THE EXPERIENCE OF UNDEREMPLOYMENT
FOR MALE COLLEGE GRADUATES

by

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We accept this thesis as conforming
to the required standing

THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA
August, 1986

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Date Sept 13, 1986
Abstract

An exploratory study was conducted in order to discover significant events and feelings attached to those events during the experience of underemployment for male college graduates. Fifteen male college graduates of varying ages and post-secondary degrees were interviewed. The qualitative/critical incident methodology adapted by Borgen and Amundson (1984) was used. The experience was found to be comprised of four segments: an initial down period during job search after graduation; an upward partially high period upon receiving employment; a downward spiral as the experience takes hold; and a time when the person either decides to make things change or decides to give up and accept the situation.

The results and description of this experience may aid counsellors in developing more effective therapeutic interventions for this population.
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"For centuries education has retained its privileged position, being viewed as what Andrew Carnagie called 'the panacea for all ills of the body politic' and what Horace Mann termed 'the great equalizer'" (Burris, 1983a, p.2). Though this statement is still true today, it is being challenged as never before. Unemployment and underemployment of even the highly educated is leading to the questioning of the worth of higher education. This study will examine one aspect of this modern day dilemma, the underemployment of college graduates.

Prior to this century, post-secondary education was typically reserved for people of privilege and viewed primarily as an agency for their own moral socialization. During the middle of the 20th. century, and especially the period after World War II, enrollments in post-secondary education increased. Bowles and Gintes (1976) report that by the late 1950s one third of the high school graduates went on to college and by the late 1960s this had increased to half. The increased enrollments were accompanied by changes in the part post-secondary education played in people's lives. Once available only to the 'elite', a college education was becoming more easily accessible. This easy accessibility combined with the number of individuals taking advantage of this opportunity led many to conclude that society was on the edge of a major change. Authors
such as Bell (1973) and Touraine (1971) document the expectation of a new 'post-industrial' society characterized by a greater emphasis on educated workers. Among the most significant changes was a shift in viewing post-secondary education as a form of moral socialization to viewing it as a form of technical socialization leading to employment. One consequence of seeing post-secondary education from a vocational perspective is that those who do not find their employment commensurate with their post-secondary educational experience tend to regard themselves as being underemployed.

In recent years, with the increase of the phenomenon of underemployment the value of higher education is being more intensely questioned. Underemployment is itself difficult to define and is by no means a straightforward concept. Nevertheless, some estimates of underemployment have ranged as high as 80 percent of the workforce (O'Toole, 1975). The Carnegie Commission (1973) predicted that approximately 25 percent of future college graduates would have to take jobs for which they were overeducated. Rumberger (1984) reports that as many as 25-50 percent of recent college graduates are overqualified for their current jobs (p.343).

It seems to be clear from this data that a college education is even less of a guarantee for occupational success than it was once thought to be. In fact, Rumberger (1984) goes on to paint an even bleaker picture for the
future of higher education. He indicates that "the ten occupations that will produce the greatest number of jobs in our future economy are unrelated to high technology...Most new jobs will be in low-level and clerical fields" (p. 344). As a result of this, he argues, society will become increasingly bi-polar, with some people having high-level professional, managerial jobs, while others are employed in low-level, low paying service jobs (p. 345).

This move towards a polar society with the bulk of persons being in the lower category highlights the need to come to grips with the consequences of being underemployed. Studies such as Richards' (1984) show that underemployment is a source of frustration and discontent. A study, containing disturbing findings, Stack (1982) links suicide with underemployment. It is imperative that more research be conducted in order to understand underemployment and to determine how best to help those who are underemployed. Up to the present time research into underemployment is sparse. Because underemployment is both "conceptually and empirically elusive" (Glyde, 1977), researchers have tended to neglect it. Burris (1983a) indicates that "what has been particularly lacking in existing research on underemployment has been in-depth qualitative analysis of the microsocial dimensions of this problem" (p. 3). There is a need to take a detailed look at this phenomenon.

This study will attempt to redress some of the gaps in underemployment research. By using an in-depth, qualita-
tive, critical incident technique it is hoped that insights will be gained into the experience of being underemployed. The main question to be addressed by this study is, 'what is the experience of underemployment for male college graduates?'. Other questions to be addressed will include the following:

1.) What is the impact of underemployment on view of the future?

2.) What is the impact of underemployment on family/interpersonal relationships?

3.) What is the impact of underemployment on job satisfaction?

4.) What factors make underemployment bearable or unbearable?

5.) Is it possible to be underemployed and still have a positive self-image, a positive outlook on life and positive family/interpersonal relationships?

By asking this question it is hoped that the body of knowledge surrounding underemployment will be enhanced. It is also hoped that those experiencing underemployment will benefit from the application of the results of this study.
II REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The literature devoted to underemployment addresses four main questions: What is underemployment? Does underemployment exist? Who is affected by underemployment? and What is the relationship between underemployment and job satisfaction?

Defining Underemployment

Based on the available literature there are at least eight operational definitions of underemployment. These are as follows:

1. A person is considered underemployed if his/her education is greater than one standard deviation above the mean education required for that occupation (Clogg, 1979; Sullivan, 1978).

2. A person is considered underemployed if he/she expresses subjective feelings of being underemployed (Solomon, et al., 1981; Solomon, Bisconti and Ochsner, 1977).

3. A person is considered underemployed if he/she is working short hours because there is no more work available, but would accept more work if it were offered. (International Labour Organization, 1982; Ham, 1981; Richards, 1984). Sabot (1977) defines
this type of underemployment as 'visible'.

4. A person is considered to be underemployed if he/she is working full-time, but for an abnormally low wage. (Richards, 1984). Sabot (1977) defines this type of underemployment as 'invisible'.

5. A person is considered to be underemployed if his/her actual education exceeds the number of years of education that he/she feels is necessary to perform the job (Quinn and Mandilovitch, 1977).

6. A person is considered to be underemployed if his/her education exceeds the GED level specified for any given job, when the GED level is converted into years of education (Berg, 1970; Burris, 1980; Rumberger, 1981).

7. A person is considered to be underemployed if his/her skills and training are inadequately used in his/her occupational setting (Richards, 1984).

8. A person is considered to be underemployed if he/she has periodic and/or extended periods of unemployment in his/her work history (Toppen, 1971).

All of these definitions are inadequate standing alone. Definitions 1, 3, 4, 6, and 7 are objective, and providing
the information required to make a determination can be obtained, they could be used to determine if people are underemployed. They lack, however, the subjective component found in definitions 2 and 5. Could it not be said that a person is underemployed if he/she feels underemployed? If used alone this determination of underemployment would probably prove unsatisfactory, as would using only an objective measure, since either of these would only measure a part of the experience. Definition 8 does not fit in either category and is included only in order to illustrate how our conceptualization of underemployment has changed. Therefore, it would seem useful to combine several of these definitions and develop a new operational definition of underemployment. A possible definition could be that a person be considered underemployed if he/she has one standard deviation more formal education than is required for the job presently held, and if he/she considers him/herself to be underemployed.

The Existence of Underemployment

Berg (1970), in his book entitled Education and Jobs: The Great Training Robbery, was one of the first recent social scientist to document empirically the existence of underemployment in the United States. Using 1950 and 1960 Census data and a GED based calculation Berg concluded that more `educated' people would end up in middle
level jobs and less 'less educated' people would enter these same jobs. Using the same data and a similar calculation Rawlins and Ulman (1974) concluded that the increase in educational opportunities resulted because of an increase in the number of people wanting higher education and had, in fact, very little to do with jobs requiring more education. Rumberger (1981) using 1960 Census and 1976 CPS data and another GED based calculation found that there was little change in occupational skills required between 1960 and 1976, but that there was a dramatic increase in the educational attainments of the workforce. The results of this trend are obvious. The Workers are becoming more educated than is required for their jobs. Rumberger (1984) states:

The American workforce has already attained an educational level that exceeds the educational requirements of many jobs in the economy...This growing imbalance between education and work not only affects workers who are forced to accept jobs for which they are overqualified, but it may also be injurious to the performance of the economy (p.342).

This type of underemployment is relatively easy to observe, but what about those who feel they are underemployed.

Literature on the subjective aspects of underemployment is scanty, even though it is often assumed that how a worker feels about himself and his work can have an impact on his job performance. Attempts have been made to examine this part of the underemployment phenomenon. Staines and Quinn (1979) found that from 1969 to 1977 there was an increase
from 27 percent to 35.6 percent of workers who felt that their skills were being underutilized. According to Duncan and Hoffman (1978) 42 percent of all workers expressed feelings of overeducation. Grandjean and Taylor (1980) surveying clerical workers found that feelings of skill underutilization were quite common. Rumberger (1984) suggests that as many as 25 to 50 percent of recent college graduates in the United States are, or feel that they are, overqualified for their current job.

**Underemployment in Certain Groups**

The above literature shows that underemployment is a factor throughout all levels of the workforce. However, college educated workers have occasionally been singled out and studied. Examining the period from 1950 to 1975, Jaffe and Froomkin (1978) found that entry level jobs and opportunities for college graduates and college attenders declined during this period. The Carnegie Commission (1973) analyzing extensive data, found that almost 30 percent of male college graduates found themselves in jobs which did not make full use of their education. In his book *The Overeducated American*, Freeman (1976) documents the changes in the labour market for college graduates, indicating the growing number of college graduates in low-level jobs and the lack of a guaranteed return on a college degree.
On the other hand there are a few studies that are less clear about the underemployment of the highly educated. Solomon, et al. (1981) examining the underemployment of Ph.D.s found that while there was indeed underemployment in this group, a full seven-tenths of the sample did not consider themselves underemployed. Underemployment was not equated with being unable to work in one's chosen field, rather reasons for being underemployed were: Wanting a position that was more challenging and perceiving that the present job is not commensurate with one's educational experience. Very few subjects indicated that their perception of underemployment was attributable to holding a job not in their graduate field. Instead, the "perception of underemployment is positively correlated with overall job satisfaction" (p.209). Stapp (1983) examining the membership of the American Psychological Association (APA) found that underemployment was not a factor for it's members. Gottfredson and Swatko (1979) in a large sample study of members of the APA, surrounding the issue of employment, found that holders of doctoral degrees fare better in the labour market than do holders of master's degrees, and that women (unless they are single) report more part-time employment, more underemployment, and more unemployment than do men. Also, "Master's level members more often that doctoral level members feel underemployed" (p.1052).
Energy has also been directed towards determining if there are certain groups which are more prone to underemployment than others. Richards (1984), Burris (1980a) and Sullivan (1978) all found that younger workers were more likely to be underemployed. Two possible partial explanations for this are that they tend to be better educated than their elders and that they are in 'entry-level' jobs. Richards (1984) also points out that these 'entry-level' jobs should be appropriate to their interests and skills if they are to have a positive effect on long-term vocational outcome, since "it is also true that a graduate's occupational position the year after graduation had a great deal to do with the probable outcome 2 years later. Some people remained stranded in low-status, dead-end jobs, unhappy or at best resigned to their situations" (p.317). Stuck in chronic underemployment.

Women are more often underemployed than men and with differing results. O'Toole (1977) found that women were more apt to be underemployed while Sullivan (1978) found that while women tended to be underutilized (ie. involuntary part-time work) they were less likely to be underemployed (ie. matched up with the wrong job). Gottfredson and Swatko (1979) found that women psychologists were more likely to be underemployed than their male counterparts especially if they were married. Rumberger (1981) found that women were more likely to be underemployed at the higher education level but not at the lower. That is, they are less likely
to be able to use their post-secondary education the more education they receive. Also, this probably reflects the greater number of women in clerical and white-collar jobs which tend to have a higher GED rating than do blue-collar jobs.

The impact of race and social class upon underemployment has barely been touched upon in the literature. Sullivan (1978) found that whites were more prone to underemployment simply because of the fact that non-whites are generally able to obtain less education. An interesting finding in her study was that if non-whites manage to get a higher level education they are less likely to be underutilized than whites. Rumberger (1981) confirmed these findings.

The issue of social class affecting underemployment is much more difficult to determine. Only two studies came to light which addressed this issue. Burris (1980) and Bourdieu and Passeron (1979) both found that people from working-class backgrounds were more prone to underemployment. This is an interesting finding since one could assume that it would be more difficult for persons with working-class backgrounds to get enough education in order to be considered underemployed. It is possible that herein lies evidence of discrimination in employment along social class lines. Clearly there is more research needed in this area.
Underemployment and Job Satisfaction

The relationship between underemployment and job satisfaction has been given relatively more attention than the relationship between social class and race and underemployment. Richards (1984b) has written:

Underemployment among highly educated workers has generally been assumed to be a source of frustration and discontent for those directly affected by it (p.305).

In her study, and in others, this has been shown to be true. Solomon et al. (1981), found that one's job does not have to be related to one's college major in order to feel that one's skills are being utilized. They also found that feelings of dissatisfaction due to underutilization increased with vocational tenure. This indicates that tenure alone does not lead to job satisfaction, which meshes nicely with Richards (1984b) finding that high income only adds to job satisfaction if job fit is also high.

Kalleberg and Sorensen (1973) found that job dissatisfaction was felt by all over-trained workers regardless of educational level. Rumberger (1980), Berg (1970), Solmon et al. (1981), Richards (1984b) have all found substantial correlations between job dissatisfaction and underemployment. Quinn and Mandilovitch (1977) examining 16 studies of the relationship between education and job satisfaction found that: a.) overeducated workers more likely to be dissatisfied; b.) undereducated workers were more likely to
be satisfied; and c.) that the relationship between education and job satisfaction was nonlinear, with higher levels of overeducation leading to higher levels of dissatisfaction.

Summary

It is possible to conclude from this literature review that higher education is all bad when in fact the opposite is true. Higher levels of education have been correlated with improved health, better mental health, more satisfying leisure time, increased satisfaction with life, etc. (eg. Bowen, 1977; Withey, 1972). It is when highly educated people are confronted with underemployment that difficulties arise. This is never more apparent than when we can say in one breath that educated workers possess a wide range of advantageous occupational attitudes (Collins, 1979) and that underemployed, well educated workers exhibit lower levels of job involvement (Kalleberg and Sorensen, 1973) and higher rates of absenteeism and turnover (Berg, 1970). It seems clear then that the benefits of a higher education lose their value within the context of underemployment.

Beverly Burris (1983 b) writes:

Higher education produces increased job dissatisfaction, higher turn over rates, reduced job involvement, impaired co-worker relations, and more emphasis on future aspirations (p.96).
Based on the literature, this seems to be the proper perception of the real economic, occupational world. Unfortunately, even though this is a picture of yesterday and today, the immediate future looks no better (Cohen and Shannon, 1984).
III METHODOLOGY

Subjects

Participants were selected for this study if they possessed one standard deviation more formal education than they needed for the job presently held and if they considered themselves to be underemployed. The educational level required for the present occupation was taken from the Canadian Dictionary of Occupations, 1971 edition. A comparison of educational level required and educational level attained is given in Table 1.

Participation in the study was voluntary. Participants were elicited through personal contact, contacts through the Commerce Placement Office at the University of British Columbia and by contacts made through the New Westminster Counselling Centre. Fifteen underemployed, male college graduates were interviewed. The sample was limited to males in order to maintain a higher degree of homogeneity. These men have all received their college degrees within the last ten years. (See Table 2 for Demographic Information.)

Methodological Approach

Finsterbusch (1976) presents a convincing argument for using small samples in research. He indicates that after a minimum threshold is reached each additional interview
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<td>9</td>
<td>Construction Labourer</td>
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<td>6-8</td>
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<th>Age</th>
<th>Status</th>
<th>Occupation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>12.</td>
<td>BA</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>Married</td>
<td>Construction Labourer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13.</td>
<td>MA</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>Divorced/Involved</td>
<td>Airline Clerk</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14.</td>
<td>PhD</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>Married</td>
<td>Elementary Teacher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15.</td>
<td>BA</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>Engaged</td>
<td>Bank Messenger</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Average age 31.8
produces declining and marginally useful information. Swinburne (1981), referring to unemployment, could just as easily have been speaking of underemployment when she says that "learning about the consequences of unemployment entails understanding sensitive thoughts and feelings which do not lend themselves to survey techniques, hence the need for small-sample in depth studies" (p.47). Borgen and Amundson (1984) also addressing unemployment research, but also equally relevant to this study, state that such a methodology allows "unemployed people to describe quite frankly their experience of unemployment without being led to one emphasis or another by direct questions of the interviewers" (p.12).

Giorgi (1975) describes eight characteristics of phenomenological research that meet the above requirements. These are: "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..." (p.99-101). Fischer (1979) states that phenomenological research is a "comprehension of experience as it is lived—existentially/behaviorally/reflectively", and that "faithful descriptions of particular kinds of experiences...can be researched for their common structure" (p.116).
It can be said that phenomenological research is the best methodology that allows people to tell their own stories, emphasizing the value of their viewpoints and analysis of the experience facilitated by the behaviour of the interviewer.

Flanagan (1954) put forward a technique which combined a subject's viewpoint of an experience with a directive interviewing technique. His approach, the critical incident technique, is designed to elicit facilitating and hindering incidents within a certain experience and then to develop a verifiable classification system of these incidents. It has proven to be a very effective method of identifying facilitating and hindering factors of an experience (Anderson & Nilsson, 1964; Herzberg, Mausner & Snyderman, 1959; Flanagan, 1978). In their study entitled The Experience of Unemployment Borgen and Amundson (1984) used a combination of these two methodologies to establish and document the positive and negative experiences of being unemployed.

This study used this methodology, the combination of an in depth qualitative/critical incident technique, as developed by Borgen and Amundson (1984) in order to acquire an in depth understanding of the experience of underemployment in college graduates. A small sample of people (N=15) was interviewed in order to acquire an understanding of the phenomena.
A pilot interview was conducted in order to assess the clarity of the questions, to establish the respondent's perception of and feedback on the interview as a whole, and to allow the interviewer the opportunity to become familiar with the interview itself. The questions asked during the interview were as follows:

1. I'd like you to tell your own story of your experience with being underemployed. Just like any story there's always a beginning, middle and end. Could you begin before you felt underemployed, and continue to describe your experience in terms of thoughts, feelings, actions and what you've done to change the situation.

2. Could you please tell me when it was that you first became aware that you were underemployed?

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

4. Now turning to the high points during this experience, start with the first high point you can
remember, and why it was helpful to you.

5. What was university like for you?

6. Were you thinking of getting a specific kind of job after graduation?

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

8. What impact, if any, has your underemployment had on your relationship with your family or significant others?

9. How old are you?

10. What is your present marital status?

11. What is your present occupation?

Upon completion of the pilot interview the respondent was asked the following questions:

1. Were there any parts of the interview which you found confusing, unclear, or difficult in any way?

2. Did you at any time feel that you needed to adapt your answers because of my comments?

3. In general, what was your perception of the interview?
4. Do you have any further comments or suggestions relating to the improvement of such an interview for the purpose of facilitating your description of the experience of being underemployed?

In response to question one the respondent indicated that while the questions were clear their very nature caused a great deal of thought which was at times difficult to deal with. He suggested that future respondents would benefit from more advance warning as to the content of the interview.

Responding to question two the respondent indicated that he had not felt swayed by my comments. However, he again indicated that the nature of the questions led to a great deal of introspection which led him to modify his answers while in the process of responding.

The respondent's general perception of the interview was positive. He responded that it was fairly straightforward and that my interviewing style had allowed him to tell his story. He was concerned that this style of interview may allow people to ramble and make it more difficult for me to ascertain what was really going on.

Question four proved quite a mouth full, but was understood when repeated. The respondent said that the only thing he could think of was to get more advance warning to the future respondents. However, he also felt that his
answers would not have changed had he known the questions in advance. What would have changed for him was that he would have felt more comfortable during the interview, had he been more informed at the outset.

An issue that surfaced earlier in the interview, but which does not come up now, was that the respondent was somewhat uncomfortable with the term 'underemployment'. He felt more comfortable with 'underutilized' or 'overeducated'. Since these terms are often used interchangeably in the literature, I intended to make use of them in future interviews if the issue arose again.

Question seven of the actual interview, which read: "What are your expectations of the future right now?", proved to be a little unclear. In order to clarify it I added: "For example, do you generally feel optimistic or pessimistic about the future?". This helped and I made it part of the question for the rest of the interviews.

Along with the two changes already mentioned I made contact with the respondents approximately one week in advance and asked them to take time during the next week to organize their thoughts around being underemployed. It was hoped that this would alleviate some of the concerns mentioned by the pilot interview respondent, and help the other respondents feel more comfortable during the interview. This did indeed prove to be the case as several respondents mentioned that they had appreciated the lead time.
The Interview

Each interview began with the researcher presenting a subject consent form to be signed by both the respondent and researcher. The date of the interview and the respondents telephone number are also recorded on this form. (See Appendix A). An identifying code number was listed on the top right corner of the consent form. After the form was completed the tape-recorder, containing the tape labelled with the corresponding number, was turned on.

The researcher then began the interview using the prepared questions.(See Appendix C). After each question the respondent was allowed sufficient time in order to answer in as much detail as possible. The interviewer encouraged this by using a non-directive style as suggested by Borgen and Amundson (1984 p.12 & 13). This approach consists primarily of minimal facilitating comments such as "yes" and "I see" with some use of open-ended questions, paraphrasing, linking, and summarizing as required to facilitate elaboration on the part of the respondent. Great care was taken not to sway the respondent in any way.

When all questions had been addressed, the respondent was asked if there was anything that they would like to add. After this opportunity the researcher explained that a few respondents would be randomly selected at a later date for a follow-up validity check of the data analysis and that this would happen via a short telephone interview.
Data Analysis

The data from this study were analyzed following the model developed by Borgen and Amundson (1984), which consists of four steps:

1. Transcribing the taped interviews.


   B) Reliability Check of the rating sheet categories and the number of shifts recorded. This was computed by having a fellow graduate student, not involved in the research, place a selection of the data on the rating sheets and comparing it to that done by the researcher. A 90% agreement was considered to be acceptable. In fact, a 94% agreement rate was achieved by the graduate student when sorting 5 or 30%, randomly selected transcripts.

3. A) Sorting emotional shifts via themes and resulting establishment of categories of critical incidents.
B) Reliability Check of the established categories. Another graduate student was asked to sort through all of the rating sheets, placing the emotional shifts into the categories developed by the researcher. A 90% agreement rate was considered to be acceptable, and a 91% agreement rate was achieved.

4. A) Establishing a description of the experience by a combination of category analysis, rating sheet analysis, and individual question analysis.

B) Validity Check of the final outcome by a follow-up telephone call interview with a selection of respondents, who were asked to verify whether or not the description arrived at accurately reflects their experience. 5 or 33% of the respondents were contacted. The portion of the rating sheet which describes events or behaviours accompanying specific emotions was read to the respondent who was then asked to respond to the accuracy of this summary of their experience. Without exception the respondents felt that their experiences had been accurately captured. Comments such as, "It's very good, yes very good", "You did a good job summarizing", "Sounds pretty good", Yeah, it
captures it", "Right on", "That's great", sum up the respondents responses.

Based on the high degree of accuracy shown in these checks it is felt that the organization of the data accurately reflects the experience of underemployment as related by these respondents.
IV RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results of the data analysis form the following two major sections, resulting in an exhaustive description of the experience of underemployment for male college graduates. The first section contains a detailed analysis of the critical incident categories. The second section follows with a content analysis of the various responses with respect to pre-graduation work experience, the university experience, job search experience, the beginnings of feeling underemployed, initial view of the future, the effects of knowing one is underemployed, present status, and future expectations.

A. Critical Incident Analysis of the Underemployment Experience

Three hundred and eighteen critical incidents were identified from the transcripts of the interviews. These 318 incidents were then placed into 29 categories, which were separated into those which occurred before underemployment and those which occurred after underemployment. These categories were further broken down into negative and positive. Table 3 gives the rank order and a summary of the positive and negative categories for the 'before underemployment' categories and Tables 4 and 5 do the same for the after underemployment categories. Overall 29 positive
TABLE 3

RANK ORDER SUMMARY OF CRITICAL INCIDENT CATEGORIES 'BEFORE UNDEREMPLOYMENT'

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>POSITIVE</th>
<th>NUMBER OF INCIDENTS</th>
<th>NUMBER OF PERSONS PER INCIDENT</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Enjoyed university.</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Hopeful that a degree will get him a good job.</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Wanted a specific job after graduation.</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Happy to graduate.</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NEGATIVE</th>
<th>NUMBER OF INCIDENTS</th>
<th>NUMBER OF PERSONS PER INCIDENT</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Disliked university</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Disappointed after graduation.</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Confused about career choice.</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Underwent a period of unemployment.</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Worried about the future.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number</td>
<td>Positive</td>
<td>Number of Incidents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------</td>
<td>----------------------------------------------</td>
<td>---------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Feeling Supported</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Pleased with the job.</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Trying to change the situation.</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Happy to get a job.</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Aware of what they are doing and in control of the situation.</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Positive about the future.</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Using personal strengths to overcome the situation.</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Pursues interests outside of work.</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Positive effect on personal relationships.</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### TABLE 5

**RANK ORDER SUMMARY OF CRITICAL INCIDENT CATEGORIES AFTER UNDEREMPLOYMENT**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Negative</th>
<th>Number of Incidents</th>
<th>Number of Persons Per Incident</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Disillusioned with present situation.</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Negative effect on personal relationships.</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Feelings of insecurity and doubt.</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Incidents of depression.</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Negative about the future.</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Resigned to their fate.</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Problems with co-workers or supervisors.</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Using excuses or rationalizing to explain situation.</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Worried about insufficient income.</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Blames the government or society.</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Annoyed at a wasted education.</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
and 32 negative critical incidents were identified in the before underemployment section and 85 positive and 172 negative critical incidents were identified in the after underemployment section.

Each of the categories will be described briefly. The range of the experience is given by attempting to relate the differences experienced, by the respondents within the category. Also, the number of people mentioning the factor and the number of incidents making up each category is given. Finally, a direct quotation from one of the interviews illustrates the category.

Before Underemployment:
Positive Critical Incident Categories

Enjoyed University

This category includes all the positive aspects of university life.

Range. Included are socializing, broadening one's horizons, meeting people of different backgrounds, being stimulated and challenged by new learning, experiencing a new freedom to be on one's own, benefiting from relationships with caring professors and other students. Quite simply, included in this category are all the fond memories of the university experience. (Number of people mentioning this factor: 13 or 87%, number of incidents: 19).
Illustration. "As a whole I found my college experience to be tremendously enjoyable. It challenged the mind and I enjoyed the social aspects as well. Just being together with a bunch of people, basically having the same goals, and who are at the same level of functioning or thinking, you're like a big family. It was a very positive experience. I feel that that the extra-curricular activities and the things that I took outside of my particular field of interest have widened my horizons a great deal."

Hopeful that a Degree will get Him a Good Job

This category is derived from the notion that if you get the proper degree and you will get a good job. A good job is defined as work that is bearable and provides a level of income that allows one to live in comfort as defined by one's reference group (Shibutani, 1961, Ch.8). This manner of thinking has been pre-dominant in society for some time.

Range. Four respondents were hopeful that they would land good job because of their degrees. All of these had entered their respective fields for reason of future employment. None were in their programmes simply for the sake of learning or improving themselves. In fact some were in fields of study they did not enjoy simply because they expected to get good jobs after graduation. (Number of
people mentioning this factor: 4 or 27%, number of incidents: 4).

Illustration. "I specialized in computer science, not that I had any great love for computer science. It looked like a good field to go into, so I went through it, coming out perhaps a little naively. I thought, wonderful, now you've got a degree, now it's time to go out and pick up a job."

Wanted a Specific Job after Graduation

This category contains the notion that one goes to university with a specific job in mind, and that one is bound and determined to get that job.

Range. All four men in this category knew exactly what kind of job they wanted after graduation. For example, one wanted to enter the diplomatic corps, and another wanted to be a university professor. They recount that this goal was an important motivating factor throughout their education and that not getting these jobs has proven to be very disappointing. (Number of people mentioning this factor: 3 or 20%, number of incidents 3).

Illustration. "I knew that I liked music, but I knew right away that it was composing that I liked. And that was what I wanted to do. I put myself through university driving bus, and I took composition. After that I went to Montreal, took more music and got student loans. Then, all
of a sudden when you're finished you're not a composer."

Happy to Graduate

This category refers to a feeling of relief or excitement upon graduation. A university experience can be a long and arduous experience and it would be expected that students would look forward to the day when they graduate. However, only 2 respondents mentioned any strong feelings about graduation. Both of these were older than the norm and had returned to school for the purpose of completing degrees. Most of the sample were more concerned about what they would do after graduation than about graduation itself. (Number of people mentioning this factor: 2 or 13%, number of incidents 3).

Illustration. "The convocation itself I found thrilling. I had not thought I would, but I did find it very, very exciting. I was very happy that I had finished it. I would have been miserable if I had not finished. It would have been a consistent low for the rest of my life if I had not finished. That would have been much, much worse than not landing the job I wanted."
Before Underemployment:

Negative Critical Incident Categories

Disliked University

Included in this category is everything that can be negative about a university education.

Range. Members described such issues as, no social life, being lonely, conflicts with professors, lack of money, hating the work, feeling like education is useless. Chief among complaints was that they saw no relevance to what they were learning when compared to the 'real' world. (Number of persons mentioning this factor: 11 or 73%, number of incidents: 13).

Illustration. "I was alienated when I was in university. It was a god damn grind. I had a lot of trouble concentrating on anything and I can remember sitting and forcing myself to study. It was pretty thoroughly frustrating. I did not socialize at school. My priorities were not those of my classmates and peers. So there was a lot of loneliness."

Disappointed after Graduation

This category indicates that coming face to face with an unfriendly reality, after graduation is an experience that creates disillusionment. Dreams are shattered and
life-plans must be restructured.

**Range.** Even if students are not expecting a specific job after graduation, most are expecting some kind of job that at least allows them to use some of their skills, or an entry level position that will eventually lead to a job that will be close to what they trained for. This category defines the realization that none of this is likely to happen, at least not very quickly. Coming face to face with this reality is not an enjoyable experience. (Number of people mentioning this factor: 9 or 60%, number of incidents: 10).

**Illustration.** In the words of one of the respondents: "It's the shits!". Another respondent said: "I was a newly minted PhD, shining with ambition and a desire to go forth and do great things. And it seemed that this would just not happen".

Confused about Career Choice

This category indicates that students do not receive adequate training or opportunities to undertake career planning. Consequently they are confused about their career choices and options.

**Range.** Members of this category showed this not to be true. Two found it quite impossible to select a career that they would like to pursue. This indecision makes it
difficult for them to conduct a proper job search thereby increasing the likelihood that they will be underemployed.

Conversely, one member was so narrowly focused on a specific career choice that when he could not achieve that career he had no acceptable alternatives and too ended up being underemployed. (Number of people mentioning this factor: 3 or 20%, number of incidents: 4).

Illustration. "Well I graduated from university and went to Quebec for a year. I wasn't sure what I wanted to do. I mean, with a BA you're kind of limited, there's just not too many alternatives as far as jobs go. I wasn't sure what I was going to do, I was still thinking of going back to school. ... If teaching falls through, that's sort of my last hope, except for writing. I still wanna be a writer."

Underwent a Period of Unemployment

This category refers to undergoing a period of unemployment after graduating from university. It is expected that most graduates will not move directly into a job, some by choice. Therefore, a person had to be want a job and be involved in a job search to qualify as being in a period of unemployment.

Range. Members revealed a general lack of patience and skills when looking for a job. In general, the men in this sample did not adequately look for work nor know how to undertake a proper job search. As a consequence of this,
many settled for jobs that left them underemployed instead of striving for employment that would be better suited to their educational level. (Number of people mentioning this factor: 2 or 13%, number of incidents: 4).

Illustration. "After a very short time of being unemployed, I found that I couldn't stand being unemployed. It was driving me right round the bend. I couldn't just sit there and not being very ambitious, I couldn't go out there and pound on the right doors. I suppose I'm not very good at selling myself, and essentially, I found out, you have to do that. You have to sell yourself in order to get a job. I felt very uncomfortable trying to do that. It didn't just come naturally to me. So essentially I carried on looking for a job hoping one would drop in my lap."

Worried About the Future

This category addresses the notion that if things are not going in one's favour then one should be worried about the future. Concerns about the future include personal fulfillment, along with an adequate lifestyle.

Range. One member mentioned being worried about income, housing, relationships, all the things our society dictates we strive for. "Will I be able to do what I want to do?" may be the salient question of this category. Number of people mentioning this factor: 1 or .07%, number of incidents: 1).
Illustration. "As I get older I felt sort of, starting to wonder, like is it going to happen. ... You kind of shake yourself, to realize that you're still working at that job. Nothing's changed. Maybe it will never happen. I guess it's a little bit of paranoia."

Being Underemployed:
Positive Critical Incident Categories

Feeling Supported

This category includes support, such as emotional, financial and counselling, from friends, family, girl friends, spouses and others.

Range. Members of this category are usually referring to emotional support, but financial support and more practical support, such as career counselling, are also mentioned. Several members referred to how much they appreciated the support of their wives. Others mentioned that friends had rallied around them. Still others mentioned how much they appreciated that their parents had stuck with them giving them encouragement as well as financial support. (Number of people mentioning this factor: 10 or 67%, number of incidents: 13).

Illustration. "Out of all of this, this star came through. My aunt said that they knew that some day soon I'd be making $40,000 a year, and that they believed in me and
that of course they would help me out, no strings attached. It almost brought tears to my eyes. It was a good feeling. They believed in me and that was all that mattered. They were family and that was it. Unconditional, there were no conditions on it."

Pleased with the Job

This category refers to those who are either happy with their present job or at least find it somewhat positive.

Range. No one was wildly enthusiastic about his job. Some found that the job was not as bad as they first feared and that they think that they can survive. Without exception the 9 respondents who fit this category are those in jobs that provide and adequate or good income. (Number of people mentioning this factor: 9 or 60%, number of incidents: 12).

Illustration. "I've always had a job which has been quite demanding, also quite satisfying. But I've also earned enough money that I never felt that I should look for something else."

Trying to Change the Situation

Included in this category are efforts on the part of the respondent to improve his situation, to somehow
undertake to escape underemployment.

**Range.** Members of this category related efforts like re-training, political maneuvering within the organization, using contacts to try and change jobs or beginning another job search. Without exception these efforts were made without enthusiasm or hope that they would succeed. (Number of people mentioning this factor: 8 or 53%, number of incidents: 13).

**Illustration.** "I had applied for the masters degree programme at _____ university, but they rejected me. They said to re-apply, but I'd have to move and everything, so I haven't. I'm getting some career counselling and I'm hopeful that something will come of it. I'm optimistic about that. ... So I'm a little excited about that, but over the past while I've been very pessimistic."

Happy to get a Job

With an approximate unemployment rate of 14% in the province most of the respondents were afraid that they would become unemployed after graduation and probably remain so for some time. Consequently there was at least some joy in getting a job of any kind.

**Range.** Several members indicated that they were desperate for work and consequently took the first job that came a long, and were happy to get it. Others felt that underemployment was the lesser of two evils, since it at
least provided some measure of income and allowed a degree of independence. (Number of people mentioning this factor: 8 or 53%, number of incidents: 10).

Illustration. "I graduated right in the middle of the recession. In other words, when I got out at that time there were no jobs for nobody. So I basically took what I could find, and that's what I could find."

Aware of what he's doing and in control of the situation

This category refers to the individuals perception that he does indeed know what he is doing and is in fact in control of his career and life.

Range. Respondents indicated that they were aware that they were taking jobs that would leave them underemployed. All members of this category felt that they could handle this and that they could control their emotions and survive this situation. (Number of people mentioning this factor: 7 or 47%, number of incidents: 8).

Illustration. "I knew when I took the job that I was underemployed. I took it because I had nothing else. I had found nothing for about two months and I took it with that in mind. I was under no illusions at that point. I knew what I was doing."
Positive about the future

The primary concern of this category is a positive attitude towards one's personal future and one's career future.

**Range.** The distinction was made between personal future and career future. Most respondents were quite positive about their personal futures, feeling that they would always be able to get along, but quite negative about their career future. One member of this group though was very negative about his personal future, feeling that he had messed it up, but positive about his career feeling that it would eventually turn around. (Number of person mentioning this factor: 7 or 47%, number of incidents: 8).

**Illustration.** "I am optimistic. I have somehow made some important decisions in my life regarding what it's worth in terms of fulfilling expectations of myself, of other people. I know that I'll probably never be rich, I'll never own my own home, but I'm optimistic that I'm going to be happy and fulfilled in what I'm doing."

Utilizing Personal Strengths to Overcome Situation

This category emphasizes using one's personal strengths, such as talents or hobbies to help one through this situation.
Range. Several members of this category mentioned that they had gone through a period of deep introspection of their life goals and the development of a new set of priorities. Others mentioned that in dealing with the emotional upheaval caused by being underemployed, they had discovered personal strengths and inner resources that they had been unaware of before. (Number of people mentioning this factor: 5 or 33%, number of incidents: 11).

Illustration. "I was forced to look at myself. I took some time and went to a religious college. As a result I changed my goals. I now value relationships more than career".

Pursues Interests Outside of Work

This category emphasizes that some of the respondents looked to areas other than work in order to use their university training.

Range. Members of this category talked about activities such as doing volunteer work, teaching courses at night school, playing music for the elderly, or putting a lot of effort into a hobby. (Number of people mentioning this factor: 5 or 33%, number of incidents: 6).

Illustration. "Right now I'm working on my music. I played piano when I was smaller, and I've got fairly high up. I did my grade 8 exam, I actually wrote the grade 9 practical too, in my second year at college, and right now
I'm doing the theory exams for that. I'm involved in community things, like helping at the library and with outdoor groups and things like that. So I keep fairly busy."

Positive Effect on Personal Relationships

This category refers to underemployment having a positive effect on the respondents personal life.

Range. Members of this category indicated that this positive effect was manifested in two basic forms; having more time to spend with the family or spouse, or feeling that the family has really gathered around and been drawn closer by facing this crisis. (Number of people mentioning this factor: 2 or 13%, number of incidents: 4).

Illustration. "One of the impacts that it had on my family, like my wife and children...I think it's been a positive impact in the sense that my underemployment, the type of work I have, has given me more time to build relationships. Family, on both sides, has been very encouraging. I mean, they know some of my feelings, and to them it doesn't matter what work I do."
Being Underemployed:

Negative Critical Incident Categories

Disillusioned with Present Situation

This category includes a general feeling of disillusionment or despair resulting from the position of being underemployed.

Range. This category was by far the most prevalent. It included factors such as, dissatisfaction with the job, frustration with lack of opportunities for advancement, finding the work unfulfilling and being worried about being stuck. (Number of people mentioning this factor: 14 or 93%, number of incidents 48).

Illustration. "With no more light at the end of the tunnel, these things snowballing on top of each other, and they're ... first of all your self-esteem is so low because you've got all these people telling you what to do. And you're disillusioned because you thought -- you had such high expectations, and then all of a sudden your expectations are nothing. Your self-worth, your self-esteem is out the window."

Negative Effect on Personal Relationships

This category, the second most prevalent, refers to underemployment having a negative effect on a personal
relationship.

**Range.** Members of this category reported that their underemployment had had serious effect on their relationships with spouses, girl friends and immediate family. There were reports of conflict and even divorce. It also refers to being lonely when one doesn’t have the money to go out and be with friends.

Another aspect to this category is the fact that some respondents were embarrassed to admit, especially to their friends, that they were underemployed. Consequently they avoided certain friends, especially the successful ones, and increased their isolation. Others reported that it got in the way of conversations at times, like family gatherings, and that their friends and family were getting tired of them talking about being underemployed. As result they avoided the topic, withdrew from conversations and again increased their isolation. (Number of people mentioning this factor: 13 or 87%, number of incidents: 27).

**Illustration.** "I think twice about going to a movie and a drink if I have to put in two or three hours of drudgery to pay for it. I usually don’t go", or "My employment situation was driving my wife crazy. She just couldn’t understand what was happening."
Feelings of Insecurity and Doubt

After every decision there comes a time when the correctness of the decision is questioned. For some people this questioning becomes self-doubt and insecurity.

Range. Members of this category reported feeling like they had made the wrong decisions in the past. Consequently, they feel that any decisions they make now will also probably be wrong. They indicated that it becomes increasingly more difficult to contemplate any changes when one is so insecure and afraid of making decisions. (Number of people mentioning this factor: 12 or 80%, number of incidents: 19).

Illustration. "I went through periods of intense struggle with myself and said, well you know, is it my fault that I'm in a situation like this? Have I fallen short? Or is it just that there is nothing out there." Or, "I don't want to go back for more education again only to discover I've picked the wrong area again."

Incidents of Depression

In order to qualify for this category the reported incident of depression had to be interfering with the person's daily functioning.

Range. Members of this category mentioned feelings such as "everyone is against me", "everything was going
wrong and I just couldn't handle it anymore". It also includes one incident of a near suicide. (Number of people mentioning this factor: 10 or 67%, number of incidents: 17).

Illustration. "Some days were just miserable. I think it was in January or February I started getting depressed. You know, I was actually getting depressed. I started noticing that I was short tempered. I was maybe becoming withdrawn a little bit. -- That was a low period."

Negative About the Future

Included in this category is a general pessimism about one's personal and career future.

Range. Members of this category expressed a general feeling that they were stuck, that they were never going to realize their dreams. One member was so discouraged about his future prospects, and the impact the underemployment had had on his personal life, that he contemplated suicide.

Illustration. "I'm becoming more and more afraid that I'm stuck. That I'm not going to get what I want out of life".
Resigned to their Fate

This category concerns those who have given up. They have a general belief that things will never get any better, that the deck is stacked against them, so why should they keep on trying.

Range. Members of this category indicated that they saw no hope that things would ever change and have convinced themselves that this is the best they can hope for. There is a general feeling of lethargy in this group and a certain amount of comfort in having given up. A common statement in this group is, "What the hell! At least I've got a job."

Illustration. "I've continued with ____ because I haven't been able to find another job, and the effort I've done--I've done a few things, but not much.--But I really haven't tried--basically, I don't know why.--I suppose I'm getting content with my lot."

Problems with Co-workers or Supervisors

This category indicates that co-workers and supervisors often were a source of frustration and anger.

Range. Members of this category indicated that being more highly educated than one's co-workers and even one's supervisor can lead to many difficult situations. Several members mentioned that their co-workers were suspicious of them and their higher education. Others reported that their
co-workers often had a different mind set, had different expressions, different interests and a different outlook on life. All of which lead them to being isolated at the workplace. (Number of people mentioning this factor: 7 or 47%, number of incidents: 16).

Illustration. "The fact that when you're working for a job that requires only a certain level of education you tend to work with a certain group of people that in some respects is quite frustrating. Co-workers and supervisors,—I think that when you study, if you have a college or university degree you've widened your horizons a bit more,—I guess it comes to the mentality of the people that you work with is sometimes very frustrating."

Using Excuses or Rationalizing to Explain Situation

This category concerns finding ways to make being underemployed, and having much more education than the job requires, more palatable.

Range. Members of this category made comments such as, "Well I can always use my education in all aspects of my life". While true these comments were made in a tone of voice that indicated that this was a weak attempt to justify not using one's education in one's job and to convince oneself that 4 or more years of life have not been wasted at university. (Number of people mentioning this factor: 6 or
Illustration. "I've come to rationalize, philosophize, or whatever, that my university education wasn't a loss. It was useful in that going to university certainly broadened my horizons...I suppose much of what I feel and am saying in regards to my university education is rationalization, but I honestly don't feel that it was wasted. It was a good time and an enjoyable time. But as far as ever putting the specific knowledge that I gained in university to any direct use, I've essentially said to myself that if I ever manage to do it that'll be a bonus."

Worried about Insufficient Income

Along with underemployment usually comes a very poor income. This category includes concerns about not being able to make enough money to properly take care of oneself or one's family. It should be noted that the emphasis here is on survival, (i.e. food, housing, medical care) not a lack of luxuries.

Range. Members of this category were concerned about having to live in inappropriate accommodation, not having enough to eat, and having difficulty with transportation. There was a general concern that having a low income made it increasingly difficult to look for other work because of lack of resources and failing emotional and physical health. One member indicated that he was extremely worried because
his wife, a non-Canadian, was pregnant and his medical insurance was not going to cover the costs of the pregnancy and birth. (Number of people mentioning this factor: 3 or 20%, number of incidents: 4).

Illustration. "I would wander down to the beach, I didn't have enough money to take the bus, they raised it to a dollar, and I didn't have enough money to get on a bus...So things happen when you're underemployed to make things even worse, when you're in a very vulnerable situation of being financially unstable. I knew I deserved more...Your pride gets in the way. You don't want to let people know that you're broke and have collected welfare and that sort of thing. You don't want anybody to know this stuff...."

Blames the Government or Society

This category places the direct blame for one's situation at the feet of the government or society at large.

Range. Government policies and the foundering economy bear the major focus of this category. One member mentioned that society teaches us to expect a lot and then doesn't deliver, and that it would be possible to be happily underemployed if one didn't have these high expectations. (Number of people mentioning this factor: 3 or 20%, number of incidents: 4).
Illustration. "I'm not overly optimistic at all though. And that's because of the general atmosphere in the province with reference to education...Things will continue as they are, as they are doing at this time, -- it's not very positive."

Annoyed at a Wasted Education

This category includes a feeling of anger towards an educational system that does not guarantee one a job upon the completion of studies.

Range. One respondent stated that he saw the day coming when unemployed university graduates would sue their faculties for not delivering on promises of employment. Others mentioned that they felt regret over past decision. Perhaps it was the wrong decision to go into this area, or to go to university at all. Perhaps it would have been better if different decisions had been taken. Generally, there is a common feeling that the years spent at university were, if not completely wasted, then certainly wasted as far as employment opportunities go. (Number of persons mentioning this factor: 3 or 20%, number of incidents: 3).

Illustration. "It was a bit of a sore point for me that I'd gone to university for four years, it appeared that essentially that education, whatever I'd learned there was going to turn out to be useless to me. Particularly since after I graduated I promptly went out and started driving
truck. Which believe it or not does not take much mental energy."

B.

Content Analysis of Interviews

Pre-Graduation Work Experience

There was no specific question asked during the interview to illicit a response on this topic. However, 47% of the sample mentioned that they had already felt underemployed before they had graduated. Five co-researchers were referring to part-time work during the school term and/or summer employment. Two others were referring to work experience between beginning their education and graduating. All felt that this work had been beneath them and that they deserved better. The nature of their employment included various forms of labouring, pizza delivery and janitorial services. Comments such as, "It was boring", or "I deserved better", were common threads throughout these interviews.

The University Experience

It is somewhat difficult to draw conclusions regarding the University experience since 59% of the sample evaluate
their experience as being both positive and negative. In this context it is important to note that the number of incidents being reported, 19 positive to 13 negative, give a more positive nature to the evaluation of the university experience.

Approximately 86% of the sample positively evaluated some aspects of their university experience. Comments such as, "I really learned a lot", "I really enjoyed it", "It really allowed me to grow a great deal", were quite common. A great deal of the positive nature of these evaluations had to do with personal growth and the social aspects of university life. All of the respondents in this group mentioned that they had enjoyed the social aspect of university life, with one person even saying that he was quite proud that he had been able to do quite well academically without sacrificing his priority in life, which was socializing.

Approximately 73% of the sample also reported that they disliked university. If we subtract the 14% who did not report liking university that leaves 59% who both positively and negatively evaluated their university experience. This is not as strange as it first seems. Three of the respondents used the phrase, "It was the best of times and it was the worst of times", and two described their university experience as a "love - hate relationship". One respondent said, "I love learning, but I hate the work", another intensely disliked his faculty. More commonly the
reason for the mixed evaluation was the people had periods of intense doubt during their university education. For three respondents this meant dropping out and returning after they had sorted out their activities. They then report their early experience as negative and the later as positive. This notion, that the early years were negative and the latter positive was quite common, with 53% of the sample mentioning this. The most common reason for this being that the early years at university tend to be quite general and do not allow one to pursue ones interests, whereas it is possible to specialize and more directly pursue personal interests in the later years.

Job Search Experience

There was no specific question asked to elicit a response in this topic area. However, the data suggests that the job search area is one that leaves a great deal to be desired. Only two respondents reported having to undergo a lengthy period of unemployment. Yet eight, fully 53% of the sample took the first job that came along. One respondent reported that he was "desperate" to get a job, when he had not yet found employment two weeks after graduation. Another reported, "It was driving me right 'round the bend", after looking for work for less than two weeks.
This data would seem to indicate that the respondents who had negative experiences with their job searches jumped at the first job opportunities they had, even if they were inappropriate.

Beginnings of Feeling Underemployed

While 47% of the sample reported feelings of being underemployed before graduation, the rest came to the realization at different times. Of the remaining eight, seven knew that they would be underemployed when they accepted their present jobs. One respondent said, "I knew when I accepted the job that I was underemployed," and this would be a very common sentiment amongst these seven men. The one remaining respondent was, "shocked to discover I was underemployed". This realization came when a temporary contract ended and he became aware of his true position within the organization.

These results indicate that 93% of the sample realized that they were underemployed before graduation or immediately upon gaining employment after graduation. This means that for the most part they have no idea of what it means to be employed but not underemployed. Consequently they are comparing their present situations to an untested ideal which makes the contrast between what is and what might have been even more intense.
Initial Future Expectations

Only one person reported being worried about the future while still in school. Seven respondents had a very positive attitude about their personal futures. This in spite of the fact that only four expected to get jobs as a result of their education. Five of these though did expect that their education would help them in some way and that eventually they would get what they wanted. Two respondents however, had no expectations or ideas what they wanted out of the future and have not been disappointed. One respondent said, "I didn't expect to get anything with my education, and I completely met my expectations".

Effects of Knowing One is Underemployed

It is well documented that underemployment can lead to frustration and discontent in workers (eg. Richards, 1984b). This study certainly agrees with these findings since 93% of the sample report at least one incident of disillusionment or discontent. 100% knew, without doubt, that they were underemployed and the knowledge of this fact, contrary to some earlier findings (eg. Swinburne, 1981) which suggested that knowledge of unemployment eased feelings of shame, anger and depression, did not help them deal with their situation. In fact for eight of the co-researchers this
knowledge led to hopelessness, despair and a resignation to their fate.

This knowledge and attendant feelings has had a serious impact on the personal lives of the respondents. 87% report that underemployment has had a negative effect on their personal lives. In most cases this conflict arises because the respondent is despairing of his situation and either takes it out on those closest to him or feels guilty and totally withdraws from those around him. One co-researcher indicated that his constant underemployment and inability to change the situation had cost him his marriage. Another indicated that he was getting "real snarly" and, because he did not want to hurt anyone, was avoiding contact with his friends. Still another explained how he had spent many sleepless nights trying to figure out what to do and, while he appreciated the support of his wife, it had been very difficult for her and the children after all, "If I would be in a situation that is satisfying and would give me the experience I wanted, I'd probably be a much more pleasant person outside of work. If experiences at work are bad, it's bound to reach over. It takes a very disciplined life, and I'm not that disciplined that I can totally divorce my eight hours at work from the rest of my life."

For three respondents an awareness of the larger employment picture did help them cope with their underemployment. After some "soul searching" they decided that it was not their fault and that others, such as the
government or the 'times' were to blame. However, this attitude did not really improve their emotional state over the long run.

Overall it seems that the knowledge that one is underemployed leads to a mind set that precludes changing the situation. While all the respondents talked about changing their situation only eight were actively trying to create change. Of these eight, only three were trying hard enough for there to be a likelihood that they might succeed.

Present Status

All of the respondents are presently working. One respondent has moved up into a position more in line with his educational background. Another has registered at a university for the next session in order to begin retraining. A third plans to travel extensively for approximately six months and then will also register to begin retraining. Of the remaining twelve, two more are considering retraining and the others are continuing as they were.

Future Expectation

The data shows that 46% of the sample were positive about the future while 60% were negative. The 6% overlap
indicates that a few respondents had both positive and negative feelings about the future. They indicated that they were quite positive about their personal future, "I believe I'll always be able to get along", but negative about their career future. Those respondents who felt positive about the future felt that sooner or later things had to turn around. In the words of one respondent, "I figure it can only get better. It sure can't get any worse!". The negative view centered around a generally pessimistic feeling that things were not going to get better especially in light of the immediate past. Several co-researchers expressed the sentiment that, "I'm beginning to feel like things will never change. At first I thought it would be temporary, but now ...?". The notion that underemployment will be temporary is an important one. For several respondents it was when they began to feel like it would not be temporary that they began to despair.

Summary of the Experience

For many of the respondents the initial underemployment experience could be compared to the initial holiday period in unemployment described by Borgen and Amundson (1984). The simple joy of having a job, the novelty of working after so many years in school was an initial high point for many of the respondents. However, this high usually did not last long. "Simply the novelty of starting a new job makes it so
that you don't experience any sense of being frustrated for the first 2-3 months. It's a change, you're making money, that sort of thing."

After this brief initial period the downward spiral begins. Again this is comparable to Borgen and Amundson's (1984) findings. However, rather than a roller coaster or yo-yo effect I prefer to look at this as a descending spiral. As they continue to experience underemployment it seems that these men just sink deeper and deeper into despair. Unlike unemployment, where getting a job creates an upward emotional shift, these people are already employed and little changes for them. The changes that do occur and may give them some hope tend to be minor. For example, one of the co-researches explained that ever since he had begun his job he had regularly been promised promotions. In fact he had taken the job because he had been promised that it was only temporary and that he would soon be moving up. Over the last two years he has been promised four promotions, none of which materialized. He has received glowing performance evaluations, but nothing has changed. With each one of these promised promotions and following disappointments he has become more discouraged, until he now believes that nothing will ever change for him with this organization. However, his feelings of self-worth and self-confidence are so low that he cannot see himself making a change by for example, looking for work elsewhere. Unemployment is too great a risk.
This fear of unemployment and a very pessimistic view of their chances to get any other job, not necessarily even a better job, seems to keep many of these persons in their present jobs. They prefer the security of underemployment to risking unemployment by looking for other work. Consequently, there is a gradual erosion of their sense of self-worth until they reach the point of resignation and "accept" their situation. This then is the bottom of the experience, the point where it cannot get any worse. For at least one respondent this was the point to consider suicide. For three others it meant a total restructuring of their value system. For another it meant seriously undertaking a new job search and risking underemployment. Not everyone in this sample has reached the bottom yet. It seems, however, that reaching the bottom is necessary before the risks inherent in change become acceptable. See Figure 1 for a graphic interpretation of the emotional shift data.
Figure 1

Diagram showing a timeline with the following stages:

- Graduation
- Job search
- Happy to get job
- Disillusionment
- Hope
- Despair
- New determination to create change
- Resignation
V SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

This study has contributed to an understanding of the experience of underemployment for male college graduates. The experience was found to be comprised of four phases: an initial down period during job search after graduation; an upward partially "high" period upon receiving work; a downward spiral as the experience takes hold; and a time when the person either decides to make things change or decides to give up and accept the situation.

This chapter will examine: 1.) limitations of the study, 2.) the study's theoretical implications, 3.) implications for further research, and 4.) implications for counselling,

Limitations of the Study

The results of this study are based on a male, college educated, British Columbia sample. A mixed sex sample may have yielded different results given that women have had to deal with underemployment for a longer period of time (O'Toole, 1977), and may have even stronger and more entrenched feelings regarding underemployment.

A sample drawn from a different province may also have yielded different results given the high unemployment and generally negative employment picture in British Columbia. Other provinces may offer the prospect of eventual relief
from underemployment, but there seems to be little reason to believe that things will change for the better in British Columbia in the near future. This may have lead to the participants in this study despairing more quickly than they might have in a different province.

The participants also held different levels of degrees ranging from Bachelor of Arts to Doctorates. The holders of the higher degrees tended to be more frustrated than those with lower degrees. There was also a variety of fields represented. A study limiting the sample to one type of degree in one particular field may have given different results due to varying expectation of employment after graduation in the different fields.

In respect to methodological limitations, the sample size was small though this was compensated for by conducting in-depth interviews. Also, the establishment of the critical incident categories is dependent on the one who acts as sorter. Another factor is that the literature is pre-dominately American and reflects the American experience. While the Canadian experience is similar there may be differences that are not immediately apparent.

Theoretical Implications

Rumberger (1984) suggested that as many as 25 to 50 percent of recent college graduates either are, or feel they
are, underemployed. Earlier studies such as Freeman (1976) and the Carnegie Commission (1973) also found that a large number of college graduates found themselves in jobs which didn't make full use of their education. The sample of this study certainly fit into the moulds of these other studies. All participants were in fact underemployed (see Table 1) and certainly felt that they were underemployed. With the exception of one participant all were in jobs that required a grade 12 education or less. In the case of three participants, their jobs actually required no formal education beyond simple reading and writing skills. It would be natural to assume that the members of this sample would be upset about wasting their time at university. This proved to be true for only 3 participants. The remaining 12 all felt that their education had been worthwhile and that they could find some applications for their training.

Richards (1984), Burris (1980) and Sullivan (1978) found that younger workers tended to be more often over-educated than older workers. In the literature review two possible explanations were given. One explanation was that younger workers simply are better educated than their elders and the second was that younger workers tend to be in 'entry level' jobs. While the first was supported by this study, the second reason was not. Several of the participants were in fields that traditionally would have offered them 'entry level' positions. Now, however, due primarily to a poorly functioning economy, these positions are no longer
available. An example of this is participant number 15. He received his Bachelor of Commerce in a specialized field in which, just a few years ago, there was a demand for personnel. By the time he graduated the economy had taken a severe downturn and those jobs were no longer available. In fact, many of the persons who had held these positions were now unemployed. He had done well at school, had accumulated appropriate experience during his education and was well able to present himself. For all intents and purposes he was the ideal candidate for a business such as a bank to take into their 'entry level' programme. However, he found that he was competing with people with more education and experience than he possessed who were willing to work for as little money as he was. After a lengthy job search he landed a job as a bank messenger. This is not an entry level position, it goes no where. He had the misfortune of graduating at a time when the job market is saturated with job seekers and jobs are few. In the words of another participant: "Who's going to hire me when there's tons of guys with masters degrees and loads of experience lining up for the same job?!".

It would appear that many of the traditional ways that college graduates entered the work-place have disappeared and that many are finding themselves in dead end positions. Given Richards' (1984) finding that inappropriate beginning jobs can have a negative impact on a persons long-term
vocational outcome we can assume that many of these participants will remain in dead end jobs and be, at best, resigned to their underemployment.

Richards (1984b) found that underemployment among highly educated workers was a source of frustration and discontent. She also suggests that high income only adds to job satisfaction if job fit is also high. The results of this study would seem to validate Richards' finding. Two of the participants who had substantial incomes were still dissatisfied with their jobs. Money did not erase their frustration with being underemployed, though it did make it easier to endure. Where these findings deviate from Richards is that neither of these participants would consider giving up their well paying jobs to take on lower paying jobs more in line with their education. It would seem therefore, that money can be enough of a factor to make the frustrations of underemployment preferable to having a low income and being properly employed.

Burris (1983b) indicates that higher education leads to increased job dissatisfaction, higher turn over rates, reduced job involvement, impaired co-worker relations, and more emphasis on future aspirations. All of these factors are verified by this study. 14 participants reported that they were disillusioned with their situation. 10 reported incidents of depression severe enough to interfere with the day to day order of their lives. Several of the participants have held numerous jobs, with only one having only one job.
since graduation. One participant has held 50 jobs since graduation from high school, four of those since receiving his university degree. Typically the participants have had 2-3 jobs since their university graduation. Comments such as "I can't stand my job!" and "If I don't get another job soon I'm gonna go nuts!" were common throughout the interviews. Only one participant stated that he was relatively content in his job and even he fulfilled the requirements of his job with a certain reluctance. 7 participants reported problems with co-workers. These problems usually centered around differences enhanced by higher education. For example one participant indicated that he couldn't stand the language and the crude humour of his co-workers. Another talked about how glad he was when someone with a background similar to his began work, providing a companion with whom he could have an intelligent conversation. 7 also indicated that they felt positive about the future. They felt that eventually things would come their way and several even indicated that they would consider more education as a way of improving their situation.

In 1976, Freeman documented the changing labour market for college graduates. He indicated that there were a growing number of college graduates in low-level jobs and that there was no guarantee of a return on a college degree. Ten years later it seems that nothing has changed except the need to document how much worse it has gotten.
Implications for Further Research

This was a preliminary study and its results indicate that more research into the experience of underemployment is warranted. Further studies using larger samples and qualitative measures could be undertaken to further examine this phenomenon. Also, since it is not a phenomenon limited to male college graduates a broader study encompassing both sexes and unlimited regarding education would add greatly to our understanding of the experience.

More specific studies would also be desirable. Areas such as the impact of underemployment on self-concept, and its impact on family and interpersonal relationships need to be examined more closely.

Sarason et al. (1975) writing 11 years ago said:

Beginning a lifetime in a field which is actually a second, third, or even lower choice, as many people do, is tragic because it impinges drastically on one's sense of self-worth. People who cannot pursue their `primary' interest--an increasing number--are likely to be very frustrated and unhappy (p. 589).

Proving this to be true could be the aim of some longitudinal studies that examine the extent of this frustration and unhappiness and tell us more about the long term impact of underemployment.
Implications for Counselling

All of the participants of this study had, at some point in their experience, sought help in dealing with their situation. Some sought professional help, others sought the help of respected peers or family members. Clearly there is a need to help those people who are having difficulty dealing with their underemployment transcend their experience.

In trying to fulfill this task, the results of this study can help the counsellor help his client. Examining the four segments of the experience and the critical incident categories would certainly help a counsellor understand the situation of the client. Counsellors will most likely see clients during stages two and three. A client in the spiral stage may come to a session completely down one week and up the next. Being aware of the spiral effect could help the counsellor to plan appropriate interventions that could help his client to break out of this spiral. Careful observation of the client, such as the degree of disillusionment, could help the counsellor to realize when the client has bottomed out. At this point a client who was previously reluctant to implement suggestions may now be open to suggestions, and the skilled counsellor may be able to facilitate a new determination on the part of the client to create change. The observant counsellor will also be able to determine when the client is going to give in to
despair and resignation and undertake interventions to prevent this or to help the client work his way out once it has happened. Quite simply, a knowledge of what can be expected in this type of experience is a valuable tool when employed by a skilled counsellor. Given that 13 participants indicated that their underemployment had had a negative effect on personal relationships, family or couple counselling may need to occur along with career counselling. Even though there was not a specific question asked dealing with self-concept it is quite clear from the data that self-concept/self-worth is negatively effected by underemployment. 14 participants reported being disillusioned with their present situation. The one abstention came from the person in a job most closely aligned with what he had trained for. 10 reported incidents of depression. 9 were negative about the future. 8 were resigned to their fate. 5 participants reported that they had gone through periods of self-examination, wondering what they had done to deserve this kind of existence. With these kind of experiences and feelings the counsellor should approach the client with the intention of helping the client to build a better self-concept and to motivate them to desire to create change in their lives. Counselling, in this case, should be seen as an exercise in building self-esteem and motivation.

Finally, I believe that there is a strong indication that more work needs to be done with students before they
graduate. They need to be better prepared for entering the job search time in their lives. It is no longer good enough to say that you get a job after graduation. They should be told that they might not get a job right away, that it takes skills to look for a job, and that the process takes time. While conducting the interviews I was often amazed to discover how quickly some of these persons had given up looking for the kind of jobs they wanted. One participant was desperate after 2 weeks and took the first job offered him. Students need to be prepared with better job search skills and they need to have their expectations modified in terms of what they can realistically expect after graduation.

Perhaps the greatest modification needs to happen before the students even attend university. The notion that you go to university to get a job seems to be outdated. It may be time to return to an Aristotelian view of education, namely, that you go to university for the sake of learning not to ensure employment. Certainly we should no longer hear guidance counsellors tell high school students, as I did recently, "Go to university if you want a good job!". Perhaps this was once true, but it is certainly not always the case. High school students should be encouraged to pursue higher education for the merits of higher education, not as a guarantee of a job.
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Appendix A

Pilot Interview Questions
Pilot Interview Questions

1. Could you please tell me when it was that you first became aware that you were underemployed?

2. I'd like you to tell your own story of your experience with being underemployed. Just like any story there's always a beginning, middle and end. Could you begin before you felt underemployed, and continue to describe your experience in terms of thoughts, feelings, actions and what you've done to change the situation.

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

4. Now turning to the high points during this experience, start with the first high point you can remember, and why it was helpful to you.

5. What was university like for you?

6. Were you thinking of getting a specific kind of job after graduation?
7. What are your expectations about the future right now?

8. What impact, if any, has your underemployment had on your relationship with your family or significant others?

9. How old are you?

10. What is your present marital status?

11. What is your present occupation?
Appendix B

Subject Consent Form
Appendix C

Modified Interview Questions
Modified Interview Questions

1. I'd like you to tell your own story of your experience with being underemployed. Just like any story there's always a beginning, middle and end. Could you begin before you felt underemployed, and continue to describe your experience in terms of thoughts, feelings, actions and what you've done to change the situation.

2. Could you please tell me when it was that you first became aware that you were underemployed?

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

4. Now turning to the high points during this experience, start with the first high point you can remember, and why it was helpful to you.

5. What was university like for you?

6. Were you thinking of getting a specific kind of job after graduation?

7. What are your expectations about the future right now? For example, are your generally optimistic or pessimistic about the future?
8. What impact, if any, has your underemployment had on your relationship with your family or significant others?

9. How old are you?

10. What is your present marital status?

11. What is your present occupation?
Appendix D

Contact Letter
Appendix E-1

Blank Rating Sheet Form
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>EMOTIONAL SHIFTS</th>
<th>EVENTS OR BEHAVIORS ACOMPANYING SPECIFIC EMOTIONS</th>
<th>COPING STRATEGIES</th>
<th>FUTURE EXPECTATIONS</th>
<th>CHANGE STRATEGIES</th>
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Appendix E-2

Completed Rating Sheet Example
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<tr>
<th>EMOTIONAL SHIFTS</th>
<th>EVENTS OR BEHAVIORS ACCOMPANYING SPECIFIC EMOTIONS</th>
<th>COPING STRATEGIES</th>
<th>FUTURE EXPECTATIONS</th>
<th>CHANGE STRATEGIES</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>&quot;Confident&quot; in his abilities.</td>
<td>Eventhough he had taken a job beneath his skill level and formal training he was sure that he could handle being underemployed.</td>
<td>He was sure that this job would be temporary.</td>
<td>Planned to save money so that he could travel and return to school.</td>
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<tr>
<td>&quot;Excited&quot; in finding a job.</td>
<td>Initially getting the job was novel and exciting. He was thrilled just to be working.</td>
<td>Just hang in there.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>&quot;Frustrated&quot; in the job.</td>
<td>The initial excitement wore off quickly once he discovered what the job was really like and that he was going nowhere with it.</td>
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<tr>
<td>&quot;Bored&quot; with the job.</td>
<td>He was not interested in the work and quickly got extremely bored with it.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Frustrated&quot;.</td>
<td>The work was so physically demanding that he had no energy left at the end of the day for social activities.</td>
<td>He hoped that he would get used to the work and adjust.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>&quot;Miserable&quot; when he made mistakes.</td>
<td>If he made a mistake and his boss got mad at him it just made things that much worse.</td>
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<tr>
<td>&quot;Depressed&quot;, everything was getting to him.</td>
<td>He recounts that the months with the bad weather were the hardest to take. The endless rain took away the one redeeming feature of his job, being able to work outside.</td>
<td>Hang on until the weather gets nicer.</td>
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<tr>
<td>EMOTIONAL SHIFTS</td>
<td>EVENTS OR BEHAVIORS ACCOMPANYING SPECIFIC EMOTIONS</td>
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<tr>
<td>&quot;Exasperation&quot;</td>
<td>He was so fed up with his job he felt that he would go insane if he didn't quit.</td>
<td>Just to hang on and hope that things will get better.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>&quot;Denial&quot; of what he was doing.</td>
<td>He related that he didn't want to admit to himself that he was underemployed and that this denial made it easier to cope.</td>
<td>Keep telling yourself that it is just temporary.</td>
<td>Expect to go travelling or back to school.</td>
<td>Eventually get more training so that you can get a better job.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;Philosophical&quot; re. his situation.</td>
<td>He's saying that because it's to be temporary he can handle it. In order to make this more palatable he rationalizes what he is doing, sort of making excuses for himself.</td>
<td>Keep telling yourself that it is just temporary.</td>
<td>Expect to go travelling or back to school.</td>
<td>Eventually get more training so that you can get a better job.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>He is feeling &quot;incompetent&quot; in his job.</td>
<td>Because he finds the job boring, his mind often wanders causing him to make mistakes.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Feeling &quot;low&quot;.</td>
<td>Since his job leaves him physically exhausted curtailing his social life, this causes a lot of low feelings, especially in the winter months.</td>
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<tr>
<td>He feels like &quot;vegging out&quot;.</td>
<td>Because his job drains so much of his energy when he does have time in the evening he just feels like plopping down in front of the TV and vegging out.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Getting really &quot;snarly&quot;</td>
<td>His frustration was getting to the point to where he was taking it out on others.</td>
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<tr>
<td>EMOTIONAL SHIFTS</td>
<td>EVENTS OR BEHAVIORS ACCOMPANYING SPECIFIC EMOTIONS</td>
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<tr>
<td>&quot;Resignation&quot;.</td>
<td>At one point he contemplated giving in and going into construction as a career. The pressure from his boss and co-workers was getting to him.</td>
<td>He sought out advice from others in the industry, especially ones who weren't gung ho about it.</td>
<td>By carefully looking at the people in the industry he decided that this is not what he wanted.</td>
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<tr>
<td>&quot;Happy&quot; or at least somewhat more content.</td>
<td>He has learned enough about the job so that he can still do the job and let his mind wander. This makes the whole experience more bearable...</td>
<td>Do your job, but let your mind wander.</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;Frustrated&quot;</td>
<td>He likes creative thinking and there is no room for creativity in his job. Everything is concrete. There is no room for abstract thought.</td>
<td>Escape into your mind.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>&quot;Happy&quot; at university.</td>
<td>&quot;Those years have been the highlight of my life so far&quot;.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Excited&quot; about learning new things.</td>
<td>The best part of university for him was being exposed to new ideas, learning new things and meeting new people.</td>
<td>Get back to university.</td>
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<tr>
<td>&quot;Resignation&quot;.</td>
<td>He didn't expect to get a job with his BA. &quot;I didn't expect to get anything, and I didn't. Totally met my expectations.&quot;</td>
<td>Tell yourself that you still have some time left to experiment.</td>
<td>To get another job.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Feels good&quot; about life in general.</td>
<td>He feels relatively optimistic about life and still feels that he will be able to do the things he wants to do.</td>
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<tr>
<td>EMOTIONAL SHIFTS</td>
<td>EVENTS OR BEHAVIORS ACCOMPANYING SPECIFIC EMOTIONS</td>
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<tr>
<td>&quot;Feels positive&quot; about the job.</td>
<td>Along with all the negatives, he feels good that he is learning a trade that he can use at any time.</td>
<td></td>
<td>May have to use these skills again if the economy doesn't improve and he can't get another job.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>&quot;Hopeful&quot;.</td>
<td>He is still hopeful that he will be able to get a job as a teacher sometime in the future.</td>
<td>Keep hoping and be patient.</td>
<td>Expects to be a teacher.</td>
<td>Get the necessary training in order to do something else like teach.</td>
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<tr>
<td>&quot;Worried&quot; about his future.</td>
<td>He is worried that things may work together in such a way that his plans may not work out.</td>
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<tr>
<td>&quot;Unhappy&quot; with his life outside of work.</td>
<td>He feels that his social life is suffering because of what he does. Also, because of lack of money he is forced to live at home which is an unhealthy situation.</td>
<td></td>
<td>Get out of the house more and spend more time with friends.</td>
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Appendix F

Protocol Example
Example Interview

QUESTION 1

Well I would say right at the beginning of my job. It was actually, I think I started my job with the understanding that I would be underemployed. Because I had already done it before, I knew what it would be, but I hadn't done it for any long period of time, but I figured that I could handle it for a time period anyway. So, yeah I guess right at the start.

Me: So it was like you graduated and then you started this job. and then...

Him: Yeah, well I graduated from university and then I went to Quebec for a year, and then I uh came back and wasn't exactly sure what, I mean with a BA your sort of limited, you know, a B Th. I sort of have any way and could have if I wanted it's just a matter of processing. I haven't done that yet, and um there' just not to many alternatives as jobs go, so I think my immediate problem was just getting money together. I was flat broke when I came back from Quebec, didn't even have enough money to take the bus from the train depot so uh, I knew I could get a job doing this so I did and then uh things just stretched out I guess.... I wasn't sure how long I was going to stay at it and then..... I just....because I wasn't sure what I was going to do, I was still thinking about going back to school.....So....

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Question 2 "Story"

OK, um, I don't know if I can start with a before exactly, I suppose in a sense you could 'cause the uh simply the novelty of starting a new job makes it uh, you know you don't experience any sense of being frustrated or whatever at the job the first, oh I don't know maybe 2-3 months because its new, it's a change, your making money, that sort of thing, you know, I don't... at that point in the summer, I started my job in July, I think I didn't really mind it, you know the guys I work with are pretty good, they're nice guys, but uh, lets see, the middle, I suppose for the most time, some time in the winter there, I uh, things were slowing down a little bit... and uh.... you just sort of, I guess I sort of started feeling just mostly frustrated because its uh, it's uh....not going anywhere I suppose just sort of putting time, you know what I mean? just sort of uh...even though I realized it wasn't going to be forever, well at times I thought well maybe I'll have to end up doing this anyway...but um.........yeah sometimes I don't know I just really start getting frustrated 'cause the job was so boring eh, I could never like going to work, 'cause framing is uh physically it's pretty demanding I was always tired in the evening and I never felt like going out...and doing anything so basically I wasn't doing anything just uh...just sort of working and sleeping and working and sleeping and .... I suppose that's the worst part of it and
uh....uh..lets see, but it goes in cycles it swings it always did the whole time, you know, like some days would be all right you know,.... like some days would be good when things went well, you know I had a good time, laughed a lot stuff like that, but other days, maybe I screwed up doing something and Harold got mad or um anything happened, I don´t know, some days were just miserable....and then for awhile I suppose, now it´s not so bad, but for awhile there, I think it was in January or February I started really getting uh....uh..depressed. YOu know I was actually getting, for about a month there, I started noticing that I was short tempered, you know.....you know I was maybe becoming more withdrawn a little bit....that was a low period, but I decided at that point I started realizing that well you´ve gotta, gotta over come that so that´s what I did, I started realizing it´s just ridiculous you know, I almost quit, actually in February, I just said: To hell with it! eh at one point. I figured I gotta leave just to keep my sanity, you know,.....but um...yeah then the weather started getting better, James came to work now, so it´s a little more diverse you know.....I suppose the bottom line is that I just don´t find it interesting you know, you go for coffee and Harold, well they´re both nice guys but,.....you know I don´t find any satisfaction out of building something. Even when I was young I was never the kid who built forts or uh....or monkeyed around on a bicycle or anything. I never did anything like that. I just don´t
find any sort of like physical things, you know, don't interest me, period...... But uh...I don't know....

Me: Can you say some more about thoughts or more particular feelings that you have about being underemployed or under-utilized.

Him: Well, uh, OK, uh, ....I suppose essentially I don't like to admit it. You don't like to face up to the fact. It's much easier to uh, when I look at what I like to be doing, and I'm not even quite sure what that might be, but I'd certainly like to try something else, but....I find it easier to uh....not to admit the reality of it, to just sort of uh....you know you just put in your 8 hours and then I just try to forget that.....I....lets see uh.......I don't know, right now I just sort of accept it eh. I just say well listen it's dull and boring and ...I'm not making much money ...but uh...it's not for ever, so.. because you can't let it, that's what was happening when I was getting really down, I was starting to sort of think to much about how bad it was, you know, instead of just casting it aside, and it's not that bad all the time, like I say it comes and it goes. Some days it's, like right now I feel OK about it, I don't....

Me: Is it sort of when you can keep it in perspective, that it's easier?
Him: Yeah, perspective in the sense that you know it's not lasting. I think, if I was in a position where I figured I might have do do this, you know, like as a career then I would ...then it would be quite a bit different I think. UH....you see I can cope with it for a year. A year is not that long, but for an indefinite period of time, I don't know.....

Me: So you're viewing it as something temporary.

Him: Yeah. WELL I guess I could. You know, well...After a year I'm not that inept at it. I mean i could probably go on my own, but I just don't want to.........

Me: Do you feel like you've done anything to change the situation?

Him: In what sense?

Me: In the sense of putting it in perspective, treating it temporarily, do you have anything in motion to change it, to get out of it or to do some other kind of things?

Him: OK, well...I mean I'm basically, right now I'm saving up money and I'm gonna go travelling in the fall and then I'm gonna go back to school I think next year, probably in September. I'll go back and try to go, it's either teaching, get my education degree, or else English as a second language degree, so one of those two, but I don't even know where, where I'll go to school....SOOOO....I don't
know, is that sort of what you mean, I mean I haven't really applied anywhere or anything like that.....

Me: I don't have anything I mean, I just want to see what you might have done in the last year or so to change

Him: Well I've applied at a few places but I don't know if well I've been going to school for a long time and it's sort of..... so I was figuring I would like to go travelling yet. Sow the last few wild oats I've got left before I uh..., settle down (laughter).

Question 3 (lows)

OK, well I'm not sure I can identify any one instance, just....I mean it's generally the same, I mean lets see uh......yeah it usually has something to do because it.......you know I'd say I went through just basically one low period. The rest of the time was just sort of good days and bad days, but nothing you know, it wasn't very long duration or anything like that. Um.....it usually has to do with feeling incompetent in what I'm doing, you know, 'cause I don't like it I don't learn it very fast, you know, and I don't or I may not remember something and my mind is, you know, my mind tends to drift a lot. Which means that you make mistakes, which means that somebody gets mad at you, you know, which means that you feel lousy. And so, I suppose that......you know, and then when you're feeling
like that you’re wondering why even, why you don’t quit and try something else, you know, or something like that. I suppose that it’s usually ah......or when it’s raining out for weeks on end or it’s cold, ....you know, ’cause then at that point your whole life revolves around your work basically, ’cause physically it’s enough that it’s not that easy to get up and do stuff in the evening. So um, you know, in the winter time it’s dark at night and you can’t do that much in the evenings and basically your life revolves around working and if and you don’t find it stimulating at all, that’s when it becomes it sort of prompts a lot of low feelings.

Me: Like what your saying is that when you can’t use something external to, uh, get some excitement or do something different that’s when it becomes the most difficult to take.

Him: Yeah, yeah, that’s it! Yeah, as long as I can sort of do something else, you know. Like I read a lot I think that’s probably one of the great things, but......you know, usually I just go and escape into a book in the evening or something like that, but for awhile there I was even getting too tired to read anything, I just didn’t feel like it. I just plopped myself down in front of the TV and just veg out till 9-10 and then go to sleep. But yeah, that’s exactly it, it was like now with Expo or whatever, now that it’s lighter I’m playing baseball. I figured you gotta get out and do
something anyway.

Me: You mentioned before, I think it was that February was a low point. Was it February?

Him: Yeah, I think so. I'm not sure, but January or February in there.

Me: Can you say a bit more about that?

Him: OK, like um......yeah I don't know exactly. I guess because it was already, you know, the novelty of working, the money, you know, having that around, was, was wearing very thin. There's a, there's other complications to it. I think somebody, uh, there's problems with living at home still, you know, which is a mistake. ......you know...So there's usually other things involved besides work, I think at that point. ....But um...yeah I started getting, ah, I just noticed it that somewhere in there I was getting really depressed about the whole thing, you know...and I just noticed a, like I was starting to snap back. I'm a pretty easy going guy. I don't usually get up tight about stuff. But I started noticing that I was getting really snarly all the time, you know, I just never felt like doing anything or being with anybody or....so I figured ah it's crazy, either I quit or something if it was the job, but it wasn't totally the job, you know I mean, there were other things involved. I mean it had a lot to do with it I suppose...Yeah.....but
um........... Lets see if it was work exactly
(thoughtful)..................
I don't know, maybe my Bio-rythmns were down or something
(laughter) February has always been the worst month, at
school or anywhere. The winter, you know, sort of gets long
at that point, it doesn't seem like it's going to end.

Me: I may be totally wrong on this, but it seems to me I
heard something else before and that is that perhaps around
that time you began to feel like this might not be
temporary. Like you were starting to think that I might end
up doing this for the rest of my life.

Him: Yeah, I know (heavy sigh) Yeah, because like I say, I
haven't really uh, I don't have any definite plans
for....you know, for changing it exactly. Yeah, at one
point I contemplated, you know, I thought you know, listen
it's a trade, and I mean other people do it and ah, you
know, you can learn to adjust, you know, you just do it.
But then, I remember talking to ______ about this and he,
well talking to my boss, he's really gung ho construction
guy. He likes that sort of, he's using it as a stepping
stone to go into building, you know and _____ too, they both
tried to convince me to go into it, 'cause for them they
enjoy it, it's their life. But ah, but so....so you get,
not pressured I would never call it that, but encouragement
from the guys at work, you know, who are my friends, to
continue at it, so I yeah, I contemplated it. But then.....
I don't know if seriously though......... On a good day I might have, but...... you know, just looking around at people who are in it, really sort of like, you know very typical example is ______ who's uh, you know uh, stuck in it basically and he doesn't like it, you know. But you can see yourself if you just look at some of these people and you wonder well, you know, what is it you want out of life, and I don't think banging nails is what I want to do.

Me: It sounds like when you run up into that realization every once in awhile, that's when it gets toughest.

Him: Yeah (heavy). Well you just don't...you see the good thing is now it's I'm starting to learn it enough that I can let my mind wander and still do my job pretty well. So that's something, as long I can....you know just sort of drift a bit. But...for a while there I had to concentrate. Not enough to, to make it interesting, but enough to make sure you didn't cut off your finger or something like that, or know what the measurements are supposed to be. That's always...you know, just a little bit...that's one thing that always bothers me too, is...you know, in college most everything is, at least, you have enough freedom to pursue what you want, you know, then you can concentrate and then you can let it fly, you know, and whatever you feel, you know, so.... and uh.... and here it's just the opposite. You still concentrate to a level, but it's so, uh how do you
say, it's so uh.... I don't know it, maybe it's because it's so concrete. That sort of stuff never really interested me. You know like, remembering how to build something, or....

Me: Not to much abstract thought going on.

Him: Nothing, nothing at all. There's no creativity, there's no... using, like ideas is what I'm in to eh, like I don't know exactly .... but I like sort of creative thinking and that sort of thing and then in construction there is absolutely no room for that whatsoever, you know, unless your and architect, but not in this field.

Me: Ok. Question (highs)

Him: Ok, uh... lets see, high points.... I don't know if there have been..... I don't know if I can name any
(laughter)

Me: Just to jog your memory, you mentioned one before. And that was the people you work with.

Him: Yeah, yeah that's true. (hesitantly) They're, yeah. I don't know if I'd say that that's really .... high points exactly, because their my friends yeah, but we don't have necessarily a lot in common, you know, .... so there's been positive like horsing around and stuff like that, I suppose uh.... when the weathers nice, being up with your shirt off getting a tan ... joking around.... yeah, there have been good days all right..... but thats still..... I don't
know... I sort of separate that from the work, because really the uh, you really only have good times when you’re doing something that is away from the work, in a sense when you’re joking around you’re actually not... your doing something, you know, maybe your working still yet, but your not talking about work and your not, you’re just sort of mechanically your doing it but, but the high points are always something extraneous, I guess.

Me: The high points are always something outside of what you are doing.

Him: Yeah! ‘Cause I don’t get any satisfaction out of building, period. I mean I don’t, it’s not that....

Me: Let me check this out with you. It sounds like when there are high points they are related to sociability, being with people that sort of thing, but nothing to do with personal gain or motivation or anything like that. Not job related.

Him: No. I mean at best, I think there are some days where I don’t mind doing it, or I guess once in a blue moon I guess.... I get, just because of the physical labour you feel good, because you, it’s just like a workout or something like that, you know, maybe you feel a little better after a little exercise, that sort of thing. But, ah, that’s about it. I wouldn’t say that the high points sort
to of just are it's all right, at best.

Me: It sounds like you're reaching.

Him: Yeah.

Me: Let's shift gears a little. Question 5.

Him: Hmmm. Well it was ah, .... I think those years have been the highlight of my life so far. Especially because of the freedom you've got. It wasn't very regimented, especially being in the Arts programme, you're writing papers most of the time so there aren't any constant things like in math or something like that. You know, I could pick my own working hours, you know which I like, you know, I like early like 12 to 2 or something. That's when I did a lot of my work, I like that. I'm sort of a night person. And uh, because friends would always be, I think it's the something new all the time. I think that's what attracted, that's what I enjoyed most about university. Because every day you'd learn something, or you'd meet someone you hadn't met before .... something was new virtually all the time, you know, and there was a sense of progression too in what you did.... Satisfaction of doing a good job, at times. ..... And if you didn't wanna put out, well you didn't put out and .... a lot of freedom and that. ........... Yeah, I really enjoyed university a lot. ..... But uh....... I suppose in a way it's OK .... coming from, I would say, sheltered background, relatively conservative as far as
ideas go .... stepping into university was not kind of an eye opener exactly, but something like that. You know, it was like moving into a new world, that’s probably what I enjoyed most about it. Meeting people who weren’t mennonites and conversing with them and discussing things and, you know, getting to know what other people were about. That was the best part.

Me: It sounds like you need a certain amount of stimulation, external stimulation.

Him: Yeah, yeah. I would say so. I get very, I get uh.... I think I get bored fast, I’m not sure..... but I always, virtually everything I do I just sort of, well even in books I just, I don’t always finish them. I put them down for awhile and pick them up later. I like .... I like things to change and uh, you know, the same with, you know, going out with girls, I always , you know, it’s good for a few months and then I get tired and move on. ..... 

Question 6

Him: No. Because I don’t think there’s any, what do you do with a BA, there’s no orientation exactly, no job built specifically for guys with a major in History and Religious studies. No, I didn’t’ anticipate getting anything. I didn’t expect to get anything. And I didn’t. Totally met my expectations. (laughter)
Question 7

How about realistic. (laughter) I don't think, ah.... I think I'm relatively optimistic. I don't see any reason not to be. ....... You know, for immediate plans, going travelling are among things I enjoy most in life. Long range, going back to school, I think I'll do.... and you know, by that point I think I'll be, you know, with any luck I'll be able to settle down a little bit more easier, and do something a little more routine. In a few years I hope so. So, yeah that's pretty optimistic.

Me: Actually that sounds like another high point before. The job allows you to save enough money so that you can do some of those things.

Him: Yeah, it does. But it doesn't pay all that well, I mean I suppose $9/hr. that's all right I guess, not great. .... Yeah well I mean it's always there and that's one good thing about the job, because you do learn a trade and I can always do it. I can always, no matter what I'm doing, there's so much flexibility in the construction trade that, you know, in housing someone is always looking for an experienced carpenter, or you know like, uh carpenters helper.

Me: Yet they say that the unemployment rate in the construction industry is 55%. 
Him: Yeah, but that's union carpenters. That's quite a different thing. You see building houses is really doing well right now, so there's lots of work. ........ I don't know, I'm not much of one for uh, overly concerned about the future. I really try to take it as it comes.

Me: Sounds like you feel that you're still going to get to do what you want to do.

Him: Yeah, I still hope. You know, if teaching falls through I think, that's sort of my last uh, ...... except for writing. I still wanna be a writer. I don't think I'll ever get into that, but ah... so of teaching falls through, it would be different 'cause then I wouldn't know what...... well that's something in the future and if it's in the future you can always hope for the best. ... But I think I could do the job. I think I could be reasonably competent at doing that so........

Question 8

Yeah, it's ah....... well it's... well there's that fact that I'm tired in the evenings. I think my social life has gone down, well it's picking up again now in the spring but, through the winter it was just..... you know, I saw very few people. So,.... simply because I was too tired and even if we went out Friday nights, or something like that, by 11 I'd be half asleep, ready to go home. And then for
awhile there we working Saturdays as well and you'd be up at 6, and then Sundays come and you go to church and you have to get up for that and ...... yeah I never had much energy for much, so my social life was at it's lowest ebb. And then of course just coming back from Quebec was totally opposite, eh, there was no... the school work was very, ah, very ah lax, there was virtually no homework and the social life was just about all that there was. So, yeah it was quite a transition I suppose in that way. And uh....yeah with the family....yeah it's hard to say. I don't think I should be living at home. I think that was a mistake. But it doesn't, I think as job relates to that uh ...... yeah I think because, you know, 'cause I don't find it stimulating I don't like talking about work, if I can help it. You know, and that's all I do (laughter) it's sort of, well you just don't talk much, except sports.

Me: Your tiredness, is it strictly a physical tiredness or is there also an emotional fatigue?

Him: No, it's mostly physical. But, I don't know if you can always totally separate the two. You know, like I was saying, because I was physically tired in the evenings, I found it hard to concentrate on reading a book which is something I like to a lot is reading and I was so tired I couldn't even properly read, just sort of watch TV. I couldn't focus for more than an hour or two on a book.
Me: I guess what I was getting at was like if I do a job that is physically demanding, if I like it and get all excited about it that kind of emotional strength, if you will, carries me through it. And then have more energy, whereas if I feel like I really don't want to do this job and then on top of that it's physically demanding the fatigue is a lot more intense.

Him: Yeah, yeah, I'm sure that's right. But I don't know 'cause I can't really say that I've ever done anything physically demanding that I've enjoyed (laughter) except playing soccer once in a while.

Age: 27

Marital Status: Single

Occupation: House Construction