THE EXPERIENCE OF UNEMPLOYMENT
OF SOCIAL ASSISTANCE RECIPIENTS

By

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We accept this thesis as conforming
to the required standard

THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA
September 1989
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Date Sept. 30, 1989
ABSTRACT

An exploratory study was conducted to discover significant events and the feelings attached to these events during the experience of unemployment of social assistance recipients. Twenty social assistance recipients were interviewed. The subjects ranged in age from 25 to 44 and there were 11 females and 9 males. The phenomenological/critical incident methodology adapted by Borgen and Amundson (1984) was used. It was found that this group had an unemployment experience that could be best described as a "flat" experience with relatively few highs and a continual, pervasive string of lows. The most prominent critical incident was financial pressures and this factor seemed to dominate the experience of the great majority of respondents. Their experience was characterized by a continual struggle to financially meet survival needs, pessimism around job search, low self esteem and a battery of negative feelings around being on welfare. The results of this study will hopefully assist counsellors in understanding the experience of unemployment of social assistance recipients and lead to more effective therapeutic interventions for this population.
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Finally, I would like to thank my wife Amy for her love and support throughout my graduate studies.
CHAPTER I

Introduction

In recent years, the need for employment counselling has increased. In 1982, Canada's annual average unemployment rates reached the highest recorded figure since 1938-39 (Deaton, 1983). More recent figures (Kapsalis, 1988) demonstrate that in 1988, British Columbia had the second highest "unemployment vacancy" gap in Canada as its unemployment rate (12.0%) exceeded its job vacancy rate (2.9%) by 9.1 percentage points.

In examining this phenomenon, it is important to consider the full impact of unemployment on the lives of those who experience it. Kirsh (1983) discussed the social stigma suffered by the unemployed in Canada where a number of negative myths and stereotypes exist pertaining to the unemployed. These myths and stereotypes include typifying the unemployed as too lazy to work, too unreliable to hold steady jobs or as dishonest individuals who are cheating the system at the taxpayers expense.

The social stigma experienced by the unemployed goes beyond these negative stereotypes. As Kelvin and Jarrett (1985) pointed out, Western society's socio-economic structure is predominantly
defined in terms of its division of labour. As a result, the unemployed are defined in inherently negative terms, namely by what they are not as opposed to what they are. The authors also pointed out that the situation can be worsened by the assumption that the unemployed individual's status is merely temporary, and that he/she will soon resume an identifiable role in society.

One population for whom unemployment is often more permanent in nature is social assistance recipients. As this study deals with the unemployment experience of social assistance recipients, one must consider the fact that many of these individuals have been unemployed for an extended period of time. This dynamic can impact their experience in a number of ways. For example, the common assumption that unemployment is merely an "intermission between jobs" can be a source of disappointment, shame and frustration for those individuals caught in long term and/or chronic unemployment. Further, the longer people have been unemployed and on social assistance, the more distant their last work experience can seem. As a result, their levels of self esteem and confidence as well as their sense of identity may be adversely affected by prolonged unemployment. This can be especially true for social assistance recipients whose lack of job search skills, vocational training and/or work experience lead them to doubt if, in fact, they will ever become permanent members of the work force.
The author of this study has worked in the area of employment and job placement counselling of social assistance recipients for the past several years. This target group has proved to be uniquely challenging and rewarding in that their barriers to employment have frequently been more profound than those of the more recently unemployed. More specifically, individuals from this target group have frequently presented difficulties in the areas of vocational goal setting, self esteem, dealing with authority, financial management, locus of control, "frustration threshold" and job search skills. At the same time, many of these individuals have presented themselves as being very motivated to become independent of social assistance and have expressed a perception that their lives would be greatly enriched by securing employment.

It has thus been the challenge of this author as well as many others in the field to develop and provide services that can enable social assistance recipients to seek, secure and retain employment. Clearly, a greater understanding of how these individuals experience unemployment can enhance the effectiveness of both employment training programs and of a variety of counsellors or counselling programs devoted to servicing the needs of social assistance recipients.

This thesis has applied a research methodology that was developed by Borgen and Amundson (1984). This methodology has proven successful in gaining knowledge regarding the experience
of unemployment of other groups such as immigrants (Borgen and Amundson, 1984), youth (Borgen and Amundson, 1984) and university graduates (Harder, 1986). It is philosophically based on a combined phenomenological and critical incident approach and utilizes in-depth interviews to elicit reports of facilitating and hindering incidents from the subjects' viewpoint. A critical incident technique is used to analyse the data generated by the in-depth interviews.

The subjects interviewed for this study were social assistance recipients that were entering an employment training program. Because the government departments funding this program were interested in helping "middle aged" job seekers in their "prime working years", each participant was 25-44 years of age. By using an in-depth, qualitative, critical incident techniques, a number of insights were gained regarding the experience of unemployment of social assistance recipients. It is hoped that these insights will both contribute to our understanding of this group's experience and assist counsellors who are in a position to enhance the physical and psychological well-being of social assistance recipients.
CHAPTER 11

Literature Review

Much of the literature devoted to the study of unemployment examines the areas of reactions to unemployment, moderating factors, generalized population models and the relationship between unemployment and human needs. In the area of the experience of being on welfare, the majority of literature is devoted to the stigma of welfare.

Reactions To Unemployment

A number of books and articles have been published pertaining to the effects of unemployment on a variety of groups. Feather and Bond (1983), for example, found that unemployed university graduates spend their time in a less organized, less purposeful manner than employed university graduates. This finding has far reaching implications as, according to the authors, there is a positive correlation between purposeful use of time and higher self esteem and absence of depressive symptoms. Further, Tiggemann and Winefield (1984) found that unemployed subjects scored lower on self esteem scales and higher on depressive affect than the employed subjects.
The theme of unemployment adversely affecting the individual's level of self esteem and depression is present in a number of studies Bernstein (1985), Fagin and Little (1983), Jahoda (1982), Kelvin and Janett (1985), and McCarroll (1984) all reported the devastating effects that unemployment can have on the individual's self concept and morale. Hartley (1980) conducted intensive interviews with twenty six unemployed managers and found that six subjects had low self esteem, eight had defensively high self esteem and eight had intermittently reduced self esteem.

Fagin and Little (1982) reported that the aforementioned reactions seemed particularly prominent among male breadwinners. They reported that these individuals tended to blame themselves excessively for their job loss and inability to gain employment. These men were further negatively impacted as they found their "inadequacy" confirmed by their family experiences wherein, "many wives, after months of useless job search... began to reproach their partners, implicitly or explicitly, for their circumstances." (Page 51).

In another study (Komarovsky,1971), a number of conclusions were reached regarding the effects of unemployment on the relationships between the unemployed man and his family. Included in the found effects were a decrease in frequency of sexual relations, a deterioration in relationships between fathers and their adolescent children, a "loss of status"
resulting from a loss of earnings and failure to provide for the family in the manner to which they had become accustomed and a decrease in the husband's tolerance of other family members. Although it was found that there was an increase in the quantity of time men spent with their younger children, there were few cases where an increase in the quality of time spent together was reported. Brathwaite (1983) also reported unemployment as having adverse effects upon family relationships and found that many subjects were concerned that those around them perceived them as lazy.

Studies have pointed to unemployment as having detrimental effects on social lives. Kirsh (1983) reported that "job loss often weakens people's support systems, just at a time when they most need reassurance and a sense of belonging". (p.47). Macky and Haines (1982) found an increase of "non-social" activities such as T.V. satching, listening to the radio and daytime sleeping. McCarroll (1984) also reported the tendency of the unemployed to interact less with others as they become more preoccupied with their own circumstances.

Given the aforementioned reactions to unemployment, it is hardly surprising that the same author (Kirsh,1983) reported number of adverse physical symptoms as a result of unemployment. These symptoms include fatigue, weight loss, insomnia and fainting spells. Bernstein (1985) also pointed to unemployment's
negative effects on both physical and mental health and Fagin and Little (1982) stated that unemployment can have adverse effects upon the physical health of individuals and their families. Liem and Rayman (1984) concluded in their study that the mental health difficulties encountered by the unemployed are sufficiently profound and distinct that traditional health services do not adequately meet their needs.

Stage Models Of The Experience Of Unemployment

In discussing the experience of employment, a number of authors have suggested models that may represent the "universal" or group specific experience of unemployment. Hepworth (1980) summarized the experience as comprising of four general stages: shock, optimism, pessimism and fatalism. Powell and Driscoll (1973) presented the experience of unemployed professionals in four stages: 1) relaxation and relief 2) concerted effort 3) vacillation and doubt and 4) malaise and cynicism. One area of possible distinction between the experience of unemployment of professionals and of clients on Social Assistance is Powell & Driscoll's first stage of "relaxation and relief". Because of the social, family and economic pressures that Social Assistance Recipients are typically faced with, it seems more likely that their first stage of unemployment experience would
resemble Hopson and Adams (1976) first stage of "immobilization" or Amundson and Borgen's (1982) initial stage of "denial".

In this original model, Amundson and Borgen (1982) relied primarily on the literature in the areas of grieving and job related stress reactions. The most widely known model of the stages of grieving is the model developed by Kubler-Ross (1969) which includes the stages of denial, anger, bargaining, depression and acceptance. It is worth noting that Kubler-Ross stated that different individuals would experience these stages in different sequences and with differing levels of intensity. Operating with the assumption that a job search would have similar dynamics to an actual job, Amundson and Borgen (1982) report that they hypothesized that the stress associated with a job search would resemble the stress associated with job burnout. More specifically, the authors found that the job burnout model developed by Edelwich and Brodsky (1980) could be applied to the experience of unemployment. This model includes the stages of enthusiasm, stagnation, frustration and apathy. It is this author's suspicion that the first stage of Brodsky's model (enthusiasm) would most likely be very fleeting in the experience of Social Assistance Recipients as the majority of client's this author has counselled have had very little confidence in their job search skills or their abilities to find a more rewarding position than that they had been displaced from.
As pointed out by Kelvin and Jarret (1985), one potential danger of defining stages of unemployment is that a "general stereotype" of the behavior may emerge. This consequence could serve to obscure the fact that different segments of the unemployed population may differ significantly in their experience of unemployment. This principle is highlighted in the work of Borgen and Amundson (1984, 1985, 1987) in which they chart distinct "emotional roller coasters" based on factors such as the clients' gender, age, cultural background and occupational background. For example, they found that the population sub-groups consisting of primary wage earners (men & women) over the age of twenty five experienced a shorter "grief period" than job search period. They also found that the members of this group who were able to anticipate their job loss seemed to have completed their grieving process prior to being displaced. Not surprisingly, the authors found that the population sub-groups of female secondary wage earners experienced much less severe reactions to job loss and, when faced with an unsuccessful job search, experienced a more gradual downward slide. Given the relative homogeneity of experiences of certain population sub-groups, it was decided to explore whether Social Assistance Recipients would also have a distinct pattern of experiences of unemployment or would instead be divisible into other sub-groups pertaining to gender, age and/or occupational background.
Factors Moderating The Effects of Unemployment

Because this thesis is discussing the experience of unemployment of a specific target group (Social Assistance Recipients aged 25-44) it would be worthwhile to examine the literature that has addressed the moderating factors on a variety of subject groups' experience of unemployment.

In discussing their study of the experience of unemployment, Amundson and Borgen (1987) found that the results of the study pointed to distinct sub-groups such as primary vs. secondary wage earners, Asian vs. European Immigrants, Youth (under 25) vs. Adults and subjects who anticipated job loss vs. subjects who did not have as much prior warning. The authors found that these groups had distinct patterns of reactions to unemployment.

Tiggeman and Winefield (1987) also suggested that it would be quite inappropriate to classify the unemployed as an undifferentiated group. More specifically, they pointed out that subjects who have no history of successful previous employment are likely to encounter unique difficulties. In a television panel on unemployment (C.B.C., 1986), Dr. N. Amundson echoed this conclusion by labeling entrance into the workforce as a North American "rite of passage" without which one does not fully enter the realm of adulthood. Although the target group of this thesis starts at age 25, it is expected that many of the subjects
will have no history of long term employment and may thus, to some extent share reactions with unemployed school leavers.

Another factor that has been reported to moderate the effects of unemployment is the worker's occupational status prior to displacement. Hepworth (1979) found that professionals were much more able to maintain a social network during unemployment than were blue collar workers. Jahoda (1983) concluded that, although many white collar workers have extremely negative experiences of unemployment, there is a wide variety of responses (positive and negative) to unemployment within this group as opposed to the uniformly negative experience of displaced blue collar workers.

One factor that is closely related to occupational status is financial support and resources during unemployment. This factor is cited as predominant in a number of studies examining the effects of unemployment. Amundson and Borgen (1987) listed financial pressures as a major factor in negatively shifting the emotions of the unemployed. Frohlich (1983) reported that "the financial problems of the unemployed are found to be the main source of frustration in study after study", (p. 311). Jahoda (1983) found that a lack of financial well being can have a "ripple" effect on the unemployed, affecting their relationships with their family, their structured use of time and their physical and mental health.
There are a number of other factors that may greatly affect the individual's experience of unemployment. These factors include gender (Winefield & Tiggeman, 1983) experience of previous employment (Feather & O'Brien, 1986) and political beliefs (Furnham, 1984). Kirsh (1983) listed a number of other possible factors including length of unemployment, reason for job loss, ability to handle losses in general and job options available. In examining the factors affecting the experience of the unemployed, it appears that the great majority would tend to negatively impact the experience of those on Social Assistance. Because individuals on Social Assistance typically have restricted job options, limited financial support and are normally unskilled or semi-skilled workers, it is apparent that these individuals are likely to have a more negative experience of unemployment than those who benefit from higher socio-economic status.

Unemployment and Human Needs

In describing the psychological dynamics of unemployment Borgen and Amundson (1984) found it instructive to incorporate the work of Abraham Maslow (1968). Maslow's "hierarchy of needs" presents needs at five different levels (Maslow 1968):
1. Self-Actualization: need for creative self expression

2. Esteem Needs: Need to be worthwhile to self and others
   Desire for strength, achievement and mastery
   Desire for prestige, dominance and recognition

3. Love and Belonging: Need to love and be loved
   Need to feel part of a special group

4. Safety: Physical safety and comfort
   Material security
   Need for psychological and environmental order and stability
   Need to be trusted and to trust others

5. Physiological Needs: Food, drink, oxygen, rest, elimination, sex

The nature of the hierarchy is that the needs at the "lower" level must be met before the needs at the "upper" levels can be addressed with any measure of success. This has very strong implications for Social Assistance Recipients as it is reasonable to expect that their "Safety" and "Physiological" needs will, in many cases, be inadequately met. Further, the stigma that is typically associated with being on Social Assistance could be a serious obstacle to meeting needs in the areas of "Love and Belonging" and "Esteem".

Borgen and Amundson (1984) also found it useful to consider the description of human needs put forth by Toffler (1980).
Toffler (1980) describes human needs in three general categories: 1. a need for community.  
2. a need for meaning.  
3. a need for structure.

It can be expected that unemployment may have a significant impact on all three of the aforementioned needs. Firstly, the need for community is often met by one's co-workers both on the job and outside working hours. A number of unemployed individuals have reported that unemployment adversely affects their non-work related social networks including friends and family (Borgen & Amundson, 1984; Jahoda, 1983).

As mentioned earlier, Western society (Kelvin and Janett, 1985) defines individual status in terms of division of labour. As a result, it would not be at all surprising to find the unemployed to be adversely affected by a lack of meaning.

Finally, unemployment can be expected to greatly affect the degree of structure in the lives of those who experience it. This may be particularly pronounced for Social Assistance Recipients as they may not have the financial and/or social resources to engage in as many job search, avocational or volunteer activities as other unemployed sub groups such as displaced professionals or secondary wage earners.
Stigma of Social Assistance

As reported by Goodwin (1983), Street (1981) and Gross, Piliavin and Wallston (1979), there has been a lack of research studies in the area of the psychological impact of receiving social assistance. Despite this problem, one can examine the effects of collecting welfare benefits by considering society's attitudes towards welfare and welfare recipients.

A number of works that discuss the history and/or efficacy of the welfare state report the stigma attached to being on welfare. Gottlieb (1974) stated that "Few groups are more despised and vilified in our land than welfare recipients; they are widely perceived (even by many of themselves) as laggards who are not to be trusted" (p.1). This same author went on to state that "there is overwhelming evidence from all sides - the press, governmental debates, scholarly studies - that the stigma attached to the welfare check is almost as tangible as the paper it is written on."(p.14). Golding and Middleton (1982) confirmed this finding and report that "despite the complex range and social differentiation of attitudes to welfare and social services, perhaps the most striking finding is the over-all influence and nature of hostility to welfare claimants" (p.178). Golding and Middleton also echoed Gottlieb's finding that these negative view are shared by many of the claimants.
themselves. Macarov (1980) described a society that equates work with morality and, assuming welfare recipients to be idle, declares them to be immoral.

Some research studies designed to measure the public's attitudes towards welfare recipients also revealed a predominantly negative viewpoint. Rolf and Klemach (1983) found a low level of public support for welfare programs. Furnham (1983) reported a public perception that recipients were being dishonest concerning their needs and were abusing their benefit payments. On a similar vein, Osgood (1977) found a high percentage of respondents indicating a skepticism regarding welfare recipients' honesty and willingness to work.

When one fully examines the pervasiveness of the negative stereotype of the welfare recipient, it is quite reasonable to conclude that the "status" of being a recipient is likely to negatively impact these individuals' sense of self worth, identity and self esteem. Waxman (1983) pointed out that this stigmatized group face a challenge far different from that of other stigmatized groups such as ethnic minorities and physically handicapped. More specifically, a stigmatized ethnic minority is normally quite homogeneous in a number of ways and can thus develop and maintain its own "status-honor and value system in reaction to the stigma" (p.94). When it is an essentially economically based group however, it does not have the
"advantages" of a common ethnic and/or religious heritage or a common physical characteristic. This inability to set up its own system of "status-honor" and values as an alternative to that of the mainstream makes it far more likely that this group will internalize this "spoiled identity". This dynamic is confirmed by Gottlieb (1974) who pointed out that welfare recipients, unlike other disadvantaged groups, have very few self help groups and rely on outside individuals or groups to lobby for "welfare rights".

Given these circumstances, it is hardly surprising that, as mentioned earlier, even welfare claimants themselves report a negative representation of the social assistance recipient. When combining the perception of themselves with the perception of how others view them, one can anticipate that a number of social assistance recipients could be affected by deep feelings of depression, worthlessness and hopelessness. These feelings are bound to adversely affect both the potential success of this group's job search and its ability to cope with unemployment.

Summary

There have been a number of studies that have documented the adverse effects that unemployment can have on individuals and their families. When one examines models of "human needs", it
becomes clear that both unemployment and being on social assistance can have a significant negative impact on these needs.

There is also a great deal of evidence to suggest that different sub-groups based on factors such as gender, age, ethnic origin and occupational background may have different unemployment experiences. However, no studies could be found regarding the unemployment experience of social assistance recipients.

This thesis will therefore attempt to address this need by studying and describing the unemployment experience of this group. Although it is clear that there is a pronounced stigma attached to being on social assistance, it is not yet known whether social assistance recipients have an unemployment experience that is distinct from other populations.
CHAPTER III

Methodology

This chapter will provide a description of the subjects of the study, the methodological approach, the interview format and questions and the data analysis. It will also describe the reliability and validity checks.

Subjects

The participants involved in this study were Social Assistance Recipients, aged 25 - 44, who were selected to participate in "Project Job Keep", an Innovations project co-funded by Canada Employment and Immigration Commission and the British Columbia Ministry of Social Services and Housing. The project was located at the offices of H. Klein and Associates Inc., #500-5050 Kingsway, Burnaby, B.C. In volunteering to participate in Project Job Keep, the clients were aware that the project had a research mandate and that they would thus be expected to participate in taped interviews and in a number of personal and vocational assessments. They were also aware that the purpose of the research was to improve the delivery of
employment counselling and training to this group, and that their personal results would not be shared with anyone outside the Project Job Keep Research Team.

Because this project wished to work with as representative a group as possible, the entrance criteria had been kept to a minimum. They were as follows:

1. Social Assistance Recipient
2. Aged 25 - 44
3. Residing in Greater Vancouver (including North Shore, Surrey, Burnaby, Richmond and Coquitlam)
4. Willing to participate in all project activities
5. Willing to sign a contract regarding attendance and punctuality

A total of twenty subjects participated in the study (11 females and 9 males). Please refer to Table I for further demographic data.

Methodological Approach

Swinburne (1981), in discussing the task of studying the consequences of unemployment, stated that small sample in-depth studies are necessary to gain an understanding of the thoughts and feelings of the subjects. Borgen and Amundson (1984) also
expressed the necessity for researchers to utilize an in-depth interviewing approach when studying unemployed subjects. The open ended interviewing approach encourages and allows subjects to fully describe their experiences, in a manner that is not being moulded or directed by specific interview questions or techniques.

This thesis basically utilized an in-depth interviewing approach based on the work of Borgen and Amundson (1984) and in doing so, had a philosophical base that was a combination of phenomenological and critical incident approaches. The interviewing technique used combined phenomenological and critical incident techniques with the exception of a single question that was worded in a more directive fashion in order to elicit subjects' feelings and perceptions around being on social assistance.

Giorgi (1975) listed the following as characteristics of phenomenological research: "1. Fidelity to the phenomenon as it is lived... 2. Primacy of life world... 3. Descriptive approach... 4. Expression of situation from viewpoint of subject... 5. Situation as unit of research implies structural approach... 6. Biographical emphases... 7. Engaged researchers... 8. Search for meaning..." (page 99-101). Fisher (1979) states that phenomenological research is a "comprehension of experience as it is lived-existentially/ behaviorally/ reflectively...faithful descriptions of
Table I
Demographic Information

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Average Age 34.65
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Demographic Information

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<td>Drafter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Separated</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Cashier</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Divorced</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Clerk</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Married</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Marine Supervisor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Divorced</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Cashier</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Widowed</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>Cook</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Married</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Swamper</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Separated</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Sign Painter</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
particular kinds of experiences...can be researched for their common structure" (page 116). The preceding statements point to the utility of phenomenological research in allowing people to describe their own experiences and in affording the researcher the opportunity to gain insights and information regarding these experiences as they exist for the subjects themselves.

Flanagan (1954) advocated the use of the "critical incident technique" which is designed to elicit reports of facilitating and hindering incidents in the subjects' experiences, from the subjects' viewpoint. It is then used to place these incidents within a verifiable classification system. A number of authors who have utilized this methodology (Andersson & Nilsson, 1964; Borgen & Amundson, 1984; Harder, 1986; Herzberg, Mausner & Snyderman, 1959; Flanagan, 1978) have found it to be effective in identifying facilitating and hindering incidents within a subject's experience. As pointed out by Borgen & Amundson (1984), the critical incident techniques has particular utility in the study of the unemployment experience due to "its emphasis on the subjects' viewpoint of a situation and the elaboration of specific behavioural incidents". (p.12). The same authors mentioned an equally essential aspect of this technique which is that "a category system usually becomes readily apparent" (p.12).

In summary, the methodology of this study drew from phenomenology in that it emphasized the perspective of the
subjects themselves. It drew from critical incident research in that it elicited factors that the subjects perceived as being helpful or hindering. The methodology of this study differed from traditional critical incident studies in that it examined incidents in the context of the subjects' overall experiences rather than any specific facet of the experience. This methodology facilitated a more in-depth understanding of the experience of unemployment of social assistance recipients.

**Interview Questions**

The interviews consisted of the following questions, most of which had already been developed for the study of the experience of unemployment (Amundson and Borgen, 1984). As previously mentioned, the only question not already developed by the aforementioned authors was question # 6, which was designed to elicit information specific to the experience of being on Social Assistance.

1. I'd like you to think back to when you first heard you were going to lose your last job. Could you reflect on your thoughts and feeling at that time?
2. What has it been like since then?
2b. What has the last year been like for you?
3. Now I'd like you to tell your own story of your unemployment experience. Just like any story, there's always a beginning, middle and end. Could you begin with before you were unemployed, and continue to describe your experience in terms of thoughts, feelings, actions, and job search.

4. Could you describe what you consider to be your lowest points during unemployment? For example, starting with the first low point you can remember, what happened exactly and why was it difficult for you?

5. Now the high points during the whole time, starting with the first point you can remember, what happened exactly and why was it difficult for you?

6. What has it been like being on Social Assistance?

7. What are your expectations about the future right now?

8. Could you draw a picture of what your experience of unemployment has been like right now? For example, if you could see your life as some kind of a line starting here when you were last working, and ending here for right now in time, what would you draw in between?

Additional questions were then asked to gather demographic data.
The Interview

Each interview began with the researcher presenting the subject consent form to be signed by both the researcher and the subject. After the completion of this form, the tape recorder was turned on.

The researcher conducted the interview using the same sequence and questions outlined in the previous section. After each question, the subject was given sufficient time to answer the question in as much detail as possible. Subjects were also encouraged to answer questions in detail by the researcher's use of the non-directive style recommended by Amundson and Borgen (1984). This approach entailed the interviewers restricting their comments to "encouragers" such as "yes" and "I see" and to summarizing and clarifying when appropriate. In this way, the researcher encouraged the subject to self disclose without unduly influencing the subject in any particular direction.

After all the prepared questions had been asked, subjects were asked if they had anything they wished to add. The researcher then explained that a certain number of subjects would later be randomly selected for a short follow up interview in which the researcher could check the validity of the results of the data analysis.
Data Analysis

The data analysis used in this thesis was based on the methods developed by Borgen and Amundson (1984) and consisted of the following steps:

1. Transcription of taped interviews.
2. Listing of emotional shifts as well as the accompanying events or behaviours. The study originally intended to also analyse data pertaining to time sequences involved with the occurrence of particular emotions as well as coping strategies employed. This proved impractical, however, as the large majority of subjects mentioned few, if any, coping strategies and had very little perception of time sequences involved. This latter quality may have been due to the chronic and cyclical nature of the subjects' unemployment as well as the "flatness" of their experience.
3a. Establishing critical incident categories (i.e. helpful or hindering factors) by sorting the emotional incidents via themes.
3b. Reliability check of the established categories. A second party who had already completed an M.A. in Psychology was asked to read all of the transcripts, placing the emotional shifts into the categories.
developed by the author. This check included a limited collaboration between the author and the second party in regards to the reproduction of critical incidents. In addition, the second party independently placed each of the critical incidents into categories.

4. Tally of critical incident category frequencies. This was first performed on individual sheets for each subject. Individual totals were then combined to arrive at group results. (Please see Tables 2 and 3.)

5. Summarizing each taped interview to capture a more "holistic" picture of subjects' unemployment experience.

Validity Check

A total of 10 respondents (50%) were chosen to be contacted for a follow up telephone interview. Respondents were chosen on the basis of the ease with which they could be reached by telephone. The data analysis procedure was briefly outlined and the subjects were informed that a summary of their unemployment experience would be read to them and they would then be asked to respond to the accuracy of this summary. This summary included a breakdown of the critical incidents culled from the subject's interview as well as each incident's frequency ranking.

(30)
CHAPTER IV

Results and Discussion

The results of the data analysis form the following section which results in a comprehensive description of the experience of unemployment for Social Assistance Recipients aged 25 to 44 years old. This section includes the results of the reliability and validity checks, a detailed analysis of the critical incident categories and a summary of the overall experience of unemployment of the subjects of this study.

Reliability and Validity

The reliability check resulted in the achievement of a 92% agreement rate, exceeding the 80% rate that had been set as the acceptable standard.

The validity check resulted in each respondent who had been contacted indicating that their experiences had been accurately captured. They responded with comments such as, "That's a good summary." and "You've covered all the bases." None of the respondents suggested any required additions or changes.
Based on the degree of accuracy illustrated by these checks, it is reasonable to conclude that the organization of the data accurately represents the experience of unemployment of the subjects of the study.

Critical Incident Analysis of the Unemployment Experience

A total of five hundred and sixteen critical incidents were identified from the transcripts of the taped interviews. These incidents were then placed into 51 categories. The categories were broken down into negative and positive. Table 2 gives a rank order summary of the negative critical incident categories and Table 3 gives a rank order summary of the positive critical incident categories. A total of 423 critical incidents (82%) were negative in nature and a total of 93 critical incidents (18%) were positive in nature.

Each of the categories in which at least 25% of the subjects mentioned critical incidents will be described briefly. The range of the experience will be given by describing the differences of the experience of the respondents within each category. Finally, one or two direct quotations will be used to illustrate each category.
TABLE 2

Rank Order Summary Of Negative Critical Incidents:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Number of Incidents</th>
<th>Number of Subjects Per Incident</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Stressed by Lack of Money</td>
<td>119</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frustrated by Job Search</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Depressed/Ashamed of Being on Welfare</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marital/Family Problems</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feels Unmarketable</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Loss of Self Esteem</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contact With Ministry of Social Services &amp; Housing</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bored</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unhappy with Job</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disappointed about Losing Job</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lazy/Unmotivated</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Christmas</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exploited by Employer/Training Program</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feels Discriminated Against</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unhappy with Moving</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Difficulties of Single Parenting</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Housebound</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Issue</td>
<td>Frequency</td>
<td>Tally</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-----------</td>
<td>-------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feels Misunderstood by Friends</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self Conscious about Age</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disappointed with Training Program</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contact with C.E.I.C's</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pessimistic about Future</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frustrated by Government Regulations</td>
<td>8</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Winter</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contact with U.I.C.</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fear of Being Caught Making Undeclared Money</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Angry at Society</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leaving School Prematurely</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Waiting for Immigration Status</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drinking</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disoriented by new city</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Loss of Independence</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lonely</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>423</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
TABLE 3

Rank Order Summary Of Positive Critical Incidents:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Number of Incidents</th>
<th>Number of Subjects Per Incidents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Joined Course or Employment/ Training Program</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Felt Fulfilled Raising Family</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Happy with Job</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supported by Friends</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relieved to Leave Job</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P/T or Temporary/Work/Income</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supported by Family</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Volunteer Work</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summer</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trip</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Happy with Housing</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Romantic Relationship</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religious Conviction</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feeling of Greater Independence</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Optimistic about Job Search</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Class Reunion</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Free to Set Own Schedule</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supported by Ministry of Social Services and Housing</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

93
Negative Critical Incident Categories

Financial Pressures

This category refers to the stress, tension, anxiety and/or depression the respondents experience as a result of lack of finances.

Range

For the most part, members reported not having enough money for basic needs such as food, shelter and clothing. One respondent reported not being able to attend a New Year's Eve party as he would have to take his shoes off and he didn't have a pair of socks without holes in them. A few respondents reported a great deal of difficulties meeting their monthly bills and were distressed by the debts they were accumulating. Single parents seemed to have the most financial difficulties and expressed intense pressure and frustration at not being able to meet their children's expectations regarding items such as clothing, entertainment and toys. This category was clearly a source of a great deal of despair for virtually every respondent and there were few cases where respondents could see the "light at the end of the tunnel" pertaining to finances. (Number of people mentioning this factor: 19 or 95 %, number of incidents: 119)
"All I think about is, how do I get next months rent in the bank now that I've got this months rent? Where is the money coming from for groceries? What time should I be at the food bank to get an early place in line so I don't end up standing there forever? Where can I go to get what I need to get? It's just... really the ... just... scratching to get by which hasn't left me much time for anything for me."

"Money... There's never enough money. I mean if you go to a grocery store and charge up but at the end of the month again you still don't have that money to pay for it but you end up paying for it and you're out again. It's a continuous back to back... Just stretching, striving to get by. You don't pay one bill one month and you have a double bill next month. And that's the way I've been in the winter months. It's hard trying to get a little extra here and that little extra doesn't even... You don't even see it."

Frustrated by Job Search

------------------------

This category includes the negative feelings respondents expressed around being unable to find employment.
Range

The great majority of remarks in this category concerned the general rather than the specific. Only one respondent reported disappointment at not getting a specific job. Others made more general complaints such as no jobs being available, not getting responses to resumes and being "led" on by potential employers. A number of subjects reported feeling discouraged by job rejections to the extent that they were unable to pursue any further job search. Others complained of employers "inhumanity", reporting that employers had little regard for their feelings. A few respondents complained of being considered under or over qualified for positions they would have been pleased to assume. (Number of people mentioning this factor: 16 or 80 %, number of incidents: 41)

Illustration

"I make the return phone call and they go, "Oh well, we just found somebody else" or you call ten people in the paper about jobs and they just say, "No, we already found somebody", or if you do go in for an interview it seems really good, really positive they say, "I'll get back to you tomorrow", and that's the last you ever hear of them. Then I get depressed and it gets hard to even look at the paper."

"You try for more attempts looking out for jobs and then you get negative results and it's just a big depression again. This
happened to me several different times. So you go back and you just say, "to hell with it." Right? You try to put your mind off of it and think of anything else that you can do."

Depressed/Ashamed Of Being On Welfare

This category includes the gamut of negative feelings subjects reported around being on welfare.

Range

Members of this category reported feeling like they had lost their independence as they were dependent on the government for their livelihood. One member reported negative feelings concerning the looks on passing driver's faces when he waited outside the welfare office to pick up his cheque. A few respondents stated that they avoid telling friends and acquaintances that they're on welfare. Others reported feeling depressed that they had "sunk to this point". (Number of people mentioning this factor 13 or 65 %, number of incidents: 26)

Illustration

"It is bad. It is bad. I hate it. I simply hate it. I want to get out of it as soon as possible. When I deposit the cheques in the bank I can feel it, the cashiers, how they look at me. They looked at me a different way when I was living on my savings."
"You certainly don't tell people about it. You're dependent on a certain amount of money once a month through other peoples pocket, really. I like to be an individual. I have an ego as I'm sure the majority of people do and it's not nice having it knocked down. Right?"

Feels Unmarketable
--------------

This category refers to the respondents' feeling that they are unable to gain employment due to their own lack of skills, education or experience as opposed to blaming employers or government officials.

Range

Many of the subjects reported feeling that they would require some sort of re-training in order to find work as they presently lacked any vocational skills or the skills they did possess were out-dated. Others felt that gaps in their work history made it extremely difficult for them to be taken seriously by potential employers. Two respondents felt that they were too old to be considered for employment and two others thought that being on welfare "scared employers off". In general, the feelings in this category did not appear to result from direct feedback from potential employers but were rather inferences made by the subjects as a result of their job search failures. (Number of people mentioning this factor: 9 or 45 %, number of incidents: 23)
Illustrations

"I know, when you've been unemployed for a couple of years and you've been working a few months during that time, it doesn't look too good on your application. For some reason, I guess, when I say you've only... You know, you put down that you've only worked from a certain date to a certain date, so I guess they get this assumption that it's our fault."

"Because you want to go for a job and you don't want to be a dishwasher all your life. You don't want to have a low type job. You want to get something good. Right? It's for your future but then you don't have any education. You don't have any particular skills. You don't have nothing. It's like kind of going and looking for a job but you have to be realistic."

Marital/Family Problems

This category includes marital splits and tensions as well as conflicts with "significant others" such as lovers and common-law spouses. It also included conflicts with parents, children and siblings.

Range

The majority of responses in this category did not seem directly related to unemployment although two respondents did report tensions due to spending more time at home. A few members
cited marital splits that occurred prior to their unemployment, two of which caused the unemployment itself. Three members reported problems in getting along with their parents. In one case, the problems were of sufficient gravity to cause the subject to sever all ties with her parents. Another subject reported difficulties in dealing with her "special needs child" whose delinquent behaviour caused a variety of problems. (Number of people mentioning this factor: 10 or 50 %, number of incidents: 24)

Illustration

"I've managed to get on my mother's nerves or she's gotten on my nerves which is a relationship I don't want to spoil and I realized that was because I'm not out for a good part of the day. Static builds up between people when they're in close quarters. You know. I like to have my privacy and individuality but you lose that when you spend a lot of time at home."

"He doesn't want me around anyways all the time. I get on his case too much. It's time I got out cause I feel that if I don't get out that I'm probably going to have a nervous breakdown or something."

Contact with Ministry of Social Services & Housing

This category includes any contact with Ministry offices or staff that clients expressed in a negative light.
Range

The responses in this category were for the most part quite general as opposed to referring to a particular incident or worker. A few respondents reported negative experiences in picking up their cheques and others complained about Ministry policy or the "general attitudes" of Ministry staff. (Number of people mentioning this factor: 7 or 35%, number of incidents: 21)

Illustration

"There's times that you feel almost like there's someone watching over your shoulder. It's not a real concern because I appreciate the fact that I've got it and I would never try to abuse it, but I'd sure rather not be on it. But that's part of their job to keep an eye on what people are doing and you have to respect them for doing their job, on the same note, I like my privacy. I really don't want to account for every movement."

"I don't know. Going through... Having to apply, you have to bring in every receipt for rent and your phone and your hydro. You know. It's like they don't trust anybody. The little bit you get for child support, it takes you two years to fight for it, they deduct off your cheque so you're no further ahead. You end up getting a part-time job just to help and they deduct that to. There's no incentive. And the run around you get..."
Loss of Self Esteem
---------------

This category includes any remarks relating to subjects decline of self confidence or self image.

Range

Comments in this category tended to relate to feelings around being on Social Assistance or frustration in not being able to secure employment. A number of subjects expressed that being dependent on "handouts" made them feel they had somehow descended to a lower level of being. A couple of respondents reported that their prolonged unemployment made them question their own worth and abilities and cast self doubt as to their ability to rejoin the workforce. (Number of people mentioning this factor: 8 or 40%, number of incidents: 22)

Illustration

"We don't get a cheque until Wednesday so I had to borrow ten dollars for gas to get here. They gave me a clothing allowance though. They give it to you in a voucher and tell you where you can shop. I've had my own family and I've lived on my own and to have to turn around and be told, how to do this and how to do that. It takes away any kind of self esteem you've got left."
Unhappy on Job

This category is unique in that it could be labelled part of the subjects "pre-unemployment experience". It includes any remarks pertaining to unhappiness or dissatisfaction with their employment.

Range

This category contains a wide range of responses as the dissatisfactions with employment were quite diverse. Conditions subjects complained about included sexual harassment, failure to be paid on time, insensitive management, excessive pressures on the job, unfair promotion policies and boring job tasks. (Number of people mentioning this factor: 7 or 35 %, number of incidents: 14)

Illustrations

"Everyone was upset and angry because of the sudden changes in how things were done. The new management was not well liked and wasn't very good at entering into it. Any time new management walks in, you're not going to be liked that's pretty much a given. They didn't seem to have any personal skills to get around that which the other management had and in fact worked out quite well. They made the people reasonably happy. I was under a lot of pressure. A couple of people had been, of the floor staff, had been thought unfairly and unreasonably fired. I was bothered by that, disturbed by it."
"You'd earn about $2.70 an hour, or something like that but the thing that got to me is you spending twelve hours a day in the blinking taxi and you had to tell people every move you make, when you leave the taxi and when you get back and this kind of stuff and you've got to check in with your dispatcher. You're right under a microscope, so it was really restricting."

Bored

This category includes respondents' comments around the monotony and boredom of their day to day lives.

Range:

Comments in this category were quite homogeneous in nature. They typically centered around the lack of variety or challenge in the subjects' lives. A number of subjects also mentioned difficulties in filling their time. (Number of people mentioning this factor: 7 or 35%, number of incidents: 18)

Illustration

"It wasn't hard. I coped with it. That only lasted... Unemployment only lasted a few months... six months, seven months. Then I got pregnant."

Disappointed About Losing Job

This category includes any negative feeling clients experienced around loss of a specific job.
Range

There was a dichotomy of feelings in this category. Some members felt angry at their employers for letting them go. Other members had a "here we go again" reaction which was a mixture of anxiety and resignation around returning to unemployment and/or Social Assistance. (Number of people mentioning this factor: 7 or 35%, number of incidents: 12)

Illustration

"I was very angry, very angry. Cause the reason I lost my job was not right. I didn't lose it because I was incompetent or whatever. They told me they were going to lay me off. I didn't hear it through the managers or anything. I heard it through the staff that I wasn't easy enough so I got canned. And I was angry."

Feels Lazy/Unmotivated

This category is somewhat similar to the "bored" category as both categories deal with the subjects being "in a rut". This category differs from boredom as it seems to come after boredom chronologically and it involves an "inertia" wherein the subjects are unable to "get themselves going"

Range

Generally, members of this category reported that they had lost the energy and/or motivation to positively change their
lives. In most cases, this seemed to be the outcome of a period of unsuccessful job or job search activity. (Number of people mentioning this factor 6 or 30%, number of incidents: 11)

Illustration

"It's been a real bloody drag. It's been really, really hard because it's so... It has been a while and it's so easy just to sit back and do nothing."

Christmas

This category contains any negative feelings subjects experienced around the Christmas holiday season, including New Years.

Range

The majority of the respondents reported difficulties in coping with the additional expenses that are normally incurred during the Christmas season. In particular, subjects with children felt very badly about not being able to buy their children the types of presents they would like to. Another respondent reported an inability to attend Christmas parties due to inadequate clothing. Aside from financial difficulties, the other negative aspect of Christmas was the perception that it should be a time of celebration when they had very little in their personal or work lives to celebrate. (Number of people mentioning this factor: 6 or 30%, number of incidents: 11)
Illustration

"I do have three kids and I just couldn't give them stuff. Christmas comes along and I'm scrapping for every penny and all that."

"It's disappointing, especially when Christmas comes around. Right. That seems to be the worst part of the year. You haven't got any money in the bank. You spend lots of time around the house. You know. There's just no fulfillment and satisfaction of doing anything. What have I got to show for anything I've done. Right?"

Exploited By Employer/Training Program

This category concerns the negative experiences subjects had with jobs or employment training programs that resulted in them feeling exploited.

Range

Some members of this category were participants in training programs in which employers were enlisted as "Training Place Hosts" to give them work experience training. In these cases there was an implicit understanding that this work experience period (which costs the employer nothing) would be followed by paid employment. It was also understood that the participant would be learning new skills during the work experience. When the employers did not live up to this agreement, the subjects
involved felt bitter and exploited. Other subjects reported feeling exploited by regular employers. This centered around monetary issues such as being underpaid or not being paid on time. (Number of people mentioning this factor: 6 or 30%, number of incidents: 7)

Illustrations

"Two host companies and they were awful and I didn't get good experience and I felt like I was really taken advantage of. So my self confidence went down again and... not getting the job because they weren't good host companies."

"It's just like with this plumber guy. He's got money. He's rolling in money. He just pays me the $3.00 and he's even refusing to sign those forms so I can get my other $3.00."

Feels Discriminated Against

This category refers to subjects' perception that they are being unfairly treated or perceived on the basis of factors such as family status, marital status, race or economic status

Range

Most respondents in this category reported feeling discriminated against in their job search. In these cases, subjects perceived that they were being unfairly exempted from consideration for job openings due to their being on welfare or
being single parents. A couple of subjects felt that they were being discriminated against in non job search related interactions such as banking or shopping. In these cases, subjects felt that they were being discriminated against on the basis of race or economic status (i.e. being on welfare). (Number of people mentioning this factor: 5 or 25 %, number of incidents: 7)

Illustration

"A lot of people shun away from single parents because they don't feel their attendance would be as good as say a married woman or a single person (without children), so I felt a lot of frustration in job hunting."

Positive Critical Incident Categories

Joined Course or Employment Program

This was the most frequently mentioned positive critical incident category. It refers to the subjects' positive feelings around enrolling in any type of job related course or training program.

Range

The majority of respondents in this category felt very positive about joining a course or program but were not specific

(51)
as to why this was such a positive incident. In two cases, subjects mentioned some particular skills that they learned in these programs such as typing skills and resume writing. Although subjects did not express it explicitly, it seems that a number of the respondents found that joining a program was an "energizing" experience as it got them more active and gave them a greater sense of purpose. (Number of people mentioning this factor: 11 or 55 %, number of incidents: 18)

Illustration

"Well, the first high point was when I became a part of that job action group. That really got me going. It was great. I was just going around in circles after I'd visit all these companies and my resume wasn't all that great, looking back. The job-action group got my resume down real well and I learned how to present myself a lot better which really helped."

"Uh..Barcel word processing. I enjoyed that... so I got into that and started right away on that Monday morning without really realizing what I was doing.. or what it was and..um.. I enjoyed it"

Raising Family

This category included all comments relating positive feelings around raising children.
Most of the subjects in this category referred to raising children of four years of age or less. Several respondents mentioned feeling of fulfillment in being present during their childrens' first two years and participating in developments such as their childrens' learning to walk or talk. Others mentioned becoming closer to their older children and having more time to attend to their needs. (Number of people mentioning this factor: 7 or 35%, number of incidents: 12)

Illustration

"It's March. The baby's born...highlight of my life. I'm a mother...excellent."

"So what else were high points - my daughter walking - my daughter basically all the way through. I want to be with her so in some ways that really tempered the unemployment and being on welfare - I felt lucky in a lot of ways because I know a lot of people who leave their babies when they're 4 months old to go back to work because they want to have a certain standard of living for themselves and their children".

Relieved To Leave Job

This category consists of subjects' reports of dissatisfaction at their jobs which led to them feeling relieved when they quit or were released.
There was a fairly wide range of experiences in this category as the members had diverse dissatisfactions with their previous employment. These dissatisfactions included excessive working hours, difficulties with supervisors, excessive travel time to and from work, sexual harassment and general job burnout. (Number of people mentioning this factor: 7 or 35%, number of incidents: 9)

"Relief more than anything else. At that time I was working at least ten hours a day, usually was in at least six days a week. Sometimes on the seventh day I'd come in for maybe a half day. Morale had just completely fallen apart. Yah. I was just glad to be out of what had been a good situation that was turning uglier and uglier everyday."

"I had to work at Metrotown here and that took a long time to get to work so that kind of bummed me out. Then I got laid off and I felt okay for a little while cause I did need a break."

This is the only positive critical incident category that could be considered a "pre-unemployment" category. It refers to subjects' satisfaction with specific jobs that they held.
Range

About half the members of this category were pleased with the fact that they had responsible positions where they were largely unsupervised. Two respondents reported particular satisfaction with the wages they were earning. Another was pleased that he was finally using the skills that he had been earlier trained for. (Number of people mentioning this factor: 7 or 35%, number of incidents: 10)

Illustration

"I was doing something I really enjoyed. I found I had some hidden talents I didn't know I had. I liked the people I was working with. There wasn't any real pressure on the job. I was responsible for my own work. I wasn't being supervised constantly. I was given some credit for having some brains and I liked it."

"I got a lot of satisfaction from the job I was doing because it was a highly skilled job. I was trained for it and I felt I belonged because I had a lot of other skills that went with the job as commercial printer, commercial artist and drafting. It was all combined. Everything was all combined in sign writing. I was even doing signs at this point as well as drafting. It was a very all around job. I wasn't stuck in one little position, in one little office, so I was travelling."
Supported By Friends
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This category includes a number of types of support such as advice, emotional support and financial support.

Range

Most of the responses in this category dealt with emotional support. These subjects reported that the support of friends was particularly important when they were feeling depressed about their job search and/or lifestyle. One member reported that she had friends she could rely on when she was in a financial pinch. Another mentioned that it was helpful to get friends' advice in regards to settling in a new city. (Number of people mentioning this factor: 7 or 35 %, number of incidents: 10)

Illustration

"Things were looking up. I had some really good friends, who are still very good friends. I made some good friends at the restaurant and I was feeling very positive, feeling more positive about my life than I had for sometime cause I'd gone through a long period of depression beforehand."

"Another high point was when I got back to Vancouver to see my friends."
Some subjects were able to secure part-time or temporary work in the midst of their unemployment. This category refers to subjects' positive feelings around securing and/or maintaining this employment.

Range

Three of the members of this category indicated that the part-time or temporary work provided them with much needed income. One member had very positive feelings about her temporary job as she particularly enjoyed the work. Another reported feeling pleased that he successfully secured employment, even though it wasn't the full-time, permanent type of position he was hoping for.

Illustration

"It was only temporary but it was a job that I enjoyed. I would say that that was pretty good. That went along from December /85 to July /86. That was a good time. I liked that job. I enjoyed going to work. I went in early. I'd stay late."

"I didn't keep track of what I made but I think I probably made between $100 to $200 extra a month, which really came in handy. It really raised our standard of living, it was great!"
Summary Of The Experience

For the majority of the respondents, the experience of unemployment could be best described as a "flat" experience with relatively few highs and a continual, pervasive string of lows. It is not marked by a significant downward swing upon job loss and the majority, in fact, do not seem to have a typical "job loss" experience. In contrast to the "worker laid off by the mill", the fired executive or the disenchanted employee who quits, many of the respondents have problems even recalling what their last "real" job was. In many cases, respondents have had long histories of temporary, part time and/or casual work that they never expected to retain. Other respondents were involved in accidents or marital break ups that forced them out of the workforce and occupied their time and attention. As a result, the majority of those interviewed do not appear to have ever grieved their most recent job loss.

Clearly, the most prominent aspect of the participants' experience is the stress and tension they encounter due to financial hardship. This factor, in fact, was mentioned almost three times as frequently as any other category (See Table 2). In addition to being repeatedly expressed as a source of tension, it also was seen to be a catalyst for other "downward pulls" such as family friction, loss of self esteem, inability to provide for
family, feeling misunderstood by friends and depression associated with Christmas and winter.

Although job search frustration was mentioned as a factor by of those interviewed, job search does not seem to be a source of emotional swings. Instead, most respondents seemed to have, for all intents and purposes, given up on finding work and have restricted their job search to occasionally responding to newspaper ads. Moreover, not a single respondent reported a "promising job interview" or "hot job prospect" as a positive critical incident.

In summary, most respondents reported an unemployment experience marked by varying degrees of depression. It was characterized by a continual struggle to financially meet survival needs, pessimism regarding being able to gain employment, low self esteem and a battery of negative feelings around being on welfare. With the exception of joining a course or employment training programs, it is an experience virtually devoid of significant and/or lasting positive emotional shifts.
CHAPTER V

Summary and Conclusion

This study investigated the experience of unemployment for Social Assistance Recipients aged 25 - 44. The results indicate that the experience is not readily divided into clear stages or segments, but is rather best represented as predominantly depressed experience occasionally interrupted by fleeting high points.

This chapter will present a discussion of the study's theoretical implications, implications for counselling, limitations of the study and implications for further research.

Theoretical Implications

Feather and Bond (1983) and Tiggeman and Winefield (1984) found a correlation between unemployment and low self esteem and high depressive affect. These findings were confirmed by the results of this study which demonstrated a high depressive affect among our sample group and also pointed to a low level of self esteem reported by over 40% of respondents.
Komarovsky (1971) and Brathwaite (1983) reported unemployment as having adverse effects upon family relationships. Although family and/or marital conflict was identified by 50% of respondents, it was not normally easily traced to the respondents' unemployment. Rather, it was often stated as a factor that remained constant throughout employment and unemployment and, in some cases, even caused the unemployment itself.

A number of authors have pointed to the utility of examining the experience of the unemployed in terms of distinct sub-groups as opposed to discussing the unemployed as a homogeneous class. Tiggeman and Winefield (1987) singled out subjects who lack successful previous employment, Jahoda (1983) contrasted blue and white collar workers and Amundson and Borgen (1987) specified a number of sub-groups including primary vs. secondary wage earners, immigrants, youth and sudden vs. anticipated job loss.

The conclusion of Amundson and Borgen (1987) that distinct sub-groups will have distinct reactive patterns to unemployment is borne out by this study. More specifically, it is clear that the participants in this study do not experience the swings of emotion found in the "emotional roller coasters" reported by the individuals from other sub-groups interviewed by Borgen and Amundson (1984). This distinction is further underlined by the critical incidents that are prominent in the experience of Social Assistance Recipients that are likely to be non-existent or less
pronounced in other sub-groups such as inability to meet "survival" financial needs (e.g. food, shelter, clothing, utilities), inability to provide for family, shame/depression around being on welfare, feeling discriminated against, feeling unmarketable and contact with the Ministry of Social Services and Housing.

This pattern also confirms the conclusions of Hepworth (1979) and Jahoda (1983) that occupational groups background can be a predictor of unemployment experience in that individuals of blue collar backgrounds tend to have greater difficulty maintaining a social network during unemployment and have a uniformly negative experience. Although support by friends was mentioned as a positive factor by 35% of the respondents of this study, it was prominent in the experience of only a single respondent who was 1 of 3 respondents who had a white collar occupational background.

As earlier suspected in this study, the lack of continuous employment history on the part of the majority of respondents caused their experience of unemployment to vary from the model proposed by Amundson & Borgen (1982). Put simply, one is hardly going to experience "grieving" stages if one has not experienced an identifiable loss.

If the respondents experienced enthusiasm in regards to their job search, it was certainly not apparent in the text of
these interviews. It is possible, however, that any optimism and/or enthusiasm that they experienced was so distant in their minds and fleeting in nature that it did not have sufficient impact to be mentioned by respondents as a positive critical incident.

Much clearer, however, was the extent to which respondents experienced the latter three stages of the aforementioned model. Frustration with job search was the second most frequent negative critical incident. Respondents seemed very easily frustrated and discouraged by job search rejections and seemed haunted by low self esteem, feelings of being discriminated against and feeling that they had no marketable skills to offer to the labour market. It was clear that the majority of respondents' job search had stagnated to the point that apathy had indeed set in and that very few respondents were undergoing anything more than very sporadic job search activities at the time the interviews took place.

As illustrated in Table 2, the most prominent factor in the experience of unemployment for this subject group was financial pressures, confirming the findings of Amundson and Borgen (1987) and Frohlich (1983). It should be emphasized that their financial pressures are very distinct from the pressures experienced by displaced middle or high income earners who find they have to adjust their standard of living and expect fewer
"luxuries". Rather, the respondents of this study report immense difficulties in meeting basic survival needs such as food, shelter, and clothing for themselves and their families. This factor stood out very prominently as a constant and pervasive source of time consumption, frustration, depression and anger among the great majority of respondents.

In discussing the prominence of financial pressures among this subject group, it is useful to examine this factor within the context of Maslow's (1968) "hierarchy of needs". This model stipulates that physiological and safety needs must be satisfied before "higher level" needs such as love and belonging, esteem needs and self actualization can be fulfilled. Within this context, it is clear that the Social Assistance Recipients in this study cannot hope to resolve the emotional and psychological issues and/or deficits in their lives as long as they are involved in a continual struggle just to meet their basic physical survival needs. Unfortunately, this places many of these subjects in a "vicious circle" as the lower their feelings of self esteem and psychological well being are, the more difficult it is for them to summon up the energy to conduct a job search. Further, their sporadic job search activities are likely sabotaged by their low levels of self esteem as this is bound to adversely affect their self presentation to potential employers.
In a number of studies, Amundson and Borgen (1984, 1985, 1987) point to group employment counselling as a particularly helpful factor in working with the unemployed. This finding is clearly verified in this study as the most prominent positive critical incident is joining an employment training course or program. This factor was mentioned by 55% of respondents.

Interestingly, most respondents who mentioned joining an employment training course or program as a highlight were not specific as to why this was a positive shift for them. Though one may have expected respondents to see these programs as increasing their probability of gaining employment or training them for more skilled, higher paying jobs, such factors were only mentioned by participants in a couple of incidents. Instead, it seems that most respondents saw joining a course or program as a positive step but couldn't say exactly why this was so.

As mentioned earlier, Borgen and Amundson (1984) found Toffler's (1980) categorization of human needs to be extremely relevant in the analysis of the unemployment experience. More specifically, the authors found that the three general categories of "community, meaning and structure" were helpful in understanding the needs of the unemployed. This categorization can, in fact, explain the attractiveness of employment training programs and/or courses to the subjects of this study. These programs tend to offer their participants a sense of community as
they are grouped with peers who are in similar circumstances and can offer understanding, acceptance and support. They offer meaning as the participants are engaged in purposeful activity and have a more defined and desirable status as a result of being "trainees". Finally, these programs offer their participants a sense of structure very similar to that of paid employment as program hours usually closely replicate standard working hours.

Although the subjects of this study did not seem to be aware of the specific reasons that joining programs or courses were highlights of their unemployment experience, it is likely that the aforementioned factors were at least partly responsible for this dynamic.

Implications for Counselling

In discussing implications for counselling, it should first be considered that counsellors are members of the larger society they reside in and, as such, often share its misconceptions as well as its beliefs and values. In the case of the manner in which society views the Social Assistance Recipient, there are a number of misconceptions. One of the misconceptions that this study strongly refutes is the depiction of the welfare recipient as "too lazy to work" and/or "not minding being on welfare". It is clear from this study that the respondents had extremely
negative feelings around being on welfare and intensely wanted to become members of working society. Counsellors should be aware of their own image of welfare recipients, be prepared to challenge this image when appropriate and be aware of the intense negative feelings their clients have around being on welfare. In order for a positive, trusting client-counsellor relationship to emerge, it is important that the counsellor avoid carrying such negative misconceptions surrounding welfare recipients into the counselling session.

It is also important that the counsellor have as thorough an understanding as possible of the issues that are most pressing to this target group. The subjects of this study responded overwhelmingly that their most pressing issue was financial pressures. Although counsellors may be limited in the extent to which they can ease their clients' financial pressures, they can at least take care to provide their clients with the forum to openly and completely express their experience. It seems that many counsellors working with this population tend to suppress discussions of finances as there is little the counsellor can do to remedy the situation. This tendency fails to recognize the clients' need to have their experience heard and validated and can serve to obstruct the achievement of counselling objectives.

In providing counselling services to this group, the results of this study suggest that a group format is most appropriate to
these clients' needs. As mentioned earlier in this study, "joining an employment training program or course" was the most prominent positive critical incident in the respondents' experience of unemployment. When one considers that the majority of respondents reported feeling low self esteem, shame of being on welfare and/or feelings of being discriminated against, it is understandable that these clients could derive a number of benefits from involvement in a program that provides them with the support and understanding of their peers.

In designing group interventions for this population, it is essential that the activities go beyond the delivery of technical, job finding techniques and information. Although this group can certainly benefit from such techniques and information, it is clear from this study that there are deeper needs that need to be addressed in order for the clients to undertake successful job searches. More specifically, the subjects present themselves as mired in varying degrees of depression, low self esteem, lack of direction, isolation and desperation. There should, therefore, be a number of activities designed to foster a sense of group support and to assist clients in raising their levels of self esteem and hopefulness. As suggested by Amundson and Borgen (1987), it would be useful to teach clients "cognitive reframing" in order to enable them to view their situations more positively. In order to assist clients in attaining greater senses of direction in their lives,
it would be extremely useful to include a "career planning" component in which the client could set short and long term vocational goals. This component could also be useful in preventing "desperation style job searches" which could result in clients seeking employment for which they are ill suited.

Another finding of this study is that the respondents' negative experiences seem to be long term and chronic in nature. Given this characteristic, it is unlikely that even the most dynamic and competent group counsellor can hope to eradicate the clients' emotional and psychological barriers to employment in the typically brief duration of a course or program. For this reason, it is advisable to build a follow up component into programs in which the counsellor can maintain contact with the client for a longer period of time. In this way, the counsellor can provide continuing support and can also help the client "bridge the gap" between the skills delivered in the classroom setting and the realities of the work setting.

Finally, this study points to the classification of Social Assistance Recipients aged 25-44 as a distinct group with characteristics and needs that set it apart from other unemployed groups. This conclusion reinforces the wisdom of the recent "SAR" agreements drawn up between Canada Employment and Immigration Commission and a number of Canada's provincial governments. These agreements call for the development and
operation of programs specifically designed to assist Social Assistance Recipients in achieving a successful transition to employment. If these programs build in aforementioned components such as group support, affective as well as cognitive learning objectives, career planning and long term follow up support, they will most certainly be a step in the right direction in addressing a critical societal and human issue.

Limitations of the Study

The results of this study are based upon a sample of Social Assistance Recipients of mixed gender, marital status, and educational and occupational background. Each subject was a resident of the British Columbian Lower Mainland. The mean age of the sample is 35 years old. It is quite possible that a sample limited to a particular marital status, educational background or occupational background would have yielded different results. Different results may also be yielded from a sample of subjects under 25 years of age or from a sample of subjects over 44 years of age.

As the study was conducted in Greater Vancouver, it is also possible that the results reflect an "urban experience". It would therefore be instructive to replicate the study in a rural
setting. There may also be regional differences within Canada not only due to cultural differences (e.g. Northern Quebec, Newfoundland) but also due to varying levels of unemployment. At the time of writing, there is a higher level of unemployment in Newfoundland than in British Columbia and a lower level of unemployment in Greater Toronto than in Greater Vancouver. These levels of unemployment could easily affect the experience of the unemployed as residents of regions of higher unemployment could lose hope more easily than residents of regions with lower unemployment.

Another limitation of this study lies in the manner in which the sample was drawn. Each of the study's participants were involved on the basis of their registering for a specific employment program. Although these subjects had not yet started when they participated in this study, a study of a group of Social Assistance Recipients not registered in a program may yield different results.

As participants in a government funded program, it is also possible that clients were not fully disclosing in a few areas of their experience. More specifically, there were very infrequent mentions of their lives being affected by alcohol consumption. As they became involved in the program, however, the majority of participants confided this aspect of their lives to program counsellors. Similarly, only one respondent mentioned "illegal
earnings" as a critical incident despite the probability that a significant percentage of the sample group engaged in such activities. It is also likely that a number of subjects were less than candid in their criticism of their welfare workers as it was these workers who often referred them to the program and, despite verbal and written assurances to the contrary, subjects may have doubted the confidentiality of the taped interviews.

Implications For Further Research

The results of this preliminary study point to the value of further research into the experience of unemployment of Social Assistance Recipients. A study utilizing quantitative measures and large samples could add to our understanding of the phenomenon. More specific studies would also be warranted as there are a number of distinct sub-groups within the large category of Social Assistance Recipients. Examples of such sub-groups are immigrants, single parents, post-secondary graduates, "white collar" subjects, illiterates, ex-offenders, youth and subjects over 45 years of age. Further, it would be worthwhile to conduct a study that could compare the experiences of short and long term Social Assistance Recipients.

A more longitudinal study would also be desirable. Such a study could strive to measure the impact of several factors on
the subjects' experience of unemployment. For example, it could examine the extent to which joining an employment training program affects the subjects' depressive affect and self esteem. Equally importantly, the study could measure the duration of these effects following the subjects' graduation from the program and throughout their post-program employment and/or job search.

One aspect of this study is that the experience of unemployment is reported solely through the eyes of the subjects themselves. It would be useful for a further study to interview other individuals that may provide other insights into the subjects' experiences such as program counsellors, family members, "significant others" and Ministry Social workers.
CHAPTER VI

References


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APPENDIX A

Sample Interview
Me: Could you tell me when and for who your last job was?
Him: I've been working with my father off and on for several years but it's very limited. He's had his own company and he's retired and I've helped him out on larger jobs which is very far in between.
Me: How long ago was it that your last job was?
Him: Oh, gee. A year.
Me: Okay. Can you think back to when you realized a year ago that there wasn't going to be more work for you. Can you think back to what your thoughts and feelings were at that time when you had that realization?
Him: When I realized the job situation wasn't going to be of any permanent source I was concerned. I've been looking for other permanent work all this... For years actually. Well, it's a disgruntled feeling knowing that you can't find yourself a permanent vocation. Everybody likes to be able to finance their own cost of living. Which is what it is. You can't do that. Like... I've been on social assistance and social assistance is just enough to survive. You know. As far as that matters you can't even buy all the food that you want. So... You know. I've been able to find little jobs on the side but it doesn't total up to what an annual income should be at a lower range. I guess most of us are at a poverty level when you've been on social assistance. When you've been
at poverty level I guess we're pretty well better off than they are in some places. Our standards of living in Canada and North America are quite high.

Me: Can you think of any other thoughts and feelings you had a year back from U.I.C.? You know. You were out of work completely.

Him: I'm disgruntled with myself cause the age that I'm at now... I'm not a really young person anymore. I've finished with my high school training and college and all that. You know. Time has gone by. It seems...I've felt that the older I get the less chance I'm going to get into a permanent job and I've always been concerned about that. What to do about it... You know. I have taken a welding course and I've taken a refrigeration course and neither of them have panned out for me.

Me: So you were quite concerned a year ago.

Him: Oh yeah. Not just a year ago. Like, for a few years now.

Me: There isn't... If a... Correct me if I'm wrong. But it seems like there isn't just one specific time when you said, "I'm unemployed now". It's a feeling that you've had for years.

Him: Several years actually. Actually all through the eighties it's just been temporary replacements and some of the jobs I have been, I took them because I needed the money but it didn't do me any good at all. I was... The wrong kind of work for me. Doing labor jobs and whatnot. I just can't do
that kind of work anymore. You eat more and lose more
weight than what you gain. I've got to find something where
I can be satisfied and comfortable. Where I don't have to
strain myself and to find a job like that with the work
experience I've got it's just about impossible.

Me: What has the last year been like for you? This past year.

Him: Last year? Just, pretty monotonous. It's disappointing,
especially when Christmas comes around. Right. That seems
to be the worst part of the year. You haven't got any
money in the bank. You spend lots of time around the
house. You know. There's just no fulfillment and
satisfaction of doing anything. What have I got to show
for anything I've done. Right?

Me: So Christmas as a particularly hard time for you?

Him: Yah. You know. As far as I'm concerned I just as soon
cancel it but you can't do that because it's family.
Right? I won't be a hermit I guess. There's a lot of
feelings come with being unemployed. You tend to think of
a lot more negative feelings and thoughts. Cause, like I
say, during the day you're not accomplishing anything. You
haven't...What do you do?

Me: What kind of negative thoughts?

Him: Well, it's just fulfillment thoughts. You cut yourself
down. Concern about the present and actually the future.
Right? It's that there are people going out and doing
things. They work all day. If it takes the time out of the
week, They're satisfied and they can go out and enjoy themselves on the weekend. When your unemployed, you can't do those things. You sit around. You've got so much time off that it's torture. That's a little bit extreme but it certainly doesn't do you any good. Watch T.V. You know. That's no good. That really puts you in a rut. Go out and do stuff costs money. Can't go out or go shopping or go places or go for hikes and things like that. That's leisure time. Leisure time is most appreciated when you've been working. It's your time off. But when you're unemployed everything is time off. It's no fun at all. Oh, it is. And of course you get on the nerve with the rest of your family members too, right? We've also been locked up in prison.

Me: So there's more difficulties with the family because...
Him: Oh yeah. Definitely. It's not their fault. It radiates from us all.

Me: When you say family, do you live with your parents?
Him: Yes. They live upstairs.

Me: Are you married?
Him: No. Single

Me: So the family problems are with your parents.
Him: Yeah. That's right. You know.

Me: Brothers and sisters?
Him: Well. Just all brothers. Yah. Well, one other brother living upstairs. But like you say, these problems arised
because you're sitting around and I guess you get on edge. You get tired of hearing little nitty picky things from our other family members. You don't want to hear about it. It's getting to be like a soap opera type thing. Right? You know. If you were out during the day, for eight hours a day, you wouldn't have to listen to it. You'd have more interesting things to talk about. What kind of experience does it take to be unemployed? Nothing happens. This isn't the greatest. And try to find something to do on a zero budget. The only thing that's left to do really is maybe watch T.V. and like I say, that's no good either. And I'm getting piles from sitting around too much.

Me: If you could tell your tale of unemployment, just like a story with a beginning, a middle and an end... The beginning would be when you were last working and the middle would be becoming unemployed and then the end would be the job search after being unemployed for a while and you could flesh that out by relating what your thoughts were throughout that time, how would you tell that story?

Him: Since I've last been unemployed?

Me: Yes. Since you were last employed

Him: Well... When you're coming to the point and realizing that there's no more income coming in and the bills are still coming in... I've had to extend credit. Having credit problems and debts on your mind... It's the first thing that
I realized is that I can't continue buying things for my entertainment, my stereo and T.V. That's got to come to a stop. So I'm stuck with stuff from two years ago. And I've had to stop spending money and having personal things that I like to keep around. That was the first realization that... Well, no more money. Going to social assistance after a period of time is a last resort. You have to have money to exist. It's certainly not working and I didn't like the idea of being on social assistance at the time and I ended up being on it for sometime. I think as every so many months went by, I was becoming probably more withdrawn and losing my motivation. I felt that my motivation was gone and I'd become almost like molasses, lazy. Motivation, I think, is a big part of being unemployed. It's just an acquired syndrom after a certain period of time and I realize that. After so many months have gone by and you sort of... You know. You could kick yourself in the ass. You make spurts. You try for more attempts looking out for jobs and then you get negative results and it's just a big depression again. This happened to me several different times. So you go back and you just say, "to hell with it." Right? You try to put your mind off of it and think of anything else that you can do. Or maybe I can start my own business but then, for a person that's got nothing to start a business, it's just about an impossibility. The chances of
that going on are probably more than one in a million. Right? Less than one in a million. I've been unemployed for sometime now and my worker suggested to me different job things. We're in the process of moving. She mentioned this Job Keep session, this course that's going on and she spoke to me about it for sometime and it raised my curiosity. I thought right then and there that this is something that I need cause my work history... My record is so scattered that I can't even use it on a resume. It's.. I've got to have a new start. Who's going to hire somebody that comes in with a blank resume. You know. I certainly wouldn't. I put myself in the employer's shoes. Right? You know. I've been looking forward to this course. I'd didn't think I would get accepted because one of the reasons is I'm moving. And... That's all I have to say.

Me: You were worried about not having a stable address which is one of the requirements.

Him: Yeah. Right.

Me: Where are you moving to?

Him: Surrey. But that's no problem cause I have my own transportation.

Me: You've got a car?

Him: Yes.

Me: During your unemployment... What I want you to do is think
about what you would consider to be your lowest points. The sort of things that brought you down. And if you could start with the first low point that you can remember, what exactly happened and why was that a difficult... Why was that difficult for you?

Him: I think probably last New Year's, two New Year's ago from this date. It's being invited to parties and "Well, sorry, ah..." Well, I didn't put down the party at that time and I knew I wasn't going to go because I couldn't afford to go, which was fine. I was content enough at home anyways. But I think that was probably the first example of financial difficulty, being unemployed. And then, of course, realizing that I can't afford to go out brought on a depression. Other people are going out and living a normal life and I'm not living a normal life. I think it probably, as I say, last New Year's that I realized that... You know. I'm in a little bit of a state here.

Me: So it was the New Year's Eve party that you said no. You declined from it.

Him: I declined from it because I just couldn't afford to. You know. That's just one example or...Well, I had to go out and buy clothes. All my socks have holes in them. And I went out to buy some socks and I looked at the prices of socks and I couldn't buy one pair.

Me: That was tough.

Him: Yeah. So I'm wearing holely socks right now. I mean...
My clothes are all...They're eating themselves away. I can't keep up my personal appearance like my clothes cause I can't afford to. I haven't gone to welfare and asked for money either.

Me: Have you gone for the clothing allowance for Project Job Keep?

Him: No. I haven't

Me: That would be a good idea to do. Who is your worker?

Him: Pam Morrison. She did mention something about that but I think she was talking about clothes for work.

Me: Well, there's also an allowance for clothes for being in the project. So you should give her a call maybe this afternoon after our interview.

So you've mentioned the financial parts being difficult. Something that was a real low point; not going to parties, problems with clothes. Are there any other things that you could think of that were real low points for you?

Him: Well...Yeah. Another thing too is not just financial but spending so much time around the home. I've managed to get on my mother's nerves or she's gotten on my nerves which is a relationship I don't want to spoil and I realized that was because I'm not out for a good part of the day. Static builds up between people when they're in close quarters. You know. I like to have my privacy and individuality but you lose that when you spend a lot of time at home. Between....It adds up. Different things....You can't help

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but not think about it. I'd have times to think about those things in the evening and when you try to go to sleep and you don't. So it kind of disrupts my sleep and then it's like dominos, one chip falls over and all the rest go with it. I'd like to be able to have a normal happy life like the majority of people...I hope the majority of people have a happy life. Or else I will be so disappointed.

Me: So there's the financial part and there's also the part of being at home all day with your other family members and all the things that go along with that. Is there anything else that you can think of?

Him: Well...You know. It's just like I said before. You know. I've had a decline in a lot of outings and so forth. Right? You know. There are special events. Like, we have long weekends and it's nice to go out with people that are going to go camping or go rent a balloon and go flying for the day or whatever. Right? You know. It's social entertainment. It's definite withdrawal. I guess. You know. Just about anything that you can think of for your own social entertainment, you have to put a stop to it.

Me: Now I'd like you to think of any high points. Was there anything that brought you up during your time of being unemployed? What happened there and why were those helpful for you?

Him: I can't ever think of anything that brought me up except for the arrival of this course. It's the only thing that's
ever given me any lift since I've been unemployed. I can't... There's no reason for... I can't think of anything really.

Me: You've talked about this somewhat already, but it's the next question so I might as well ask you that. From what you haven't mentioned, what has it been like on social assistance?

Him: Well, there I go again. It's not... I think I did mention a little bit about that. It's not a pride... You certainly don't tell people about it. You're dependent on a certain amount of money once a month through other people's pocket, really. I like to be an individual. I have an ego as I'm sure the majority of people do and it's not nice having it knocked down. Right?

Me: So that's been tough?

Him: Yeah. I don't... Like I say, I don't, certainly... Other people I hear talking, "Well... Oh yah. I'm going to go and collect my cheque and cash it and go do this and that." I don't have to add on that. I mind I'm collecting it. Right?

Me: That's not something you tell other people about.

Him: Not at all. It's not something I'd probably discuss about.

Me: Have you ever been on U.I.C.?

Him: Yes. I've been on U.I.C. several years ago.

Me: Can you think of any differences between being on U.I.C. and being on social assistance?
Him: U.I.C. was... Well....I know when I was on it, it helped between jobs. I was doing heavier work and the jobs were available. Like in the late seventies and very early eighties, there was quite a bit of work around that I could do and so I wasn't too concerned about the U.I.C. I was only on it for six months at a time and then another time, after a period of time, I went to school and I was able to collect U.I.C. while I went to school for a year, which really paid off well because I was going to college and I had money still for rent and for the course. So it came in really handy. At the same time, I did benefit from it. I did learn some physics and welding and it was a great occupation for that period of time. It did me some good. But...As far as U.I.C. goes, I don't think it....It should have it's limits.

Me: How was it different for you being on U.I. versus being on welfare?

Him: Well U.I. is...I can say that I worked for those pennies anyways. It isn't a definite...like...this is your retirement. It is only a short period that you collect it and hopefully, when you're on U.I.C., that you have work coming along in a period of time. Your fumbling from a lay-off or a job transfer. I think, when you get to the point, when you're unemployed and there isn't anymore work that you resort to welfare, it's a definite statement that, "Hey man. You're not working. You're not doing anything."
You're not going nowhere." Well... I guess another thing is to is you look at welfare and you look at other people that have been on it for all their life. You don't want to get doing that. You don't want to get in a rut but a lot of people have said the same thing. You know. Twenty, thirty years ago and they don't want to get and they ended up falling in a rut. I don't know what happened. They ended up down skid row and look at these people. I think that's the biggest nightmare. You wonder how these people get there. Right? What happened to them? Possibly it can happen to anybody then.

Me: So there's a fear there.

Him: Yeah. You get in a rut and never climb back out.

Me: Is there anything else you can say about being on social assistance?

Him: It's no fun at all. It's too bad the program couldn't be different somehow. If there could be some kind of job creation in welfare so it would increase people's motivation but not slave, scummy labour either.

Me: Were you ever referred for any job program before this one?

Him: No I wasn't

Me: And how long have you been on?

Him: I've been on social assistance for probably two years now, off and on. I was off for sometime two years ago and I started receiving it again last winter.
Me: So, this is the first one you have been referred to?

Him: Yes.

Me: Is there anything else you can say about your contact with people at welfare?

Him: Well, the only person I talked to at the office is Pat Morrissey and she's nice. As far as going in the office, I don't even like sitting there and having to wait around. I just feel like I'm putting myself into, "Well, here's another welfare case waiting for us." The typical old doldrum, in and out system. Right? I guess I don't want to place myself in that standard and I'm trying to avoid it. But ah...Like I say...Obviously I haven't. I want to be self-sufficient. I've got things I want to do. Right? I want to build my own house. Right? That's a pretty major dream for someone to say that when you're on social assistance. But... I guess that's one escape.

Me: What are your expectations for the future right now?

Him: Well, my expectations is increased since I've been accepted into this course because now I feel that I should have a fighting chance to get back into the workforce. Not just get back in the workforce but find a job that is going to suit my physical and mental needs.

Me: Your physical and mental needs. Would you have an idea what your expectations for the future would be if it wasn't for this project?
Him: It's really vague right now. All the other expectations was that hopefully I'd be able to come up with some kind of an idea that I could sell to somebody or create my own company cause I am a tinkerer, a little inventions maker. That's the only thing. But even then, that's very unstable. You know, be able to definitely plan on that. It's very unstable. You know. As far as going out and being able to find a job right now, I don't think I could because I have to put myself in the employer's shoes, "That guy's been out of work for a while. He's had a sketchy work past". There's so many other people out there that are younger with a solid school and training and background in work. The odds are against me.

Me: So, you weren't very optimistic about it?

Him: Exactly. Yeah. You might say that my only alternative is that hopefully I can create my own business.

Me: The last question I have for you is what we call a lifeline. I'll show you what that is.. If this could represent this point in time when you were last working and this would be right now and all this in between is your life, how would you draw this line?

Him: Well, there's a definite dip.

Me: Okay. Well, what I'd like you to do is be as detailed as possible and put in as much as you can. What were the ups
and what were the downs or if there were just downs, what
were the downs? Explain as much as you can and I'll just
leave you. I'll go outside for just one second and I'd
like you to take your time with this.

Him: Well, I guess the best way would be to divide it into
twelve, eh?

Me: Okay. Whatever works for you.

Him: It will probably be the best way.

Me: Okay. Great. Just take your time with that.

Okay. So, there was no work for a while and then there
was a big dip.

Him: Yeah. I realized the issue.

Me: Uh Huh. Then you were the same for a while and then you had
some small jobs.

Him: Tune ups I was doing. It was nicer weather and of
course the sun seems to affect me, always. So, up the
summer.

Me: And in the winter the small jobs ended and it was winter
time and your birthday was a difficult time.

Him: Yeah. This is my realization point.

Me: How old were you?

Him: Twenty-nine.

Me: Twenty-nine. So that was a difficulty. And that just...
It stayed low there for a while. Then you heard about this
job program and that took up a little bit to the present.

Him: Yeah.
Me: Okay. Is there anything that you can add to that?

Him: No. That's all.