

Public Abstract

First Name:Jonathan

Middle Name:Edward

Last Name:Wickert

Adviser's First Name:Debbie

Adviser's Last Name:Dougherty

Co-Adviser's First Name:

Co-Adviser's Last Name:

Graduation Term:FS 2014

Department:Communication

Degree:PhD

Title:Managing Uncertainty During Unemployment: A Phenomenological Exploration of Social Class Differences

This research address a relevant and important problem, unemployment. After 2008 unemployment steadily increased leaving many people out of work and causing concern for others. This study attempts to understand how people from different types of work experience unemployment. The data was gathered through interviews with 31 people who were experiencing unemployment. To assist in understanding their experiences, each participant provided pictures of anything they thought symbolized their unemployment experience. People commonly took pictures of their cars, empty wallets, and closed doors or hallways. Findings from this study suggest that participants anticipated being able to find a new job. However, participants described experiencing uncertainty after multiple failed attempts to find work. Additionally, social class positioning exposed text (white-collar) workers to valuable job search related resources; whereas body workers (laborers) struggled to manage the job search and meet their basic needs such as food and shelter. Lastly, both text and body workers described feeling stigmatized by their unemployment status and chose to withdraw from interactions with others to avoid feeling stigmatized. As a result of these findings, practitioners are encouraged to help laborers translate their physical work experiences into written text that is useful in the job search process. Practitioners can also help text and body workers develop strategies for managing the unemployment stigma that does not hinder their ability to find a new job.