonstrate that capital migration based primarily on the pursuit of lower costs was unjust and that such processes could be opposed. Such an argument is not overstating the perceptions of the workers and their leaders with the situation in which they found themselves. The occupations at Lee's, Lovable, and Plessey should therefore be incorporated within discussions of the broader resistance of Scottish workers and Scotland's working-class communities to the processes of deindustrialisation. Thus, the thesis makes an important contribution to our understandings of the moral economy and deindustrialisation in Scotland.[11] The perceived injustice of closing plants that were profitable and relocating them to lower cost economies at the expense of the workforce was considered a violation of perceived moral codes in working-class communities, and

[11] Perchard and Phillips, 'Transgressing the Moral Economy', p.11.

the actions of the workers was a response to this breach. It has been argued throughout the previous chapters that this perspective is crucial in offering an explanation of why the workers took action, further emphasising the importance of socio-economic contexts in explaining the motivations for launching defensive factory occupations. These disputes should therefore be recognised as a key part of deindustrialisation experiences in Scotland, as opposed to being viewed as localised actions, marginalised in the broader historiography of industrial contraction.

The relationship between women workers and the labour movement is another neglected area in Scottish labour historiography that this thesis has sought to address, and several key themes emerge that require comment and further discussion. The level of participation among the workers in trade union organisation at the plants was low prior to dispute, broadly conforming to previous analyses of active engagement among all workers.[12] Despite being members of the unions that operated at each site, the vast majority of respondents had no direct institutional engagement, and the shop stewards were the key point of contact between the workers, their union, and their employer. It has been argued that, as a result of historic public representations of trade unions, industrial dispute, and worker militancy as male arenas, the respondents' own perceptions of trade unions were similarly masculine. When asked through the oral history interviews of their own views on trade unionism and the development of these, the respondents consistently framed their perspectives through the male-dominated industries of shipbuilding, coal mining, and auto manufacturing that dominated popular representations of collectivism in the period. These perspectives reaffirm Breitenbach's contemporary assertion that increased militancy by women workers throughout the 1970s was not represented in the reporting of industrial action, leading to the continued invisibility of female experiences.[13] The pervasiveness of the social and cultural context of remembering is reinforced by the respondents being unaware of any other instances of female factory occupations, the plausibility

[12] Kirton, 'The influences on women joining and participating', p.388.
[13] Breitenbach, *Women Workers in Scotland*, p.4.

of which has been argued to be highly doubtful. Thus, it has been demonstrated that even those women who led and participated in industrial action at the time predominantly view militancy as being much more prominent among men, despite their own experiences. This highlights the male dominance of popular narratives of resistance to deindustrialisation in Scotland.

It has been argued that the relationship between the workers and their unions in these disputes represents a continuation of women taking independent action, often out-with traditional trade union structures, that Gordon noted in her analysis of the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries.[14] When the workers took resistive action, the approach of their own trade unions can be seen as having had minimal impact on the continuation, or the success, of the occupations. These approaches differed across the disputes, with hostility and opposition at Lee Jeans, ambivalence at Lovable, and public support but private focus on the auto-industry at Plessey. The most important aspect of the role of the unions at these disputes in our understanding of Scottish women's industrial activism in the period is the lack of impact that their varying levels of support had on the workers. Lukewarm union support or opposition did not prove a significant barrier to the continuation of the occupations. The vast majority of respondents interviewed through the course of this project did not discuss the presence, support, or opposition of trade union officials. Rather, the individual shop stewards at the plants were viewed as the organisers and leaders of the occupations, not the institutional officials. This is important, as it clearly demonstrates the continued significance of female workers creating space for their action outside of conventional industrial relations structures, and taking action regardless of institutional support when this was necessary.

As well as the approach of individual unions, the support of other workers and of working-class communities for the occupations has been examined extensively

[14] Gordon, *Women and the Labour Movement in Scotland*.

through these case studies. It has been highlighted that defensive factory occupations are able to attract greater levels of popular support, due to their visibility and the reasons for action. This was evident at Lee Jeans and Plessey, where the workers received substantial donations for the continuation of their action, as well as a number of smaller acts of support and solidarity. It has been argued that this support was framed through widespread opposition to industrial decline and rising unemployment, therefore representative of another facet of working-class resistance to deindustrialisation in this period that has not been incorporated in the Scottish literature. Lovable was the anomaly in this regard, where it was argued that the leadership of the occupation largely localised their dispute to the workforce and management at the plant, and appeals made for public support failed to receive substantial backing. In offering explanation, it was asserted that the limited history of class action in Cumbernauld had an important impact on the dispute not becoming a broader struggle between community and capital. Greenock and Bathgate can be regarded as 'communities of collective action' through historic instances and traditions of industrial action which created the support structures that the leadership of the occupations could interact with and utilise in their disputes.[15] The workers at Lovable, conducting their dispute in a new town with much more limited traditions and experiences, did not have this latent support network within their locality, leading to a significantly lower level of community engagement with their action.

Through an extensive investigation of contemporary reports and original oral history testimonies focused on these workplaces and the disputes that were conducted by the workers, this thesis has demonstrated that the occupations at Lee Jeans, Lovable, and Plessey in 1981 and 1982 are highly significant in our understandings of deindustrialisation in Scotland. Considering the reflections of female manufacturing workers who took militant action in resistance to capital migration and closure allows for a better understanding of their perceptions of

[15] Gall, 'Trade Unionism and Industrial Relations in Scotland Since UCS', p.61.

industrial labour, the value extracted from work, and their reflections on leading and participating in defensive factory occupations. This contributes significantly to our understanding of the impacts of deindustrialisation on working-class communities across Scotland, with the experiences of women workers faced with manufacturing closure adding to the rich literature focused on industrial male workers. Additionally, the thesis has demonstrated that the mobilization of the workers at Lee Jeans, Lovable, and Plessey was a response to the attempts by private capital to deny the workers their jobs, and therefore destroying spaces of working-class feminine sociability and the bonds of solidarity that had been forged at the point of production. It was these latent support structures that were then transposed to militant collective action, which prevented the full closure of each factory and demonstrated the ability of workgroups to oppose and reject closure. This demonstrates the continued validity of Bluestone and Harrison's seminal argument that 'deindustrialisation does not just happen', but is the result of strategic corporate decisions to disinvest in one area and shift production to another. The workers at these sites demonstrated that women were not passive victims to deindustrialisation, but actively engaged in the processes of resistance. Their actions demonstrated that, when acting cooperatively and drawing on the bonds of collectivism forged on the shopfloor, the workers could mobilize in resistance, create local and national support structures, and ultimately win their struggles against industrial closure.

Appendix A: Interviewee Details

SOHCA/052/001

Betty Wallace

B. 1932

Betty Wallace was born in Govan in and brought up in the Ibrox area of Glasgow. She left school at 14 and got a job in the toy counter of Woolworths. She then worked in Galbraith's grocery store, Davidson Trust, and Milliner's clothes store. She moved to Cumbernauld, North Lanarkshire, in 1970 and began working as a sewing machinist in the Lovable Lingerie plant. She worked in Lovable in 1982, during which time the company threatened to close the plant. Betty participated in a workforce-led occupation and picketing of the factory in an attempt to reverse the decision of the company. She continued working in the plant following the sit-in and was a shop steward of the National Union of Tailors and Garment Workers. She retired from the plant in 1997.

SOHCA/052/002

Irene Steel

B. 1942

Irene Steel was born in Bridgeton, Glasgow, before moving to Cumbernauld as part of the Glasgow overspill programme, when her husband got a job in the Burroughs plant in the town. When she left school, she worked in Collins' Bookbinding and a tobacco factory, before getting married and leaving employment. On her return to work, she got a job in the Lovable plant. She worked there in 1982, during which time the company threatened to close the plant. Irene participated in a workforce-led occupation and picketing of the factory in an attempt to reverse the decision of the company. Following the occupation, she continued to work in Lovable, before moving into catering, cleaning and school canteen work. She retired as a cleaner in Cumbernauld's New Town Hall in 2012.

SOHCA/052/003

Josephine King

B. 1954

Josephine King was born in Bellshill before moving to Hamilton with her parents. When she left school, Josephine worked as a wage clerkess and in a Simplicity Patterns factory, before moving to Cumbernauld and beginning employment with Lovable Lingerie. She worked in Lovable in 1982, during which time the company threatened to close the plant. Josephine participated in a workforce-led occupation and picketing of the factory in an attempt to reverse the decision of the company. She continued to work in Lovable following the sit-in, before beginning work with the Scottish Prison Service teaching inmates how to sew. She is still employed by the Prison Service part-time and lives in Wishaw, North Lanarkshire.

SOHCA/052/004

Agnes Quin

B. 1957

Agnes Quinn was born in Chryston and brought up in Moodiesburn, North Lanarkshire. When leaving school, Agnes began working in Cochrane's before beginning employment as a sewing machinist in the Lovable plant in Cumbernauld. She worked in Lovable in 1982 and participated in a workforce-led occupation and picketing of the factory in opposition to planned closure. Following the occupation, she continued working in Lovable until the factory closed in 1998, after which worked in B.O.C and OKI. She then worked in Sri Lanka and the Philippines, training sewing machinists producing garments for firms such as Marks and Spencer and Victoria Secret. She now works as a support worker and lives in Moodiesburn.

SOHCA/052/005

Margaret Brown

B. 1955

Margaret Brown was born and raised in Greenock, firstly in Ann Street in the town centre, before moving to Larkfield, a housing scheme two miles outside of the centre. After leaving school, she immediately began work in the Playtex bra factory in Port Glasgow as a sewing machinist. After 10 years in Playtex, she began working in the Lee Jeans factory, located in Larkfield, cutting her daily commute significantly. She participated in the occupation of the factory in 1981 and was involved in going out to other workplaces to speak with workers and seek support for their dispute, and she helped others in the sit-in to pass the time by teaching them knitting. After the jeans factory closed, Margaret began working in Greenock's IBM plant, her last employment before retiring.

SOHCA/052/006

Patricia Arkley

B. 1962

Patricia (Trisha) Arkley was born and raised in Greenock. When she was six months old, her family moved from the town's Lynedoch Street to the Larkfield housing scheme, two miles outside of the town centre. Her dad, Pat Arkley, was well known in the town's trade union movement and the local Labour Party. Trisha began working in Lee Jeans when she was 15, immediately after leaving school, and took part in the workforce occupation of the factory to oppose closure in 1981. After the factory closed, she worked for four and a half years in Jersey, before returning to Greenock and worked in the town's Gateside Laundry. She still lives in Greenock and works as a home carer for Inverclyde Council.

SOHCA/052/007

Margaret (Maggie) McElwee

B. 1959

Maggie McElwee was born in her family's tenement in Greenock and moved with her family first of all to the Branchton scheme and then Larkfield. Once leaving school, Maggie immediately began work in the Lee Jeans Factory also in the Larkfield area. She worked in the factory in 1981 when the management announced that the factory was to close and that production would relocate to Northern Ireland. She took part in a workforce occupation of the factory between February and August that year. Maggie was a prominent figure in the sit-in, as she travelled around the UK speaking with workers to promote their dispute. She was the only worker not to be reemployed when the factory reopened, only becoming so when shop steward Helen Monaghan threatened strike action. After leaving the factory, Maggie worked in Jersey before opening a laundrette in Greenock. She now lives in Wemyss Bay and lets out properties.

SOHCA/052/008

Helen Monaghan

B. 1936

Helen Monaghan was born in Port Glasgow in May 1936. Her upbringing was made materially difficult as her father was unable to work due to emphysema. When she finished school, she worked in various jobs including Birkmyre's Mill, the Royal Ordinance Factory in Bishopton and as a 'clippie' on the buses. She began working in the Lee Jeans factory when it opened in Greenock in 1970 as an inspector of finished products. She recalls that, due to being slightly older than many of the workers, she became an unofficial spokesperson for workers' grievances. This brought her into conflict with management and, in 1971, she was dismissed. This led to an unofficial walkout by the workers, after which the company were forced to recognise the National Union of Tailors and Garment Workers, with Helen becoming convener. She was convener when the company announced that the factory was to

close. Helen then led a seven month occupation of the premises to prevent the company from removing stock and machinery from the site. This brought her into conflict with her own union, which the workers divorced from following the dispute. After the factory closed, Helen went into home care. She is now retired and lives in Greenock.

SOHCA/052/009

John Easdale

B. 1947

John Easdale was born in Paisley and once he left school, he worked in the engineering industry and became an office worker in Talbot car plant in Linwood, working in the wages department. He became a member of the Transport and General Workers Union, becoming the deputy convener for the staff. He then completed a diploma in Trade Union Studies at the London School of Economics and began working for the National Union of Tailors and Garment Workers in 1977 as a full time officer in the Scottish branch. He was employed by the union at the time of the factory occupations at Lee Jeans and Lovable in 1981 and 1982. He continued for work for the NUTGW and subsequently the GMB before retiring in 2004. He is a Labour Councillor for Irvine East in North Ayrshire.

SOHCA/052/010

Sadie Hotchkiss

B. 1959

Sadie Hotchkiss was born in Greenock and was brought up in the town's Bow Farm housing scheme, attending St Columba's High. After leaving school at 16, she worked in the office of a garage for a short time, before beginning employment in the Lee Jeans factory. She left for a short period following a disagreement with her supervisor, but got back in and worked there when it was announced that the company was closing the plant and the workers launched an occupation to prevent this. Once the sit-in started, Sadie discovered that she was pregnant with her first

child, but continued to participate in a more limited way. Following the eventual closure of the plant, she has worked in retail. She still lives in Greenock.

SOHCA/052/010

Catherine Robertson

B. 1961

Cathie Robertson was brought up in the Gibshill housing scheme on the outskirts of Greenock, attending Finnart High School. Once finishing school, she had a couple of small jobs, before beginning employment in the Lee Jeans factory. She became a pivotal figure in the occupation to prevent the closure of the factory, travelling across the UK to speak with others about the dispute. She is also a singer, and composed a number of songs during the sit-in. Following the eventual closure of the factory, she worked in a local shipyard in the catering and then book keeping departments, and still lives in Greenock.

SOHCA/052/011

Bridie Bellingham

B. 1933

Bridie Bellingham was born and raised in Greenock, attending Saint Mungo’s and Saint Mary’s Schools. When she left school, she began working in Birkmyre’s Mill in the town as a machinist. She then worked in Thomas Boag’s Bag Store, before taking a gap in employment once getting married and having children. She began working in Lee Jeans in the mid-1970s as a machinist, before becoming a supervisor. She also became a Shop Steward of the National Union of Tailors and Garment Workers, and was in this position when the workers launched their occupation of the factory in 1981. During the sit-in, she travelled across the UK to speak on behalf of the workers and to raise funds for the dispute. After the denim factory closed, she worked for two years in a tights manufacturer before retiring.

SOCHA/052/012

Karen Steel

B. 1967

Karen Steel was born in Glasgow and was brought up in a Mormon household in the Drumchapel area of the city. At age 15, she moved with her family to Cumbernauld when her mum and dad had the option to buy a house in the town. She began working in the Lovable factory immediately after leaving school, and joined the workforce less than two years after an occupation of the premises had prevented its closure. At the age of 18 she became a shop steward of the National Union of Tailors and Garment Workers in the plant. She worked there for a number of years before having children. She still lives in Cumbernauld and is an insurance salesperson.

SOHCA/052/013

Theresa Coulter

B. 1962

Theresa Coulter was born in Maryhill, Glasgow and her family moved to Cumbernauld when she was two months old. She grew up in the new town and left school at 15. Upon leaving school, she got a job in the Lovable factory in the town, and worked there when the workers launched a sit-in to prevent closure in 1982. She participated in the occupation of the premises and the subsequent picket from outside the plant. Once the factory was reopened, she worked there for a short while before moving to another clothing manufacturing firm in Glasgow's east end. She stopped working when she began having a family, and made curtains from home to secure additional income. Once her children were older, she trained as a car mechanic and then as a hairdresser, the job she had always wanted growing up. She works in a hairdressers' in Cumbernauld and still lives in the town.

SOHCA/052/014

Sandra Docherty

B. 1956

Sandra Docherty was born in Stirling and brought up in the mining town of Kilsyth. Her father was a plumber and her mother a housewife and, once leaving school, she worked in a sewing factory in the town for six months. After that, she gained employment in the Lovable factory in Cumbernauld and worked there until 1981 when she became pregnant with her oldest child. She did not work in the factory during the workers' occupation of 1982, and was not involved in any way. Once their children were older, her husband started his own road repair business and she now works in the office of their firm. They live in Cumbernauld, in the Balloch area on the outskirts of the town.

SOHCA/052/015

Alison Cairns

B. 1956

Alison Cairns was brought up in Dunnipace in Stirlingshire. Once leaving school, she began working in a paper mill in Denny, before working in a clothing manufacturer in the town. After this, she began employment in Lovable, Cumbernauld in 1975. She worked as a switch worker, meaning that she was trained in all aspects of production to provide cover when workers weren't on their normal job. She worked at the factory when the company announced that it would be closed and participated in the worker occupation of the plant. She did not participate in the external picket, and began working there again when it reopened. After leaving Lovable to have children, she worked a number of part-time cleaning jobs, before becoming the Assistant Manager of Dobbie's Garden Centre. She still does this and lives in Cumbernauld Village.

SOHCA/052/016

Margaret Cairney 1953

B. 1956

Margaret Cairney was born in Glasgow's Rottenrow hospital and brought up in Croy, on the outskirts of Cumbernauld. Once leaving school she began working as an office junior in Kilsyth, but left as she felt that she could make better money in the Lovable factory and began working there in the early 1970s. She was not employed in the plant during the period of the workers' factory occupation, but began working there again after its successful conclusion. She went on to gain a BA in History and Industrial Relations before working as a Health and Safety Officer. She is now retired.

SOHCA/052/017

Kenny MacAskill

B. 1958

Kenny MacAskill was born and brought up in Linlithgow, West Lothian before going on to study Law at the University of Edinburgh. He served his legal apprenticeship with Edinburgh law firm Levy McRae and, during this time, advised and represented the workers at the Plessey Capacitors plant in Bathgate regarding the legal steps taken by the company in trying to end their occupation of the plant in 1982. He is a lifelong member of the Scottish National Party (SNP) and was a key member of the'79 Group' that attempted to move the party to the left. He was a Member of the Scottish Parliament between 1999 and 2016, and acted as the Cabinet Secretary of Justice 2007 – 2014. His most high profile episode as Cabinet Secretary was his decision to release Abdelbaset Ali Mohmed al-Megrahi, the only person convicted of the Lockerbie Bombing in 1988, on compassionate grounds due to the diagnosis terminal cancer in 2009. He retired from the Scottish Parliament in 2016.

SOHCA/052/018

Esther McGinnes

B. 1951

Esther McGinnes was born in Fife in and moved to Bathgate with her family in the early 1960s. She worked in a shoe shop whilst at high school and once finishing school at 16 she started working in the Plessey Capacitors Plant in the town. She worked mostly on production in hand winding and power winding and was there in 1982 when it was announced that the factory was to close and the workers launched an occupation in opposition. Esther took part in the sit-in and was also taken to the Court of Session when the company took action against the occupying workforce. After Plessey, Esther was unemployed and 'signed on' for a year, an event that she recalls vividly. She then began working as an auxiliary nurse in Gogarburn Hospital, and worked as a carer until she retired in 2014.

SOHCA/052/019

Elizabeth Fairley

B. 1933

Elizabeth Fairley was brought up in Bathgate before moving to Blackburn with seven in a family living in a single end before they got a new house. After leaving school she worked in a hosiery factory and a deaf and dumb school in Edinburgh. When she was 18 she got a job in the Telegraph Condenser Company in Bathgate, and worked there until she was married. After being married and having children, she went back to the plant – now Plessey Capacitors – and worked shifts until it closed. She participated in the workers' sit-in of the plant to resist closure and was active in collecting funds to sustain the dispute. She worked in a number of jobs after Plessey and is now retired and living in Whitburn, West Lothian.

SOHCA/052/020

Jim Swan

B. 1939

Jim Swan was born in Harthill and, after leaving school, he began an apprenticeship as a fitter in Murray Patterson's engineering works in Coatbridge. After not being allowed in the army due to medical problems, he signed up with the Merchant Navy and worked as a junior engineer until he got married. After this, he worked in a number of engineering sites, before beginning with the British Motor Company (BMC) in Bathgate in 1965. During his time with BMC he acted as a shop steward, vice-convener and convener for the AEU, before being appointed onto the joint shop stewards committee. He worked at the plant, then called British Leyland, in 1982 when the workers staged a short occupation in opposition to proposed reduction in production. This was at the same time that workers in Bathgate's Plessey plant also staged a longer occupation in opposition to proposed factory closure. He is now retired and lives in Whitburn, West Lothian.

SOHCA/052/021

Mamie Friel

B. 1922

Mamie Friel was born and brought up in Whitburn, West Lothian. She worked in Fife during World War Two making shell casings, before living in Dundee once she got married. After separating from her first husband, she returned to West Lothian and started working in the Telegraph Condenser Company (TCC). She worked there as an inspector until being made redundant from the then Plessey factory in 1979. Her second husband also worked in Plessey, and worked there at the time of the worker occupation in 1982.

SOHCA/052/022

Clare Boyle

B. 1926

Bridget Clare Boyle was born and raised in Bathgate, being brought up by her grandmother and aunt after her mother had passed away when she was 2 years old. After school, she worked in a factory in Corstorphine for a number of years, before beginning in the new TCC at Bathgate when she was 18. She worked in the TCC and then Plessey until she was 56, before beginning work in the hotel sector. She wasn't actively part of the sit-in in 1982 as she had a job in a hotel at this point, but she did join marches and demonstrations to offer support. She still lives in Bathgate.

SOHCA/052/022

Catherine McLean

B. 1931

Catherine McLean was brought up in Gorebridge, Midlothian. Whilst at school she worked for a dairy, milking cows and delivering milk and newspapers. Her father died when he was 60 of silicosis having been a miner throughout his life, and Catherine believes that he was one of the first people to receive compensation for this. She worked in Plessey, Bathgate for a number of years, and took part in the workforce occupation in 1982. She did not return to the plant after this, and worked in a clothing plant.

SOHCA/052/023

Kathy Lawn

B. Not disclosed

Kathy Lawn was born in Glasgow before moving to Cumbernauld after it was designated as a new town. She worked in the office of the Lovable plant, and was instrumental in organising the staff into the NUTGW. She participated in the worker occupation in resistance to closure and was a close friend of Sadie Lang, the shop steward in the plant.

SOHCA/036/003

Mary McGachie

B. 1962

Mary McGachie was born in Greenock. Once leaving school, she immediately began working in the Lee Jeans factory in the town and remained there until the factory occupation in opposition to closure in 1981. She participated in the sit-in and travelled across Britain to raise awareness of the dispute and collect funds. She left the occupation before its conclusion, moving to the Isle of Man to work. After that, she returned to Greenock and worked in the reopened Inverwear plant. Since that closed, she has worked for the NHS and still lives in Inverclyde.

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Bridie Bellingham
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Interviewed 08/10/2015

Clare Boyle
Assembly Worker, Plessey
Interviewed 05/03/2016.

Margaret Brown
Sewing Machinist, Lee Jeans
Interviewed 28/08/2015

Margaret Cairney
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Alison Cairns

Sewing Machinist, Lovable

Interviewed 18/11/2015

Theresa Coulter

Sewing Machinist, Lovable

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Sandra Docherty

Sewing Machinist, Lovable

Interviewed 05/11/2015

John Easdale

Trade Union Official, NUTGW / GMB

Interviewed 05/06/2016

Elizabeth Fairley

Assembly Worker, Plessey

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Mamie Friel

Assembly Worker, Plessey

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Sadie Hotchkiss

Sewing Machinist, Lee Jeans

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Josephine King

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Kenny MacAskill

Lawyer and Politician

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