MANAGING UNCERTAINTY DURING UNEMPLOYMENT: A

PHENOMENOLOGICAL EXPLORATION OF SOCIAL CLASS DIFFERENCES

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Presented by Jonathan Wickert,
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And hereby certify that, in their opinion, it is worthy of acceptance.

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ABSTRACT

This study explores a crucial transition in the exit phase of the assimilation process, the transition from paid work into unemployment. Specifically, this study had two objectives. The first objective was to understand how people experienced and managed uncertainty during unemployment. The second objective was to explore how unemployment is a socially classed phenomenon. Participants in this study consisted of 17 text workers, 11 body workers, and 3 social class straddlers. Data consists of interview transcripts and 142 photographs which were discussed during the interview using the Photovoice method (Novak, 2010). A thematic analysis was used to analyze the transcripts and the photographs. Three themes emerged from the data. First participants described anticipating certainty that gave way to uncertainty. Second, text and body workers described social class differences in the ways that participants managed their uncertainty and unemployment. Third, participants described being stigmatized and withdrew from interactions with others as a way to manage the stigma.

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

The financial recession of 2008 led many people into unemployment. Since 2008, the unemployment rate has increased from 5.8% to as high as 10% in October of 2009 (U.S. Bureau of Labor 2012a). The U.S. Bureau of Labor estimates that 12.5 million people are currently unemployed (U.S. Bureau of Labor, 2012b). Of those currently unemployed, 40% (5 million) have been unemployed for 27 weeks or longer. To put the current trend in context, the United States has not experienced sustained unemployment numbers this high since 1981-1982 (Congressional Budget Office, 2012). However, at that time only 25% of unemployed people were unemployed for 27 weeks or longer (Congressional Budget Office, 2012). These statistics suggest that today more people are unemployed for longer periods.

Unemployment can be a traumatic event that causes some people to experience heightened levels of uncertainty. As communication scholars, we ought to be studying how people manage uncertainty because uncertainty is managed through cognitive and communication behaviors (Kramer, 2004). There are three ways in which communication scholars can make important contributions to unemployment research. First, we know less about the experiences of people who transition out of and back into unemployment than we do about people who transition into the work force from college or another job. Second, communication scholars have an opportunity to build upon existing uncertainty management research. In this particular study, I explore how people

use communication to manage uncertainty during unemployment. Third, our understanding of social class differences related to work is somewhat limited. Scholars such as Dougherty (2011) and Lucas (2011) have begun to explore the nuances of social class; however, how people manage uncertainty during unemployment is likely to depend on their material surroundings.

Unemployment and the Assimilation Process

We know little about the experiences of people as they transition in and out of the workforce. A commonly studied area in organization research is the assimilation process, the process of joining, participating in, and leaving organizations (Kramer, 2010). The assimilation process consists of four phases: the anticipatory socialization phase, the encounter phase, the metamorphosis phase, and the exit phase. The anticipatory socialization phase (before joining an organization) and the encounter phase (becoming a newcomer) are the two most heavily studied phases of the assimilation process (Kramer, 2010). However, the phase relevant to unemployment experiences is the exit phase, which typically focuses on people who leave the organization. For example, Smith and Dougherty (2012) found that participants described retirement as ultimate marker of success. Participants described being excited about the freedom that retirement brought but fear retirement as well because they would lose their daily work related routines. Although participants saw retirement as a universal marker of success, whether or not a person achieves success is an individual's responsibility. Tan and Kramer (2012) found that when people decide to make a voluntary downward career change they communicate this change in three phases. First people gather information

about the change and seek support for it in the decision making phase. Second, people announce the change at a strategically optimal time and frame the message in a way that will receive the most acceptance. Third, people reframe their new career to increase their social identity.

Organizational disengagement (exit) is a process that consists of a withdrawal between the leaving individual and the organization (Jablin, 1987, 2001). During the disengagement process, people who leave the organization and the people who stay experience three phases. The first is the preannouncement phase where people may experience some type of shock, or begin giving clues about their imminent departure from the organization. The second phase is the announcement and actual exit from the organization. This phase is typically marked by a shift from private to public communication (Jablin, 2001) and the person physically leaves the organization. The last phase is the post exit phase. During this phase, the person is physically and symbolically absent from the organization (Jablin, 2001).

The post-exit phase can be stressful for all those involved because those who stay may be uncertain about their tenure with the organization and those who leave may be uncertain about their future employment (Jablin, 2001). Those who stay can talk with their fellow coworkers and seek the information they need to manage their uncertainty. People who stay can engage in collective sensemaking and reminisce about their former coworkers. This period of remembrance allows those who stay to come to a consensus about what the leaver contributed to the group (Moreland & Levine, 1982). Those who stay maintain important communication networks that aide them in managing their

uncertainty, while those who leave need to find other information sources to rebuild their network.

For those who leave, their communication networks change drastically. Unlike those who stay at the organization, leavers must find new information sources and build new relationships. Those who leave the organization likely need to rely on weak ties to help them find new work. Weak ties are relationships with people that involve relatively low intimacy and infrequent contact (Granovetter, 1973). After someone has left an organization, their communication with former coworkers may initially focus on work related topics; however, as time passes it is likely that the communication will focus less on work related topics and more on personal topics (Jablin, 2001). Eventually it is likely that relationships with former coworkers may dissolve completely.

The success that leavers experience in their new job depends largely on the realism of their communication expectations (Jablin & Krone, 1994). The more realistic the expectations formed during the anticipatory socialization phase, the easier the role adjustment will be in the new job (Jablin, 2001). In his description of the post-exit phase, Jablin (2001) describes the post-exit phase as entering the anticipatory socialization phase again, prior to a new encounter. Alternatively, people may exit one organization while already hired at a new organization and, thus, enter the encounter phase. However, the recent unemployment trends would suggest that many people are becoming unemployed and staying unemployed for a long time. If those people who become unemployed cannot develop an accurate schema, they will likely experience heightened levels of uncertainty (Kramer, 2004).

Unemployment and Uncertainty Management

Second, communication scholars need to explore unemployment experiences because unemployment is a traumatic event (Latack, Kinicki, & Prussia, 1995) that likely produces heightened levels of uncertainty in peoples' lives. Uncertainty is the perception of not knowing what to do in a given situation and certainty reflects a confidence about what will happen (Kramer, 2004). People primarily manage uncertainty through communication and cognitive attempts at uncertainty reduction (Kramer, 2004). Researchers in the area of uncertainty management have argued that communication practices and patterns can help people manage uncertainty (i.e. Goldsmith, 2001). In 2001, Brashers encouraged communication scholars to develop communication theories of uncertainty management. Since then, Afifi and Weiner (2004) and Kramer (2004) have answered that call by developing their own theories of uncertainty management. By exploring uncertainty management during unemployment, organizational communication scholars have an opportunity to explore how people manage uncertainty.

The idea of managing uncertainty evolved from uncertainty reduction research (i.e. Berger & Calabrese, 1975), which originally suggested that as people experienced uncertainty in interpersonal contexts they would be motivated to seek information to reduce their uncertainty. However, people may not want to reduce their uncertainty. Kramer (1999) argued that sometimes people do not want to reduce their uncertainty and instead choose to either maintain or even increase their uncertainty to satisfy competing motives. Although a person may be motivated to seek information in one situation, they may be motivated to increase their uncertainty in a different situation. Brashers (2001) demonstrated this when he applied the idea of uncertainty management to people dealing

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with uncertainty about living with HIV. Brashers (2001) argued that accepting uncertainty is an adaptive mechanism that allowed men living with HIV to function in a comfort zone and cope with the day-to-day uncertainty of living with HIV.

Unemployment and Social Class

How people manage uncertainty also depends on the resources available to them. This is especially important when studying how people manage uncertainty during unemployment because during unemployment people lose valuable resources such as financial and social support resources (Blustein, Kozan, & Connors-Kellgren, 2013). Communication scholars need to study uncertainty management during unemployment to explore how the availability of resources affects one's ability to manage uncertainty. One way to do this is by exploring how people from different social class positions manage uncertainty during unemployment.

The resources that people have available to them vary depending on their social class positioning. Until recently, scholars have typically assessed social class by measuring specific variables such as education level. However, Dougherty (2011) points out that these assessments of social class are incomplete and do not provide a robust understanding of social class. Instead, Dougherty (2011) argues social class is physically unmarked but communicatively marked. Communication is the mortar that intersects the many aspects of social class. Because social class is communicatively marked, the meaning of social class positions changes as well. To ensure that people perceive us as a particular class, we mark our bodies, wear certain clothes, and buy certain goods and services (Dougherty, 2011).

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To capture social class positions I turn to Dougherty's (2011) concepts of text work and body work. Text work involves the manipulation of words and language and body work is characterized by the use of one's body to do the work (Dougherty, 2011). Dougherty's distinction of text and body work is rooted in communication because how people talk about work depends on the type of work they do.

For people who are unemployed, their experiences can be very different depending on the resources they have available to them. For example, Katherine Newman's (1999) book titled *Falling from grace: Downward mobility in the age of affluence* describes the resources that middle-aged, unemployed, former managers utilized to help manage their uncertainty. These men were able to rely on resources such as financial savings, equity in their homes, spouses who also worked, and social support groups such as 40+ clubs that enabled them to mix and mingle with other middle-aged men who worked at the management level.

Unfortunately, the same cannot be said for those with social class positions closer to poverty. In their book *The missing class: Portraits of the near poor in America,* Newman and Chen (2007) describe how those who live just above poverty status are easily decimated by unemployment. The near poor are people who work hard but do not make enough money to be considered middle class. They aspire to become middle class; however, they often experience setbacks such as unemployment that preclude them from becoming middle class. Often the near poor do not have resources such as financial savings, or a home with equity. The near poor may struggle to find others who can give them access to needed resources such as resume writing and job search assistance. Instead, the near poor must rely on government programs to help them find work. If the

near poor are made aware of their upcoming termination, taking time to find a job means that they are not working and if they are not working, they are not making money.

The bottom line is that people experience unemployment differently because of their social class positioning. Communication scholars need to explore these social class differences because it is likely that social class positioning greatly influences how people manage their uncertainty.

Theory of Managing Uncertainty

This study is theoretically supported by Kramer's (2004) theory of managing uncertainty. Unlike other uncertainty/information management theories, Kramer's (2004) theory is robust enough and has the explanatory power needed for exploring uncertainty management during unemployment. First, as argued previously, people likely experience uncertainty differently because of their social class positions. Kramer's (2004) theory argues that people experience uncertainty differently depending on the context in which uncertainty is experienced. One way to understand these contextual differences is to explore social class differences because social class positioning likely changes the experience of uncertainty. Second, Kramer's (2004) theory argues that people manage uncertainty through cognitive and communicative processes. The social costs associated with unemployment would suggest that unemployed people may use both cognitive and communicative processes to manage their uncertainty. Third, Kramer (1999) argued that people may not always be motivated to reduce uncertainty and instead may want to maintain or increase their uncertainty. Kramer's (2004) theory explores how people manage uncertainty beyond information seeking. Because people must manage

competing motives, the ways people choose to manage uncertainty may differ depending on which motives are stronger. Lastly, Kramer (2004) argues that people manage uncertainty in interpersonal and group settings. Unemployed people will likely experience uncertainty in both settings and, therefore, this study needs theoretical support in both settings.

The purpose of this study is three-fold. First, this study aims to describe how people experience unemployment, a transition that takes them out of the workforce. In describing how people experience unemployment, this study can add to our understanding of the assimilation process. Specifically this study can enhance our understanding of the exit and anticipatory socialization phases. Where other assimilation research tends to look specifically at either the anticipatory or exit phase, this research looks at a theoretical gap between exiting an organization and reentering an organization. Findings from this study provide understanding about a crucial work related transition not covered by Jablin's (1987, 2001) model.

Second, this study seeks to understand how people manage their uncertainty during unemployment. Uncertainty is the perception of ambiguity in a situation or setting that leaves people feeling insecure in their own knowledge (Brashers, 2001). Research has shown that people can use a number of different communication behaviors such as information seeking (i.e. Miller & Jablin, 1991) to manage uncertainty. However, the unique characteristics of unemployment, such as the destabilization of personal identities (Garrett-Peters, 2009), may force unemployed people to use certain communication behaviors over others, such as using surveillance or observation as opposed to direct inquiries.

Lastly, this study explores how social class positioning affects unemployed peoples' ability to manage the uncertainty they experience. In doing so, this study can explore the contextual differences that change the experience of uncertainty. Kramer's (2004) theory argues that what may cause uncertainty in one context may not cause uncertainty in another. Exploring social class differences is one way to understand how contextual differences may alter the experience of uncertainty. Previous social class research has sought to understand a specific social class (i.e. Newman, 1999). This present research allows for a comparative analysis and discussion to highlight differences and similarities between text and body workers. In the next section, I review assimilation literature beginning with the exit phase. I then review literature relevant to unemployment and uncertainty experiences. Lastly, I frame the study using Kramer's (2004) theory of managing uncertainty.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

Becoming unemployed can be a traumatic event that can affect peoples' psychological and physical well-being (McKee-Ryan, Song, Wanberg, & Kinicki, 2005). This literature review aims to explore the experience of job loss. First, I review assimilation research. Much of the assimilation research focuses on people joining organizations and tells us little about what happens after people leave an organization (Jablin, 2001), including how people transition from the exit/disengagement phase into unemployment. Second, I review unemployment and uncertainty management literature that explicates my theoretical framework while grounding it in unemployment literature.

Assimilation Research

How people join, participate in, and leave organizations has been an area of research that has received much attention. This research is commonly referred to as assimilation research. Fred Jablin's (1987) initial review of socialization and assimilation research has become a well-known and used model of assimilation in the communication discipline. Assimilation research encompasses numerous areas of study such as newcomer experiences (i.e. Morrison, 1993), information seeking behaviors (i.e. Miller & Jablin, 1991), job and career transitions (i.e. Kramer, 1989), and exit or disengagement communication processes (i.e. Fairhurst, Green, & Snavely, 1984). This project contributes to this body of research by exploring how people manage uncertainty during a crucial transition from employment to unemployment. To frame this study, I provide a review of the assimilation process, beginning by defining important terms related to the assimilation process. Then, I move into the exit/disengagement phase because it is at this

phase that the transition from organizational member to outsider occurs, creating

heightened levels of uncertainty. After discussing the exit/disengagement phase, I

discuss the anticipatory socialization phase. While discussing these phases, I include

unemployment and social class research to draw connections between unemployment,

social class, and assimilation research.

Although scholars have begun using the terms socialization and assimilation

interchangeably (i.e. Kramer, 2010) Jablin (1987, 2001) defines assimilation as the

process by which people join, stay in, and leave organizations. Jablin (1987, 2001)

intended for this term to capture the broader process of how people come to choose an

occupation and find a job. He describes the assimilation process as:

> Assimilation involves a chain of events, activities, message exchanges,
>
> interpretations, and related processes--essentially "links"--in which individuals
>
> use what they have learned in the past (the extant chain of sensemaking moments)
>
> to understand new organizational situations and contents, and as appropriate
>
> realign, reshape, reorder, overlap, or fabricate new links so they can better adapt
>
> to their own and their organizations' requirements in the present and future
>
> (Jablin, 2001, p. 759).

Assimilation is divided into two parts: socialization and individuation. Socialization is

the process by which organizations influence individuals to fit the needs of the

organization (Jablin, 1987, 2001). Socialization processes can be rather obvious or subtle

depending on the socialization tactics the organization chooses. Individuation is the

process by which individuals influence and change the organization to fit their needs

(Jablin, 2001).

The initial phase, the anticipatory socialization phase, includes the time prior to joining the organization. The second phase, the encounter phase, is the period of initial interaction that newcomers have with the organization and its members. The third phase, the metamorphosis phase, includes the time when newcomers have become active and established members of the organization. Jablin's (1987, 2001) model includes a fourth phase, the disengagement or exit phase. This phase signifies when individuals leave organizations. To organize this review of literature, I use Jablin's (1987, 2001) model of assimilation as a framework for the discussion. As stated previously, I begin with the exit/disengagement phase because this phase is that point at which people move from organizational members to unemployed outsiders.

The Exit/Disengagement Phase

The exit phase has received little attention from scholars compared to the other phases of Jablin's (2001) assimilation model. Exit from organizations is a process, not an event and Jablin (2001) defines the process in three basic phases. First is the preannouncement phase. In the preannouncement phase, cues or signals occur that begin to foreshadow an employee's leaving. Cues or signals can come from the employee, coworkers of person who leaves, or managers. For example, Cox (1999) found that coworkers sometimes encourage people to quit. In the second phase, the announcement and actual exit phase, the employee makes public his or her departure from the organization. Kramer's (1989, 1993) research on transitions demonstrates that not every person or group necessarily finds out about the employee's departure at the same time. As the person is getting ready to transition out of the organization, they may choose to

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tell specific people at specific times to minimize the negative effects of their departure.

The third phase of the exit process is the post exit phase. During the post exit phase both

the people who remain at the organization and the people who left the organization must

adapt (Jablin, 2001). Those who stay at the organization may experience a period of

remembrance where stayers reminisce about the leaver (e.g. Moreland & Levine, 1982).

As time continues, it is likely that stayers will think and talk less about the leaver (Jablin,

2001). Leavers, Jablin (2001) argues, must adapt their skills to new settings. Jablin and

Krone (1994) found that the communication expectations leavers held at their previous

positions affected their ability to adapt to new situations. Those leavers with more

realistic expectations were able to adapt more easily to their new situation than those who

held unrealistic expectations. The exit process can vary depending on the type of exit

that occurs. Jablin (2001) describes exit as either being voluntary or involuntary.

     Voluntary exit. Generally, exit is discussed in two forms, voluntary and

involuntary exit (Price, 1977). Voluntary exit occurs when people choose to leave the

organization. Research by Lee, Mitchell, Wise, and Fineman (1996) focusing on

voluntary exit suggest that people take four paths towards voluntary exit. People may

leave via a planned exit. This form of exit is planned ahead of time and is often

motivated by non-work events such as family related issues. In planned exits, people

communicate openly about their exit. In the second type of voluntary exit, shock

resulting in quitting, employees are motivated to quit because of some type of severe

shock such as being passed over for a promotion. The immediacy of this shock limits the

amount of communication the employee may have with others before quitting. The third

type of voluntary exit occurs when the person experiences a shock and begins searching

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for a new job before quitting. The communication during this exit is usually secretive to avoid any negative repercussions. Lastly, people may become gradually disenchanted with the organization and decide to look for a job that interests them.

Another form of voluntary exit that does not fit within Lee and colleagues (1996) typology is that of downward career changes. Tan and Kramer (2012) discovered a communication process that those who choose to make a downward career change use to facilitate the change. First, participants in their study sought information and support from others about the career change. To minimize naysayers, participants described avoiding communication with those who they thought would not support their decision to make a downward career change. Second, participants timed and framed their announcement of the change to ensure the greatest amount of acceptance of their career change. In telling others, participants typically used a casual form of communication to minimize the social impacts of the change. Third, participants verbally and behaviorally reframed their new careers in a positive light by refocusing on the positive aspects of the new career and not on the differences between the two careers. In addition, participants also changed their criteria for accessing careers. For example, instead of focusing on financial losses, participants focused on the satisfaction or fulfillment they received from the work they did.

One specific type of downward career change relevant to this study is retirement. Retirement is a form of organizational exit that has become popular in recent years. Master narratives such as the American Dream suggest that Americans can work hard, become successful, and eventually enjoy retirement. However, retirement research suggests that retirement may not be the best of times. Research by Jones, Leontowitsch,

and Higgs (2010) found that those who took early retirement approached it with a positive attitude, focusing on the spontaneity and freedom of retirement. However, their positive attitudes were met with concern over their status change. According to Jones et al., (2010) early retirees were concerned about their identity change from a working person to a retired person. Furthermore, Smith and Dougherty (2012) highlight two fractures within retirement, the freedom/routine fracture and the individual/responsibility/universal expectations fracture. Participants in their study described anticipating the freedom from routines while at the same time fearing retirement because of that freedom. While retirement allows people to stop working and do other activities, it also alters the structure of their lives. Being employed provides people with structure in their daily lives, such as going to work and then running errands before returning home for the day.

Retirement is a unique situation because many times in retirement scenarios the organization will have some type of event that signifies the person's retirement. Often this event is a retirement party or gathering; however, retirement preparation programs also mark the transition into retirement. Avery and Jablin (1988) found that a majority of the fortune 100 companies they surveyed had retirement preparation programs. However, Avery and Jablin (1988) did not find significant differences in the amount of communication that took place between the company and the retiree after the retiree left. Both those companies that had retirement preparation programs and those that did not experienced about the same amount of communication with retired individuals. The communication that took place between the organizations and retired personnel focused on retirement benefits, pensions, or taxes.

Although voluntary exit can be a planned decision, voluntary exit does not necessarily mean that the person leaving an organization avoids unemployment. In a pilot study for this project one of the participants, Stephanie, described how she was so frustrated with her performance at work, became disenchanted with the organization, and decided to leave the job. As Lee and colleagues (1996) described, Stephanie gradually became disenchanted with her job and decided to leave. Stephanie and other participants in the pilot study described how they anticipated being able to find work once they became unemployed. However, in Stephanie's situation, she was unable to find work and two and a half months later was uncertain about how she was going to pay her rent and day care services that she needed for her daughter. Stephanie's motivation to leave the organization became greater than her motivation to stay at the organization and earn money. At the time of her exit from the organization, the uncertainty brought on by unemployment was low. However, two and a half months later Stephanie regretted her decision to leave the job. Even those who choose to leave an organization are likely to experience heightened levels of uncertainty.

Involuntary exit. Involuntary exit occurs when people leave at the request of the organization and they include mergers and acquisitions, reductions-in-force (RIF), and individual exits. Involuntary exits are likely to be the most uncertainty producing because the employee and employer may not agree to the employee's termination. The more surprising the termination, the more uncertainty a person is likely to experience.

Mergers and acquisitions can produce uncertainty for employees because their jobs or their status within the organization may be in question (i.e. Kramer, Dougherty, & Pierce, 2004). Mergers occur when two organizations integrate themselves and create an

entirely new company while acquisitions involve a larger more prosperous organization

purchasing another organization (Buono & Bowditch, 1989). While much of the research

on mergers and acquisitions focuses on the financial and material concerns about doing

business, communication researchers (i.e. Pierce & Dougherty 2002, Kramer et., al,

2004) have begun to explore the role communication plays within a merger or

acquisition. Kramer et al. (2004) found that pilots in their study of two airlines felt more

secure about their jobs as the merger progressed; however, they were not necessarily

happier with the merger. Some pilots chose not to seek information to reduce their

uncertainty. Those pilots that were close to retirement felt no need to seek information

because the uncertainty they experienced was below their threshold. Others chose not to

seek information because they perceived that no one had accurate information. For those

pilots who did seek information, seeking information did reduce their uncertainty but it

did not improve their attitudes. The pilots were happy that the acquisition occurred

because the acquiring company was financially stronger, but they remained uncertain

about issues such as seniority. In short, seeking information does not always reduce

uncertainty.

Reductions in force are similar to mergers and acquisitions because a change at

the organizational level occurs that causes employees uncertainty about their future with

the organization. Casey, Miller, and Johnson (1997) found that downsizing heightened

perceptions of information deprivation among RIF survivors, increased their feelings of

job insecurity, and changed how they sought information. When downsizing occurred,

RIF survivors experienced information deprivation. In response to their information

deprivation, Casey et al., (1997) found that survivors sought information from third

parties regardless of their need for feedback. The authors reasoned that the act of seeking

information is a coping mechanism that gives the survivors the perception of control over

an uncertain situation. While studies like Casey et al., (1997) provide an idea of the

uncertainty that RIF survivors experience, we still know little about the uncertainty that

those who lose their job experience and how they manage that uncertainty.

Reductions in force are a catalyst for heightened uncertainty for those who stay

and leave the organization. As a form of involuntary exit, it is likely that those who leave

the organization will experience increased levels of uncertainty that may come as a

surprise or shock. Whereas survivors may be uncertain about job security (i.e. Johnson et

al., 1996) those who leave the organization are likely to experience uncertainty in

multiple facets of their lives such as uncertainty related to financial assets, familial roles,

and their professional image.

The last form of involuntary exit discussed in this review is that of individual

involuntary exits. Individual involuntary exits are rarely ever a sudden event (Kramer,

2010) and are likely to cause people uncertainty because the loss of work means a loss of

structure (Jahoda, 1982). Most of the time, involuntary exits are the culmination of a

progressive disciplining process (Cox & Kramer, 1995; Fairhurst, Green, Snavely, 1984).

Fairhurst, Green and Snavely (1984) argue that managers reach two breaking points prior

to terminating an employee. The first breaking point is the problem solving breaking

point, which occurs when management perceives a problem that is assumed to be

correctable and takes steps such as remedial training to correct the problem. If the

problem persists after management has attempted to correct the problem, then managers

may reach the elimination breaking point. At the elimination breaking point, the

manager's actions have failed to solve the problem, the relationship is no longer perceived as salvageable, and the employee is dismissed. Both the problem solving and elimination breaking points may not need previous smaller events to occur. Instead, one event such as theft or sexual harassment may be enough to force managers to reach the elimination breaking point without exercising a problem solving breaking point. The findings of Fairhurst et al,. (2004) demonstrate that the termination process itself may create uncertainty for people who are about to lose their jobs which will likely carry forward into their unemployment.

Even though managers use communication chains to inform employees of poor performance and the possible consequences, research by Cox and Kramer (1995) found that managers who remembered instances where they had terminated an employee described the employees as being surprised by the termination even though previous communication and paperwork informed the employee of their performance deficiencies. The reaction of surprise by terminated employees suggests that even when employees are warned about their possible termination, being fired from a job can cause heightened levels of uncertainty.

What we know about the exit process primarily focuses on people's experiences within the organization. As Kramer (2010) notes, exit from organizations is inevitable. Following Jablin's (2001) model of assimilation, someone who exits an organization is likely to enter vocational anticipatory socialization, organizational anticipatory socialization, or the encounter phase. However, when people become unemployed they begin to manage experiences that fundamentally alter, in novel ways, the vocational anticipatory socialization, organizational anticipatory socialization, or organizational

encounter. The surprise that employees experience during job loss (Cox and Kramer, 1995) may become a debilitating force that causes so much uncertainty that people may struggle to move on or not be able to move on from unemployment at all. Master narratives such as the American dream and the entrepreneual spirit suggest that people should work hard to become successful (Cullen, 2003). However, the number of long-term unemployed and discouraged workers would suggest that some people might be experiencing something that is not captured by current research on vocational anticipatory socialization, organizational anticipatory socialization or organizational encounter. The next section explores the anticipatory socialization phase, which may be profoundly different for people who experience unwilling unemployment.

The Anticipatory Socialization Phase

The period prior to entering an organization is called the anticipatory socialization phase. Although Jablin (1987, 2001) initially developed this phase to represent early childhood through college leading to a person's first and life-long job, more contemporary research has applied this phase to those who leave one job and transition to another through one of the anticipatory phases. During the anticipatory socialization phase, individuals anticipate which occupations interest them and eventually which organization they would like to join. The anticipatory socialization phase is a broad time period ranging from the time someone is born until they find a job or another job. Jablin (1987, 2001) divides this phase in to two smaller sub-phases: vocational anticipatory socialization and organizational anticipatory socialization. Vocational anticipatory socialization is the process of finding a career and organizational anticipatory socialization is the process of finding an organization to join (Jablin, 1987, 2001). This

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phase is important to this research because it is likely that unemployed people will experience organizational exit and the anticipatory socialization phase concurrently.

During the anticipatory socialization phase, unemployed people will most likely engage in behaviors that enable them to gain reemployment. Some people will engage in vocational anticipatory socialization behaviors whereas others who do not want to make a career change will engage in organizational anticipatory socialization. A lesser number of people are likely to bypass the anticipatory socialization phase altogether and move into the encounter phase if they were immediately offered and accepted a job. The ways in which people leave unemployment do not have the same benefits. Strandh (2000) found that the ways people exited unemployment affected their uncertainty and well-being differently. Those who exited to permanent employment saw larger increases in mental well-being than those who exited unemployment into temporary work or self-employment. Those who exited unemployment into university level education saw increases in mental well-being whereas those who exited unemployment into high school level education did not see an increase in mental well-being. Lastly, exit from unemployment into maternity/paternity leave increased mental well-being whereas exit from unemployment into sick leave did not. It is important to note that just because a person exits unemployment does not mean that they will see an improvement in their metal well-being and levels of uncertainty Strandh (2000). The exit from unemployment must resolve the difficulties and uncertainty that the person experienced during unemployment.

Vocational anticipatory socialization begins during childhood when children begin exploring what they want to be when they grow up. During this sub-phase, people

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learn the meaning of work. Parents are a source of socializing messages to their children about work (Lucas, 2011). As people continue to learn and gain new experiences during the assimilation process their understanding of work changes as well. Once employed, our relationships at work continue to shape the meaning of work through collaborative sensemaking with others (Wrzesniewski, Dutton, & Debebe, 2003).

Jablin (1987, 2001) argues that during vocational anticipatory socialization people commonly seek information from five information sources: family, education, part-time employment, peers and friends, and media. Through these five sources, individuals learn the skills that they need to seek future employment. For example, research by Kristen Lucas (2011) suggests that blue-collar parents send socializing messages to their children about work and class mobility. Research by Jablin (1985) found that educational books and classroom discussions tended to over or under represent certain occupations. Internships, however, can be sources of positive learning experiences that influence student's attitudes towards work. Feldman and Weitz (1990) found that when students' expectations match their internship experiences their experiences were more positive. Those positive experiences had a positive effect on their attitude towards work in general as opposed to a specific vocation.

Vocational anticipatory socialization is a lifelong process (Jablin, 2001) that can benefit unemployed people, especially those who experience long-term unemployment. Stenberg and Westerlund (2008) found that at least two semesters of comprehensive education had positive effects on yearly wages for people who experienced long-term unemployment. Those people who left their education after one semester did not see a significant increase in wages. The skills and knowledge gained from their

comprehensive education likely allowed these unemployed participants to find other

career paths. Interestingly, Stenberg and Westlund (2008) found that men experienced a

greater wage variance than women. The authors conclude that more women than men

took public sector jobs where the wage variances are less. For many unemployed people,

their financial uncertainty does not allow them to enroll in comprehensive education

programs. Participants in Stenberg and Westlund's (2008) study received financial

support from the Swedish government to participate in a larger national program. While

people learn about work from the five sources identified by Jablin (1987) it is unclear

what people learn about unemployment from vocational anticipatory socialization

sources.

The second process included in the anticipatory socialization phase is the

organizational anticipatory socialization process. Organizational anticipatory

socialization is the process by which individuals select an organization to join (Kramer,

2010). Jablin (2001) argues that job seekers typically acquire information from either job

related promotional materials such as brochures and pamphlets or from interactions with

other applicants, organizational representatives, teachers, friends, or family members.

Organizational anticipatory socialization differs from vocational anticipatory

socialization in a number of ways. First, vocational anticipatory socialization is a

lifelong process that influences the occupations people choose to pursue. Kramer (2010)

argues that much of the vocational anticipatory socialization process occurs

subconsciously. Throughout life, people develop preferences for certain types of work

and certain types of work environments. Organizational anticipatory socialization is a

much shorter process that involves conscious decision-making. People spend anywhere

from months to just days deciding where to apply for a job and a majority of people can recall when they decided to work for a particular company whereas most people cannot recall when or how they decided to pursue a particular occupation. Second, how individuals choose a career versus an organization can be very different as well. When people consider which career to choose they may find different careers appealing for various reasons. However, when people choose an organization to join the decision is more memorable. Third, deciding to join an organization is different than deciding which career to choose because joining an organization is not an individual choice like choosing a career. Rather, joining an organization is a decision made between the individual and the accepting organization. During the process of finding an organization, or finding an employee for the organization, both parties must take into consideration their needs and the needs of the other party.

During the recruiting process, unemployed people must manage the stigma of unemployment. Vishwanath (1989) found that organizations view lengthy unemployment as signaling low productivity. Vishwanath (1989) argues that lengthy unemployment is a signaling context that marks the job candidate as unable to perform and the longer a person is unemployed, the greater their wage disparity will be from the previous wage. During the pilot study for this dissertation, participants were well aware of the stigma associated with unemployment (Wickert, Dougherty, Gist, 2012). We found that participants were very concerned about what others thought about them. Participants such as Tom, a 26-year-old unemployed web developer, described how he was concerned what his friends, family, and wife thought his unemployment. Tom

became so concerned about what his friends thought about him that he stopped communicating with them to avoid talking about his unemployment.

For unemployed people the anticipatory socialization phase is important because it is during this phase that they are active in their job search. Research exploring job search behaviors of unemployed people suggests that this phase of the assimilation process is particularly brutal. For example, Wanberg, Glomb, Song, and Sorenson (2005) found that an individual's core self-evaluation influenced their job search persistence. Those who had lower core self-evaluations were more likely to struggle maintaining job search efforts. Research in this area has also shown that those who experience greater financial hardship are more likely to experience greater negative affect leading to lower search progress (Wanberg et al., 2005). Therefore, those who have more resources, such as savings accounts, are likely to achieve better search progress.

During this time, support networks are an important resource to help people manage their uncertainty surrounding job loss. Social support research suggests that job search-support-groups can help unemployed workers create ties with others through which they share information and provide coping support (Garrett-Peters, 2009). Family members are also a valuable source of support. Buzzanell and Turner (2003) found that familial discourse allowed families with unemployed men to manage their emotions, create a sense of normalcy within the family, and make the men feel masculine even in an emasculating situation. This finding is interesting because previous research on unemployment and familial discourse suggest that blue-collar families structured in the traditional patriarch style experience lower marital adjustment to unemployment, lower quality communication, and lower satisfaction than those families living an egalitarian

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life style (Larson, 1984). Family members can help the unemployed manage their uncertainty; however, family members and close friends can also increase uncertainty.

Social support from others is not always helpful. Holmstrom (2012) found that people in close relationships provided an almost equal amount of helpful and non-helpful support messages. Holmstrom (2012) concludes that the nature of close relationships allows people to feel comfortable giving non-helpful messages. Non-helpful messages may be a form of tough love that is meant to motivate another person (Holmstrom, 2012). The consequences of providing social support messages are not the same across gender (Holmstrom & Burleson, 2005). Holmstrom and Burleson (2005) found that female gender role expectations focused on communal and supportive messages. When a women broke those expectations both men and women viewed those messages as negative and less supportive (Holmstrom & Burleson, 2005). The social support that unemployed people have available to them may be helpful or harmful depending on the nature of the message.

The remaining phases of Jablin's (1987, 2001) assimilation model, the encounter and metamorphosis phase, involve joining an organization, becoming a newcomer, and then becoming a fully-contributing member of the organization during the metamorphosis phase. These phases are beyond the scope of this research as someone who has a job would fit into one of these phases and would not qualify for this study.

Unemployment and Uncertainty Management

This section provides the theoretical support for the study of uncertainty management in the context of unemployment. Previous research by Miller and Jablin

(1991) and Louis (1980) have argued that when newcomers join an organization they experience uncertainty and must make sense of their new environments. Using this rationale, I argue that people who lose their jobs also experience elements of surprise or change that create uncertainty and force them to make sense of their environment. As evidence of this, Cottle's (2001) book titled *The Hardest of Times: The Trauma of Long Term Unemployment* is replete with stories of anguish and uncertainty. These families are uncertain about many things including food, financial stability, relationships and mental and physical well-being. First, I review and critique uncertainty management theories and approaches arguing that Kramer's (2004) Theory of Managing Uncertainty is the best fit for the study of unemployment experiences. Second, I explain Kramer's (2004) theory, citing relevant unemployment research.

Through the years, scholars have developed a number of theories to explain how people deal with uncertainty in their lives. Early research focused on reducing uncertainty. Berger and Calabrese's (1975) Uncertainty Reduction Theory provided the basis for much of this research. In short, their theory argued that when people experienced uncertainty, they would be motivated to reduce that uncertainty by seeking information. A reduction approach to uncertainty research was the basis for much of the future research on uncertainty. Miller and Jablin's (1991) work on information seeking tactics, and Kramer's (1999) Motivation to Reduce Uncertainty are just two examples of research that used a reduction approach.

Adding to the original theory, Berger (1979) found that different types of uncertainty exist. People experience cognitive uncertainty, the inability to predict a person's motives, and behavioral uncertainty, the inability to predict a person's actions.

Berger and Bradac (1982) added to the types of uncertainty suggesting that people experience three types of uncertainty. People experience descriptive uncertainty, which is the inability to indentify an individual, predictive uncertainty, which is the inability to predict an individual's behaviors, and explanatory uncertainty, which is the inability to explain the reasons for an individual's chosen actions. These additions to the original theory are important because it recognizes that people do not manage or reduce the same types of uncertainties. People can reduce some uncertainties but do not need to reduce all of their uncertainties. Furthermore, Berger (1979) found that individuals do not always actively seek information nor do they necessarily seek information from the source of uncertainty. Berger (1979) argued that people use passive, active, and interactive strategies to manage their uncertainty. Passive strategies, such as observing others, allows people to obtain information without taking action. Active strategies allow people to obtain information from sources other than the source of uncertainty by taking actions and seeking the information. Interactive strategies allow people to obtain information directly from the source of uncertainty.

As uncertainty reduction research has progressed, scholars have called for theories that are more robust and informative about uncertainty management as opposed to uncertainty reduction. One of the assumptions of the uncertainty reduction approach is that uncertainty creates anxiety; thus, people have the need to reduce uncertainty. Brashers (2001) argued that in order to make a paradigmatic shift from uncertainty reduction to uncertainty management scholars have to abandon the assumption that uncertainty produces anxiety. Supported with chronic illness research, Brashers (2001) argued that there are times when people, such as those who are patients with chronic

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illness problems, do not want to reduce their uncertainty. Even when doctors are most certain about a troublesome diagnosis, patients choose to remain hopeful that they can overcome their disease. At the same time, there are those patients who reap psychological benefits from learning threatening information, such as HIV patients who can move on from worrying about whether or not they are HIV positive to managing the disease. Brashers (2001) concludes that the consequences of uncertainty management have profound effects on people and therefore require further scholarly exploration.

One of the first attempts aimed at advancing uncertainty management theory is that of Afifi and Weiner (2004). Afifi and Weiner's (2004) Theory of Motivated Information Management (TMIM) proposes a three-phase model of the information management process. Unique to their theory, the authors also explore how the information seeking person and the information provider interact during the information management process. Afifi and Weiner's (2004) theory is an important step closer to developing a robust understanding of uncertainty management. However, limitations of this theory make it a less desirable choice for studying unemployment experiences. The authors of this theory limited the scope of the theory to interpersonal contexts. Furthermore, they focused only on information-seeking behaviors. While collecting data for the pilot study (Wickert, Dougherty, Gist, 2012) I was reminded by a participant that there is a difference between a sign that says "now hiring" versus "accepting applications." Applying for a job often requires that unemployed people interact with representatives of the organization. While the interactions unemployed people have with others such as family and friends are interpersonal in nature, when looking for work the unemployed person interacts with employees who represent the organization. As a

representative of the organization, employees maintain the image of the organization which consists of a collective of people. The study of unemployment experiences requires a theoretical perspective that goes beyond interpersonal communication and provides the explanatory power needed to understand communication in group contexts.

How a person chooses to manage their uncertainty may depend on their motivation to reduce uncertainty. Kramer (1999) found that people might have competing motives for seeking information. Furthermore, those competing motives may motivate someone to seek information even when their motivation to seek information is low. For example, sales people at department stores may not be highly motivated to know how a customer is doing; however, their employment at the department store requires that they greet customers and ask the customer how they are doing. Miller and Jablin (1991) have argued that people consider various social costs associated with information seeking before deciding which course of action to take. For example, Miller and Jablin (1991) found that people may not seek information when others may perceive them as incompetent, or people may seek information because it is expected of them in a particular social setting. Social costs may motivate people to seek information even when they are not highly motivated to do so, or social costs may preclude a person from seeking information when they are highly motivated to seek information. Kramer's (2004) Theory of Managing Uncertainty is useful for exploring uncertainty associated with participation, or the lack thereof, in organizations. Furthermore, Kramer's (2004) theory can help to further uncertainty management research because his theory spans the disciplines of interpersonal and organizational communication.

Theory of Managing Uncertainty

The Theory of Managing Uncertainty (Kramer, 2004) addresses the previously discussed limitations and answers Brashers (2001) call for more robust theories of uncertainty management. In developing this theory, Kramer (2004) addresses two shifts. The first shift in theorizing separates reduction processes from communication processes. Kramer (2004) argues that uncertainty reduction can occur without communication through cognitive processes; therefore, one does not always need to communicate to reduce uncertainty. Second, multiple motives influence communication and information seeking behaviors in both interpersonal and organizational contexts. A primary assumption of URT is that the experience of uncertainty motivates action. Specifically, URT suggests that people reduce uncertainty by seeking information (i.e. Berger & Calabrese, 1975). However, making this assumption fails to consider that people may experience other motives simultaneously. For example, an unemployed person may want to tell someone that they are unemployed so they obtain a particular benefit, however, the embarrassment of being unemployed may be too much bear and they chose not to disclose their employment status in favor of maintaining their image or reputation.

Theory of Managing Uncertainty consists of seven concepts. The concepts include context, the experience of uncertainty, cognitive attempts at uncertainty reduction, motivation to reduce uncertainty, competing motives, communication behaviors, and the impact on uncertainty. Additionally, Kramer (2004) describes a number of areas where organizational members are likely to experience uncertainty. I draw upon these areas to discuss some possible triggers of uncertainty for unemployed people.

Context. Contextual factors can greatly influence the experience of uncertainty. What may cause uncertainty in one context may not cause uncertainty in another context. Before the attacks on the World Trade Center Towers, plane crashes were not associated with terrorism; however, after the attacks, airplane crashes received heightened uncertainty because of their association with terrorism (Kramer, 2004). Similarly how people perceive unemployment influences how people experience unemployment. As unemployment has increased across the world, people have become more afraid of becoming unemployed (Blanchflower, 2010). Fears about unemployment can leave the public pessimistic about future unemployment rates (Dua & Smyth, 1993). The implications of these fears push government officials to create policies that curb unemployment. Graham and Paulsen (2002) analyzed policy statements about unemployment made by a number of different nations throughout the world. In their findings, Graham and Paulsen (2002) argue that policy makers set out to create policies that will solve unemployment issues. At the same time, these policy makers use their institutional limitations within society to rationalize why they cannot completely wipe out unemployment. In turn, policy makers position the unemployed as social problems, which moves the discourse away from the underlying social issues causing unemployment and puts the blame back on the unemployed. In short, Graham and Paulsen (2002) conclude that policy makers use a problem-solution approach that allows them to define unemployment according to pre-established solutions. The fear caused by high unemployment and the perceptions that people have of unemployment create an environment in which unemployment becomes a stigmatizing mark (i.e. Dua & Smyth, 1993).

Another way that context is relevant to the experiences of unemployment is through social class positioning. Social class is difficult to study because it is hard to know what signifies social class. Dougherty (2011) argues that prior definitions of social class can be placed into one of three categories; variable, cultural, or structural. Variable definitions of social class focus on a specific attribute or characteristic of a person. The person is then placed into the appropriate category of that system. One example is the use of income. Measuring social class via a person's income would place them into various income categories. A definition of social class from a cultural approach focuses on the socialeconomic conditions that shape our lives. One such definition comes from Bourdieu (1984) who argues that social class is a composite of various forms of social capital that interact together in a person's habitus. Habitus refers to our habitual behavior learned through lived experiences within our specific class position or milieu. Social capital is the ties and networks in our lives that provide us with opportunities depending on which social capitals are enacted and how they are enacted. Lastly, structural definitions of social class focus on social and economic structures that privilege one group of people over others. A well-known example of this is the work of Karl Marx (1976) who argued that social class was structured by the division of labor. Marx (1976) argued that the division of labor allowed the capitalist to control the wages of the workers by separating the workers from the goods they created. The capitalist system, Marx argued, created two classes, the bourgeoisie and the proletariats.

The point that Dougherty (2011) is making with these three categories is that none of these approaches to defining social class completely captures the essence of social class. Instead, Dougherty (2011) argues that communication is the mortar that intersects

the many aspects of social class. Social class is physically unmarked. Unlike gender and

race, we cannot see social class. Dougherty (2011) argues that social is communicatively

marked which enables people to use markers such as automobiles to pass as part of a

desired social class. One way to explore the context of uncertainty is to look at the social

class positioning that people demonstrate through their communication. Dougherty

(2011) notes that scholarship has shown that there is a middle class way of speaking that

is foreign to the working class and is privileged over other forms of communication.

Thus, these communication differences may become an integral part of understanding

how uncertainty management changes in different contexts. Furthermore, the nature of

unemployment may differ depending on a person's social class position. For example,

those who have greater financial resources are likely to still experience uncertainty, but

their threshold for financial uncertainty is likely to be greater than someone who has less

financial resources.

 The experience of uncertainty. The second concept in Kramer's (2004) theory

is the experience of uncertainty which occurs when people do not have schemas or scripts

that match the situation; thus, triggering an experience of uncertainty. Kramer (2004)

argues that uncertainty and ambiguity are not the same. A person may experience

ambiguity but be certain about a particular meaning just as another person may

experience no ambiguity yet be uncertain about the intended meaning. Ambiguity occurs

when there are multiple interpretations of an event or message. Clarity occurs when

interpretations are limited (Eisenberg, 1984). Kramer (2004) distinguishes uncertainty

from ambiguity arguing, "Ambiguity is considered a quality of the message or

environment that potentially influences experiences of uncertainty. Uncertainty is the

individual's response or perspective on those messages or events" (p. 71). In short, uncertainty is a perception of a situation that is influenced by the ambiguity of the setting.

The structure of employment in the United States has remained largely unchanged since the industrial revolution (Jahoda, 1982). It is because of this consistency that workers have developed specific expectations about work and have structured their lives around work. Job loss is stressful and creates uncertainty for people because work structures our time, expands our scope of social interactions beyond interactions with family members, allows us to participate in a collective, gives us a status and identity, and gives us stabilizing and regular activity (Jahoda, 1982). When people lose the benefits that employment provides, they experience higher levels of uncertainty which can lead negative mental and physical health consequences.

The stress of job loss can lead to increased levels of uncertainty which can lead to negative mental and physical health outcomes. Findings from a meta-analysis by McKee-Ryan, et al. (2005) suggest that unemployed individuals have lower psychological and physical well-being than employed people do. McKee-Ryan et al. (2005) point out that in cross-sectional analysis, unemployed individuals experienced lower well-being than employed individuals and in longitudinal studies individual well-being declined as people moved from employed status to unemployed and improved when people became reemployed. Findings from McKee-Ryan et al. (2005) and Paul and Moser (2009) show that the longer people are unemployed, the more detrimental the negative effects of unemployment are on mental health and well-being. The experience of unemployment brings with it a cascade of secondary stressors such as uncertainty about financial resources, marital stability, and familial roles (Mckee-Ryan et al., 2005).

The effects of unemployment on well-being and mental health can differ across demographic variables; specifically, gender, family role, and social class. Overall, Artazcoz, Benach, Borrell, and Cortès (2004) found that unemployment affects men more than women. First, those who were single, unemployed, and not receiving unemployment insurance had poorer mental health than those who were married or receiving unemployment insurance. Marriage and parenthood mediated the effects of unemployment differently for women than men. Among women with children living at home, unemployment was not associated with poor mental health. First, the authors argue that many of the women in their study were able to have their needs met whether they were living at home with their parents or with their partner. Second, those with children living at home were able to refocus their efforts on parenting regardless if they were receiving unemployment insurance or not. By focusing on their children the women were able to distract themselves from their uncertainties.

For men however, Artazcoz et al., (2004) found that those married men working in manual labor jobs and not receiving unemployment insurance were at a higher risk of poor mental health than those men who were single and not cohabitating. Because this finding is contradictory to previous research, Artazcoz et al., (2004) argue that the financial strain put on men with families may be the source of poor mental health. Thus, those men in lower class situations may experience more financial strain because they are typically the breadwinners of the family. The uncertainty about financial stability they experience is likely to be greater than the uncertainty experienced by other men who do not have to support families. The authors also argue that men in lower class positions have less involvement with familial responsibilities and cannot use familial

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responsibilities to replace their loss of work. Because the men position themselves as the breadwinners, they likely focus more on working and earning money and less on familial responsibilities such as raising children. Also, the demands of blue-collar work may make it difficult for these men to interact with their families after work, whereas, those in white-collar jobs may be more likely to work a standard 40 hour work week and have the time and energy to spend with their families after work.

Cognitive attempts at uncertainty reduction. The third concept of TMU focuses on cognitive attempts at uncertainty reduction. Instead of always seeking information to reduce uncertainty, TMU argues that people may manage uncertainty through internal cognitive processes. Cognitive attempts at uncertainty reduction can be achieved on the individual and organizational level. Cognitive attempts at uncertainty reduction include denying that uncertainty exists, tolerating the uncertainty by changing priorities, assimilating the uncertainty by possibly recategorizing the uncertainty to fit another stereotype, accepting the uncertainty by recognizing that the uncertainty may persist for a long period of time, and lastly imagined information seeking where people imagine the possible results of information seeking behaviors.

Cognitive attempts at reducing uncertainty are both prospective and retrospective in nature. Extant research has typically sought to understand how people either prospectively reduce uncertainty by seeking information or retrospectively reduce uncertainty by reflecting on past experiences. However, Kramer (2004) argues that people manage uncertainty prospectively and retrospectively simultaneously. Weick's (2001) notion of scripts and schemas allows people to avoid the experience of uncertainty

whereas cognitive attempts to reduce uncertainty, such as denial, allow people to manage uncertainty in a retrospective manner.

Coping behaviors allow people to manage uncertainty both prospectively and retrospectively. Unemployment researchers have typically defined coping as the cognitive and behavioral efforts made to manage internal and external demands that exceed the person's resources (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). Coping strategies are usually categorized into problem or emotion-focused coping. Problem-focused coping occurs when people attempt to manage or solve the problem that is causing them stress (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). Emotion-focused coping occurs when people attempt to regulate their emotional responses to the problem (Lazarus & Folkmn, 1984). Looking for a job is a problem-focused coping behavior that allows people to take control of their situation. Research in this area has provided some interesting findings. First, Wanberg, Glomb, Song, and Sorenson (2005) found that participants in their study most frequently searched for jobs using newspapers, internet job postings or other publications followed by networking with others. Interestingly, search intensity over time displayed a convex trend suggesting that individuals decreased slightly in their search intensity during the middle of the study and increased their search intensity again near the end of the study. Wanberg et al. (2005) conclude that participants may have started out with higher search intensity at the beginning of their study, then, during the middle of the study, participants were searching less because they were hoping to hear back from organizations they had applied to earlier. For those whose leads did not pan out, they again increased their search intensity near the end of the study.

An emotion-focused strategy that may be useful for people to maintain high job search intensity is disengagement, which is an individual's ability to detach themselves from thoughts that may interfere with their job search persistence (Wanberg et al., 2010). Wanberg and colleagues (2010) found that lower positive affect on any given day was related to less job search effort the following day for individuals who were less able to detach from negative thoughts. Those who were able to disengage experienced more job search the following day. The authors argued that because action-oriented people are able to regulate negative emotions better, they may be motivated by negative moods. Those who struggle to detach from negative thoughts may need positive moods to become motivated. Interestingly, those who perceived progress on any given day spent less time searching for a job on the following day (Wanberg et al., 2010). However, those who experienced less job search progress on any given day invested more time in the job search the following day. Wanberg and colleagues (2010) conclude that positive job search progress results in "coasting behavior" in which people take breaks in the job search progress. With the integration of job search processes and technology, it is likely that text workers do more job searching than body workers. In the pilot study for this dissertation, my colleagues and I noticed that those who were text workers, people who manipulate text for a living, described sending out more resumes than those who were body workers, people who need to use their body to do the work.

Motivation to reduce uncertainty. TMU suggests that individuals' ability to cognitively manage uncertainty is related to their motivation to seek information (Kramer, 2004). Those people who are able to manage uncertainty on their own are less motivated to seek information, and those who are unable to manage uncertainty on their

own are more likely to seek information. However, as Kramer (1999) points out, people may feel compelled to seek information even when they do not want to because social norms suggest that they should. Kramer (2004) also cautions that groupthink may affect a group's motivation to reduce uncertainty. The use of cognitive processes to manage uncertainty may lead to groupthink where the uncertainty that group members experience is not enough to motivate them to seek information. In these situations, Kramer (2004) argues that groups may need to create additional uncertainty to motivate information seeking. One example of how groups can overcome groupthink is through developing mindfulness which is an enriched awareness that facilitates the detection and correction of unexpected events (Weick & Sutcliffe, 2001).

A person's motivation to reduce uncertainty may be related to their positive self-concept. Wanberg et al. (2005) found that those job seekers who have a positive self-concept, which included higher self-esteem, generalized self-efficacy, perceived control, and emotional stability, were able to continue looking for a job despite facing rejection along the way. Conversely, those participants who had a lower self-concept and perceived themselves as having less control over finding a job were unable to continue through the rejections and did not maintain their job search intensity. Most likely, these people were completing self-fulfilling prophecies believing that they could not control whether or not they found a job; therefore, they either stopped looking for a job or lowered their job search intensity. Self-fulfilling prophecies such as these can affect many people. In March of 2013, the Bureau of Labor Statistics categorized 885,000 people as discouraged workers. Discouraged workers are those people who do not look

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for a job because they believe that no jobs are available for them. This demographic of people may be falling victim to learned helplessness.

Learned helplessness theory suggests that when people are repeatedly exposed to events beyond their control, such as involuntary job loss, they come to believe that they cannot change their predicament (Leana & Feldman, 1992). Unemployed people can learn to become helpless. They may become depressed, apathetic, and unmotivated to find a new job because they have learned from their experiences that they cannot change their predicament (Leana & Feldman, 1992).

Competing motives. Competing motives are a unique contribution of TMU that help to explain communication behaviors (Kramer, 2004). Competing motives may hinder or enhance the motivation to seek information. Reducing uncertainty may not be the only primary motive. TMU suggests a number of competing motives such as impression management, seeking information variety, social appropriateness, inquisitiveness, social costs, negative impacts, the utility of information seeking, creating uncertainty, competence at information seeking, job requirements, emotion avoidance, and relationship maintenance.

Social class positioning such as social networks, education level, and access to technology influence which motives are stronger than other motives. In her work, Newman (1999) described how unemployed, middle-aged men with managerial level experience spent time doctoring their resumes. These men created fake businesses, positions, and titles all in the name of impression management. It was more important for these men to maintain the image of an upper-management level professional than it was for them to find a job at a lower-level position. The family members of these men

also engaged in image management as well. The wives of these men were accustomed to a certain lifestyle and did everything they could to maintain the appearance of that lifestyle; even going as far as driving miles out of their way to buy food at another grocery store with food stamps. Although the major problem these families faced was a lack of employment, the men and their families spent hours making sure they upheld a particular image as opposed to accepting a lower status job. These families could worry about their image management because they had financial savings and equity in their homes to fall back on. For those who do not have financial savings or a home with equity, their uncertainty about financial stability may be so much greater that the motivation to earn money is greater than the motivation to maintain a particular image.

Those in blue-collar work may have different motives than the above described men because their contextual factors are different. Newman (1999) also described how Singer factory workers had to abandon traditions that were the foundation of their lively-hood. These factory workers believed in hard work and an honest wage. Many of them expected to go to work for Singer until they stopped working. However, when the Singer plant closed, so did their foundational traditions. Workers were motivated to find another life-long position at a factory like the one they had at Singer. However, when that was not possible they were forced to change what work meant to them. Reluctantly, the workers took jobs where they could, knowing full well that it would never be like what they had at the Singer plant. The limited education and training of the Singer factory workers limited their ability to find work other than factory work and because their financial savings were limited they needed to find whatever work they could to pay the bills. The worker's social class positioning greatly influenced their motivation to manage

uncertainty. Unlike the managers in the previous example who likely had a higher threshold for financial uncertainty, these workers had to put their finances as a primary concern.

Communication behaviors. Individuals use a wide range of communication behaviors from direct inquires to observation and surveillance to manage their uncertainty. Miller and Jablin's (1991) typology of information seeking behaviors presents seven communication behaviors: overt questions, indirect questions, third-party inquiry, testing the limits, discussing conversations, observing, and surveillance. Others have expanded this typology of information seeking behaviors such as labeling overt questions as inquiry to peers and supervisors (Morrison, 1993), solicited information (Kramer, 1993), and initiating information requests (Kramer, Callister, & Turban, 1995). However, most of this research focuses on information seeking in the organization. The unemployed, however, are no longer organizational members and therefore cannot seek information within an organization. As a result, their information seeking behaviors may narrow.

When people lose their job, the people they communicate with changes. Often the unemployed lessen their communication with work related relationships, communicating more with family members and close friends (Jablin, 2001). Buzzanell and Turner (2003) provide a glimpse of familial communication after a male member of the family experiences job loss. They found that families created discourses that focused on positive emotions over negative emotions, created a sense a normalcy, and reinstitutionalized traditional masculinities. Backgrounding negative emotions and foregrounding positive emotions enabled individuals who lost their job to engage in positive behaviors such as

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self-preservation, face-saving, and problem-focused coping behaviors. To create a sense of normalcy, participants acted as if life was pretty much the same. This included withholding negative talk and evaluations of the situation. At times, financial information was either withheld from family members or family members tried to minimize the financial changes. Lastly, families tried to maintain the masculine roles that the men had prior to losing their jobs. The discourse of the families continued to frame men as breadwinners and focused on their activities outside of the home, such as searching for jobs. While it is likely that unemployed people use the communication behaviors described by Miller and Jablin (1991), it is also likely that the unemployed rely on their family members, friends, extended networks, and technology for support and validation.

Social support is one form of coping (Thoits, 1986) that can be helpful for unemployed people. Blustein and colleagues (2013) argued that social support was one of the most influiental factors on particpants' experience of unemployment. However, unemployed participants in multiple studies described losing their social networks and becoming disconnected from friends (Blustein et al., 2013; Westman, Etzion, & Horovitz, 2004). The loss of social networks was due in part to the stressors associated with unemployment. The stress from unemployment caused problems beyond whether people had a job or not. Westman et al., (2004) found that anxiety related to unemployment crossed over from the unemployed person to their spouse. The most common hardship in their study that produced a considerable amount of anxiety was financial hardship. Interestingly, Westman et al., (2004) found that after two months, the amount of social support from all sources (family and friends) decreased significantly. The authors argue

that these particular social support resources may have been drained or that the source providers may have felt that the resource they provided was being abused and they stopped providing that source. As a result of the source loss, many of the participants suffered from a loss of social contact.

Due to the prevalence of computers and online search engines, technology such as the internet provides platforms for important communication behaviors. Not surprisingly, internet searches are most common among unemployed people as opposed to any other labor group, with 38 percent of unemployed people who looked for a job using a computer in their home (Kuhn & Skuterund, 2003). Since 1994, the number of unemployed people who sent out resumes via the internet has increased from 36 percent in 1994 to 48 percent in 2000 and 55 percent in 2003 (Stevenson, 2009). Over the same period, the percentage of people who participated in traditional networking, contacting friends and family members, rose from 16 to 19 percent (Stevenson, 2009). Although online job searches have become widely used, they have not replaced traditional search behaviors such as networking. Instead, online job searches have allowed people to search more and increase their use of other job search behaviors (Stevenson, 2009).

The ability to search for a job can help deter unemployed people from ceasing their job search activities and dropping out of the labor market. Those people who have access to broadband internet either at home or in public places reduce their probability of leaving the labor market by more than 50 percent (Beard, Ford, Saba, & Seals, 2012). People who leave the labor market are those who feel that no jobs exist for them and they stop looking for a job. Beard and colleagues (2012) conclude that access to public internet is at least as effective as having access to broadband internet at home. This

finding is insightful because it suggests that the expansion of public internet access can be a cost-effective way of reducing the negative consequences of prolonged unemployment. Furthermore, one of the hurdles to the job search process for many people may be internet access. The lack of internet access is more likely to affect who lack the equipment, knowledge, or funds needed to access the internet. Lacking access to the internet may increase uncertainty for those who cannot gain access.

Other research has shown that unemployed people most frequently searched for jobs using newspapers, internet job postings or other publications followed by networking with others (Wanberg, Glomb, Song, Sorenson, 2005). This finding may appear contradictory to the research discussed previously, however, the financial commitment required for buying a computer and then maintaining online access is a financial burden that many unemployed people who suffer financial hardships may not be able to afford. Searching for jobs via the newspaper may be one of the few options available to them.

Impact on uncertainty. Initially, URT (Berger & Calabrese, 1975) suggested that information increases uncertainty. However, other research and TMU suggest that information can either increase or decrease uncertainty and may increase or decrease how a person feels about the uncertainty (Kramer, 2004). It is the positive or negative valence of the information gained that determines whether the information gained increases or decreases liking. For example, Blustein et al., (2013) found that the stronger the support network one has, the more positive their unemployment experience will be. Coasting behavior or taking breaks in the job search process is another example of the impact on uncertainty (Wanberg et al., 2010). When job seekers experience positive progress in the

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job search process, they tend to take breaks. Those job seekers who do not perceive

progress in the job search process tend to intensify their job search the following day

(Wanbger et al., 2010). In this scenario, receiving positive information during the job

search process likely helps people manage uncertainty.

   Areas of uncertainty. Kramer (2004) argues that people experience uncertainty

in different areas such as role negotiation and evaluation, organizational culture, emotion

norms and management, work-family policies, diversity, communication networks, and

power and influence. While these areas of uncertainty focus on organizational

membership, some of them do seem to fit within previous literature on job loss. First,

role negotiation and evaluation and communication networks hint at the change people

experience when shifting from being an organizational member to not having a job.

Kramer's (1993) model of the job transfer process suggests that transferees loosen their

communication with coworkers, then transition their communication from the previous

workspace to the new workspace, and lastly tighten their communication building

relationships at their new workspace. As people become unemployed, they will most

likely need to terminate their communication with old work relationships, transition

themselves into being unemployed, and change their communication networks

accordingly. Those relationships that existed only in the work context are likely to end

and unemployed people will likely need to use other networks to supplement the loss of

work-related relationships. Relationships and communication networks are important

because they provide social support which can aide in coping assistance (Thoits, 1986).

   While losing a job relinquishes membership in an organization, those who lose

jobs still maintain membership in other institutions such as volunteer organizations and

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the family unit. When a person within the family unit loses a job, their job loss affects

the rest of the family whether they are aware of it or not. At times, parents may decide to

keep the news of a lost job from their children to protect them from the uncertainty that

job loss causes (i.e. Newman, 1999). When men lost their jobs, Buzzanell and Turner

(2003) found that men struggled to maintain their place within the family unit as

breadwinners. However, the familial discourse surrounding the job loss focused on

repositioning the male figure as the head of the household and the breadwinner. Job loss

can destabilize a person's sense of self, leaving people to contemplate their identity

without work (Garrett-Peters, 2009).

Power, influence, and financial needs are also sources of uncertainty for those

who lose a job. Newman's (1999) descriptions of middle-aged men, who lost upper-level

management positions demonstrates how the loss of power and influence can create

uncertainty for people. The men in Newman's (1999) study spent much of their time

dressing in suits, doctoring their resumes, and socializing with other men who had once

held upper-level management positions because they were trying to maintain an image of

prestige and power. With their work not only came money and the luxuries that money

can buy, but the image of a leader, a decision maker. Without their job, these men fell

from a position of power and prestige.

The money that came along with such high position jobs allowed the families in

Newman's (1999) study to live in luxury. As these men and their families experienced

downward mobility, they would fight to hang on to their homes, relinquishing their

homes at the last possible moment to avoid further financial hardship and public

humiliation of home foreclosure. The loss of financial support can create unparalleled

uncertainty because money buys the house, food, clothes, and luxury items that people use to mark their social class position (Dougherty, 2011). Financial hardship has also been linked to job search affect. Wanberg and colleagues (2010) found that those who experience greater financial hardship experience more negative affect during the job search and those who experience less financial hardship experience higher positive affect during the job search. These are just a few areas that may cause unemployed people uncertainty. The causes of uncertainty are influenced by contextual factors such as social class position, and are, therefore, different from person-to-person.

Research Questions

This review of literature brings to the forefront three questions of interest. First, assimilation research focuses primarily on newcomer experiences and tells us little about what happens after people leave an organization. According to Jablin's (2001) model, we are left to assume that those who exit an organization will find another job and become employed again. We know little about what happens in the interim or how the experiences of unemployment imparts assimilation into future jobs. However, not everyone leaves a job and transitions into another job or retirement. With long-term unemployment rising, many people losing their jobs are not able to find new ones. Intending to explore that gap between the disengagement/exit phase and reemployment, I ask

RQ1: What is the lived experience of unemployment by unemployed people?

Research has shown that job loss creates elevated uncertainty for people. People become uncertain about various facets of their lives such as their identity (Garrett-Peters,

2009), professional image (Newman, 1999), familial positioning (Buzzanell & Turner, 2003), and about their financial stability (Wanberg et al., 2010). This study seeks to expand our understanding of uncertainty by looking at social class differences in the ways that people experience and manage uncertainty. Intending to explore how people experience and manage uncertainty associated with job loss, I ask

RQ2: How do unemployed people experience uncertainty?

RQ3: How do unemployed people manage their uncertainty?

Social class influences the resources people have available to manage uncertainty. The loss of a job is a traumatic event for a plethora of reasons. Previous unemployment research typically focuses on a particular demographic of people such as Newman's (1999) work on the missing class. This research seeks to expand our understanding of social class by collecting data from diverse groups of participants. Namely, those who are text and body workers. Intending to explore how social class influences how people manage uncertainty associated with unemployment, I ask

RQ4: How, if at all, does social class positioning influence how unemployed people experience and manage their uncertainty?

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY AND METHOD

In this study I took a hermeneutic phenomenological approach to explore how people experience unemployment, how they manage uncertainty experienced during unemployment, and how social class positioning affects people's ability to manage uncertainty. To do this I drew from the interpretive paradigm and employed a phenomenological approach to data collection using interview and photovoice methods. To analyze the data I used a thematic analysis.

The Interpretive Paradigm

The broad goal of this research is to understand the experiences of unemployed people. One can chose from a number of methodological approaches to achieve such understanding. In this section, I argue that conducting research from an interpretive perspective is best suited for understanding the experiences of unemployed people. Lindlof and Taylor (2002) argue that "Fundamentally, qualitative researchers seek to preserve and analyze the situated form, content, and experience of social action, rather than subject it to mathematical or other formal transformations" (p. 18). Because the goal of this study is to understand the situated experiences of unemployed people, a qualitative approach seems proper.

How we come to understand reality occurs through social interaction. Austrian born sociologist Alfred Schutz (1967) argues that we experience reality in a uni-directional, irreversible stream of consciousness. Furthermore, Schutz (1967) argues that reality only becomes meaningful through retrospective glances. It is only when we reflect upon our experiences that humans ascribe meaning to their experiences. Through

the process of data collection, qualitative scholars give participants an opportunity to reflect upon their experiences and describe the meaningfulness of those experiences. In this way, a qualitative approach can allow unemployed people to reflect upon their experiences and describe the meaningfulness of those experiences.

One consideration when choosing a particular methodological paradigm is the role of the researcher. Qualitative research recognizes and strategically incorporates the researcher into the research process. In the interpretive paradigm, researchers see reality as socially constructed phenomenon (Creswell, 2007). How one comes to understand and ascribe meaning to his or her life does not occur in isolation. Rather, Schutz (1967) argues that we come to know and understand our own world in relation to others. That is, understanding is intersubjective and thus, through the interview process researchers not only collect data but they help participants reveal the meaningfulness of their experiences.

The interpretive paradigm also recognizes that collaboration occurs between the participant and the researcher to construct a meaningful understanding of the phenomenon. Interpretive research follows the interpretive spiral in which the analyst, analysis, and the object of inquiry are mutually informing (Anderson, 1996). As the researcher and participant interact with each other, the two work together to create an understanding of the phenomenon. The final product of this collaboration is the researcher's interpretation of the participants' interpretation. Schutz (1967) argues that one cannot understand another person's subjective experience without being guided by his or her own experiences. Inherently, the researcher cannot be removed from the process of knowledge construction because without the researcher, knowledge

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construction does not take place. Later I will describe my personal experiences with unemployment as a way to make my experiences and any bias more transparent to the reader.

Understanding the relationship between the researcher and the participant is especially important in this study because the interaction between the interviewer and participants are in fact real-life moments in which reality is socially constructed within a situated setting. In one sense, the interviews are a time for an interviewer to meet and interview a participant; however, they are also a time where two people may be meeting for the first and only time. During this meeting the interviewer and participant engage in information sharing that has inherent social costs. In short, this is another moment where an unemployed person explains why and how they became unemployed; an answer they may have to give when responding to the question "what do you do for a living." Ideological narratives such as the master narrative of the American dream inform people about work. For example, Smith and Dougherty (2012) found that people, regardless of where they are in their working life, have ideas about what retirement should be like. People have ideas and perceptions about work and, inherently, unemployment. Those perceptions include the social costs associated with unemployment. Therefore, the perceptions that participants have about their unemployment status come to bear on the conversation between the researcher and the participant. The interaction between the researcher and participants are themselves moments in which participants encounter linguistic constructions of being unemployed.

Lastly, research from the interpretive paradigm acknowledges that realities differ from person-to-person and because the realities differ from person-to-person, qualitative

scholars seek multiple iterations of the data by collecting data from multiple sources. The researcher then interprets the data collected from multiple sources. In this study, I collected data in the form of interview transcripts and photographs. By using multiple sources, I pulled together knowledge from a collective of people who are situated within a particular time and locale (Anderson, 1996). Such an approach to data collection also allowed me to collect data from people experiencing the same phenomenon who were from different social class positions. By collecting data from multiple people in different forms, I used triangulation as a way to ensure the credibility, transferability, dependability, and confrimability of my findings (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Phenomenology as a Methodology

In keeping with the interpretive paradigm, I turn to a phenomenological methodology to guide the study. A number of scholars have articulated various forms of phenomenology; however, Van Manen (1990) and Moustakas (1994) have articulated two of the more widely used forms of phenomenology. Using Husserl's (1970) concepts of transcendental phenomenology as a guide, Moustakas (1994) developed his own understanding of transcendental phenomenology. In the transcendental approach, researchers seek to set aside prejudgments of the phenomenon under study and instead rely on intuition, imagination, and universal structures to create a picture of the experience through systematic methods of analysis (Creswell, 2007). The final product of transcendental phenomenology is an explanation of the universal truth that is shared among all the participants.

The other commonly used form of phenomenology is Van Manen's (1990) hermeneutic phenomenology. The word hermeneutic is an etymological reference to Hermes, the messenger of the gods (Anderson, 1996). Hermes was always required to tell the truth and in the same vein, hermeneutic phenomenologists aim to tell the truth about a phenomenon. Unlike transcendental phenomenology which takes a more removed axiological position, hermeneutic phenomenology recognizes the role that researchers play in the research process. Instead of trying to remove the influence of the researcher from the research process, hermeneutic phenomenology acknowledges that the researcher's worldview helps shape the interpretation of the data. Like Hermes, the researcher is left with the responsibility to describe the meaningfulness of his or her participants.

Hermeneutic phenomenology is about the study of lived experiences and asks the simple question "…what is it like to have a certain experience?" (Van Manen, 1990, p. 44-45). More specifically, hermeneutic phenomenology is about the essence of a lived experience and its meaningfulness. To study the essence of a phenomenon is to seek out the structure of meanings of the lived experience (Van Manen, 1990). Furthermore, the essence of a lived experience is what makes a particular experience unique from other similar experiences. To further understand hermeneutic phenomenology, I discuss the eight components of phenomenology originally articulated by Van Manen (1990).

Phenomenological Research is the Study of Lived Experiences

The questions posed in phenomenological research are of the utmost importance because they orient the researcher towards the object of study, which is a lived experience of some sort. Generally, the questions ask the researcher to describe what a

specific experience is like and in this study, my questions focus on what it is like for people from different social class positions to manage uncertainty during times of unemployment.

Phenomenological Research is the Explication of Phenomena as they Present Themselves to Consciousness

Language gives us the ability to recall and reflect upon our lived experiences. Hermeneutic phenomenology is not only concerned about lived experiences, but more specifically the reflection upon those lived experiences (Van Manen, 1990). Van Manen (1990) argues that phenomenological research can only include the conscious because the unconscious cannot be experienced. Therefore, phenomenology requires that people reflect upon their experiences. Participants in this study needed to manage uncertainty during their unemployment. However, until they reflect upon their experiences those experiences will not be part of the inquiry. Together with my participants, we intersubjectively and reflectively explored the essence of unemployment.

Phenomenological Research is the Study of Essences

Hermeneutic phenomenology is a study of essences which are captured when the researcher's, "description 'reawakens' or shows us the lived quality and significance of the experience in a fuller or deeper manner" (Van Manen, 1990, p. 10). Such a study is not meant to simplify our understanding of a phenomenon, but describe complex experiences so that we may be able to make interpretations about the meaningfulness of those experiences. The goal of this study is to describe the complex experiences of people who are unemployed and interpret the meaningfulness of those complex experiences.

Phenomenological Research is the Description of the Experiential Meanings we Live as we Live Them.

This assertion made by Van Manen (1990) is important for two reasons. First, the central focus of phenomenological research is the lived experience and not a statistical analysis or measure. Phenomenological research focuses on the experiences that people have lived and can reflect upon. Second, phenomenology includes only what people are conscious of; therefore, people must reflect upon their experiences to pull them from the durée and bring them to their conscious mind. In this study participants reflected upon their durée by describing their unemployment experiences to the interviewer.

Phenomenological Research is the Human Scientific Study of Phenomena

Phenomenology is a human science that is systemic, explicit, self-critical and intersubjective. Phenomenology is scientific in the broad sense of the word because phenomenology is a systematic exploration that attempts to articulate the structures of meaning embedded in lived experiences (Van Manen, 1990). Researchers enter into a process of data collection and analysis that continually refines the goals of the study and methods of the researcher to come to terms with the strengths and shortcomings of the approach. Inherent to this approach to research is the need for human participants. Together, researchers and participants create an intersubjecive understanding of a human phenomenon. This study follows the phenomenological approach because it articulates the meaning of the lived experience of being unemployed.

Phenomenological Research is the Attentive Practice of Thoughtfulness

A foray into phenomenological research requires great care. Van Manen (1990) argues that phenomenological researchers must engage in research with a heedful

wondering into exploring lived experiences. The reflective nature of phenomenological

research requires researchers to think about the mundane everyday life experiences.

During the research process, researchers are mindful of the meaning structures and

systems of knowledge that emerge. The same holds true for a study of unemployed

people whose mundane experiences brought to life the meaningfulness of unemployment.

Phenomenological Research is a Search for what it means to be Human

A phenomenological approach to research should leave us with a better

understanding of what it is to be human. Such an understanding includes what it means to

experience a particular phenomenon within its historical context. The ultimate aim of

phenomenological research is the fulfillment of human nature (Van Manen, 1990). This

study provides a better understanding of unemployment experiences and the nature of the

relationship humans have with work or the lack of work.

Phenomenological Research is a Poetizing Activity

Lastly, phenomenological research is a poetic activity in which no summary of

the data that removes the researcher from the results can be given. Van Manen (1990)

argues that phenomenological research does not provide the punch line nor does it

provide the latest and greatest information. Rather, phenomenological research leads the

researcher and readers to capture the essence of a phenomenon. This study captures the

essence of what it means to be unemployed.

Methods

To address the research questions in the study I used two methods. First, I used

semi-structured interviews to allow participants to explain and describe their

unemployment experiences. The phenomenological approach requires that the researcher and participant work together to communicatively construct the meaningfulness of the phenomenon (Van Manen, 1990). Interviews enabled this through back and forth dialogue about the participant's experiences. The second method of data collection that I used involves photographs. Specifically, I turned to the Photovoice (Novak, 2010) method of data collection as a way to explore the unemployment phenomenon from another perspective and to give my participants more agency in the data collection process.

To collect my data, I used an interview guide that helped me incorporate the pictures into the same interview, see appendix A for the interview guide. This way, I ensured that I asked the questions and incorporated the pictures. Upon making contact with a prospective participant, I informed them about the study and asked them to take pictures that symbolize their unemployment experience before we meet for the interview. Specifically, I asked the participant to take pictures that tell the story of their experience. To help them understand this task, I asked them to pretend that they were telling me their unemployment story with pictures, much like a children's picture book. As a way of providing guidance to my participants, I offered suggestions such as taking pictures that symbolize the day they became unemployed or their toughest challenge so far. Participants had the freedom to take as many photos as they felt were necessary to tell their unemployment story. To capture these photos, participants used their own phones or cameras. All participants used their own cameras and did not have to borrow a camera from me. Participants either sent their photos to me via text message or e-mail. One

participant did ask me to use a USB device cable to download the photo from her cell phone.

I conducted interviews with my participants either over the phone or in person; however, I followed the same procedure for both situations. After participants had taken their photos, I either met with them at a place convenient to them or I called them on the phone. During that meeting, I first introduced myself and explained the study. While doing so, I informed them of their voluntary participation, gave them a copy of my consent form (see appendix C), and obtained verbal consent to conduct the interview. Those who interviewed via the phone were sent a consent form either electronically or by U.S. Postal service. After obtaining their consent, I asked participants to answer the questions in my demographics survey. For a copy of this survey see appendix D. I opened the interview with questions about their previous employment, which helped set the backdrop of the person's experiences. For example, I began the interview by asking participants to tell me about their last job. Then I asked them about how they came to be unemployed. These questions are important because they set the back-story that helped make clear how uncertainty has affected their unemployment experiences. After developing the back-story I turned to the photos and used the photos as centerpieces or prompts in our conversation. I asked participants about each photo. To assist me in facilitating the conversation about the photos I followed the SHOWeD method described by Novak (2010). I describe the SHOWeD method in greater detail in the next section. As I discussed the photos I keep a watchful eye on my interview guide to ensure that I was obtaining answers my questions. The interview guide helped me make sure that I asked everyone the same general questions.

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Interviews

Research in the interpretive paradigm assumes that reality is socially constructed, intersubejctive, and contextual. Furthermore, the interpretive paradigm acknowledges the active role the researcher plays in the research process. In keeping with the assumptions of this paradigm, this study used a phenomenological approach that sought to create an interpretation of the human experience (Van Manen, 1990), enabling myself and participant to work together to create an interpretation of the meaningfulness of the phenomenon. Semi-structured interviews are one form of data collection that follows the assumptions of the interpretive paradigm and the phenomenological approach.

Interviews are well suited to help researchers in a number of ways. Creswell (2007) argues that interviewers can help researchers understand the social actor's experience or perspective. Often, as is the case in this study, researcher's select participants who have experience with the central phenomenon. Experiential knowledge can come in three forms of discourse: stories, accounts, and explanations (Creswell, 2007). Interviews allow participants to tell their stories about how they experienced the phenomenon and give accounts or justifications of their behavior. The conversational tone of interviews allows the researcher to ask participants questions about their statements. In doing so, participants can provide rich detail about their experiences.

This study was well suited for the use of semi-structured interviews. Semi-structured interviews provide the researcher with both guidance and flexibility (Lindlof & Taylor, 2002) to ensure that the researcher asks the necessary questions but allows the participant to tell their story. Often researchers conduct semi-structured interviews using an interview guide as opposed to an interview schedule. Interview guides consist of

groupings of topics and questions that an interviewer can ask in different ways; whereas, an interview schedule is more formal and consists of the exact questions the interviewer needs to ask. This study used an interview guide for three reasons. First, I needed to begin by building rapport with my participants. The interview guide allowed me to let the initial conversation and questioning flow to topics that the participant wanted to talk about. This was important because many of the participants were initially nervous talking about their unemployment experiences with me. Building rapport with my participants helped them open up about a topic that many of them may not be so forthcoming about because of the social costs associated with unemployment. Second, I used the conversational nature of the interview to obtain rich detail about my participants' experiences. Third, an interview guide allowed me to move with the flow of the conversation, while reminding me to ask any questions that may not have been covered during our discussion. The product of the interview was a text that I analyzed for relevant themes. I will talk more about how I did this in the analysis section of this chapter.

To understand how people experience unemployment and manage uncertainty during unemployment I used a semi-structured interview guide that includes questions related to socialization processes, uncertainty management processes, social support processes, social class questions and stigma questions as they relate to unemployment. I followed the guide at the beginning by asking the first two questions. After those questions were answered the interview guide simply reminded me of questions and topics that I wanted to make sure I covered during the discussion about the photos.

Initially, I asked open-ended questions that focused on the participants' last job prior to becoming unemployed. This allowed participants to set the scene of their experiences. Then, I shifted my focus to the participant's pictures and used them as centerpieces of the discussion.

When discussing the pictures, I used a variation of the SHOWeD (Novak, 2010) method to assist me in developing a robust understanding of the picture. The SHOWeD method helps guide researchers towards developing a robust understanding of the photos and includes these five questions: 1) What do you see here? 2) What's really happening here? 3) How does this relate to our lives? 4) Why does this problem or strength exist? 5) What can we do about it? My variation changed the wording so that it applies to the context of unemployment. For example, I asked participants "what does this picture tell us about your unemployment?" By working these questions into the conversation, I gave my participants the freedom to talk about their experience while keeping the conversation focused on their lived experiences of unemployment. As we moved through the photos, I checked my interview guide to ensure that I was asking all of the questions that I wanted to ask.

Photovoice Method

Photovoice is a method of data collection in which participants take photographs that illustrate or symbolize various aspects of their lived experiences. The photographs are used to prompt discussion during the interview with the researcher. This method has seen little use in the field of communication. Novak (2010) argues that in 2010 a search of popular databases revealed only three published communication related articles using this method. While few scholars have used this method, the potential benefits of using

such a method can greatly enhance qualitative research in the communication discipline (Novak, 2010).

Qualitative research and this study in particular stand to benefit from using the photovoice method for two reasons. First, the photovoice method gives the participants more agency during the data collection process. Participants are able to choose what they want to share with the researcher. This can potentially reveal experiences and situations that add to the knowledge construction that may not have been reached without the photos. For example, Jorgenson and Sullivan (2010) found that using photos in their study allowed them to see issues of technology access and boundary-management that may not have come to light using surveys or formal interviews. Second, the potovoice method provides another source of data to support the final interpretation of the phenomenon. Traditionally, phenomenological researchers focus on texts from transcribed interviews to support their findings. The photovoice method produces interview texts and uses pictures to bring the text to life. During the interview process, the pictures were used as centerpieces that helped inform the discussion. However, the images captured by the pictures are valuable as well. The photographs are windows into participants' worlds that would not otherwise be accessible to the researcher. These windows provide a snapshot in time that becomes durable and allows the researcher to reflect upon them throughout the data collection and analysis process. I found this useful as I would go back and look at what people took pictures of, how they talked about those pictures, and think about what their quotes and photos told me about unemployment. For example, the idea of material struggle for body workers finally emerged when I went back and looked at the photos of vehicles that body works took. Only one of the body

workers had a nice and new looking car. The rest had older vehicles that typically had

dents, scratches, or mismatched paint. The fact that body workers took pictures of their

cars was interesting, but it was more interesting to see what their cars told me about the

struggle they experience during unemployment.

While the photographs are beneficial to this study, there are some concerns that

need to be addressed. The usefulness and ethical character of the photos are two possible

concerns. Because the participants took the photos at their discretion, some photos were

not as useful or as informative, but they did provide a glimpse into the priorities and

choices people made. Furthermore, these photos provided insight later in the data

analysis process that I could not foresee. The second concern is one of ethical

responsibility. Due to the requirements of the IRB, those photos that provide identifying

information were de-identified by either blurring or blacking out the identifying

information. To mitigate this concern, all participants were briefed about how photos

will be treated for the study. Those photos submitted by participants that cannot be de-

indentified will not be included in any published work.

Participants

Sampling Techniques

Qualitative researchers often use a variety of sampling techniques such as

purposive, snowball, and maximum variation sampling (Creswell, 2007). Because this

study aims to explore the social class differences in how people manage uncertainty

during unemployment, two types of sampling were used, purposive and snowball

sampling.

Purposeful sampling occurs when criteria for inclusion of participants follows logically from the objective of the study (Lindlof & Taylor, 2002). Furthermore, Schwandt (1997) argues that during purposeful sampling participants are chosen because "there may be good reason to believe that 'what goes on there' is critical to understanding some process or concept" (Schwandt, 1997, p. 128). The research discussed in the literature review of this study provides good reason to believe that one, people who become unemployed experience heightened levels of uncertainty and two, that how people manage uncertainty while unemployed is greatly affected by the resources that are available to them. It is for these reasons that this study purposefully included people who are unemployed and who were involved in either text or body work prior to becoming unemployed. For the purpose of this research, anyone who perceived themselves as unemployed was considered unemployed. Including people who identified as unemployed produced a wide range of unemployment experiences. Some participants were unemployed with no work to speak of while others periodically held temporary jobs. Text and body work refer to the type of work that people perform. Text workers are those whose work involves the manipulation of words and numbers, whereas, body workers are those who need to manipulate their bodies to do the work (Dougherty, 2011).

To locate participants I initially posted my research call locally on public bulletin boards located on sidewalks, in coffee shops, and in municipal buildings. I was not obtaining enough participants so I began posting my research call on Craigslist and other unemployment related forums such as Unemployed Friends 2.0. Using Craigslist, I posted my research call in the community/volunteer section in major US cities such as Los Angeles, New York, Chicago, and Boston. These cities offered a greater density of

people. From my Craigslist postings I found 15 of my 17 text workers and all three of

my class straddlers. The other two text workers I located through personal

acquaintances. Unemployment forums offered little assistance as I only received a few

sarcastic comments about unemployment that were typically aimed at blaming the

government for high unemployment rates.

Recruiting participants online allowed me to find many text workers but I was not

finding body workers online. In an attempt to find body workers I went to a local

temporary staffing agency that specialized in staffing labor positions. I explained my

study to the people at the agency and asked if I could leave recruitment sheets on their

counter (see appendix B for the recruitment script). The staff said yes and I began to

receive phone calls from people who went there but were unable to find work. The

staffing agency requires that people be present at the agency to receive an assignment.

For those who showed up at the agency and did not receive work, they often took a

recruitment sheet and called me. I typically met with these participants in person within

the next two days. Of the 11 body workers, I found six through recruiting at the local

staffing agency, three through acquaintances, and two from my calls on Craigslist. In

total, eight body workers were interviewed in-person and three were interviewed over the

phone.

The second sampling technique that I used in this study is snowball sampling.

Snowball sampling occurs when researchers receive recommendations or referrals from

their participants (Lindlof & Taylor, 2002). While unemployment centers may be good

places to make contact with unemployed people, there is no physical mark of

unemployment that makes others aware of their employment status. Therefore, snowball

sampling can be a helpful technique when looking for more participants that fit the criteria of the study. To put this technique to use, I asked each of my participants if they knew anyone who was currently unemployed and would be interested in telling me their story. If the participant knew someone, I provided the participant with my contact information and asked the participant to pass my information along to the other unemployed people.

To help attract people to my study, I offered compensation in the form of a Walmart gift card. Initially I offered a Walmart gift card valued at ten dollars. I received feedback from unemployed people posting in the forums of Unemployed Friends 2.0 that a ten dollar Walmart gift card was insulting and that I was a disgrace. Interested in offering a fair value for participating in my study, I received IRB approval to increase compensation to a 20 dollar Walmart gift card. It total, ten participants received a ten dollar Walmart gift card and 21 people received a 20 dollar Walmart gift card.

Demographics

In total, 31 people participated in this study, consisting of 19 women and 12 men. On average, participants were unemployed for 21 months with a range of 1- 61 months. The average age was 38 years with a range of 23-61 years. The majority of participants identified as single (17), and the rest identified as married (8), divorced (4), separated (1), and widowed (1). Participants differed across race with 11 participants identifying as white, 8 as African-American, 4 as Native American, 2 as White-Hispanic, 2 as Asian, 1 as Hispanic, 1 as African-American/Hispanic, 1 as Korean-American, and 1 as Indian.

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The type of work that participants used to perform broke down into 17 text workers who held jobs such as aerospace engineer, project manager, administrative assistant or a banking call center employee. Eleven body workers participated in the study and had performed work such as a cook, grocery stocker, warehouse loader, or a horse trainer. Three participants were defined as stradlers, someone who performed work that emphasized both body and textual characteristics. Malcolm worked as a drug and alcohol specialist. I describe his work as a straddle because his work involved textualizing the bodies of drug addicts. Malcolm would create files for each person and then manipulate those files accordingly. At the same time, Malcolm's job required that he lift and move objects on a daily basis. I placed Mckenzie as a straddler because as a public relations and promotions specialist he had to create advertisements and promotional materials for clients. The promotional side of her work required that she setup booths inside organizations or at events that required her body to be physically present to symbolize the product. While her work is not as labor intensive, it did require the use of her body to symbolize the product. Lastly, I classified Daynaria as a straddler because as an ER nurse her day was split between completing paper work about other people's bodies, thus turning the medical needs and concerns of others into a paper trail and being physically present to assist in treating others.

Participants primarily rented a place to live with 18 renting some type of house or apartment. Eight people did own a home and five people lived with a friend or their parents. A majority of participants had achieved some level of advanced education. Among the participants 8 had some college experience, 7 earned a bachelor's degree, 5

earned an associate's degree, 4 had graduate degrees, 3 had a high school diploma, 2 had some high school experience, 1 had a graphic arts certificate and 1 had a culinary degree.

A valuable resource in the job search is reliable transportation. Of the participants, 20 said that they owned a vehicle and 11 did not. However, only 16 used their own car daily, 6 participants relied on public transportation, 5 relied on family and friends to help them get around, and 4 walked or used a bicycle on a daily basis.

Personal Bias

In hermeneutic phenomenology research, the researcher cannot be separated from the research process. The researcher is a co-constructor of the data with his or her participants. However, by discussing their personal experiences, researchers can make any personal bias related to the phenomenon more transparent to themselves and the reader (Creswell, 2007). To illuminate any personal bias I had about unemployment I will describe my experiences with unemployment and discuss how those experiences may have shaped my views on unemployment.

If someone were to ask me if I have ever been unemployed I would say "no, I have never been unemployed." However, when I reflect on my experiences that may not be the case. During my high school years I was always employed. It was easy to find a job and I often worked more than one job at time. As I began college I joined the Marines and also maintained part-time employment. During those college years I did have transition periods where I was not employed, however, I knew that I had a new job waiting for me so I never considered the down time in between jobs as being unemployed.

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My first exposure to unemployment came when three people close to me

experienced unemployment beginning about four years ago. Two of them were laborers,

one working in a toilet and faucet factory and the other working at a door-making factory.

The third person worked in a sales position as a mid-level manager. The first two people

laid off were the laborers. Morgan (pseudonym), the toilet and faucet worker, was

employed by a large unionized company. When Morgan was laid off he had union

support to help him pay the bills, and even had an opportunity to enter higher education

and earn a degree that would be paid for by his former employer. However, the

unemployment only lasted a few months and Morgan was back to work providing for his

family. While his unemployment was definitely stressful, no one ever seemed to worry

because it was expected that he would be brought back when the workload picked up.

The other laborer I knew, Jesse, did not fare so well. Jesse was laid off from the

door building business, then a few months later was able to find another laborer job at a

yacht building company. However, that company soon closed its doors and Jesse was

once again out of work and remained out of work for over two years. Jesse had to move

in with family members, collect unemployment, and work cash jobs to make ends meet.

The state in which Jesse lived provided a displaced workers program that Jesse used to

earn eighteen credit hours towards a computer programming degree. Discouraged by

school, Jesse found another laborer job and for the past two years has returned to work

and found a place to live.

The final person in my life who experienced unemployment is Alex the mid-level

manager. Alex is a successful middle-aged person who lives in a nice house, and was

able to provide for his family. However, without warning, Alex's position was

eliminated and he was out of work. The company offered him a six month severance package that helped him maintain his life style while looking for another job. Although Alex is college educated, a bachelor's degree, it took him nearly two years to find another job. Alex relied on his retirement funds to continue supporting himself and his family. The family made some lifestyle changes, but for the most part maintained the same life style.

These three experiences were quite different from each other and, in turn, shape the way I understand unemployment. I see unemployment as something that can happen to anyone, regardless of education, age, or experience. Furthermore, it became apparent to me that how one manages their unemployment depends greatly on the resources available to them. Thus, my experiences were the driving force behind a program of research that has lead me to this study.

Ethical Obligations

As a researcher, I have a few ethical obligations that I must address. First, my intent is to do no harm to my participants or anyone else. Following IRB protocol, participants are not required to answer any questions that they do not feel comfortable answering. Furthermore, participants may stop the interview for any reason at any time if they wish.

Second, all data collected in this study has been de-identified. All names of participants have been replaced by a pseudonym of their choosing. If they do not choose a pseudonym, I choose one for them. All names of cities, towns, landmarks, previous places of employment, organizations, coworkers, superiors, friends, and family members were also changed or omitted to help protect the identities of my participants.

Third, the photos collected in this study present some unique challenges. To protect my participants I informed them about how I de-identify photos as necessary. Following IRB protocol, I either blurred or blacked out any identifying information in the photos. Photos submitted by my participants were not be altered in any way that portrays them in a negative light.

The Data and Analysis

For this study I used a thematic analysis to analyze both the interview texts and the photographs. After conducting an interview, I sent the recording to a transcriptionist who transcribed the interview. After receiving the transcript I began my analysis. As new data was transcribed I analyzed that data as well. To assist me in the transcribing process I hired two outside transcriptionists. Before the transcriptionists began working with the data I provided them with a confidentiality agreement that stated they will not disclose or use any of the data that I provide. I also provided the transcriptionist with an exemplar document and an explanation of how to format the document and the level of detail required for this project. In the next section I describe the analysis and transcribing processes in detail.

The Data

The data for this project were collected via in-person and phone interviews with participants. Due to the stigmatizing nature of unemployment, it is not surprising that only eight of the interviews were conducted in a face-to-face setting. All of the interviews conducted in a face-to-face setting were with body workers. The interviews lasted on average 61 minutes with a total of 31.6 hours spent interviewing participants.

The interviews produced on average 15 pages of single-spaced text per interview with a total page count of 479 pages of data. The average word count per interview was 11,490 words with a total of 356,213 words. In total, participants provided 142 photos with an average of 4 pictures per interview. The nature of the pictures provided by participants differed in that some of the pictures provided metaphors for discussing their unemployment experiences, while other pictures were literal glimpses of participants' unemployment experiences. An example of pictures that provided insightful metaphors are the pictures of grey skies that allowed participants to talk about their struggle to find a vision and pictures of closed doors enabled participants to describe how they felt trapped by their unemployment.

Thematic Analysis

To ascertain the essence of what it means to be unemployed and managing uncertainty I used a thematic analysis. A thematic analysis is a process of recovering themes that are embodied in the text, a process that is not bound by rules but driven by the act of seeing meaning (Van Manen, 1990). The process of how themes are recovered varies depending upon the approach the researcher takes. Phenomenologists can either take a wholistic or sententious approach, a selective or highlighting approach, or a detailed line-by-line approach (Van Manen, 1990). In the wholistic approach, researchers read the text as a whole attempting to discern a phrase that captures the fundamental meaning or significance of the text. In the selective or highlighting approach, researchers read the text several times looking for statements or phrases that seem essential or revealing about the phenomenon (Van Manen, 1990). In the detailed or line-

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by-line approach, researchers look at every sentence to see what is revealed about the essence of the phenomenon.

Now that I have discussed the thematic analysis process, I must define what constitutes a theme. Van Manen (1990) defines themes as meaning systems that help us understand the essence of the phenomenon. A theme is a main point or focus of the text, a simplification of the complex into a meaningful formulation, intransitive compilations of exemplars from across all of the texts, and lastly a description of the phenomenon (Van Manen, 1990). In summary, a theme is a partial unlocking of the essence of the phenomenon. A theme gives shape to our reality that we had not shaped before because we had not reflected on our experiences and made sense of them in this way (Van Manen, 1990).

For this study, I used the selective or highlighting approach because it allowed me to find exemplars from each participant that support the themes in their own ways. The selective approach also allowed me to find counter examples to themes when they emerged. Thematic analysis is not neat and our findings are not clean and perfect (Van Manen, 1990). Instead, Van Manen (1990) suggests that we embrace the possibility of counter examples because they demonstrate the complexity of our lived experiences and are likely to make our findings more informative. The selective or highlighting approach allowed me to question my understanding of the emerging themes as I analyzed the data.

In keeping with the selective or highlighting approach to thematic analysis, I transcribed the interviews verbatim. At this level of analysis, it is important to capture the utterances and pauses that occur during the interview because they add detail to the transcript. Any information that is likely to identify a participant was omitted and

brackets with a description of the information were inserted. For example, instead of listing the name of a university a participant attended, I simply wrote the word university inside two brackets. Additionally, brackets were used to denote any change to the data or clarification that is made by the transcriptionist or me. Using brackets helped maintain the original verbiage of the transcript. The transcriptionists were informed about the need to de-identify and I showed them how to do this. The header of each transcript provides the participant's pseudonym, and the date and time of the interview. A letter related to each participant's pseudonym denotes each person in the interview. For example, an "I" represents the interviewer and the first letter of the pseudonym represents the participant. Each line of the transcript was numbered beginning with the first line on the first page and running consecutively through the entire transcript. After transcribing a transcript, I read it a second time to ensure accuracy of the transcript. For those transcripts done by the transcriptionist I listened to the recording and read the transcript twice to ensure that the transcript is accurate and properly de-identified. Any errors were fixed before proceeding.

Scholars have provided insight about how to manage the data in a qualitative research project. Lindlof and Taylor (2002) suggest that the data analysis covers three fronts: data management, data reduction, and conceptual development. Data management focuses on how the data will be handled. For this study, I uesed NVivo 7 to organize the data into searchable electronic files. Using this software allowed me to move the data into different folders that eventually captured the emerging themes. Data reduction focuses on prioritizing the use-value of the data into categories and codes that become the schemes of interpretation (Lindlof & Taylor, 2002). To do this, I placed the

relevant data into folders using the software, which helped prioritize the relevant data. Lastly, conceptual development focuses on connecting the concepts and themes together and tying them back into the theory to help create an informative interpretation of the phenomenon. Conceptual development occurred when I begin fitting the themes together to tell the story of these unemployed participants.

Bringing the theory to practice, I would like to explain the steps I took to conduct my analysis. First, I organized my data using NVivo 7 software. Each participant had a folder with his or her interview transcripts and photos in the folder. I read each transcript which allowed me to make notes in the text about their experiences. As I read each transcript a second and third time, I begin to classify highlighted selections into meaning structures (statements of like meanings) that I kept in folders. Those statements were grouped into meaning themes. Lastly, the themes that emerged from the data support my written interpretation of the essence of unemployment. For example, upon my initial reading of the data I highlighted data that I put in the folders titled hope, anticipation, schema, and American dream. As I re-read the transcripts and looked over the photos this grouping of folders began to shape what I interpreted as schemas of uncertainty leading to uncertainty. While schema folder contained examples of schemas described by participants, those highlighted sections alone did not tell me what happened to the schemas that people used or the outcome of those schemas. Bringing the meaning structures together helped emerge a rich understanding of how participants tried to create certainty in their lives through the use of schemas.

Trustworthiness of the Study

To demonstrate that this interpretative study is trustworthy (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) or that a study is well grounded and supported by the exemplars (Polkinghorne, 1989). Creswell (2007) outlines eight methods of verification (prolonged engagement, triangulation, peer review, negative case analysis, acknowledging bias, member checking, rich or thick description, and external audits) and recommends that researchers employ at least two of the methods. For this study, I used of three of these methods. First, I used triangulation as a form of verification. Triangulation refers to the use of multiple and different sources to collect data (Creswell, 2007). In this study I collected data from multiple people in two different forms. Each participant contributed to the data by describing and discussing their unemployment experiences and taking photographs. The second form of verification I used in this study is the clarification of my researcher biases. By discussing my experiences with the phenomenon, I am attempting to make transparent any bias that I may hold. The third form of verification that I used includes rich, thick description. By accompanying my interpretation with rich, thick description, Creswell (2007) argues that readers can use the details in the description to transfer information from the study to other settings. A well-written thick description should allow the reader to see how the findings may be similar or different from their own experiences. The level of detail provided in the discussion of my findings is intended to provide the richness that allows the reader to enmesh themselves into the experiences of my participants.

CHAPTER 4: FINDINGS

The findings of this research describe an experience of unemployment and uncertainty that is distinct across social class. Upon becoming unemployed, participants anticipated that they would be able to manage their unemployment and find a new job. However, when that certainty did not happen, participants experienced a schema failure that left them uncertain about their future. The experience of unemployment is laden with uncertainty and many barriers to reemployment. How participants managed their uncertainty depended greatly upon their social class positioning. Lastly, participants chose to withdraw from interactions as a way to manage the unemployment stigma. Unemployment is a complex experience that affects people differently depending on the resources available to them.

In this chapter I discuss three themes that emerged from the data. The first theme, schemas of certainty leading to uncertainty, describes how participants anticipated certainty and, when that certainty was not confirmed, they experienced uncertainty. The second theme, social class and the search for work explores how social class positioning and materiality changes the experiences of unemployment. The third theme, stigma and communication withdraw describes the stigma of unemployment and explores how participants chose to manage that stigma.

Theme 1: Schemas of Certainty Leading to Uncertainty

The schemas of certainty leading to uncertainty theme describe how participants used schemas to anticipate certainty about their future. However, when those schemas

were not confirmed due to prolonged unemployment past their original expectation, participants experienced schema failures that triggered uncertainty. First, I discuss the anticipation of certainty sup-theme that describes how participants created certainty using schemas. Then I discuss the failure of schemas sub-theme that demonstrates how participants' schemas failed, creating uncertainty.

The Anticipation of Certainty

The anticipation of certainty theme describes how participants created schemas that enabled them to feel certain about an uncertain future. Regardless of the type of work they did, all participants thought that they would be able to find new employment in a reasonable amount of time. TMU argues that uncertainty is a psychological state influenced by schemas or scripts (Kramer, 2004). Schemas are broad knowledge structures (Abelson, 1981) that are the result of direct personal experience or communication about a specific event (Koerner & Fitzpatrick, 2002). Schemas are useful because they help us define events in our lives (i.e. ordering food at a restaurant) and create scripts for particular events (i.e. what is said between the waiter and the patron). Research in family communication has shown that people rely on schemas to help them interpret messages. Koerner and Fitzpatrick (2002) found that people rely on general social schemas, general relationship schemas, and relationship specific schemas to help them interpret relational messages. General social schemas are the broadest and they include knowledge about beliefs and social norms. General relationship schemas focus more specifically on types of relationships such as romantic, paternal, or collegial relationships. Relationship specific schemas provide knowledge about specific relationships with particular people such as memories and experiences with a brother or

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sister. As we narrow our schemas to meet our specific needs we begin to develop scripts that inform our cognitive understanding and our behaviors (Abelson, 1981).

Scripts are the routine behaviors or actions that allow for mindless responses to situations (Cantor et al., 1982) and are activated when people can anticipate the sequence of events that are going to occur (Abelson, 1981). Different events require different types of scripts. The most common scripts, situational scripts, help people interpret meaning easily and quickly, such as ordering food at a restaurant (Shank & Abelson, 1977). Personal scripts help the individual meet their goals, even when others are unaware of the personal script. Those who steal or swindle others rely on their victim's willingness to abide by the socially accepted situational script while the thief enacts his or her personal script and steals the unsuspecting victim's wallet. Personal scripts may not always be private and they may or may not follow the situational script. Lastly, Shank and Abelson (1977) argue that people use instrumental scripts to complete tasks such as frying an egg.

Scripts are informed by our schemas and provide us with a sequence of what to say in particular situations. As an example, first dates are a situation characterized by elevated levels of uncertainty and a desire for information seeking. Therefore, people develop scripts that help them interact with their date. Research by Serewicz and Gale (2009) suggests that on first dates people generally follow a common script that involves the man picking up their female date, paying for the date, and then taking their female date home. The common script allows a heterosexual couple on their first date to coordinate expectations. Deviating from the script changes the expectations. For example, Serewicz and Gale (2009) found that if a woman asked a man on a date, the man was more likely to anticipate sexual intimacy; whereas, if a man asked the woman

on a date women were more likely to kiss the man at the end of the date. The authors argue that men were more certain that the woman liked them when the woman asked the man out on a date. When women did ask men out on a date, the men were more likely to expect sexual intimacy. The deviation from the norm changes the expectations for men. Situational scripts such as those used during first dates help people understand what to say during the situation. The scripts used on dates are informed by the schemas about dating that people learn. Developing schemas and scripts for unemployment is challenging because people lose the structure of work during unemployment (Jahoda, 1982). The structure provided by work has colonized our personal lives (Deetz, 1992) and without work we struggle to build new schemas.

Participants in this study created schemas that allowed them to anticipate certainty; however that certainty gave way to uncertainty when they continued to struggle with their unemployment beyond the expectations of their schema. The data reveals that participants anticipated certainty in three ways. First, a majority of participants anticipated that their unemployment would be short-term and easy to overcome. Second, participants anticipated how they would find a new job. Third, some participants anticipated new opportunities. To these participants, unemployment was an opportunity to do something new or different. However, as demonstrated by the following examples, the schemas that participants created failed to provide certainty when they received disconfirming information. As a result, participants no longer had an accurate schema to help them understand their unemployment and they experienced uncertainty.

Schema one: unemployment as short-term and easy

The vast majority of participants described anticipating their unemployment to be a short-term event, which they expected to find a job with little effort and in a period of time they deemed as reasonable for finding a new job. Kim, a 31 year-old, who had been unemployed for nine months, developed this expectation from previous experiences with unemployment. As a Certified Occupational Therapist Assistant, Kim described how in-demand her job was and her previous experience changing jobs suggested to her that she would be able to find a new job within three to four weeks. Kim describes her anticipation as follows:

> I figured I would be able to, you know find a job relatively quickly. You know, I have in the past. The longest I was unemployed prior to this was three or four weeks…So you know I figure relatively… I'd get another position because; you know, I have a degree and I do have an education and you know, there's not a whole lot… nobody knows what a coder is. Which is good for marketing because I mean, because there's not a whole lot of them. So when we do put in for our positions, you know, we usually get it because there's not a whole lot of competition.

For Kim, the perceived limited number of people working in her field led her to believe that she had a desirable skill set that would allow her to obtain reemployment quickly. Kim's expectation of short and easy reemployment process was also supported by the numerous jobs in her field that she found online. However, nine months later she was still unemployed and struggling to find new employment. Even though she searched for jobs, she struggled to find jobs in the rural Midwest and she did not want to move away from her husband. Kim's inability to find new work disconfirmed the schema she used to manage her uncertainty.

Another participant, Kenny, also thought that he would be able to find work easily because of his prior work experience. Kenny rationalized that as a laborer he would have no problem finding other labor jobs to employ him. Kenny describes his anticipation this way:

> Aww. Hell, I figured like I would have like a 30 day vacation at the most. Like I said, I've done construction all my life, but at that point in time construction was just not booming, nobody's hiring. It just sucked.

Kenny was fired from his warehouse loader job after he had a disagreement with another person on the job. As a 36 year-old with a prior violent felony, Kenny was proud that he left the job instead of getting into a physical altercation. However, 24 months after making the choice to walk away from a confrontation, Kenny was still unemployed and looking for work. It is important to note, that what may have seemed like a small disagreement at work actually caused Kenny an increased amount of stress because of his prior conviction. As Kenny stated later in the interview, if he had stayed and became involved in an altercation his felony status would have brought a harsher punishment if the police were called. For Kenny, the motivation to avoid further legal problems and retain the ability to see his child was greater than his motivation to keep that job.

Kenny's anticipation of being able to find work because of his labor experience allowed him to diminish the significance of the altercation at his previous job and not feel guilty about losing work. What is particularly interesting about Kenny's statement is his qualification of why he has not been able to find work. Kenny stated that "…at that point in time construction was just not booming, nobody's hiring. It just sucked." This statement provides a reason why Kenny is unable to find work, one that does not implicate himself. By not implicating himself, Kenny can avoid uncertainty. Although,

Kenny was proud of himself for not getting into an altercation, he confided that he wished he had just kept working and not walked off the job.

Similar to Kenny, Daynaria thought she would have a couple weeks of vacation and then find another job. At 34 years-old, Daynaria is a former emergency room nurse who lost her job when the doctor she worked for was called to active duty in the military. The hospital she worked at eventually cut her hours to about ten hours per week which left her unable to make ends meet. Daynaria was forced to quit that job and search for another place to work. Armed with work experience and an associate's degree in nursing, Daynaria anticipated a pleasant transition from one job to another. She describes her anticipation this way:

> The first thing is that I thought it was going to be really short term. I thought it was going to be like oh it's going to be easy. I'll get a couple weeks off and a vacation and then I'll go back to work. That was kind of my mentality. Unfortunately that didn't work out.

Daynaria perceived the transition from the old job to a new job as "easy." However, 48 months later Daynaria is still unemployed and struggling to find work. Characterizing the transition as easy, short term, and a vacation allowed Daynaria to feel in control of finding a new job therefore, allowing her to feel certain. Kenny and Dayaria both use the word vacation as a synonym for unemployment, which would suggest that unemployment is temporary and to be enjoyed. Describing unemployment as an enjoyable break allowed both Kenny and Daynaria to frame their unemployment in a positive way. Using the schema of a short and easy transition to another job failed Daynaria; as she moved in with her father and went to her local church for food and legal services. Where a vacation is usually fun and enjoyable, Daynaria's anticipation of such an experience was

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disconfirmed when she could no longer afford to live on her own or afford food for her and one of her children who lived with her.

A strong work history of continuous employment also leads some to believe that they would easily overcome unemployment. Mom, a 58 year-old factory worker expected to be able to find another job quickly because she had always been employed. Mom's strong work history and work ethic allowed her to anticipate certainty like this:

> I was like "in a week I'll have a job cause I've always had been able to." But my age bars a lot of stuff. I never think, "you're getting old." I don't think that way. But guess what, I woke up real quick.

Mom figured that in a week's time she would be able to find work. She was a hard worker at her factory job and did not see any reason why she would not be able to find another job. Mom was so dedicated to her previous job that she lost a total of three fingers during two different work related accidents. Mom never filed for workman's compensation and never missed a day of work. Mom was tough. Unfortunately, her schema of finding work was quickly disconfirmed and 48 months later Mom was still unemployed. Mom discovered that her body was no longer able to perform many of the intense labor jobs available to her. Without a high school diploma, it will likely be difficult for Mom to find another type of work that she can perform.

While Mom struggles to find another type of work that she can perform, those participants with bachelor degrees also created schemas that anticipated certainty. Sophie, a 24 year-old college graduate with a bachelor's degree in biology, was certain that her academic excellence and internship experience would most certainly land her a job. However, after 14 months of searching Sophie was still unemployed and describes her anticipation this way:

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Unemployment? Um, the only thing that jumped out to me was that I didn't realize that it was so hard to find a job. I knew about it when I was about to graduate, a lot of people, were like, couldn't find a job for a while and were kind of trying but I didn't think it would be me because, I don't know if it sounds rash to say this but, I just felt like I was, I had a big GPA, I had very successful like experience, um… I had a lot of like, internships and um, mentors and a lot of connections and instead like, coming back to [city] coming back to this town, I just felt like, well I have this degree from this prestigious college and like, I could find a job. I just felt like I didn't expect it to be so hard and so when I first got the interview for the [hospital] as a lab technician, I was like, 'Oh, this is definitely expected.' And then when I didn't get the job I wasn't like, really sad about it but now, like a year and two months forward it's like I can't even get an interview with them.

Throughout her education Sophie was socialized to think that if she did well in school, she would find a job. By following this ideology, Sophie developed the expectation that because she did well in school she would be able to find a job. Even after her first interview did not end in employment, Sophie still expected to find employment without much difficulty. Schemas are useful because they become routine (Kramer, 2004). Much like the routines people use to interact with the cashier at the grocery store, Sophie enacted a routine that is passed down through education; that is, go to school and you will get a job. Sophie's schema was not disconfirmed initially. She rationalized that not being hired was part of the process, but still expected to find a job rather easily. It was not until after Sophie applied for another job at the same hospital and did not get an interview that she realized her mistake. Sophie later went on to explain what had occurred in the interview at the hospital. The position she was being interviewed for was a full-time position and Sophie told the interviewer that she was more interested in part-time work because she did not know if she would be living in the same city at that time next year. It was not until well after that interview that Sophie realized the mistake she

had made. She told me that she regretted informing the interviewer of her uncertain future and wished she had done a better job interviewing for the position.

The behavioral script that Sophie enacted was likely not consistent with the expectations of the person conducting the interview because Sophie was interviewing for a full-time position but only wanting part-time hours. Sophie made an assumption that her education and internship experiences alone would be desirable enough that the hospital would still hire her as part-time. This perspective was rather naive in an economic climate with unemployment rates fluctuating between 7.9- 8.3% during that year (BLS, 2014).

The short-term and easy schema allowed participants to see unemployment as something they could manage. However, when participants realized that finding a new job was not going to be as easy as they had hoped, participants experienced uncertainty. The consequences of thinking that finding a new job would be quick and easy left participants questioning why people were not hiring them and what they could do to find a job. A second schema that leads to uncertainty was the schema of knowing the process.

Schema two: knowing the process

For some, the process of looking for a job had changed since they last looked for work and searching for a job was not like what they had anticipated. These participants found certainty in the idea that they knew how the job search process was supposed to happen. However, when these participants began looking for work they realized that what they once knew about unemployment and the job search had changed. For example Earl a 36 year-old shiv (narrow pieces of wood used to form barrels) maker anticipated

that he would have to go to the local employment center to file for unemployment. Earl

recalled walking into the employment center as a child with his mother as she applied for

unemployment benefits. The contemporary method requires that people file for

unemployment either online or over the phone. Earl describes his experience learning

about how to file for unemployment this way:

> So after doing this, after leaving that job like being unemployed was a real eye
> opener and a totally different situation because I have never been unemployed like
> that. I always bounce back and find another job. Now my life has totally
> changed. I got a child. Everything is done off of… well now you don't have to
> walk in no more. You know I remember as a child walking in when my mom was
> unemployed, standing in line. Now everything is done by phone, touch tone, stuff
> like that. So I had to sit down and talk to my stepfather and he had to show me
> how to get unemployment.

For Earl, what he knew about filing for unemployment came from his experiences

accompanying his mother to the employment office when she filed for unemployment

benefits. Not knowing that people are no longer required to go to an employment office

to file for unemployment benefits, Earl's schema about how to achieve this task was

incorrect. Fortunately, Earl's stepfather was able to help him understand the new process

to file for unemployment benefits. In Earl's quote he describes how becoming

unemployed has been a real eye opener because he now has a responsibility to take care

of his son as-well-as himself.

Greg is another participant who anticipated a different process to the job search.

Having worked for his previous employer for 13 years, Greg had been off the job market

for a long time and much about the job search had changed. At the time that I spoke to

Greg he had been unemployed for six weeks and did not seem too concerned about his

ability to find a new job. Greg's previous employer offered him a nice severance

package that paid him a salary and insurance benefits. However, Greg was still caught

off guard about the nature of the job search process. Having graduated with a bachelor's

degree in 2000, the job market was very different than compared to 2014. Greg describes

that realization this way:

> And I feel like I should mention, um, so when I was an undergrad, you know, I
> graduated in 2000 right when the economy was at its peak. I go to engineering
> school and the majority of us, myself included, has multiple job offers, uh, by
> Thanksgiving of our senior year. And so this has been like a totally different
> experience whereas now admittedly it was 13 years ago. Previously employers I
> kind of you know really been trying to, you know, get us to sign on with them.
> Now it's such an employer's market it's incredibly frustrating in some regards.

Unfortunately for Greg, the employment situation had shifted dramatically while he was

employed and he was left unprepared for the realities of today's job market. Greg was a

former project manager who had filled a number of different roles at his previous

employer such as an IT specialist and project manager. While working for his previous

employer, Greg earned an MBA. With an MBA and 13 years of steady work experience

behind him Greg felt confident that he can find a new job. However, he was not prepared

for how much effort it was going to take. Surely Greg did not anticipate someone would

just hand him an offer, but he did expect the selection process to move more quickly.

Fortunately for Greg he has a severance package that allows him to be slightly more

relaxed about his job search.

Greg is not financially destitute, nor is he or his family going hungry. Because

Greg does not have to worry about his basic needs, the environment in which he

experiences uncertainty is less threatening to his physical health and well-being. The

schema he uses for the job search process is outdated and Greg will need to adapt, but the

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schema Greg has about the value he brings to a company is strong and Greg is willing to continue looking for a job that fits his schema.

The knowing the process schema demonstrates how participants did not have a schema that gave them an accurate understanding of the processes they needed to navigate. Participants became uncertain about how to find a job when their schema did not help them understand the structure of the job search. These participants relied on the structure they learned from an earlier job search. However, the job search has changed since these participants last search for work and their assumptions about the structure of the job search were not accurate. Without a schema that gave them an accurate understanding of the job search structure, these participants became uncertain and frustrated about how to search for a job.

Schema three: unemployment as an opportunity

Not everyone anticipated that they could quickly or easily solve their employment predicament. Some developed a schema that, initially, did not interpret their situation as a negative unemployment experience. Schemas help us understand a specific situation and these participants used a schema to view their unemployment as an opportunity to do something different in their lives. In viewing their unemployment as an opportunity they did not see their exit from work as uncertainty producing. Instead, opportunity suggests that they felt liberated. For example, Adriana anticipated that she would be able to stop working as an office assistant and focus on going to school while her boyfriend worked full-time. Adriana also envisioned herself enjoying the experience more. She anticipated

a nice change of pace that would allow her to enjoy time with the family and work on earning a bachelor's degree. Adriana describes her anticipation like this:

> I very much have enjoyed spending that extra time with them [kids]. I guess I didn't realize what an impact on myself, like my, the way I feel about it now versus the way I felt about it then. Like I guess I thought I would be able to enjoy it [unemployment] more. You know, being able to do the school and, you know, thinking it was going to work financially at that point. I thought I was going to enjoy it and now I'm kinda like "oh gosh," you know where you almost like stir crazy and you wanna be able to have that job just to get out of the house and go do, make some money and get a check. You know. Yeah, I didn't, I think there's a lot of things that there I expected but I didn't realize it was going to be like it is.

At 29 years-old, Adriana voluntarily resigned from her office assistant position at a law firm to pursue an education. She looked forward to enjoying her new freedom and going to school. However, four months after leaving her previous position Adriana was feeling "stir crazy" and wanted to have a job so she could get out of the house and make some money. Initially, Adriana anticipated a positive experience, one that would allow her the freedom to earn a degree and spend time with her two boys. However, her schema of how she thought it was going to go was disconfirmed in multiple ways. First, when Adriana began to feel "stir crazy" she saw finding a new job as a way to cure the feeling of restlessness. Second, Adriana later stated that the amount of money that her boyfriend was making was not enough to cover the bills and some unexpected costs. Adriana and her boyfriend were now behind on their utilities and were struggling to come up with enough to pay all the bills. Third, when Adriana and her boyfriend began struggling to pay the bills, she told me how she began doubting whether going to school was a wise change and was uncertain if going to school would benefit her later in life. Adriana's uncertainty was partially triggered by the responses that she received from people when they found out that she was taking classes at a for-profit online university. To reduce her

uncertainty about going to a for-profit school and prove to others that going to this school was a good choice, Adriana memorized which accreditation organizations had sanctioned the university.

Adriana anticipated a positive change, certain that she was going to have the time to work on a bachelor's degree and spend time with her children. However, that certainty quickly gave way to uncertainty as Adriana and her boyfriend fell behind on bills and their relationships became strained. Six months after I interviewed Adriana, her boyfriend asked her to move out because he could not be with someone who was not working. At last contact, Adriana was moving out of the house she shared with her boyfriend and had begun working a factory job. Prior to leaving her job, Adriana worked in an office setting which is something she was very proud of because she grew up in a blue-collar family and had to learn how to be a professional. Adriana wanted to use her unemployment as an opportunity to advance her skills for other types of text work. However, what she initially perceived as an opportunity gave way to uncertainty. Adriana's schema of opportunity failed when she could no longer seize the chance to earn a degree and now she struggles to develop a new schema to explain her unemployment.

Ted is someone else who anticipated a positive experience because he saw unemployment as an opportunity to achieve other goals. At age 54 Ted had worked as an aerospace engineer for the majority of his adult life. He found the job to be stressful and unpleasant. With more than enough cash and assets to support himself and his wife Ted retired from his job to pursue other activities such as getting into better shape, teaching karate, and working on strengthening his relationship with his wife. Ted describes his anticipation this way:

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Well, I knew that I liked working enough. I knew I was the type that wasn't just going to sit on the deck and have a rocking chair. I knew I was going to be doing something. So, for me it was more of an opportunity to work on some of the things that I wanted to do, which was get in better shape, really spend more time with the karate, do some more travel, and then, actually spend some more time with my wife so we could work through some of the issues we were having. In that regard I had looked forward to that. That's what I thought it was going to be like; I didn't think it was going to be just, relaxing all the time, you know. It'd be an awful lot of chores but at least it was chores that I was interested in.

For Ted retiring early was supposed to be a positive experience that allowed him to work on other projects that were more interesting to him. Leaving a stressful job, Ted's goal was to lower the amount of stress and uncertainty in his life. The schema of opportunity prepared him for a fresh start. Nevertheless, after more than 30 months of unemployment Ted found himself struggling to find persistent work. To his credit, since Ted retired he has written six books that focus on a range of topics from investing, his travels across Scotland, and his weight loss journey. Unfortunately, Ted was not able to save his marriage and identifies as divorced and single. At the time of the interview Ted's home was in foreclosure and he was afraid that he might lose his house. Later in the interview he admitted that he would take his old job back if he could. He would choose to endure the stress and pressures of the aerospace industry because working at his former job for just three months would allow him to make enough money to pay off his debts. Recently Ted posted on his blog that he and the mortgage company had come to an agreement and he would not lose his home. Although Ted prepared for his retirement, social and economic factors beyond his control caused him to lose vast amounts of money which dramatically increased his uncertainty about needing and then finding a new job. Ted's schema about retirement was similar to the master narrative of retirement discovered by Smith and Dougherty (2012) who found that every participant narrated retirement as the

ultimate marker of individual success and freedom. However, participants in their study struggled with the loss of their work routine, even though they anticipated enjoying the freedom. Factors beyond Ted's control turned what was supposed to be an opportunity into a nightmare struggle to find certainty. Ted struggled figuring out how to be retired; yet socially and financially stable.

The schema of opportunity allowed participants such as Adriana and Ted to have a positive outlook on their future. Others such as Britney used their unemployment as an opportunity to take care of obligations or responsibilities that they were struggling to complete while working. Britney, a 52 year old office supply person saw her unemployment as an opportunity to take care of personal matters. Britney states, "I was going [to] take my unemployment for a couple of months, get my mother's estate in order, and then the next thing." Britney's unemployment was an opportunity for her to make arrangements for her mother's estate. While working Britney struggled to take care of her mother's needs. Unemployment became an opportunity to take care of her mother's estate and then go back to work. However, after finishing handling her mother's estate, Britney struggled to move onto "the next thing" which is to find another job. The schema of opportunity helped participants feel certain, but when their opportunities did not turn out like they had expected, Adriana, Ted, and Britney experienced uncertainty.

Summary of the Anticipation of Certainty sub-theme

All of the participants anticipated certainty in some form. For many, they saw unemployment as something that was not only temporary but short lived and easy to overcome. Unfortunately for those participants, their schemas were not confirmed and

they experienced uncertainty. A few of the participants anticipated certainty because they thought they knew what the unemployment process was going to be like. For example, Earl remembered what his mother did when she was unemployed. He was surprised to find out that people can now file for unemployment over the phone. Greg was fortunate enough to have multiple job offers when he graduated with his bachelor's degree in 2000 and was not ready for the dramatic change in the employment situation in America. Similarly, other participants saw their unemployment as an opportunity to work on other tasks or continue their education. Unfortunately, for those who anticipated new opportunities, the uncertainty associated with unemployment impacted other areas of their lives such as relationships with significant others. Once their schemas were disconfirmed, participants who saw unemployment as opportunity began to struggle to make ends meet. Ted narrowly avoided losing his house and Adriana ended her relationship with her boyfriend, found her own place to live, and ended up finding a job in a factory and not in an office setting like she used to have. The failure of participants' schemas to help them understand their unemployment situation led participants to experience uncertainty, struggling to develop a new schema. In the next section I discuss the failure of these schemas and how they created uncertainty for participants. The following exemplars show how participants experienced uncertainty because they could not structure their lives.

The Failure of Schemas and the Production of Uncertainty

The failure of schemas and the production of uncertainty theme describe how participants experienced a loss of structure that created uncertainty when their schemas failed. Work structures our lives (i.e. Deetz, 1992; Jaohda, 1982) and without work these

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participants lost structure in their lives. Schemas are useful because they provide people

with guidance of what to do and the order tasks need to be done; essentially schemas

provide a goal for people to pursue (Abelson, 1981). Although participants did have a

goal, getting a new job, they could not visualize how they were going to find a new job.

All of the participants in the study wanted to find work, but the job search process

is complex and there is no "right" or "perfect" way to find a job. The lack of structure

during the job search process caused Daynaria, a 34 year-old single mother and former

emergency room nurse, uncertainty as she tried to figure out why she was not being hired

as a nurse. After six months of searching for a job Daynaria remained unemployed and

struggled to understand why she could not find a job. Unable to explain why she was not

finding a job, Daynaria's uncertainty came to a point of frustration and dismay which was

compounded when her unemployment benefits ran out. Daynaria explains her situation

this way:

> Um, I would say probably about six months into it. And I was thinking like, "I
> don't understand! I'm putting out like at least ten resumes like a week and I'm
> not getting calls back." You know, did I do something wrong at my other job?
> You know I felt like maybe I was kind of black balled there for a while. And then
> I really started to stress out when the unemployment benefits ran out.

Daynaria expected to find a job by "putting out" resumes. Unfortunately, after six

months of searching for a job, Daynaria still has not found work and her uncertainty is

derived from the lack of structure in the job search process. Without work, Daynaria

must find structure in the job search process. However, the job search process is not a

highly structured event that can structure personal lives as Deetz (1992) has suggested.

In Daynaria's situation, her uncertainty is due to the lack of feedback in the job search

process. Without feedback Daynaria cannot assess why she is not receiving job offers.

Unable to understand the job search, Daynaria is struggling for structure that gives her a vision of her next job. Without a vision, Daynaria cannot see a goal and cannot form a schema to give her life structure.

A body worker, Earl, also struggled to develop a new schema about his unemployment experience. Earl is a 36 year-old former shiv maker who had been unemployed for five months. Earl worked at the shiv making company for the last 13 years and did not have a lot of recent experience looking for a job. When he became unemployed Earl entered a new employment environment that was unfamiliar to him. When Earl was hired at the shiv making company, he found the job through face-to-face communication with people at the company. Turning in an electronic application was not something that Earl had done before, but now the contemporary job search process requires people complete applications online. This did not fit Earl's schema about what the job search process would be like and he struggled to structure his job search in a way that made sense. Earl describes his failed schema this way:

> Well every day the thing is, "okay, what is going to be my next job?" Do they want me or"… because I've done passed different little tests that they gave me. So is there any openings, because the world has changed so much now some jobs you got to go online. They give me an email address to apply instead of just walking in and hand them a piece of paper and a resume. They want it written but they want you to email it. Well I can sit in my car and send it to you. So my concern is, what's my next job and I don't know.

Earl's greatest uncertainty is about what his next job was going to be; however, finding that next job is complicated by changes in the job search process. Because Earl last looked for a job 13 years ago he is not accustomed to looking for jobs using the internet. Earl's schema for finding a job relies on face-to-face communication and handing a person his resume. When Earl was told by employers to use their online application

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process he did not have a schema to help him make sense of his experience nor did he have a script to communicate with people about the job search. Without a viable schema, Earl could not visualize how he could find another job. Earl's quote is evidence of this as he states "So my concern is, what's my next job and I don't know." Earl does not talk about job prospects or when he thinks his unemployment will end; instead, he is left wondering what his next job will be. Earl did not have many job prospects and was unsure about what to do next to find a job. Without a schema, Earl struggled to take action and continue on with his job search.

The failure of Earl's schema was due to his inability to find structure in a disembodied job search process. The job search has become disembodied, that is job seekers and employers no longer need to maintain a physical presence during the anticipatory socialization phase. Earl's schema relies on his ability to create a physical presence in front of the employer. This is not particularly surprising because Earl is a rather tall man with broad shoulders and big hands, his body symbolizes his ability to do physical work. Without the job search process that Earl was used to, he struggles to envision the future and his future job.

The loss of structure that created uncertainty for these participants was also prevelent in the photos they provided. Anne Marie, a 25 year-old former early childhood teacher who had been unemployed for three months, used a photograph of a cloudy sky to symbolize how she felt lost without a schema.

Figure 1 Cloudy Sky

Figure 1. Anne Marie's uncertainty is endless.

The photograph includes the top edge of a tree in the lower-left corner and a grey sky in the background. In the following exemplar Anne Marie explains what this photo tells us about unemployment:

> It's cloudy, I can't see. I cannot view what's going to happen next. That's the one like black and white, I can't see it when it's cloudy, it's not like it's dark but it's like a view of the future is clouds.

To Anne Marie, this photo symbolizes being lost and unable to see where she is going. Anne Marie is lost because she does not have a schema to structure her unemployment. Unable to see far in the distance, Anne Marie does not have a schema to prepare her for what is coming in the future because she cannot see the path ahead of her. Schemas not only tell us what an event will be like, they also provide us with a plan and a goal (Abelson, 1981). Without her schema, Anne Marie cannot make a plan nor can she see possible jobs that will get her to her goal of reemployment. Her loss of a schema has left her without structure that would enable her to visualize the future.

Without a schema to guide her, Jessabell also felt lost and wondering which door, if any, might open for her. Jessabell provided the following picture of a door in her home to symbolize how she felt loss during her unemployment.

Figure 2 Closed Door

Figure 2 Jessabell waits to see which door will open.

As a former office assistant and food service worker at an early childhood development center, Jessabell struggled to understand her unemployment experience. To symbolize her uncertainty, Jessabell took a picture of a door in a hallway at her home. Jessabell's picture represents a colloquial saying that when one door closes another one opens. However, Jessabell is unsure which door is going to open and describes the picture, saying, "Um, it's actually a mail chute, but it was mostly the door um you know when one door closes another door opens and I'm just waiting to see which door is going to open." Currently Jessabell is stuck waiting for a door to open and without a vision of the future Jessbell struggles to take action towards finding a new job. Jessabell is stuck

because she has lost her original schema that helped her set a goal and make a plan. After five months of unemployment, Jessabell is still struggling without a schema to give her some structure that will enable her to visualize the future and take action.

The loss of work also meant the loss of a daily routine and a larger vision for participants. Mackenzie, a 28 year-old former public relations and promotions specialist, lost her routine and struggled to make sense of her unemployment experience. Mackenzie has a bachelor's degree in business administration and felt confident that she would be able to use that to find another job. However, after three years of unemployment Mackenzie wondered if life would always be a struggle. She describes her experience this way:

> Um … I guess there's that it will always be like this. I mean, I've had problems paying rent. You know I've gotten three-day notices for rent. Um, you know it's, you know I just don't want to be like this forever and not necessarily because I'm starting to get to the point where I'm kind of of, you know, liking not working. I'm like fine, working sucks. I mean, I live it up, like a lot of people [are] like, "I wish I was on vacation." Well, I'm on permanent vacation so let me just live it up but I don't really enjoy so much stress. I can't, but I mean I try to tell myself, "Hey, enjoy it a little bit," but uh, you know, I guess the biggest worry is that it will always be like this and you know that I'll never be able to get back in the groove like not kind of be used to like this schedule, working around schedule. So, I'm worried like, will I get used to let's say, nine to five again or whatever. Um, so I guess, things like that.

After three years of unemployment Mackenzie is struggling to make sense of her experience. She tries to tell herself that she should enjoy not working; but she cannot enjoy this time because she can barely afford to pay rent, let alone take vacations and have fun. Her initial schema of enjoying the time off while she searches for another job has not come to fruition as she has not been able to find another job. Without an accurate schema Maceknzie has no vision of the future and she wonders if her life will always be a

struggle. Mackenzie even wonders if she will be able to return to a nine-to five style of work after having been unemployed for so long. Not only can Mackenzie see a vision of the future but she struggles without a schema that can structure her life.

Summary of the Failure of Schemas

Participants in this study experienced uncertainty when their schemas failed to guide them in their unemployment. The lack of guidance from an accurate schema left participants feeling lost because they had no structure to follow. Without structure, participants struggled to envision their future and make a plan to find a new job. Schemas provide people with a goal and a plan to reach that goal. The loss of work and the failure of schemas left them unable to structure their lives in much the same way they did when working. Work provides structure, such as working a nine-to-five job; however, the loss of work did not lead participants to a new structure. Rather, the loss of work left them without structure and participants struggled to visualize their futures without a schema to provide structure.

Theme 2: Social Class and the Search for Work

The social class and the search for work theme describes how social class position shaped participants unemployment experiences. The first two sub-themes, discursive distancing and textualizing the body, describe how text and body workers used communication to manage their uncertainty. Text workers use discursive distancing to ignore the material conditions of their unemployment; whereas, body workers struggled to present their physical experiences in textual ways to help others understand the support they need. The third and fourth sub-themes describe what social support text and body

workers needed and how they obtained support. In the text work, social support, and weak tie sub-theme text workers looked for support from weak ties that could help them find a new job. The body work, social support, and strong ties theme describes how body workers sought help meeting their basic needs such as food and shelter from strong ties. The fifth sub-theme, the digital divide and the job search process, describes the role that technology played during the job search creating an inequality that body workers struggled to overcome while text workers were better prepared for the job search process.

Discursive Distancing

Text workers managed their uncertainty through text class privilege that enabled them to distance themselves from material uncertainties. Text workers still experienced uncertainty that was meaningful to them, but their text class privilege allowed them to manage those experiences in ways that were not negatively impacted by food, shelter and safety. Discursive distancing is the use of communication to talk about their unemployment in a way that minimizes the concern text workers have about their material resources.

One resource available to text workers that helped them manage their uncertainty was their text class privilege. Text class privilege is the ability of text workers to remove themselves from their material conditions with little consequence to their ability to do work. I define material as the objects and artifacts, sites, and physical bodies of the participants in this study (Ashcraft, Kuhn, & Cooren, 2009). Text class privilege is also the ability of text workers to control how work is viewed as meaningful. Findings in this demonstrate how text workers use their text class privilege to remove themselves from their material conditions. An example of text workers removing themselves from

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material conditions Greg used his privilege to discursively distance himself from his concerns about food and feeding his family. Greg uses his text class privilege to rationalize that his family cannot make financial cuts to their food bill because they need all of the groceries and items that they buy. Greg is a 35 year-old former project manager who had been unemployed for six weeks at the time of the interview. He has a wife who stays home and takes care of their three children. Fortunately for Greg, his former employer offered a nice severance package that provided him with his salary for eight months and the ability to collect unemployment benefits. The company also subsidized his health care insurance for one year. Greg felt that his bachelor's degree in information technology, his MBA, and his severance package would allow him to find a job rather easily. He describes his uncertainty this way:

> I will be honest it [uncertainty] fluctuates day-to-day. You know my goal when I was separated was um, you know to have some serious interviews by Labor Day and then hopefully have a full time position, a new full time position by Christmas and um, you know, some days are good, some days are bad. But actually, I mean I've had a couple of interviews so far. Um, and so I'm on track I would say right now to meet my goals having some serious interviews by Labor Day. Um, but you know with each passing day, it's something that's always on my mind. You know, when am I gonna find something?

Text class privilege allows text workers to ignore their material conditions and Greg does this when I asked him what he was uncertain about. In Greg's quote he talks about the job search process and explains how his uncertainty fluctuates day-to-day. Greg does have a schema about how his unemployment should happen and he feels confident that he will be able to find new work. Without a job I thought Greg would be concerned about buying food and consumable items such as diapers for his family. However, Greg seems more concerned about the job search process, although his concern does not seem urgent.

The schema that Greg has articulated demonstrates that Greg sees his ups and downs as part of the process of finding a job.

Greg is able to focus on his job search because he has the financial resources that allow him to maintain his lifestyle without making many sacrifices. Money is an important resource that not only allows people to pay for goods and services but enables them to discursively manage their uncertainty. If Greg did not have the funds coming from his severance package and his unemployment benefits, it is likely that the way Greg talked about his unemployment experiences would be drastically different. From a functional perspective, financial capital has buying power. However, from a symbolic perspective having financial capital lessens material uncertainties and allows unemployed people to focus on discursive means to manage their experiences. Although money is a material entity, its symbolic power is just as important as its buying power.

Even when material concerns such as food come into question, text class privilege allows text workers to rationalize away those concerns through the ways text workers talk about their material surroundings. Greg appears to have a schema that helps him create a plan about what should happen during his job search. When Greg talks about his grocery bill he further demonstrates discursive distancing as he begins to contemplate how his family could spend so much on groceries. Prior to losing his job, the groceries were something that his wife just bought as needed. Greg did not pay much attention to how much was being bought and how much it costs. Greg has not had to think about the food and diapers that his wife has to buy. The grocery bill creates uncertainty for Greg that is meaningful to him. To symbolize his uncertainty, Greg took a picture of his grocery bill.

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Figure 3 Greg's Grocery Bill

Figure 3 Greg is shocked by the grocery bill

Greg's family is not without food and nor are they starving, but the long grocery bill laid

on the table symbolizes the material needs of Greg and his family. In the following

exemplar, Greg uses discursive distancing to manage his uncertainty about the grocery

bill.

> It's always like "how can we possibly be spending this much money at the
> grocery store?" It's one of those things. I mean, you know, I thought that before
> I got laid off and um, you know, now it really weighs on me now that I am laid
> off. We would not… I would not describe this being you know being excessive
> consumers of things. But like when you've got two kids in diapers, the costs are
> just overwhelming at times. I just say to myself if I could get one of them out of
> diapers it would be like a huge weight that's lifted off of me. But my wife and
> I… my wife, you know, clips coupons and we typically buy stuff that's on sale
> when we can, when we don't need it, but even with that like the cost of living is
> so high.

The picture of the grocery bill symbolizes the bodily needs of Greg and his family. They

need food to fuel their bodies and keep on living. Even when this concern becomes

apparent to Greg he uses discursive distancing to continue ignoring the body. Greg

rationalizes that the grocery bill is so large because he has two kids in diapers. He does

suggest that if he could get one kid out of diapers the grocery bill would not be such a

point of concern. Greg further justifies the spending when he comments about his wife

cutting coupons and buying items on sale. So far Greg has shown that he is very aware

of the uncertainty caused by the grocery bill but he makes a final text class justification

when he concludes this quote by justifying the grocery bill in relationship to the cost of

living. Greg is saying that the grocery bill is justified because it is comparible to the cost

of living in that part of the United States. Greg's justification is a text class justification

because removes the body his from his explanation. Instead of justifying the bill because

Greg needs the nourishment to do labor work, Greg's text work allows him to use a

logical comparison to another statistic to justify the bill.

Regardless of their financial resources, other text workers used discursive

distancing as well. John Door, a 41 year-old drafter in the aerospace industry with a wife

and three kids, was laid off one month prior to the interview. John's company

experienced a massive reduction-in-force. The layoff was large enough that the company

did evaluations of all employees a few months before the actual reduction-in-force to

determine who to terminate. On the day of the reduction, John and his wife, who also

works for the company, arrived at work to find news trucks parked outside where

reporters were asking employees about the impending reduction. Later that day John and

his wife attended an informational meeting about the severance package that was being

offered to terminated employees. John describes his experience this way:

We attended that, my wife and I and then thought about it over the weekend and I decided that the what is that… severance package that the company had offered was fair so I just went ahead and signed it. They gave us seven days I believe, I don't understand the severance protocol, but seven days to go back on it or whatever that would be called that we signed. I just decided that you know, this was uh, I'm gonna cut my ties and move on and you know I'll take their offer. So that's where I'm at right now. And with the department of Labor, uh apparently uh, a letter was sent to them saying that um, people from my company needs to send a printout copy of their severance agreement. And it's kind of red tape after red tape, you know, and it's been over a month. I was waiting on… I was counting on that little bit of money to help out. Two weeks ago, three weeks ago now and it's still pending but I guess that's how it is, so.

With his wife keeping her job, John felt that it was time for him to move on to something else. John perceived the severance as fair and seemed upbeat and certain about his future. However, when some "red tape" got in the way of John receiving his unemployment benefit check that was part of the severance agreement, he expressed some uncertainty about not having that money. With both him and his wife working, enough money came in each month to pay the bills. Without the dual income, the household finances were uncertain and John resolves this uncertainty but simply stating "that's how it is, so." Instead of talking about how the loss of finances has made it difficult to buy the material items that John and his family need, he turns his attention to the unemployment benefit process and describes his experience with a textual representation of need. John needs the money to help make paying the bills easier. Ideally, he could ask someone for money and they could hand him the money. However, unemployment benefits do not work that way. The unemployed person must apply for the benefit by submitting paper work that symbolizes their financial need. People have a financial need because their bodies have needs such as food and shelter. Focusing on the

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process allows John to ignore the body and focus on the text process of obtaining unemployment benefits.

John's discursive distancing is made possible in part because of the resources that he has available to use. John and his wife can survive on her salary, but the money he was supposed to receive from his unemployment benefits would have made paying the bills each month just a little bit easier. Again, John's experience is another example of how having financial capital enabled him and his wife to use discursive means to manage their uncertainty. Having the funds allowed them to maintain their lifestyle and became a symbolic representation of class. Fortunately for John, the severance package also includes access to a career specialist who can help him find a new job. These resources help make it possible for John to discursively distance himself from material needs and focus on the textual processes involved in unemployment such as searching for a job and obtaining benefits.

Financial capital is an important resource because it allows unemployed people to continue paying for goods and services, and discursively distance themselves from their material needs. For example, being able to continue paying for internet access at home allows those who are unemployed to keep searching for a job at home. Ted retired early in his life to pursue other interests and approximately two years later he found himself unemployed and struggling to find another job. Ted had a large amount of money saved that he expected to live on during his retirement. However, Ted lost a substantial amount of his savings in the crash of the investment and housing markets and became uncertain about how he was going to afford his standard of living without working. A self-proclaimed frugal person, Ted did all he could to save money and pay his bills on time.

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Ted was surprisingly optimistic about his future. With the prospect of losing his home looming over him, Ted talked about what would happen if he lost his home. Ted described the idea of losing his house this way:

> I recognize though, that if the house goes into foreclosure and the market hasn't rescinded as much as everyone thought it has and I still haven't got a job, then I could be anywhere on the planet, doesn't have to be here, but then I have no idea how I would be anywhere. Luckily the few jobs that I've got are the greatest in that they're all virtual so that I could do this job from a sailboat and I've actually considered that, as buying a sailboat as a live-aboard to be cheaper than a house, kinda'. And, then just living that way until I can find something that works, whatever that something would be, whether that is a cheaper living arrangement or I finally get recognized for what I've been doing as a consultant so I can get into the corporations and live at the personal hourly rate.

Losing a home is undoubtedly a stressful experience; however, Ted uses discursive distancing to focus on the flexibility that his text class privilege gives him. As someone who can do his work over the internet or through a virtual presence, Ted has the flexibility to focus on his work and the type of work he wants to do instead of his need for housing. Ted's financial, educational, and social capital make it possible for him to focus on his work instead of his material needs.

The social, economic, and cultural forms of capital available to Ted also let him pursue other endeavors such as hosting art galleries in his home. Ted took the following picture to symbolize his unemployment experience.

Figure 4 Ted's Living Room

Figure 4 Ted turned his living room into an art gallery.

The in-home art gallery symbolizes how Ted was able to discursively distance himself from this material needs.   Ted's financial stability allowed him to feel comfortable turning his house into an art gallery, which requires knowledge of art and develop an eye for assessing art. However, that venture did not generate much income. In the following quote we see how Ted turns his physical problems, in this case losing his house, into a text class endeavor. That is, Ted found a way to use non-material resources to change the meaningfulness of his home. The home is no longer a place for him to live; his text class privilege affords him the opportunity to turn the place where he lived into an opportunity to earn money. In the following quote, Ted talks about what he was trying to do with his in-home art studio.

> Even when I had probably only a half a million dollars I was still doing this [the art gallery] because if things went bad, then I just wanted to have some money coming in. It turns out that hasn't been right, much at all, but that's…and in fact that's still active [the art gallery tour] I just haven't been able to deal with it this.

Ted's text class privilege enabled him to turn his home into an opportunity for income. Attempting to make a living in the arts requires resources that are arguably not available to everyone. In fact, the production and consumption of art is one way that society

demonstrates social class. Bourdieu (1984) argues that non-financial assets such as education promote social mobility. Those in the privileged class view art with a gaze; art is something that is to be appreciated and admired. Whereas, those from the working class tend to view objects as fulfilling a function (Bourdieu, 1984). In short, Bourdieu (1984) argues that in society exists a high culture, the elites, and a low culture, the working class. Those in the high culture control the language and those in low culture are not equipped with the skills or words to become members of the high culture. In this way, Ted is maintaining his place in the high culture and using his privilege to discursively distance himself from his material needs, such as maintaining a place to live.

Financial resources allow text workers to discursively distance themselves from their material surroundings. Anna Novek is a 44 year-old mother of one who found herself unemployed after going through a divorce with her husband. Anna previously worked as an office manager but had not worked in many years because her husband made enough money that she could stay home with their son. The life style that Anna was accustomed to allowed her to buy expensive jewelry rather frequently and drive expensive luxury cars. The city she lives in on the west-coast is well-known for this type of life style and among her circle of friends and acquaintances, luxurious living was common. The divorce was spurred by Anna's habitual opiate drug use and she struggled to control her addiction, even voluntarily going into rehab. When she talked about going into rehab Anna stated, "I checked myself into a very nice luxury rehab down in [city]. I thought if I'm going to detox, I'm going to do it in style, and it cost me $60,000 per month." Anna was used to a luxurious life style that surrounded her with other wealthy

people. However, for Anna, the uncertainty is tempered by the money that she still has. She describes her uncertainty this way:

> Oh, I thought "oh it's great" you know, because I'm getting a great price, you know, at the time the market was really high, you know, and the prices of homes in [city] were still really you know, still really expensive and my house is going for about $800,000. We had purchased it for about $200,000. So you do the math there. You know I thought yes, I'm coming out with a good chunk of change. You know, I'm going to get alimony. I've been married for almost ten years. I'm getting alimony for the next five years. Then my attorney managed to get an extension for the next year. And that's what happened.

Over the years Anna has had a steady source of income, even after she divorced her husband. More than five years later; however, Anna is struggling to maintain a source of income that will meet the needs of her lifestyle. She is in no way poor or destitute, but to keep living the way she wants and to maintain a particular image of wealth and affluence Anna will need to either change her ways or find someone to support her. Anna is currently able to maintain her lifestyle because she has money to pay lawyers who can help her use the legal system to her advantage. She has the capital (money and knowledge) that is required to participate in the legal system. Anna's primary concerns are not of material needs in the sense of food and shelter; rather, her concerns are about staying in her nice home and being able to afford the material items that symbolize the life style she wants to live.

Anna's financial capital was supplied by her ex-husband for a number of years. Now that source of funding has ended, Anna is experiencing heightened levels of uncertainty. Anna's social and cultural capitals have positioned her in a life style that requires luxurious living. It has also put her in a network of people who have the same expectations of luxury. By no means is Anna poor, but she does experience heightened

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levels of uncertainty, even financial uncertainty, and that uncertainty does affect her by causing her stress which often leads her to cry and become depressed. Even under stress and uncertainty, text workers can discursive distance themselves from their material surroundings because they can still pay for goods or services that help them maintain their text class privilege such as nice clothes or cars.

Text class privilege allowed text workers to create a sense of normalcy during unemployment. They did so by using discursive distancing to avoid their material realities such as concern for food or housing. The financial, cultural, and educational resources available to text workers allowed them to provide text focused justifications for their uncertainty. The talk of text workers drew attention away from the physical needs and focused on communication processes, such as focusing on the unemployment application process. By focusing on the discursive, participants ignored body. By discursive distancing themselves, participants avoided their bodily needs without solving them. If a text worker who discursively distances themselves from their material surroundings does end up going hungry, they will need to figure out different ways to talk about their uncertainties to receive the help they need and meet their material needs. It may be the case that text workers do not have the language to express their material needs. Living a text class lifestyle is about projecting an image that is consistent with being a text class person. The desire to live a text class life style may prompt people to act in ways that hides their material needs and promotes a text class image, such as "credit card millionaires" as described by Dougherty (2011). Without the language to communicate their material needs, text class workers are left to rely on their text class ways of managing uncertainty.

Textualizing the Body

Body workers are those who primarily use and manipulate the body to do their work (Dougherty, 2011). Unlike text workers, body workers did not have text class privilege to help them manage their uncertainty. Text workers did not worry about where their next meal was going to come from; instead they discursively distanced themselves from material concerns. Without text class privilege, body workers experienced uncertainty directly related to the lack of material resources such as food, money, or transportation. Body workers needed to find ways to meet their material needs to search for a job. However, receiving the support they needed required that they textualize their physical experiences. The textualizing the body sub-theme describes how body workers struggled to textualize their bodily experiences. Textualizing the body is the process of representing embodied experiences in textual ways. Textualizing the body requires that body workers use communication to enable others to understand their embodied experiences. This is not to say that body workers are incompetent communicators; rather, they must be skilled communicator to successfully bring body experiences to text.

Textualizing the body means that body workers have to communicate with others in a way that enables others to live vicariously through the body worker in need. However, the onus of body work is that the worker primarily uses their body to perform the work so bringing those body experiences to text often demonstrates the struggle and uncertainty that body workers experience during unemployment. Jay is a 32 year-old former factory worker and convicted felon with two children who is struggling to meet his material needs. In the following quote Jay is attempting to articulate his experiences to me. Jay states:

> I'm like fighting for everything, dog. I am fighting for everything I get right now. If I don't work I do not eat. If I don't get up and hit [temporary labor agency] every day and get out there and do some fucking job I don't get nothing.

In Jay's quote it is clear that he is desperate for everything that he needs and that desperation makes him feel like he has to fight for everything in his life. Jay described his experience as "fighting" shows that his unemployment experience is not easy and that he is working hard every day. Furthermore, he is working hard for basic necessities such as food and having what he needs. Unlike the text workers who discursively distance themselves from their material needs, Jay's quote reflects the physical harm that will come to him if he does not somehow come up with the money he needs to pay the bills and find food. The work that Jay does find is not consistent because he only finds work at a temporary labor agency.

At the time of the interview Jay told me he was living in a dormitory that cost him 400 dollars per month and he was struggling to make those payments each month. Jay is consumed with uncertainty about his basic necessities such as food and shelter. Fulfilling his material needs for food and shelter consume almost all of his time and energy. To get by Jay went to a soup kitchen when he could not afford groceries. A few months before the interview Jay was able to apply for food stamps and is now able to use food stamps at the grocery store. Jay used the following picture to talk about his struggles to feed himself.

Figure 5 Food Stamp Certification Review
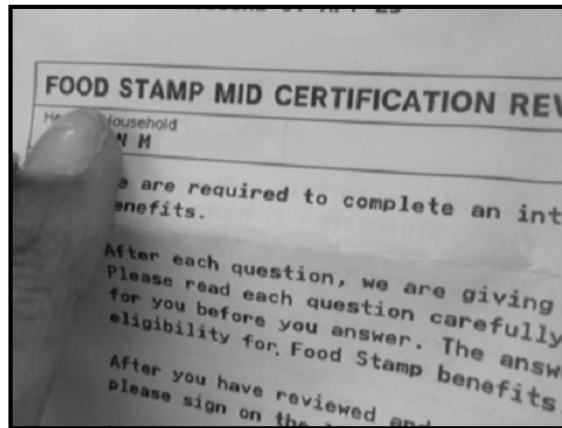
Figure 5 Jay uses food stamps to buy his food

The picture above shows a certification review that Jay had to complete to keep receiving

food stamps. This form is a textualization of Jay's struggle. The person who will read

this form to verify Jay's circumstances likely knows little about Jay, yet completing this

form could either enable him to keep receiving food stamps or have his food stamps

revoked. Documents like this do not show the desperation and frustration that Jay is

experiencing. However, Jay must hope that the person reading the document can

understand his struggle.   In Jay's quote below, he is still frustrated because people do not

understand his struggle.

> That's what I was telling you dog. They feed the community. They nice enough
> down here to feed the community. Know what I mean? Every day at five 'o'clock.
> I've been there, man. I ate a few meals there over the summer. I got food stamps
> now so I'm not going to go down there and eat because that's taking a plate away
> from somebody who don't have food stamps or who can't make it down there to
> the grocery store. But man, when I didn't have food stamps I had to eat there. I
> had to, dog. Don't nobody feed me. Don't nobody give a fuck.

Jay continues to experience frustration because it is difficult to textualize his

embodied experiences. Even though he can obtain food stamps or go to a soup kitchen,

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Jay still feels that people do not understand the essence of his struggle. That essence is the struggle to survive. Receiving support from the soup kitchen and food stamps is helpful but that support does not alleviate the constant struggle that Jay faces.

Textualizing body worker experiences is challenging because unemployment is layered with multiple material uncertainties. Walter is a 35 year-old former cook at a chain restaurant who has two children with his girlfriend and had been unemployed for two months at the time of the interview. Money was a point of concern for Walter prior to unemployment as he and his girlfriend both worked at the same restaurant struggling to make ends meet. As Walter talked to me about his financial troubles, he tried to describe how his uncertainty, although couched around financial troubles, extended beyond having a job to earn money. In the following quote Walter describes the complexities of his uncertainty during unemployment.

> Walter: It's just like everything just revolves around money. Like we doing alright but we could be doing better. It sucks to, once you pay the bills, like you can't even put no gas in the car. Know what I'm saying?
>
> Interviewer: Yeah, and you got to have gas in the car to go look for a job.
>
> Walter: Exactly! Know what I'm saying? Cause you rent, you pay water and lights with no income coming in you're going to be a walking mother fucker because you can't put no gas in the car.

Walter's comments reflect the complexity of experiencing uncertainty during unemployment. The complexity of unemployment makes it difficult for body workers to textualize their embodied experiences. In this quote Walter is trying to explain that many of his uncertainties stem from the lack of money and those uncertainties such as paying the bills and having enough money for gas affect his ability to search for work. Walter is frustrated because it is difficult for him to explain to others that finding a new job is

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about more than turning in applications or submitting a resume. In Walter's experience, unemployment is a struggle to pay the bills, rent, and put gas in the car before he can even look for a job. Not being able to pay the bills means that the utilities in his apartment will be disconnected. Not paying the rent means that he, his wife, and kids will not have a place to live. Not having money to put gas in the car means that he cannot make the 35 mile commute to the nearest urban city where he is more likely to find work. The connection between all of his uncertainties makes it difficult for Walter and other body workers to aptly textualize their experiences.

Finding a job in the contemporary job search process typically requires that people have access to the internet and can search for jobs using the internet. For those who are not likely to have access to the internet at home, owing a vehicle that provides reliable transportation is a valuable asset because it allows them to physically travel to open jobs. Those in low-income or poor households are less likely to have access to the internet in their homes (Witte, Kiss, & Lynn, 2013) and will need to travel to locations where they can access the internet. Ownership of a vehicle can greatly affect how one experiences unemployment. Buddy, Mom, and Kenny are family and share one vehicle in order to find work. They talked extensively about their vehicles and how the problems with their vehicles made finding work difficult. Living 40 miles from the nearest urban city, Mom and her two sons travel to the city almost daily to find work at a temporary labor staffing agency. For one of her pictures, Mom provided me with a picture of her pride and joy, her car.

Figure 6 Mom's Car

Figure 6 Mom is proud of her car that she shares with her sons to find work.

This car is Mom's pride and joy because it is the one thing in their lives that is paid for. No one can take the car from her. Having the car does help because it allows the family to make trips to the city to find work. Typically, the two sons and their mother car pool to the city together in hopes of finding work for the day at a temporary labor agency. If one or two of the three does not find work they simply wait in the car until the other person comes back from the job and then they head home. However, just having a car can cause more uncertainty for the family as well. Buddy and Mom put these problems into perspective when they talk about the car.

> Buddy: And that's like just knowing, just praying, okay I hope my vehicle don't crap out today. Anytime you're going anywhere, cause knowing you ain't got AAA and you ain't got nothing and the mother fucker break down, it's just fucking broke down.
>
> Mom: It's bad luck. (Crosstalk)
>
> Interviewer: Mom you buy the car?
>
> Mom: Yep. Thing about it it's mine. I don't have to worry about them coming and get it. I don't have to worry about calling somebody telling them we can't make payments got to come and get it.

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Mom is very proud of her car; however, Buddy makes it clear that if anything happens to that car, there is not much that can be done. This family feels fortunate to have a car that enables them to search for work, but without a public transit system that could take them to the city to find a job, they depend on that car working properly every time. Mom, Buddy, and Kenny live together because they can pool their resources together to survive. However, even after combining resources, the three of them and their children are behind on rent and struggle to keep the utilities on. The primary source of uncertainty for this family is meeting their basic necessities such as food, shelter, and transportation. The resources they do have are not enough to keep the material consequences of their unemployment from affecting their lives. This family lives on the edge of survival.

Unlike the text workers, this family did not try to distance themselves from their material struggles through their discourse. The three were very open and adamant about their struggles to survive. In fact, the family told me that they wanted the story of their experiences to be told so that others would know what unemployment was like for them. I found these families interesting because they were very aware of the need to have someone tell their experiences to others. All of them wanted their experiences written down and produced in text form as a means to legitimize their struggle to survive and disprove the stigma of unemployment that will be discussed later. Without documenting the experiences of this family it is difficult to fully grasp the struggles they face because America is a text privileged society (Dougherty, 2011). However, writing down their experiences means that their experiences and the story of their struggles become durable across the divides of time and space and exist in the text world where they can possibly be understood by text workers, the dominant members of society.

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The Textualizing the body sub-theme described how body workers struggled to articulate their body experiences in textual ways so people would understand their unemployment experiences. Without text class privilege to ignore material concerns, body workers must find ways to communicate their material uncertainties to others to gain the support they need to meet their material needs. Body workers must become skilled communicators to textualize their experiences to find the support they need to survive.

The experience of uncertainty for body workers is rooted in their struggle to meet their material needs. Without text class privilege that would allow them to use discursive distancing to manage uncertainty, body workers must find ways to meet their basic needs. Meeting those basic material needs such as food, shelter, and transportation consumes most of their time and energy leaving them little time, energy, and resources to search for work. Without the means to search for work, body workers find themselves trapped in a cycle of poverty that by themselves they cannot break. Their material needs were very real and they wanted others to know what they were experiencing. In this study body workers were able to bring their experiences to text through their interviews with me using their stories and their pictures as evidence. A marker of the body worker struggle was talk about how to meet their material needs or pictures of material items that were important to them. For example, all of the body workers either talked about or took pictures and talked about their struggles to find reliable transportation. They needed to textualize their struggles with transportation so that others could see that struggles during unemployment are about more than finding a job, they are about managing valuable resources that are needed to find a job.

Text work, social support and weak ties

Text workers described receiving support during the job search that focused on improving their job search process and related materials such as a resume. The text work, social support, and weak ties sub-theme describes the support that text workers received during their job search. People can receive different types of social support such as emotional support, instrumental support, informational support, and appraisal support (Malecki & Demaray, 2003). The job search support that text workers received focused on informational and appraisal support which provides them with information about jobs and how they are doing in their job search. The professional contacts that text workers had allowed them to seek information from sources such as other professionals, career centers at alma maters, state programs, or private reemployment companies that were funded by their previous employers. Having access to these services allowed text workers to obtain informational support about where or how to look for jobs.

Obtaining support from multiple sources can help unemployed people manage their uncertainty. Greg was able to find informational support from multiple sources. As a former project manager, Greg worked for a company that provided him with reemployment services and the universities he had attended provided career counseling as well. The reemployment services provided by the company were free-of-charge and Greg was able to use those services either in person or online. Greg described the support he received from the reemployment center this way:

> So you have like a career counselor that you can meet with and kind of talk about where things are and the activities that you're doing like working on your resume, working reviewing interview questions. They have like all different kinds of stuff. Um, training courses, webinars, uh you know, they have company resources and most of which is online so that you can do it whenever and

wherever, which is a good thing. So I mean I would say overall they are a very good positive.

The support that Greg received from the reemployment services company gave him access to numerous services such as talking with a counselor about his job search, revising his resume, and brushing up on his interview skills. Furthermore, as Greg stated, many of these services are online, which allows Greg to access them from his home. Online access made it easy for Greg to spend time with his children at home and brush up on his job search when his attention was not fully consumed by the children.

Acquaintances of text workers play an important role in helping people find work. Acquaintances are weak ties, people with whom we have little emotional involvement in the relationship and infrequent contact (Granovetter, 1973). Weak ties are important because they allow us to obtain information from outside of our network. Relying on strong ties, those who we are emotionally involved with and communicate with often, limits the information we are exposed to and new information cannot be obtained. Research in this area has shown that those job seekers who seek information beyond the limits of their network are more likely to find a job than those who do not seek information from outside of their network, even in declining industries (Brown & Konrad, 2001).

An important source of support for Greg came from an acquaintance of his who had experienced unemployment in the past. This acquaintance is a contractor who had been unemployed numerous times before and Greg liked talking to him because Greg felt that he could trust what this person offered for advice. By talking with this acquaintance, Greg was able to get his resume out to other people, including recruiters, with whom he

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may not have come into contact otherwise. Greg describes what he and his acquaintance would talk about:

> You know he kind of sent me through talking to, getting the word out, you know, just like telling me like it's the numbers game. Just get your resume out there to companies, because you don't know. It's not going to be one HR person looking at it. You don't know who's going to be looking at it. He also said like, you know, summer months are slow and expect it to be slow. That's definitely the truth as to why it's quickly going to turn into August here, and he's been through all of this before and because he spent a lot of time as a contractor, he's been through it relatively frequently. So he's been very supportive and at the same time I know he's done this and so I know that I can, you know, go off of what he says. And he's also put me in contact with recruiters that he's used and so forth.

Greg was fortunate to have multiple sources of support to aid him in his job search. A self-proclaimed introvert, Greg understood how important it was for him to make contact with people outside of his network. The job services provided by the company that let him go, the services supplied by his alma mater, and his interactions with acquaintances all helped him to expand his network and obtain the informational support he needed. For two of the sources, the services provided by the company that let him go and his Alma matter, Gregg was able to use those resources in person and via the internet which enabled him to work on searching for jobs at home, allowing him to take care of other duties while at home.

The support that Greg received is indicative of text worker discursive distancing. Since text workers avoided any concerns about material needs it is not surprising that the support that the support Greg sought focused on text activities such as revising his resume and focusing on networking with others who can help him find a new job. None of the support that Greg sought or received addressed material concerns such as feeding

his family or finding a place to live. Without the need to material support, Greg was able to keep distancing himself from the material conditions of his unemployment.

Having support services provided by their former employer helps participants manage their uncertainty by giving them avenues for support that they might not otherwise be able to utilize. John Door, a 41 year-old former drafter in the aerospace industry, received support from a private consultant hired by his former employer and the public reemployment center in his hometown. John Door took the following photograph to represent the support that he had available to him.

Figure 7 The Work Force Center

Figure 7 John Door used the Work Force Center for support during his search.

The photo above represents the support that John received after becoming unemployed. The reemployment center is a public unemployment assistance office and John used this office to get any training he could. The support provided by this office

allowed John to feel positive about his unemployment experience. In the following

exemplar, John explains how he gets support from the center.

> Um, I really was never really like negative or down about [unemployment]. I just thought you know what, I'm going to go down to the workforce center, work on my resume and get into, you know, some training. Like even right now. Like my number one… a number one priority is if I can have… somehow make this work so that I can get paid training for something else and transition to something else because the company even provided this, uh, this person, a career transition professional. Whatever she is, but it's kind of almost like a counseling/employment kind of career direction coach kind of thing. Cause I thought [retraining] was pretty cool.

Upon accepting his severance package, John went to the unemployment center and began

working on his resume and looking for training. Not entirely happy with his previous

occupation as a drafter, John is excited about the opportunity that lies ahead of him to be

retrained into a new field. Additionally, John's former employer provided private

reemployment assistance services that allowed him to sit down with a career coach and

figure out his next move. John describes working with the career coach this way:

> Um, just talk basically and gave her what, you know, what my next move and she's, I guess kind of act as a support information guide kind of person/liaison, I guess, but I mean she has her own business, but I guess she allotted a certain amount of hours to work with laid off employees of my former company.

The career coach provides John with one-on-one personal assistance aimed at

helping him land a new career. This service is paid for by John's former employer and

does not cost John any money. John sees his career coach as someone with support

information who can help guide him through the job search process. Having these

different forms of support enabled John to feel optimistic about his unemployment and he

focused on the opportunity in front of him to find a different kind of work. At the time of

the interview John was working part-time as a school photographer going around to the

local schools and taking the children's pictures. He enjoyed this work because it allowed

him to use a more artistic side without being in a corporate environment. Although the job is not full-time work, the support John received helped him organize his search. The support that John sought and used focused again on text related activities such as working on his resume and trying to discover which work related skills John wanted to market to employers.

In an attempt to organize their job search and find support, text workers also attempted to build their support networks by creating mutually beneficial relationships. Ann found support in creating what she called "win-win" relationships with other people via employment websites such as Linkedin. Ann said that it was important that she formed relationships that benefited her and the other person. She realized that it was important to provide a benefit for others even though she was the one who was unemployed. Anna Novek was another text workers who found ways to create weak ties and gain support through her volunteer activities. Anna's work experience is in the music industry and when her community wanted to put on a music festival she volunteered to coordinate the entertainment, something she felt comfortable doing and hoped that would put her in contact with other people who could possibly lead her to a new job.

Unfortunately, seeking support may not lead to positive experiences. Sometimes the information unemployed people received was not welcomed. Receiving information from weak ties is particularly frustrating for unemployed text workers because, although well-intentioned, when other people give advice they assume that the unemployed person has not already tried that advice, or in some cases the advice given is not relevant to the unemployed person's job search and the advice giver fails to see their error. Mackenzie,

a former public relations promotions specialist, described being very frustrated with people because they would often give advice, assuming that Mackenzie had not already tried that option. Mackenzie talks about her frustration with people offering advice this way:

> I know, "you know you can't think of a new idea," like I've tried every single angle, like
> "there's nothing you can think of that I haven't." And so, because it's kind of angering that people think they can think of something that you haven't thought of because I have thought of it and I have tried every single angle I don't sit here on my ass like I've tried everything and there is nothing you could think of that I haven't tried. So, I was like, "don't give your advice. Keep your advice to yourself" and that's kind of, I really angered part of this. So, yeah, I do try it all like I've tried unemployment agencies. I do go out and go to networking events or talked to people. You know I do, it's not just on the computer but that is a big part of it as well because that is, you know that is the first thing I do every day.

Mackenzie is frustrated by the constant advice that she gets from weak ties. In her quote she describes trying everything and that it is not likely someone is going to come up with a miracle solution that she has not already tried. Mackenzie would rather people kept their advice to themselves. The nature of weak ties suggest that advice givers in weak tie relationships have the best of intentions but are not familiar enough with the unemployed person and their struggles to accurately assess what they need to do to be successful. Other participants such as Greg and Priya also expressed their frustrations over people offering unwanted advice. Priya felt much the same way Mackenzie does and Greg felt frustrated because people offer advice about possible jobs that do not interest him. Ted provides an interesting perspective on this topic. During the interview with Ted, he talked about the importance of people knowing that he was unemployed so they could hire him. In fact, Ted maintains a blog about his unemployment experiences and wants

to share his story with others so he welcomes the interactions with others even though they may offer advice that is not useful.

Text workers found support during their job search by extending their networks and seeking out weak ties that might help them find employment. Weak ties came in the form of unemployment support agencies, support from alma maters, or from other professionals that may be able to help them find a job. Text workers were fortunate enough to have access to technology that enabled them to obtain support through online avenues. The type of support text workers sought was primarily informational and focused on the job search process and the availability of jobs. Text work support did not focus on the material conditions of their unemployment which enabled text workers to continue to discursively distance themselves from their material surroundings. Receiving support from others was not always welcomed, because sometimes the support offered to unemployed people suggested a lack of competence on their part.

Body work, social support, and strong ties

The body work, social support, and strong ties sub-theme describes how body workers obtain support during their struggles to textualize their embodied experiences. The support that body workers received focused on instrumental support aimed at helping them survive. Instrumental support includes spending time with people or providing them with needed materials or money (House, 1981). This type of support required that body workers rely on those with whom they have developed strong ties because people in strong tie relationships are more likely to invest the time and energy needed to help these participants. While strong ties are helpful, they do not enable body workers to obtain information from outside of their network, thus hindering their job search process.

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Finding a place to live was a challenge for all of the body workers except Earl.

Participants without housing struggled to conduct any form of a job search because they

needed to spend time looking for a place to live. One participant who went without

housing was Nellypoo, a 27 year-old former grocery stocker who had been unemployed

for nine months at the time of the interview. Nellypoo was living in an apartment while

she worked as a stocker for a grocery store. When she was laid off from the grocery store

she could no longer afford to pay rent and ended up living on the street. One of the

images she provided was of a group of penguins. Below, Nellypoo describes why she

sent me an image of penguins and what that says about her unemployment.

> Interviewer: Yeah. All right. You sent me five pictures some penguins, a chrysanthemum, a picture of the desert, koala and a lighthouse. What do the penguins represent about unemployment?
>
> Nellypoo: Well because they represent how I had to be out in the cold weather when it's in the winter, walking around with no coat on and that had sandals on. That's how it feels.
>
> Interviewer: Yeah. You're out in the cold freezing, huh?
>
> Nellypoo: Yeah when it's like below zero and you're out there and nobody helps you you know, people just walk by and you know, just evil like that you know.
>
> Interviewer: Yeah and people walk by, what do you mean, they walk by and they don't see you, what do you mean?
>
> Nellypoo: I mean people walk by and they see you but you know people don't help anybody no more, you know.
>
> Interview: Oh okay, okay. Were you living on the street during the winter?
>
> Nellypoo: Uh, yeah I was homeless for a minute, downtown.
>
> Interviewer: Hello, yeah and people weren't helping you out, huh.
>
> Nellypoo: No, other homeless people they would help you out more than regular people, you know. Like a homeless guy let me borrow his sweat shirt one time.

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The penguins represent Nellypoo's struggles with homelessness. After losing her job at the grocery store Nellypoo could no longer afford to pay her rent and found herself living on the street begging for change from people walking by. Unfortunately for Nellypoo, the people walking by ignored her and the other homeless people living on the street. Since the people walking by were not willing to give their money to Nellypoo, she had to rely on other homeless people to lend her a sweater to stay warm during the cold winter. Without a place to live, no shoes, or a coat; Nellypoo was looking for instrumental support that would keep her warm or put a roof over her head.

Nellypoo was only able to get off the streets when her family came up with enough money to rent an apartment for her. In this example, Nellypoo uses a weak tie, another homeless person, to procure a sweater to keep her warm on the streets. The support Nellypoo gains from a weak tie is strictly about survival and does not help her find a job or a job lead. It was not until her family members, strong ties, pooled enough money together that she was able to make a much needed change.

Nellypoo's experience of homelessness demonstrates the struggle that body workers have to textualize their unemployment experience. Another homeless person who most likely understood what it was like to be in her situation was willing to give her a sweatshirt to wear but others ignored her even though doing so meant that Nellypoo continued to live outside during a harsh Midwestern winter. Living on the streets during winter in the Midwest is physically threatening, yet people were not willing to help her find a place to live. It was only when her family could find the financial resources that she was able to get off the street.

Housing is so important that when multiple family members experience unemployment and cannot afford to pay rent by themselves they may rely on each other for support. One such family is Mom, Buddy, and Kenny. The three moved into the same house together after they all became unemployed. Each family member had their own job and was getting by independently; however, when Buddy had a business deal go bad and Kenny lost his job, they needed to find a way to combine resources. Buddy talks about how they all ended up together under one roof.

> Interviewer: All right. So how did you all end up here? Do you all live in this house, is that the deal?

> Buddy: Yeah I live… we were buying a place. I was in partnership with a friend of mine in buying some houses for events like this, you know, and he flaked out and got on a bunch of drugs with his ex-wife and basically left us holding the bag so we moved over here and then the job my brother had went belly up so we decided to move up here, that way we could all work together.

> Interview: Come together to survive, huh?

> Buddy: Yeah, basically. I mean you have to pull together to keep… make sure you keep a roof over your head.

The family pulled together to keep a roof over their heads. When I met Buddy, he and Mom were at a temporary work agency. I explained my study to them and asked them if they would like to participate. They excitedly agreed to participate in the study but told me that they wanted to do it together at their house because that was how they got by, together. I agreed to the small focus group style interview and during the interview it was clear to me that each person looked out for the others. For example, Kenny was usually able to get more work than Mom or Buddy so when he got paid, instead of keeping the money for himself, he gave that money to Mom so the three of them could juggle paying the most important bills first. The close familial relationships allow the

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three to sacrifice for each other in a way that would not be supported in weak tie relationships.

As stated earlier, this family was excited to participate in my research because it gave them a chance to tell their story. In doing so, their struggles were documented. It was difficult for the family to articulate their material struggles in the textual ways. Attempting to tell people about their plight offers little relief because living in a house with a mother and two sons may not sound like a struggle, but only when I met them in person, saw the house they lived in, and listened to their story did I begin to realize how much this family struggles to get by every day. Explaining to the "bill man," as Buddy calls the bill collector, why they cannot pay the electric bill this month does little good until you observe them in their environment. Telling their story to me gives them validation because I am an outsider with no interest at steak. What I have to say is perceived as more objective. In addition, allowing me into their home gives credibility to their story because as an academic I have the tools and skills at my disposal to explain their story in such a way that it is not likely they would be able to do without assistance. My status as a text worker allows them to show someone who may not understand their struggles that their trouble are real and that these people are trying to overcome those troubles. By inviting me into their home and telling me about their experiences this family was very smart about what that allowed them to accomplish, telling me about their experiences gave them a voice that they struggled to find.

All of the body workers except for Earl struggled to keep a roof over their head. Earl's wife, a close tie, still had a job that made enough money to cover the bills; therefore, they were not uncertain about their housing. Mom, Kenny, and Buddy moved

in together to get by, but still struggled to pay the rent. Kahreasa's adult son moved in with her after losing his job. Jay found a dorm-style living arrangement but struggled to pay for his dorm each month. Walter was never sure how the rent was going to get paid because without income he relied on the child support that his girlfriend received from her ex-boyfriend. If her ex-boyfriend did not pay the child support on time that month they had no money to pay the rent. Lisa lived in a house that was paid for, but she was behind on her taxes and was afraid that she may lose her house to cover the tax bill. Antonio struggled for a while to pay rent, but as soon as he learned how to make money online he was able to pay rent consistently. Nellypoo was homeless for a while until her family had enough money to rent an apartment for her. Lastly, Wayne has struggled with housing for years and bounced from place-to-place. In fact, on legal documents his residence was listed as "streets of [city]" and he only found consistent housing when he was in prison.

The needs of body workers are challenging to solve and often force them to find support from people in unique ways. To get by, body workers in this study created informal networks that worked to help one another. This became apparent to me when I met Wayne after posting my call at a temporary labor agency. During my interview with Wayne he talked about being homeless and how he found places to stay here and there. At the conclusion of the interview I knew that Wayne only had one bus pass and no money so the 20 dollar gift card I gave him as compensation was pretty much worthless. Without another bus pass he could only get to the store and not back to some place to stay for the night. To help with this I offered to give him a ride to the store so he could use his gift card.

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On the way to the store, Wayne saw a woman walking down the street and asked

me to pull over so he could talk to her. I obliged and Wayne called the woman over to

my jeep. The day was hot, over 100 degrees and this woman was walking on the side of

a busy road in heels and a tight chaeta-print dress that stopped about mid-thigh. Wayne

talked with her for a minute then told her to get into the vehicle. I did not seem to have a

say in the matter, but I was definitely outside of my comfort zone so I kept quiet. I pulled

away from the side of the road and assumed that they both were going to the store.

Honestly, I was wanting both of them to go to the store because I was not used to picking

people up on the side of the road and I did not know either of them. Taking both of them

to the store would be the fastest way to get them out of my vehicle. Wayne introduced

the woman to me and she thanked me for the ride. The woman began to ask me

questions about what I did for a living. It quickly became clear that she was pitching me

to become one of her clients. I answered that I was a graduate student studying

unemployment and that I met Wayne through my research. To follow-up she asked if I

was single and if I had money. When I told her that I was single and broke, she told me

that she was looking to make some money later that afternoon. I politely declined and

she asked me to turn around and take her to a local motel because she had some "bread"

to make. On the way she lit up a joint of marijuana and I politely asked her to put it out.

She apologized and said that she did not even realize what she was doing, it was natural

to her.

During this interaction Wayne sat quietly. After the questioning was over Wayne

and the woman talked and joked. Wayne asked her if he could stay at her place that night

and they tried to coordinate schedules. Wayne was planning his bus route and she was

figuring out the amount of time it would take her to see her clients for the day. While I sat there nervous and contemplating what I would say to a police officer if I got stopped, the two of them were talking like friends do when they catch up after not seeing each other for a while. We eventually made it to the motel where Wayne and her talked a little more and then she went into a room in front of my vehicle to see her client. On the way to the store Wayne told me that this needed to be in my "book" because this was real life. He was right.

This experience is important because it is a first-hand account of an informal network that people use to support each other. Wayne had me stop the vehicle because he wanted to find a place to stay for the night. To increase his odds of finding a place to stay, Wayne offered her a ride and a prospective client. In return for the ride, the woman was willing to let Wayne spend the night at her place. This was a barter situation and I essentially became the object of that barter.

This experience with Wayne also demonstrates the instrumental help that body workers need and the difficulty they have trying to present those needs in text form. Wayne needed a place to stay and the woman needed more clients to make more money. Wayne told me that he had known this woman since he was much younger and that they are friends. Without the close-tie relationship, I doubt that Wayne would have been able to ask for a place to stay and she would not have been comfortable trying to solicit a client for her prostitution business.

Body workers were forced to rely on strong ties such as their family members for support. Relying on family members helps body workers meet their needs but it does not allow them to expand their network and obtain new information that could lead them to a

new job. Not having transportation makes finding a new job difficult, but having a vehicle does not necessarily make finding a job easier because vehicle ownership brings new obstacles such as paying for insurance, maintenance, and gas. The amount of instrumental support that body workers need is so great that it is unlikely people with whom they have weak tie relationships will help them. Instead unemployed body workers must rely on strong tie relationships and forego spending time and energy building beneficial weak ties. The ability to communicate their struggles to others in a way that presents the body in a textual form is important because body workers in this study had to convince people that their struggle was real and that they were not being lazy as will be discussed later in this chapter. Much of the support that body workers needed was sought through face-to-face communication because they did not have the technological resources that text workers had. The role of technology will be discussed in greater detail in the next theme.

The Digital Divide of the Job Search Process

The use of technology in the job search has steadily increased and online applications have become ubiquitous (Suvankuloy, Lau, & Chau, 2012). The use of technology is also a key factor impacting how people from different social classes communicate (Dougherty, 2011). Technology played a fundamentally different role in the job search process for text and body workers. Text workers described always being online; always being connected and searching for jobs. For body workers, technology was often absent from their lives, let alone the job search process. What is present for both text and body workers is the feeling of disembodiment that the mediated nature of the job search creates. However, the use of technology during the job search is still a

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source of inequality and struggle. Originally digital divide research focused mainly on access to the internet; however, the digital divide has grown to encompass the access to technology at large and the ability to learn the skills needed to use technology (Pearce & Rice, 2013). The following describes the role that technology played in the job search process for text and body workers.

Text workers maintain routines through technology use

Text workers were constantly connected to technology, afraid that they may miss the one job posting that would lead them to a job. Text workers were fortunate enough to have access to computers and the internet in their homes which helped facilitate the job search from the comfort of their own home. Furthermore, because these people had experience using computers and the internet, they were prepared for conducting a job search online.

The prevalence of technology use during the job search is important because it allows job seekers to build weak ties with others through mediated forms of communication that can be less face-threatening. Text workers are the ones most likely to use the internet because of their education attainment and financial capital (Witte, Kiss, & Lynn, 2013). The internet is a gateway for people to make connections with others and obtain social capital that may not be available to them off-line (Witte et al., 2013). Furthermore, those people who are stigmatized (i.e. a health related stigma) prefer online support because they are more likely to get the support they need with less threat of judgment from the support provider if the support provider is a weak-tie whom they communicate with online (Wright & Rains, 2013). Weak ties are relationships with

people with whom we have little emotional involvement in the relationship and infrequent contact (Granovetter, 1973). Building weak ties allows people to obtain information that is outside their normal communication network. Having access to information computing technologies (ICTs) is crucial to the success of unemployed people. The nature of text work predisposes text workers to have the skills and access to technology to conduct a job search.

Twelve of the seventeen text workers had at least an associate's degree and all three straddlers had an associate's degree or a bachelor's degree which provided them with experience and access to ICTs. Adriana, a 29 year-old former office assistant, was someone who had access to technology because of her aspirations to earn a college degree. Adriana was thankful that she had recently purchased a laptop for school. To symbolize the way she searched for jobs, Adriana took the following picture of her lap top computer.
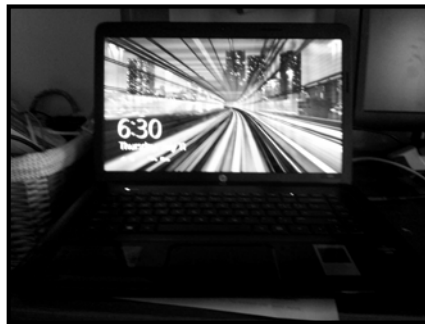
Figure 8 Adriana's Laptop Computer

Figure 8 Adriana lives on her computer.

For Adriana a picture of her laptop symbolizes where she conducts her job search. Initially, Adriana bought the laptop to use for enrolling in online classes at a for-profit online university. However, once she realized that she needed to find a job to help

generate income the laptop facilitated her online job search. In the following exemplar, Adriana talks about what her laptop means to her.

> Yes, like obviously most of the, all the places now you go through their online applications so I almost live on my computer [laughs] cause I'm on my computer for school I'm on my computer to fill out applications you know, and it's like constantly, it's been a blessing in disguise. I even got a new laptop because I basically, like I've said, I've lived on it since April so.

Adriana describes her laptop as a blessing in disguise because she is using her laptop "all the time" to search for jobs. Adriana recognizes that many of the available jobs are posted on line and she is thankful to have a computer and internet access at home to search for jobs. Adriana's characterization that she "lives" on her computer also suggest that she does more than just look for jobs on her computer. As we talked Adriana described her computer as her portal to the outside world. Social networking websites such as Facebook became a way for her to keep in contact with others. In fact, Adriana contacted me through Facebook messenger to inquire about my study and setup an interview. The laptop allowed her to search for jobs when she could from the couch in her living room. Having such flexibility allowed Adriana to make searching for jobs part of her daily routine. Adriana explained that she would usually wake up before her boys to see her boyfriend off to work. In between the time she woke up and her kids woke up, Adriana was able to search for jobs. Then, after the kids went to school Adriana could do her chores around the house. In the evening after the day was done and the kids had gone to bed, Adriana was able to again search for work using her laptop. Having the laptop and internet access at home gave her great flexibility during her job search.

Having access to a computer and the internet at home allowed text workers to build their daily routine around searching for jobs without having to leave their residence.

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One participant who was able to do this was Mackenzie, a 28 year-old former public

relations and promotions specialist. The internet allows Mackenzie to search for jobs in

the mornings after she wakes up for the day. To symbolize how she searches for jobs

Mackenzie provided the following picture.

Figure 9 An Online Search Engine
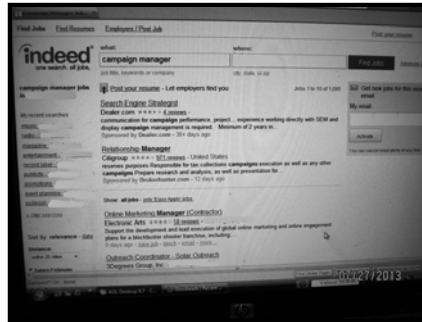
Figure 9 Mackenzie searches for jobs online daily.

Mackenzie's picture shows a screen shot of the online search engine Indeed; a site that

she uses to look for work. This picture is symbolic because it shows how unemployed

people interact with others through mediated forms of communication. In the following

quote, Mackenzie discusses this picture and how she searches for jobs.

> First, I'll get up and the first thing I do uh, I kind of either just do morning
> activities like making the bed, eating breakfast, whatever and then the first thing I
> do is job search online. I always immediately go on the computer and I sit here
> every morning and look for work on several job sites. I look on Craigslist even
> though that, it's kind of sketchy. I would go on Indeed. I would go on LinkedIn.
> There's several sites I kind of use. So that's the first thing I do. I always job
> search online every single day and then just kind of continue after that, kind of
> continue wanting things.

Mackenzie searches for jobs every morning after she does her morning activities. The

ability to search for jobs online at home allows Mackenzie to include her job search in

her daily routine without having to drive to an employment center, the library, or some

other location. Searching for jobs in this way allows her to post her resume online and

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apply for open positions. Using multiple job search engines allows Mackenzie to bridge

the gaps of time and space. Job seekers who do not have access to online search engines

would need to visit the physical location of the company to apply for the job. However,

using these search engines, Mackenzie can apply to many jobs in a shorter amount of

time that are both near her and anywhere in the world.

One issue that job seekers face when looking for jobs online is the lack of

physical presence. Searching for jobs online is the textualization of a process that once

required people to physically present themselves in front of business owners. In today's

text society (Marvin, 2006) the resume and the online job application process have

become textual representations of the body. Those people in charge of hiring are no

longer forced to interact with job applicants within the same time and space. The

separation of the body from the job search process allows those hiring applicants to

perform communication activities in a disembodied state. That is, since neither the

application nor the person representing the available job have to be physically present,

the applicant and the hiring person become texts. The job applicant becomes an

application or resume and the hiring person becomes the job call with an e-mail address

or application submit button.

The disembodiment of the job search process left participants frustrated and

wondering if anyone even looked at their application. The textualization of the job

search process removes face-to-face interactions and replaces them with mediated

interactions. Textualization is the professionalism that separates the body from the work

being done (Marvin, 1995). Relating this to unemployment, the commonly accepted

practice of searching for a job online using the internet is the textualization of a process

that once required the physical presence of both a representative of the organization and the person seeking a job. The asynchronous communication that typically occurs online between job seeker and the hiring organization allows the organization to receive numerous applications without needing to confirm the status of those applications. Jessabell describes how the asynchronous communication is frustrating as she questions if anyone even looked at her application.

> Interviewer: Okay. Has there been anything that's really surprised you about this process so far?
>
> Jessabell: Hmmm…What do I think? I think the time it takes me to fill out an application online. Because sometimes you have to be on their web browser and you don't know that until you try to send the thing in and then you find out that they want a different edition and… I think that's the thing that causes me the most frustration because it's like, will they actually look at it?

The textualization of the job search process has moved much of the search activity to online mediums that allow companies to develop their own application process. Jessabell is a 53 year-old former office assistant and food service employee who is a text/body class straddle (Lubrano, 2004). Jessabell worked a job that requires her to use her body to perform physical labor; however, she also had to fill the role of an office worker which required her to use text work skills. Jessabell became frustrated with the online job application process because she never knew if the web browser was going to reset before she finished the application or if anyone would actually read her application and respond to her. The textual nature of the modern job search process enables hiring personnel to manage their applicant pool by simply discarding applications, creating uncertainty for those who apply, especially because job seekers have a limited number of ways to seek information from the organization about the status of their application.

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Text workers in this study enjoyed the privilege of routine technology use to search for jobs and develop weak ties online. Routine technology use is important for two reasons. First, the more participants search for a job the more likely they will find appealing job opportunities. Second, finding weak ties online can help stigmatized people manage the effects of the stigma (Wright & Rains, 2013).

Body workers and digital inequality

The job search for body workers is characterized by struggle and obstacles to reemployment. One of the largest obstacles that body workers must overcome is gaining access to the technology required to search for jobs. The technology required to search for jobs (i.e. smart phones, computers, and internet access) is not entirely absent but it is not readily available to them like the technology is for text workers. More importantly, because the technology needed for the job search is not a part of their daily routine, body workers struggle to consistently engage in productive job search behaviors.

With more content available online and little closing of the digital divide (Witte, et al., 2013) body workers in particular suffer from the lack of access to technology needed to conduct an effective job search. Unlike the text workers who had readily available access to the technology they needed to conduct a job search, body workers struggled to obtain consistent access to technology, which hindered their ability to use the internet to create weak ties that would help them expand their network and find a new job.

Body workers struggle in the job search because they typically do not own the technology required to conduct a job search. Because of the nature of their work, body

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workers are less likely than text workers to build routines that incorporate the use of multiple technologies. Earl a 36 year-old former shiv maker, husband, and father of two talked about how not everyone owns a computer or a smartphone which makes searching for a job difficult. He states:

> Yeah, I had some leads, but it's mostly part time. I'm looking for a full time job. I'm looking for a job with some benefits. This day and age, everything is getting cut short. So it's making hard for everybody. Like I said not everybody owns a computer and not everybody owns a smartphone either. That's another reason what's making the job situation out here hard for a lot of people because not everybody is computer savvy.

Searching for a job is hard when you do not have access to the technology or the skills and abilities to use the technology effectively. Earlier in the interview, Earl told me that he was surprised by how much of the job search was done online these days. Earl does have a computer and access to the internet in his home but as a shiv maker Earl does not have to use technology in his daily routine. When he became unemployed Earl had to begin incorporating technology in his daily routine.

The ways that body workers search for work depends on the resources available to them. For Walter, a 35 year-old former cook with two kids of his own and a girlfriend with two more kids from a prior relationship, the resources most readily available to him were newspapers or his friends who might know of open positions. Walter and his girlfriend struggle to earn enough money to pay their bills each month. Between the two of them, Walter's girlfriend has a car, but Walter's license is currently suspended and he cannot afford the fees for a new license. Therefore, Walter must rely on others for transportation because the town he lives in does not have a public transit system. Walter describes how he looks for jobs this way.

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Walter: Yeah and that's crazy, man. So I'm out here every day trying to get a factory job to where I can get benefits.

Interviewer: Okay. How are you looking for work?

Walter: Internet, and I go around newspapers…just ask friends about where they work at, you know?

Interviewer: When you are looking for work on the internet, is that at home or no?

Walter: I got…if I'm close enough to wifi I can get wifi on my phone so…or I might go up to my girlfriend's Mom's house and use their internet and stuff like that. But as far as internet in the house then, no I don't.

Walter's limited resources makes it difficult for him to search for jobs. Unlike text workers in this study, Walter does not have convenient access to the internet that would allow him to search for work at home. Walter can use the internet when he visits his girlfriend's mother. Without his license and a second vehicle, it is difficult for Walter to travel to places where free internet access is available. Furthermore, Walter and his girlfriend have children at home and Walter spends most of his time watching the kids so they do not have to pay for child care which saves them money but makes it more difficult for Walter to find access to the internet and conduct a job search.

Prior to becoming unemployed Walter was a cook for a local restaurant and did not use computers or other technology as part of his work duties. The nature of his work did not require him to engage in text work activities like working on a computer every day. Walter did not have to include technology in his daily routine; however, once he became unemployed he had to figure out how to engage in the textual job search process to search for labor jobs. Walter is an example of how body workers are forced to enter a text world without the access to technology nor the skills necessary to be successful in a text worker world. For body workers like Walter who are looking for labor jobs, the

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modern job search process forces them to enter a text worker's world to find a job and once they have found their new labor job it is not likely that they will need to keep a daily routine that incorporates technology. The process of finding a job is particularly difficult for laborers like Walter because they must find ways to breach the digital divide.

The digital divide is about more than having access to the internet. The digital divide includes access to multiple digital technologies such as cell phones that people use to send and receive data and calls. The digital divide also includes the gap in skill proficiencies to use the various forms of technology. In Walter's situation, he struggles to gain access. Even more problematic for him is that he does not have a reliable method of transportation so he cannot get to the locations where access to the technology (i.e. the public library) is free. The inequalities that people suffer because of the digital divide makes their job search very difficult and increases their uncertainty.

Having access to the technology that one needs to conduct a job search does not always remove barriers to reemployment. For example, many body workers in this study used phones that they called "minute phones." Minute phones are prepaid cell phones that allow users to make calls, send text messages, or use data depending on the services the user buys. People purchase a minute phone because they can buy minutes as needed without signing a contract. If a person does not buy the minutes needed to send text messages, then he or she is not able to send or receive text messages. Wayne, a 41 year-old former factory worker and convicted felon, struggled to find work at a temporary labor agency because his cell phone did not support text messaging. The temporary work agency uses text messaging to alert workers registered with their organization of jobs that

come available. Wayne talks about his frustrations with the temporary work agency this way.

> Aw man, I'm mad at them right now. I got like the poorest phone in the whole company. So I don't see the texts. So I got to come up there and basically sit and wait until some opportunity or somebody don't show up. Other than that I'm back to square one. That's what my day consists of, try to come find employment, if they don't give us any, go back home.

Wayne has a minute phone that he uses to communicate with the temporary work agency. Unfortunately, Wayne can only afford to buy minutes that allow him to make phone calls and does not have minutes for sending text messages. Without the ability to send and receive text messages, Wayne misses out on job opportunities that come available because the organization that he uses to find work sends out information via text message.

Minutes before we began the interview Wayne expressed his frustration with the organization's reliance on text messages. I came in contact with Wayne because another person who I had scheduled an interview with brought Wayne along. Just before I was going to begin the interview with my original participant, that person received a text message from the temporary labor organization informing him of a job opportunity. My original participant quickly excused himself and left. Wayne stayed because he felt that if the organization wanted him to work, they would have called him. Since the organization did not call Wayne, I interviewed him about his experiences. Wayne's experiences exemplify why there has been little closure of the digital divide. With more important information becoming available online and more people turning to mediated forms of communication, unemployed body workers are particularly prone to suffering

the inequalities of the digital divide, such as the lack of access to technology and the lack of routinized interaction with the technology.

Summary of the Digital Divide and the Job Search Process

The digital divide is about more than access to and the use of technology. The digital divide is a reproduction of inequality (Wyatt, Henwood, Miller, & Senker, 2000) that is demonstrated in this sub-theme. Text workers were able to draw upon their social, educational, and technological capital to gain access to the technology needed to conduct a job search and develop routines that allowed them to use that technology on a regular basis. Having access and using the technology, such as the internet, did not eliminate uncertainty for them. Rather, having access to the technology and using it created uncertainty for these people in the form of not knowing if anyone had received their application or not knowing why they were not offered a job.

Body workers experienced uncertainty related to technology use and the job search differently because they were the ones who suffered from the inequalities of the digital divide. Without consistent access to the technology needed to conduct a job search and without the routinized behaviors that lead to consistent use of those technologies (i.e. the internet), body workers found themselves missing out on valuable resources. Access to technology such as the internet gives people access to information in the public sphere that enables them to be active members of a societal network (Wessels, 2013). By not using the various information computing technologies available, body workers miss out on the informational, social, and cultural capital that is found on mediated platforms such as the internet. Body workers also lacked the knowledge to use these technologies. In short, the contemporary job search process creates structural

inequalities that are difficult for body workers to overcome yet. To find a job, body workers must overcome these inequalities or they are likely to face persistent unemployment.

Theme 3: Stigma and Communication Withdrawal

As participants struggled through the disorganized and immobilizing job search process, their struggles were compounded by the stigma of unemployment. All participants felt that unemployed people were stigmatized and labeled as lazy people. For some, such as Jessabell and Jay, their experience of stigma was compounded by additional stigmatizing characteristics such as age or their felon status. To manage these stigmas, everyone, at some point, withdrew from communication with other people to avoid the stigma related, face-threatening interactions. By withdrawing from interactions, these participants made it more difficult for them to develop the weak ties needed to find a new job. As discussed earlier, when body workers needed to meet their basic needs, they reached out to strong ties which are less face-threatening (Granovetter, 1973).

Stigma is an identity discrediting mark (Goffman, 1963) that is managed through communication (Meisenbach, 2010). Research suggests that unemployment is stigmatized with communication implications because lengthy unemployment is a signaling context that marks an unemployed person as unable to perform (Oberholzer-Gee, 2008). A consequence of the unemployed stigma is the wage disparity that unemployed people experience. The longer a person is unemployed, the greater their wage disparity will be from their previous wage (Vshiwanath, 1989), possibly because

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hiring agents believe that if the long-term unemployed were good producers, they would have already been hired (Oberholzer-Gee, 2008). Anyone unemployed for more than 24 months has a 51% lower chance of finding a job than someone newly unemployed, and someone unemployed for over 30 months is unlikely to find employment at all (Oberholzer-Gee, 2008).

Stigmas are discursive co-constructions of stigmatized and non-stigmatized individuals that change because of varying discourses and material conditions (Meisenbach, 2010). The discursive nature of stigma suggests that people can manage stigma through their communication. How people manage stigma can be done in a number of ways ranging from ideological approaches (i.e. reframing & refocusing) to social approaches such as joining particular groups of people, to defensive cognitive and behavioral approaches such as avoiding the stigma (Ashforth, Kreiner, Clark, & Fugate, 2007). How a person chooses to manage a stigma relies on their acceptance or denial of the public understanding of the stigma and whether or not the person believes the stigma can be applied to them (Meisenbach, 2010). To manage stigma, Meisenbach (2010) defines the following six approaches 1) accepting the stigma, 2) avoiding the stigma, 3) evade responsibility for the stigma, 4) reduce the offensiveness of the stigma, 5) deny the stigma applies to self, and lastly 6) ignore the stigma. With each of these approaches comes a number of strategies that people can choose.

The experience of stigma for unemployed people has been documented in previous research. Research shows that unemployed people may feel stigmatized because of their age (Eriksson & Lagerström, 2012), race (Robinson, 2009), or social class (Newman, 1999). If people perceive that the stigma applies to them or are unable to

find re-employment due to a perceived stigma, then their uncertainty is likely to increase.

Participants in this study unanimously felt stigmatized by their unemployed status and

they unanimously described being stigmatized as lazy and not working hard to find a job.

To manage their stigmatized experiences, participants withdrew from interactions with

other people when they could. Withdrawing from interactions with others hindered their

ability to develop weak ties that help unemployed people find work. The following

explores how participants felt stigmatized and then how they withdrew from interactions

with others to avoid the stigma of unemployment.

Feeling Stigmatized During an Uncertain Time

Participants in this study felt stigmatized as being lazy, even though they were

working hard and struggling with the disorganization and immobilization that they

experienced. Adriana, a 29 year-old former office assistant, gave her opinion about the

stereotypes associated with unemployment when I asked her at the end of the interview if

there was anything else she wanted to tell me that I may have missed:

> I think I would personally say in my opinion that a lot of the people that are
> unemployed that I've even ran into because I have a couple of friends who are
> unemployed and they it's not anywhere near oh this is fun I'm just gonna sit home
> and not be employed or they may be collecting unemployment. But you go back
> to the stereotypical and you hear what people say like you did, I don't think, I
> think that a lot of people out there want to be employed and I think that a lot of
> people think that these other people are just like whooohoo and sit on their butt
> and do nothing. Yet I don't think they realize how frustrating being unemployed
> is, especially when you need to be employed, you need to have those finances and
> they're not there.

In Adriana's opinion, non-stigmatized individuals see unemployment as a fun time

where people just sit on their butts enjoying a vacation. She argues that people want to

work because they need money. Adriana also described unemployment as frustrating and

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suggested that people who perpetuate the stigma of unemployed people as lazy do not understand what it is like to be unemployed. Adriana stopped working so that she could pursue a bachelor's degree. With two sons Adriana easily kept her days busy. Adriana felt unfairly labeled as lazy.

The stigma of laziness is not necessarily overtly communicated to unemployed people. It is more likely that unemployed people pick up on the stigma through subtle moments during interactions with non-stigmatized people. Daynaria, a 34 year-old former emergency room nurse, is frustrated because she feels that people look at her and wonder what she has been doing while she has been out of work. Daynaria describes her frustration this way:

> Yeah. Cause I mean I have a work history. I mean I've worked since I was 16 and I'm 35 now. So I mean it's not like I bounced around everywhere. All my jobs have been 3 to 7 years at a time. So but then after 2009 that's when pretty much everything just was done. Yeah, so I'm unemployed and they're looking at it like, oh well what have you been up to?

Daynaria has years of work experience; however, when employers see the current gap of work experience they question what she has been doing, which insinuates that she has been lazy and not looking of a job. Daynaria's gap in work employment is her discrediting mark that becomes very visible when she is applying for a job. Daynaria does not believe that she is lazy, but she perceives that others think she is lazy, which allows her to develop a schema about why she is not being hired. Daynaria's new schema denies that she fits the stigma of lazy; however, it also allows her to blame the stigma for her negative outcomes. That is, to Daynaria when she says "they're looking…" the use of "they" refers to the people who she says evoke the stigma that unemployed people are lazy.

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The experience of unemployment is complicated further by compounding stigmas. Compounding stigmas are additional stigmas that are associated with unemployment or the unemployed person that make managing unemployment more difficult. While everyone did describe being lazy as the stigma associated with unemployment, some experienced additional stigmas that increased their uncertainty. Additional stigmas such as age or felons status compounds the problems that stigmatized unemployed people manage. Those who were older had to worry about the stigmas associated with age and unemployment. Age and criminal records each added compounding stigmas that made finding a job even more difficult. Jessabell, a 53 year-old former office assistant and food service worker, felt disadvantaged because of her age. During her interview, Jessabell provided the following picture that symbolizes how her age is stigmatizing.

Figure 10 Jessabell's Dinosaur
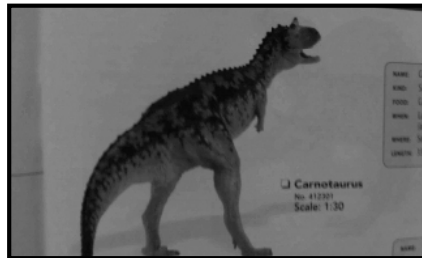

Figure 10 Jessabell used a dinosaur to symbolize her age as stigmatizing.

The picture of the dinosaur symbolizes the stigma Jessabell feels about her age. When she talked about this picture, Jessabell explained that she believed companies did not think that she was young enough to work. Jessabell talks about how she thinks people discriminate against her because of her age this way:

> Ah, time. You know, I feel that ah, us and to an extent there's time that I have to find something to occupy my day – I have to find something to kill time with. And since I'm an older person trying to get back into the workforce I feel like some of the companies will feel that I'm not young enough to work.

Being older leaves Jessabell feeling that companies do not think she is young enough to work. Unfortunately, the master narrative of aging as decline suggests that women lose their bodies, their young faces, and their young identities as they age (Trethewey, 2001) However, women resist by being trail blazers and enjoying the absence of sexual harassment. There is no doubt, that the emergence of internet-based searches makes it easier for hiring companies to sort applicants across desirable and undesirable qualities (Eriksson & Lagerström, 2012). While companies may or may not be screening applicants according to age, Jessabell believes the stigma of age applies to herself when she talks about how she feels. Questioning the stigma suggests that Jessabell is struggling to develop a schema that accurately explains why she is still unemployed. Just like other participants in this study, Jessabell is struggling to find a job; however, she is also struggling to convince employers that she is not too old to do the work. Jessabell's uncertainty has increased as she must figure out how to find a job and not appear too old to employers.

The stigma of being a felon primarily affected body workers as they were the ones most likely to have been convicted of a crime. Of the 31 participants, eight disclosed their felon status willingly as I did not ask about felon status during the interviews. Adriana was the only text worker with a felony conviction. Being a felon introduces an additional stigma that compounds the existing stigma of unemployment. Research form Vishwanath (1989) and others has shown that felons are stigmatized. Many felons feel

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like they are still being punished for their crime long after they have finished their

sentence (Aresti, Eatough, & Brooks-Gordon, 2010).   Participants with felonies

described how their felon status was continually held against them even after they had

completed all of the requirements in their sentence. Many of the felons described the

stigma of being an unemployed felon as something that they could not escape. For

example, Jay, a 32-yaer old former factory worker who has struggled to maintain

employment since being released from prison, described how successful he has been

during the application process; however, once employers perform a background check

they decide not to hire him. Jay describes his experiences this way:

> I kill 'em dead man, you know I got a stellar interview. With my attitude, my
> finesse, everything man I kill 'em dead and like, my resume, perfect. Cover letter,
> perfect. But once people start looking into my background…I've even had these
> funny, little ugly lookin' bitches that made me do a background check. And once
> somebody knows you have something on your background check they throw you
> out the window man.

Jay is very frustrated with his job search because he feels that people do not

consider him for jobs after finding out about his criminal history. Even though Jay has an

associate's degree in computer science, he struggles to find work because when people do

a background check and see his record of arrest and prosecution they chose not to hire

him. In part what makes Jay's job search so difficult is the nature of his felonies. Jay's

criminal record consists of one weapons charge and multiple violations for driving after

revocation and without insurance. It is important to note that Jay was convicted for the

unlawful use of a weapon, which varies from simply possessing a concealed weapon

without a concealed carry permit to actually discharging that weapon.   In comparison,

Adriana, a text worker who used to work as an office assistant for a law firm, was

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convicted of writing fraudulent checks and soon after the interview found another job

working in a box factory. Since employers can view an applicant's record of arrest and

prosecution online, it is likely that employers are pleased with Jay during the interview

process, but when they conduct a background check they are hesitant to hire him because

of the weapons charge. Having access to Jay's criminal record without him being present

to explain the charges allows hiring personnel to make assumptions about Jay and his

character. Jay, Wayne, Walter, and Lisa feel that they are stigmatized as untrustworthy

and inherently bad workers because they are convicted felons.

Unfortunately, the stigma associated with felon status forces convicted job

seekers to stop using public resources available to them. Jay, Wayne, Walter, and Lisa

all explained that they do not use the state employment offices because the jobs available

through the state offices either turn away felons or require a background check before

applicants can be hired, and they all know that if they have to pass a background check it

is not likely they will be hired. When talking about the stigma of a felon they all became

upset. Jay said that he put that place, the local public employment office, on "fuck

orders," meaning "fuck off" or "fuck them," he is not going to talk to them anymore.

Wayne became upset when a man at the unemployment office told him that he could

apply for a particular job but he probably would not get the job because of his record.

Wayne said he was so mad that he "wanted to throw gas on his ass and light a match."

The words of these participants speak to the intensity of the stigma and how their felon

status shapes their lives beyond their control.

The felons in this study did not deny their felon status or what they had done in

the past. They all accepted that they broke the law, but they all struggled because even

years after their sentences had ended, they were still being punished for their crimes during the job search. Jay and Walter both showed frustration because they believe that, in the states where these interviews took place, it is against the law for employers to discriminate against people with a criminal record. However, employers are allowed to ask about criminal records on job applications and can request background checks as part of the application. All of the felons talked about how they were still paying for their crimes. One participant, Walter, who was convicted of a charge related to fighting when he was in his early 20's and spent seven years in prison is now begging for a chance to prove to people that he is no longer the same man who was sent to prison. Walter describes how he wants that "one shot" this way.

> Know what I'm saying, man? But that's the crazy part like, just your whole time wanting to do something else and then when you get a chance all you want to do - like I said all I want is that one shot.

All Walter and the other felons want is a chance to prove themselves; however, they continue to pay for their crimes because the legal system continues to make those crimes public. Couple that information with the standardized hiring practices of today and unemployed felons are immobilized (Nicotera & Mahon, 2013), they desperately need a job to avoid going back to prison, but they have been to prison already so employers do not want hire them. This is the contradiction for felons that marks them as stigmatized individuals. Without the opportunity to look up an applicant's criminal history, organizations would not be able to turn applicants away because of their criminal record.

The feeling stigmatized during an uncertain time sub-theme describes how text and body workers experienced stigma during their unemployment. None of the participants believed that they were lazy, although Antonio believed that other

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unemployed people may be lazy. Just not him. The pervasive stigma of unemployed people are lazy was compounded by additional stigmas that participants had to manage such as being old or being a convicted felon. Body workers were the most likely to experience the felon stigma as they were more likely than text workers to have been convicted of a crime. The compounding stigmas made it more difficult for people to manage their unemployment experiences, which will be discussed in the next sub-theme.

Communication Withdrawal

Participants in this study felt that they were stigmatized, marked as lazy people who did not want to work. To manage the stigma, all of the participants described withdrawing from interactions with others. By withdrawing from interactions, participants are enacting the avoiding strategy (Meisenbach, 2010) as a way to manage the stigma. Using this strategy allows individuals to avoid stigmatizing situations; however, it can be difficult to distinguish between someone who is avoiding the stigma or someone who is isolating themselves. Someone who chooses to isolate themselves accepts the public understanding of the stigma and accepts that the stigma applies to them. The exemplars below and the exemplars presented in the previous sub-theme are evidence that participants in this study do not accept that the stigma applies to themselves. Because it is difficult for many of them to refute the public perception of unemployment without relying on personal experiences alone, the participants want to deny the stigma completely but have a difficult time making a convincing denial. Therefore, they are left avoiding the stigma.

In the following exemplars, participants avoid the stigma of being lazy in different situations. Avoiding social interactions with friends, former colleagues, and

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acquaintances is one way that Ted, a 54 year-old aerospace engineer who has been

unemployed for 30 months, avoided the unemployment stigma. Ted began to notice that

he was not attending as many social events as he did when he was working. In turn, Ted

noticed that people were not inviting him to as many social events either. Ted talks about

this realization in the following exemplar:

> But the other aspect is, especially with what I've been experiencing in the last
> year, is how many unemployed people, how disconnected they become from
> society because you can't show up to a party, you can't show up for events, you
> can't show up for dinner and whatnot and when I find myself pulling away from
> all those things, or just not even getting the invites anymore I think, "how many
> other folks are in the same situation?" Where you're just being disassociated from
> society; which was a revelation of this other population that does not really have a
> voice.

After becoming unemployed, Ted began attending fewer social events and, in turn, he

was being invited to fewer social events. By not attending the events Ted removed

himself from a stigmatizing situation. Attending social events meant that he would have

to answer common questions about work and what one does for a living that would force

Ted to talk about his unemployment status. However, it was this realization that made

Ted change his approach to managing his unemployment. Ted rationalized that the only

way he was going to find a job is if people knew that he was looking for work. If he did

not tell someone that he was looking for work, they would not know to mention a job

opportunity to him and he would miss out on a possible lead. Ted describes coming to

this realization in the following exemplar:

> Well, the key for me is I want the exact opposite [of withdrawal]. I'm not going to
> get out of this situation by hiding what I'm in the midst of. I have to, people have
> to know what I'm going through. Nah, I take it back; people don't have to know
> what I'm going through to get me out of this, but the more people know the better
> my chances of getting through it. And, occasionally folks who find themselves in
> this situation, they are literally hiding under the covers for days on end because

they're so depressed and aren't able to have a conversation about it. There's a guy I know that if I mention the word, 'job' or, 'resume' he will turn around and walk away. He's already told me that's what he's going to do because it kicks off anxiety and panic attacks for him. He cannot be in a conversation that involves that and he's trapped because it demoralized him so much and it's made of so much reinforcements that he can't bring the issue up and if he can't bring the issue up he can't get through it.

Ted's quote is particularly interesting because it demonstrates the contradiction that these participants experience when they choose to manage the stigma through avoidance strategies. The contradiction is simple, to find a job people must know that you are unemployed and looking for one. However, telling others that you are unemployed exposes an unemployed person to social costs associated with unemployment. While research suggest that contradictions are not always harmful (i.e. Baxter, 1988) or that they may be ruptures in the social fabric that can lead to change (Putnam, 1986), participants in this study refrained from disclosing their unemployment status when possible because doing so was face-threatening. It was not until Ted accepted the uncertainty caused by the unemployment stigma that he was able to be comfortable telling people that he was unemployed. The threat of remaining unemployed became a stronger motivator than the face-threatening interactions with non-stigmatized individuals. The only other participants who discussed a need to disclose their unemployment status were Mom, Kenny, and Buddy who did so because if they did not let people know that they were unemployed, they were going to go hungry and lose their home. By letting people know that they were unemployed, their landlord worked with them and allowed them to pay their rent late.

As discussed earlier, social support helped participants struggle through the job search process. However, participants struggled to manage the tension of needing

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support but wanting to avoid those stigmatizing interactions. Lisa, a 46 year-old former

horse trainer who has been unemployed for 36 months, was very aware of the need to not

abuse those who offer support by burdening her support providers too much. Lisa

stopped talking about her unemployment woes because she was afraid that if she

continually brought up her problems, those close to her would not want to take her calls

any more. Lisa explains why she does not talk with others about her experiences this

way:

> No. And I don't even, to be perfectly honest with you, I try to avoid really even talking about it much with my friends. I used to, but it's… if things have progressed and I have lost my ability to keep a good control on my emotions. My friends are really good to me. The last thing I want to do is to abuse them.

Lisa wants to remain a good friend to those who are close to her. To do that she must

monitor how much she vents about her troubles to her support providers. By disclosing

her emotions too often or too intensely, Lisa is afraid that people will not want to answer

the phone the next time she calls. Lisa's fears are not without merit. Westman, Etzion

and Horovitz (2004) found that unemployed participants in their study initially received

support from family and friends; however, two months after losing their jobs support

from those people decreased. Westman et al., (2004) argue that support providers may

have felt burdened by the unemployed person and withdrew their support. An

interpretation of this data would suggests that unemployed people withdraw from their

support providers as a way to avoid stigmatizing interactions.

Avoiding stigmatizing situations also meant withdrawing from interactions with

others such as friends when those interactions required participants to spend money.

Trinity, a 29 year-old actor with a Master's of Fine Arts degree who had been

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unemployed for 15 months, described how she became a shut-in, someone who does not

leave the house to avoid socializing with others, because she did not have any money to

go out and do activities like she normally did with her friends. Instead of going out,

Trinity would stay in and avoid doing activities or meeting with people that would

require her to spend money. Trinity describes how she became a shut-in this way:

> It's very frustrating and then you kind of just don't go anywhere cause every time
> you leave the house you have to spend money. If you don't have any money,
> there's nothing to spend. I kind of became shut-in.

Trinity avoided a stigmatizing situation, spending money, by staying at home and

becoming a shut-in. Becoming a shut-in was an unintended consequence but one that

Trinity needed to endure if she did not want to put herself in a situation where her

unemployed status would become visible. Money and material items are often used to

mark a person's social class status (Dougherty, 2011). Without money, Trinity's middle-

class, well-educated social class image was threatened. Trinity's exemplar also

demonstrates how the stigma of unemployed people as lazy can be compounded by other

stigmas such as stigmas about poverty. Becoming a shut-in can very well signal to others

that Trinity is lazy and not doing much about her unemployment, when in reality she is

poor and does not have the financial means to be more social. Unfortunately, being a

shut-in also means that Trinity is not using face-to-face communication to create weak-

ties with other people who may be able to help her find a new job.

Many of the participants, such as Lisa, Mom, Earl, Nellypoo and Britney

withdrew from interactions with people as a way to manage the stigma of unemployment.

By spending time alone, participants could avoid stigmatizing situations. Participants

who took this approach were generally skeptical of others motives or were angry about

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their unemployment experience. For participants like Jay and Wayne, this skepticism was born out of frustration with the job search process and what they viewed as unfair hiring practices that discriminated against felons. When I asked Jay, a 32 year-old former factory worker, who he talked to, this is how he responded:

> Interviewer: Yeah, so you got nobody to talk to?
>
> Jay: Ain't talk to shit, dog. I talk to myself dog. I make music and talk to myself. I need a strait jacket around this mother fucking bitch.
>
> Interviewer: Yeah, yeah.
>
> Jay: Straight up dog, talk to my damn self. Fuck them all.

When I asked Jay who he talked to, he was agitated because he truly felt that he was alone in the world and that no one cared about him. Jay is a very frustrated African America male who has faced prejudice in the past because of his race. He believes that his race stigmatizes him and that many people in his city do not want to give him a break. Jay does not talk to anyone because by doing so he can avoid stigmatizing situations. The skepticism that Jay has developed has not helped his job search. Jay told me about a time that he showed up at a job site for a construction job and the employer told him that he hired too many people so they would have a competition to see which two of the three would stay. Jay noticed that the other people were white like the boss and that the three of them rode to the job site in the same car. From this Jay figured that he did not have a chance at the job and walked off the job site. Jay's negative experiences have motivated him to withdraw from interactions with others which helps him avoid stigmatizing situations, but it hurts his ability to find a job.

Withdrawing from interactions with others allowed participants in this study to avoid stigma producing situations. The avoiding strategy allows people to challenge that the stigma applies to themselves. However, I argue that many of the participants would like to deny the stigma completely, but without finding a job they have little evidence to demonstrate that the stigma of laziness does not apply to them. Being marked as lazy was compounded by other factors such as a person's age, race, finances, or material needs. Participants such as Jessabell felt stigmatized by her age, Jay felt stigmatized by his race, and Trinity felt stigmatized by her lack of finances. Additional stigmas such as these demonstrate the complexity of managing stigmas during unemployment. The ultimate solution, of course, is to find a job. However, participants wanted to avoid the unemployment stigma so badly that they withdrew from interactions with others. Ted's exemplar demonstrates the contradiction that unemployed middle-class people experience. Even going to social events puts Ted in a position to feel stigmatized. However, unemployed people need to network and need to let people know that they are in search of a job in order to find a new job. Luckily for Ted he has been able to accept (disclose) the stigma in the hopes that doing so will help him find a job.

CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION

Summary of Themes

Three themes emerged from the data that told a story about unemployment that is fraught with struggle for these participants. The first theme, schemas of certainty leading to uncertainty, describes how participants' original schemas gave them certainty; however, when those schemas failed they experienced uncertainty. The second theme, social class and the search for work, explores how participants used communication to manage their unemployment. The third theme, stigma and communication withdraw, shows how participants experienced stigma attributed to unemployment and then how they managed that stigma by withdrawing from interactions with others. The essence of unemployment is of struggle for both text and body workers. The following summarizes each theme in preparation for answering the research questions in the following section.

Theme 1: Schemas of Certainty Leading to Uncertainty

The first theme, schemas of certainty leading to uncertainty, has two sub-themes that describe how participants initially used a schema to create certainty, but when those schemas failed participants experienced uncertainty. The first sub-theme, the anticipation of certainty, describes how participants created certainty by following schemas. The second sub-theme, the failure of schemas and the production of certainty, describes how participants experienced uncertainty when their schemas failed.

The Anticipation of Certainty

Participants in this study used schemas that allowed them to anticipate certainty; however that certainty gave way to uncertainty when they continued to struggle with their

unemployment beyond the expectations of their schema. The data reveals that

participants anticipated certainty in three ways. First a majority of participants

anticipated that their unemployment would be short-term and easy to overcome. Second,

participants anticipated how they would find a new job. Third, some participants

anticipated new opportunities. To these participants, unemployment was an opportunity

to do something new or different. However, as demonstrated by the following examples,

the schemas that participants created failed to provide certainty when they received

disconfirming information.

     Schema one: unemployment as short-term and easy. The majority of

participants thought that it would be easy for them to find a new job within a short time.

The reasons why they felt that their unemployment would be short and easy varied. A

few reasons included; previous experience with unemployment that was short, the ability

to find a job in the past, or participants perceived that their job skills would make them a

desirable candidate for other jobs. Anticipating a short and easy transition left

participants unprepared for the struggle that they were about to face.

     Schema two: knowing the process. Some participants had been successful in

their previous job search and assumed that they knew how to make the

unemployment/job search process work for them. For example, Greg was able to find a

job after completing his undergraduate degree and never had to look for another job until

he was laid off 13 years later. With only his experience from 13 years ago, Greg

assumed that he knew how to find a job and would be able to do so easily.

Unfortunately, the employment environment changed and Greg struggled to figure out

the best way to find a job. Greg received advice from people to update his resume but he

could never figure out what that meant. Those participants who thought they knew the process of finding a job were certain that they would be successful at finding a job. However, when they were not able to find a job, participants experienced uncertainty and struggled to develop new and accurate schemas about unemployment.

   Schema three: unemployment as an opportunity. The last schema participants used to anticipate certainty positioned unemployment as a positive opportunity. For example, Adriana voluntarily resigned from her office assistant job to begin working on her bachelor's degree. Unfortunately, Adriana and her boyfriend struggled to pay the bills without Adriana's income and she was forced to look for another job. Schemas include goals or outcomes that people wish to see in specific situations (Abelson, 1981). For participants who saw unemployment as an opportunity, when the goals of their schema were not met they experienced uncertainty and needed to develop a new schema.

The Failure of Schemas and the Production of Uncertainty

   The second sub-theme of theme one explored how participants' schemas failed, leaving them without a sense of structure and uncertain. The failure of schemas left participants without a vision of the future. This was evident by the way participants questioned when and if they would ever find a job. Pictures taken by participants lead them to describe their experience as feeling lost without work. Without a vision and feeling lost, participants could not see how to move forward finding a new job.

Theme 2: Social Class and the Search for Work

   The social class and the search for work theme explores how social class position shapes the experience of uncertainty during unemployment. The first sub-theme,

discursive distancing, suggests that text workers use their text class privilege to discursively distance themselves from their material needs and focus on the job search. Text workers are more likely than body workers to navigate the job search because the contemporary job search is a text work endeavor. The second sub-theme, textualizing the boy suggests that body workers struggled to textualize their embodied experiences so that others could understand their needs. Instead of focusing on the job search, body workers were forced to focus on meeting their material needs which required body workers to rely on strong ties within their network. The third sub-theme suggests that text workers received social support from numerous weak ties and were able to obtain information from outside of their support network. Meanwhile, the fourth sub-theme suggests that body workers experienced so many material needs that they needed to rely on strong ties, people close to them, to gain the instrumental support they needed. The fifth sub-theme explores how the digital divide represents inequality in the job search process. Text workers were more likely to have the skills to access the technology needed to conduct a job search. In contrast, body workers struggled to gain access to the technology or develop the skills they needed to use that technology. The textualization of the job search is important because body workers are forced to engage in a textual process without the skills and language needed to be successful. Without the skills and language, body worker are at a disadvantage in the job search process.

Discursive Distancing

The discursive distancing sub-theme demonstrates how text class participants used discourse to distance themselves from their physical needs. Dougherty (2011)

argues that text workers use discourse to ignore material conditions that shape social class. For example, Ted and Greg used their discourse to ignore their uncertainty about food and housing. Dougherty (2011) points out in her book that text class privilege allows people to ignore the needs of hunger, education, and working conditions. Text workers talked about their unemployment in a way that focused on the process of finding work. Instead of talking about going without needed goods or services, text workers talked about the job search and their frustration with the job search. Text workers do feel frustrated, they are mad, and they are worried about their futures, but their uncertainty lies within the textual process of searching for a job. The essence of their experience is communicative in that they are uncertain about the job search, a communication process, and they use their communication to distance themselves from the materiality of life.

The ability to discursively distance themselves from their material needs also reflects how the discourse of text workers creates the dominant discourse of unemployment. Dougherty (2011) argues that text work is the primary way that power is controlled. Discursive distancing enables text workers to decide what counts in their unemployment experiences. By ignoring the body, bodily concerns are not meaningful. Therefore, participating in the text work job search process counts and body workers are left struggling to textualize their body.

Textualizing the Body

The Textualizing the body sub-theme explores how body workers discursively managed their uncertainty. Unlike text workers who discursively distance themselves from material uncertainty, body workers needed to textualize their body experiences so

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that others would see their experiences as meaningful and provide the support that body

workers needed. The essence of the body worker experience is a struggle of survival.

Body workers need to be skilled communicators to help others see the constant struggle

they face. Their struggle is complex because many of their needs, such as money, affect

other needs. Walter is a body worker who struggled to earn enough money each month

to pay the bills. Not earning enough money meant that he could lose his apartment, go

hungry, or have no gas for the car; which he needs to look for work. Textualizing the

body is about more than asking for support. Textualizing the body is about

communicating in skilled ways to demonstrate the complexities of unemployment to

others.

Social Support and Weak Ties

The social support and weak ties sub-theme describes the social support that text

workers sought during their unemployment. More importantly, it demonstrates how

unemployment is socially classed because of the social support that people receive. The

job search process is a textual process that requires those looking for a job to have text

related knowledge and skills. For example, using a computer to draft a resume and cover

letter is typically text work. Since text workers usually have training in computer skills,

writing skills, and specifically resume and cover letter writing, they were able to receive

support that was already built into their job search process. Companies terminating

employees often provided career counselors, universities that text workers (i.e. Greg,

Ted, Priya, & Sophie) had attended provided job placement services, and text workers

had the skills and knowledge to use unemployment centers if needed. Having access to

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support in these forms allowed text workers to reach out to weak-tie relationships. Weak ties offer a better source of support for finding a job because they allow job seekers to expand their network and obtain new information that can help them find new job opportunities (Granovetter, 1973).

Social Support and Strong Ties

The social support and strong ties sub-theme describes how body workers used strong ties rather than weak ties to manage their unemployment. The use of strong ties as opposed to weak ties is important because it again reflects how the job search is socially classed. Body workers primarily relied on strong ties because their need required that they find instrumental support. Instrumental support involves spending time with someone or providing them with needed materials (House, 1981). As stated before, the needs of body workers forces them to overtly seek support from others because not meeting those needs threatens their well-being. Body workers needed support with basic needs such as finding a place to live, finding food, or finding reliable transportation. Body workers had to rely on strong ties because their needs were so time consuming that it was difficult for them to search for work. Furthermore, body workers struggled to communicate their needs in textual ways that others would find meaningful and provide help. In doing so, body workers have to become skilled communicators.

The Digital Divide of the Job Search Process

A prominent difference between the experiences of text and body workers was their access to technology. The digital divide of the search process sub-theme demonstrates how inequalities related to the digital divide change how people experience

the job search process. Text workers were able to maintain access to technology that enabled them to use the technology with ease on a daily basis. Having access to technology such as computers and the internet allowed text workers to search for jobs daily with little inconvenience. Access to the technology also allowed text workers to create weak tie relationships with others through mediated communication channels that are less face-threatening than face-to-face communication. Using mediated forms of communication can enable people to develop more weak ties and ameliorate the negative consequences of stigmas (Wright & Rains, 2013). Body workers struggled to gain access to the technology needed to search for jobs. Many of them could not afford computers or access to the internet and relied on their cell phones to communicate with people. Unfortunately, many of the body workers could not afford phones with unlimited plans and had to buy "minute" phones that allowed them to pay for service as they could afford. Over the past few decades there has been no closure of the digital divide (Witte et al., 2013) and the experiences of body workers in this study are evidence of the inequality produced by the digital divide.

Theme 3: Stigma and communication Withdrawal

All of the participants described feeling stigmatized by their unemployment and as a result withdrew from interactions with others to avoid the stigma. The most prominent stigma described by participants labeled them as lazy. Some participants described feeling stigmatized by additional stigmas such as being old and unable to work, or being a felon who could not be trusted. These additional stigmas were compounding stigmas that complicated how participants could manage the original stigma of lazy. Participants denied these stigmas but had no way of refuting them and therefore chose to

avoid stigmatizing situations altogether. Unfortunately, avoiding the stigma meant that participants withdrew from interactions with people who may be able to help them find a job. The way participants chose to manage the stigma of unemployment created a contradiction. Choosing to withdraw allowed participants to avoid the stigma, but withdrawing hid their unemployment status. In order for unemployed people to receive help others need to know that the person is unemployed. Yet, people knowing that they are unemployed increases the likelihood they will experience stigma.

Interrogating the Research Questions

In this study I asked four research questions aimed at understanding the essence of unemployment. In this section I will discuss those research questions and to do this, I first discus research questions one and two because both questions focused on the lived experiences related to uncertainty and unemployment. Second, I discuss research questions three and four because they both provide insight into how the experience of unemployment is socially classed.

The Lived Experience of Unemployment and Uncertainty

Participants in this study described an unemployment experience that began with certainty, eventually giving way to uncertainty. Research question one asked "What is the lived experience of unemployment by unemployed people" and research question two asked "How do unemployed people experience uncertainty?"

The lived experience of unemployment by unemployed people is not as simple of an experience as Jablin's (2001) model of assimilation might suggest. From Jablin's (2001) model, one could assume that people either transition back into one of the

assimilation phases or they stay in the exit phase because they have retired from work. However, these participants describe a different experience of unemployment. Initially, the experience of unemployment may be one of certainty because people use schemas that they have developed to help them understand why they are unemployed and what they should do while unemployed.

The schemas of certainty theme demonstrates how participants in this study used schemas to create certainty. All of the participants began their unemployment with schemas that gave them certainty. Schemas are broad knowledge structures (Abelson, 1981) that are the result of direct personal experience or communication about a specific event (Koerner & Fitzpatrick, 2002). Not all of the participants had prior experience with unemployment and those that did not were left to develop their schemas about unemployment based on what they learned through related socialization experiences, which is consistent with previous assimilation research (i.e. Levine & Hoffner, 2006). Family members are a particularly influential source of socialization that teach children about particular work related values (Gibson & Papa, 2000). Conceivably, people can be socialized about unemployment. However, the messages that people receive about unemployment may not reflect actual experiences.

Schemas failed when they no longer helped explain why participants were experiencing unemployment. Hence, participants became uncertain about their unemployment. The experience of uncertainty made the experience of unemployment difficult for both text and body workers, yet they experienced uncertainty differently. Text workers were able to distance themselves from their material needs through

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discourse. Discursive distancing allowed participants to focus on their job search, which they found to be disorganizing.

The experience of uncertainty differed for text and body workers. Text workers were uncertain about the job search process and they used their text class privilege to ignore their material surroundings and focus on searching for a job. Their prior work experience prepared them with text work skills that they used to search for jobs online. Body workers were uncertain about their material needs and focused on finding ways to solve those material needs. Since the job search itself is a textual process, body workers were not as well prepared to search for jobs using the contemporary job search process. Instead, body workers wished they could present themselves in front of employers because their bodies are symbolic of the physical work they perform.

Communication Withdrawal and the Search for Work

The third research question asked "how do unemployed people manage uncertainty?" and findings suggest that unemployed people initially used schemas, but when those schemas failed participants struggled to manage their uncertainty.

The primary means of managing uncertainty for all participants was by withdrawing from interactions with others. Withdrawing from interactions with others occurred because unemployment is a stigmatizing experience (Vishwanath, 1989) and participants wanted to avoid face-threatening moments. Stigmas are discursive co-constructions based on perceptions of stigmatized and non-stigmatized individuals that change based on varying discourses and material conditions (Meisenbach, 2010). How people manage the stigma depends on how they perceive the stigma applies to them and whether or not they agree with the common understanding of the stigma (Meisenbach,

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2010). Meisenbach (2010) argues that people can 1) accept the stigma, 2) avoid the stigma, 3) evade responsibility for the stigma, 4) reduce the offensiveness of the stigma, 5) deny the stigma applies to themselves, or 6) ignore the stigma. Participants in this study chose to avoid the stigma altogether. The only way for participants to avoid the stigma was to avoid talking about their unemployment. Since stigmas are communicatively enacted and people commonly ask about unemployment status during small talk, participants in this study avoided small talk when possible.

By withdrawing from interactions with others, participants avoid the stigma but lose out on possible support and networking opportunities. Even though more people are looking for jobs online, the number of people who engage in networking behaviors has increased as well (Stevenson, 2009). Networking leads people to create weak ties that help people find new jobs (Montgomery, 1992). Networking can also help unemployed people develop social support networks which help people come to understand their unemployment experiences and rebuild a sense of self (Garrett-Peters, 2009).

The communication withdraw that these participants experience represents a contradiction. That is, in order for unemployed people to find a job they need to let others know that they are in need of a job. However, letting others know that they are unemployed would reveal their stigma that is otherwise hidden. The contradiction of the unemployed speaks to the influence of competing motives (Kramer, 2004). Participants were more motivated to hide their unemployment status than they were to reveal their unemployment status in hopes of finding a new job. The social costs associated with the stigma of unemployment were so great that whenever possible participants in this study chose not to reveal their unemployment status.

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Uncertainty and Privilege

The fourth research questions asked "How, if at all, does social class position influence how unemployed people experience and manage uncertainty?" The answer to this research question requires a discussion of privilege and materiality. The experience of uncertainty varied greatly depending on the amount of privilege participants had and the material resources that were available to them.

A fundamental difference in the way that text and body workers manage uncertainty occurred when text workers used their text class privilege to discursively distance themselves from their material needs. Text class privilege is the ability of text workers to ignore their bodies and the needs of their body (Dougherty, 2011). Text class privilege is a communicative resource that allowed text workers to discursively create a sense of normalcy during their unemployment. Body workers did not have this privilege and were forced to manage their material uncertainties by problem solving.

Text workers used their privilege to manage their uncertainties through discursive attempts at reducing uncertainty such as tolerating or ignoring the uncertainty. Greg, Ted, and John Door provided exemplars of this when they resolved their uncertainties by concluding there was nothing else they could do to reduce their material uncertainty (i.e. the cost of groceries) so they must tolerate the uncertainty. For each of them, their financial resources helped them maintain a sense of normalcy. Previous research has shown that those who experience greater financial hardships experience more negative affect during the job search and are more likely to struggle finding a job (Wanberg et al., 2010). Since text workers experienced less financial hardship, they were likely to be less uncertain about their finances and their unemployment.

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Inherent to text work is the idea that text workers manage meaning and in doing so can discursively remove their body from their work. The further texts are distanced from the body, the higher the cultural standing of those text and the bodies associated with them (Marvin, 2006). Text workers used their privilege as meaning managers to reinvent themselves without needing to make a change to their bodies. Ted is a great example of text class privilege. With enough money to retire, Ted left his job as an aerospace engineer and began other ventures such as writing books and hosting art galleries in his home. Even though his home was in foreclosure and he was often unsure of where he was going to get his next meal, Ted was able to use his cultural capital (knowledge of art) to create other possible sources of income. By involving himself in other ventures such as art, Ted was able to maintain his social class status. Writing books and attending art exhibits are all activities that signify middle to upper class status. Even though Ted is out of work and uncertain about his future, he behaves in a way that displays a desired social class position. Through his behavior and communication, Ted enacts his social class status (Dougherty, 2011).

Body workers did not have the same privilege as text workers when it came to managing their uncertainty. The uncertainty that body workers faced in this study was rooted in material struggles, struggles to find food, shelter, and transportation to facilitate their job search. Text workers had the financial resources that allowed them to tolerate or ignore uncertainty. Body workers did not have the same financial resources and when they became unemployed they also went hungry. Jay, Walter, Mom, Kenny, Buddy, Kahreasa and others all talked about their desperate attempts to find enough food to not go hungry.

Struggling to not go hungry, body workers cannot choose to tolerate their uncertainty or use other cognitive resources to manage that uncertainty. The working class are more likely to struggle because they lack the same financial resources as text workers such as money in savings accounts and equity in a home (i.e. Newman, 2007). Body workers uncertainties tended to stem from a lack of material resources and forced them to seek out support from close ties. The need to seek support forced body workers to textualize the material, revealing their social class position. Body workers were compelled to disclose their unemployment status to receive the help they needed. The job search process itself is textual and many of the body workers struggled to navigate the text process. Body workers preferred to be physically present in front of people to show them that they could do the work. The struggle to obtain needed resources was a threat to the actual body of body workers. Therefore, they were forced to talk about their unemployment with others to get the help they needed. Body workers sought help from people in strong tie relationships who were more likely than those in weak tie relationships to provide the instrumental support they needed.

Implications

This study extends our understanding of unemployment and uncertainty in three general areas. First, this study provides insight about four different theories that help to explain the experiences of unemployed people. Those theories are Karmer's (2004) theory of managing uncertainty, Dougherty's (2011) web of power, Meisenbach's (2010) stigma management communication, and Jablin's (1987, 2001) model of assimilation. Second, this study provides insight into four areas of research; unemployment research,

uncertainty management research, social support research, social class research, and stigma research. Third, this study provides implications for practice that can help people and practitioners manage unemployment.

Theoretical Implications

This study drew from four different theories to understand unemployment experiences. First I discuss the theory of managing uncertainty and how this study helps us better understand how the availability of resources changes the ways unemployed people can manage uncertainty. Second, I discuss the ways in which unemployment is a socially classed phenomenon using Dougherty's (2011) web of power. Third, I discuss how unemployed people struggled to manage compounding stigmas and were unable to refute that the stigma of laziness applied to them without finding a new job. Fourth, this study provides insight into the assimilation process by describing what happens during unemployment. In doing so, I suggest that the exit phase and anticipatory socialization phase occur concurrently.

Theory of Managing Uncertainty

The theory of managing uncertainty (Kramer, 2004) argues that uncertainties may change depending on the context within which they are experienced. Current events and environmental uncertainty are two examples provided. This research extends our understanding of how contextual differences can change the experience of uncertainty. Contextual factors in this study focused on the material resources that people do or do not have available to them. Findings from this study showed that text workers had resources such as career counselors and other support options already built into their unemployment

experience because of the nature of their work. The job search has become a primarily textual endeavor and companies provided their former employees with useful resources. Other forms of capital such as financial capital allowed text workers to discursively distance themselves from their uncertainty about material needs such as food.

The Web of Power

Findings from this study demonstrate that unemployment is a socially classed experience and this is evident in two ways. First, text workers in this study benefited from text work specific support resources that were intended to help text workers navigate a textual job search process. Dougherty (2011) argues that text workers and body workers are the defining line distinguishing social class. The nature of the work that text workers and body workers performed predisposed them to the support that they would receive and to their preparedness for the job search process. Text work often requires some form of formal training and many of the text workers (i.e. Greg, Ted, Priya, & Sophie) in this study were able to use resources at those institutions of training to help them during the job search. Body workers did not have these resources available to them because their work often required them to perform physically demanding tasks that did not require formal text-based training. The differences in text work and body work also informed how participants communicated with others during their unemployment.

Text workers were able to use discursive distancing to remove their bodies from the experience of unemployment. The ways in which text workers talked about their unemployment experiences minimized their material uncertainties and focused on

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uncertainties about the job search process. The end goal of finding new employment was the central focus of how they talked about their unemployment. Body workers talked about their unemployment experiences as a struggle to survive. Body workers did want a job and the end goal of finding a job was important to them, but their material needs of survival were in jeopardy so body workers tended to focused on the means of survival instead of the end goal of finding employment. The actual bodies of body workers became symbolic representations of their struggle and they talked about that struggle openly as a means to obtain help from others and to show others that they did not fit the stigma of unemployment.

Talking openly about their unemployment required body workers to textualize the material. Body workers had to find a way to articulate their body experiences in a textual job search process. In the contemporary job search, work experience only becomes meaningful if it can be represented in text form, such as a resume. Body workers preferred to let their body symbolize their ability to perform work. The contemporary job search process does not allow for this, placing body workers at an inherent disadvantage when looking for work. Because the job search process privileges the text ways of doing work, text workers such as human resources managers who have no body work experience can be put in charge of making hiring decisions for body work jobs. A body worker looking for work will have to textualize their body experiences as a means to convince others to hire them.

How text and body workers talked about their unemployment signified a social class power difference that is devastating for body workers. Dougherty (2011) argues that text class privilege gives a voice to those in the text class while silencing those in the

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body class because body workers do not have the language to voice their opinions. Findings from this study demonstrate how unemployment is power laden and text workers benefit from having the language and skills to participate in the contemporary textualized job search process. Body workers must find ways to represent their body in textual ways. Body work does not usually require body workers to have advanced text skills, but the contemporary job search requires that body workers communicate their work experience and skills in textual ways, such as using resumes to apply for jobs. Dougherty's (2011) theory is quite insightful here because body workers need to be skilled communicators inside and outside of their normal cultural spaces.

Stigma Management Communication Theory

Participants in this study described the stigma of unemployment as being lazy. None of the participants saw themselves as lazy and they all stated that the stigma of unemployment did not apply to them. While all of them rejected that the stigma of unemployment applied to them, participants struggled to refute the stigma because it was difficult for them to prove that they were not lazy. Bob, a text worker with a graduate degree in accounting, provided me with a photo of him holding his 400th resume that he sent out during his job search. Quantifying job search activity is one way participants could refute the stigma but the only way to completely refute the stigma is to find a job, and participants struggled to do that. The compounding stigmas that participants experienced made it impossible for them to use a single piece of evidence to disprove the stigma. If a participant applied for numerous jobs, others may still perceive them as stigmatized because of other compounding stigmas such as age. Just as unemployment is

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a complex phenomenon, managing the stigmas associated with unemployment is complex as well.

How people manage the stigmas associated with unemployment may vary depending on the relationship unemployed people have with others. Meisenbach's (2010) theory can offer insight into how people manage stigmas related to unemployment differently depending on the relationship. Talking to unemployed people about specific relationships and how they manage the stigma of unemployment within those relationships can help us understand how the context of a relationship changes or maintains the management strategies that unemployed people choose.

The Assimilation Model

The final theoretical implication focuses on the assumptions of the assimilation process. Jablin's (1987, 2001) model of assimilation suggests that people experience a life-long assimilation process that seemingly ends upon exit unless a person re-enters into another phase of the assimilation model. Scholars such as Smith and Dougherty (2012) have begun to explore experiences after organizational exit such as retirement. However, Jablin (1987, 2001) gives no insight into unemployment, what happens during unemployment, or how people transition from exit through unemployment into other phases of the model. This research suggests that unemployment is a crucial transition that many people struggle to manage and that communication practices and behaviors greatly alter the likelihood of re-entering another phase of the model. Unemployment is a particular extension of organizational exit that needs further exploration by communication scholars.

Jablin (2001) and others (i.e. Haski-Leventhal, & Bargal, 2008; Miller & Kramer, 1999) have argued that the assimilation process is not linear and that people may enter the process at different phases. People may also transition through the phases at different times. Findings from this study suggests that the exit phase and anticipatory socialization phase run concurrently. Participants became stuck in the exit phase when their schemas failed them and they could no longer visualize their future. Yet, as participants looked for work they engaged in vocational or organizational anticipatory socialization activities. Receiving retraining to assume a new occupation or looking for a new organization to work at are activities that participants engaged in while describing being lost in the exit phase.

Implications for Related Areas of Research

This study brings to light the complex nature of unemployment and demonstrates how unemployment experiences differ across social class. How people manage unemployment has changed because the ways in which people apply for jobs has changed. With more job openings being posted online, the job search has gone virtual and unemployed people must be able to sell their skills and abilities to employers through a disembodied online presence. This was particularly difficult for body workers in this study because they often lacked access to the needed technology and struggled to textualize their embodied experiences. Text workers had the language and skills to participate in a text focused job search but often struggled to make sense of the disembodied job search process.

Unemployment and Social Class Research

Social class is communicative at its core (Dougherty, 2011) and this research demonstrates how social class is enacted through communication. Text workers were able to use the language and technologies of the contemporary job search. Body workers struggled to search for jobs online because they lacked the language and access to technology to conduct the job search. Furthermore, the contemporary job search of looking for jobs online demonstrates how text work expectations are applied to body workers. In doing so, body workers struggle to have a voice in the way that the job search is conducted and body workers described their frustration with online job searches because they could not be physically present in front of hiring personnel.

Social Support Research

The ways in which participants received social support differed across social class. Text workers had support opportunities built into their unemployment experience, which enabled text workers to focus on creating weak ties through mediated forms of communication. The ability to create weak ties is important because unemployed people are more likely to obtain new information that could lead to a job through weak ties (Granovetter, 1973). Creating ties through mediated forms of communication was also important for unemployed text workers because people who feel stigmatized tend to prefer seeking support through mediated forms of communication to help ameliorate the negative consequences of their stigma (Wright & Rains, 2013).

Body workers did not have the same types of support built into their unemployment experience because they typically did not seek higher education or

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specialized training from institutions that would offer job search support such as universities. Additionally, the jobs that body workers performed focused on the ability to use their body to do the work. Body workers focused on material needs such as housing, transportation, and food. It is not likely that weak ties can help unemployed body workers meet these needs because the amount of investment that a support provider would need to make is greater than typically expected form a weak tie relationship.

Body workers were forced to talk about their material needs and find strong tie relationships to help them meet those needs in order to survive. Where text workers were concerned with demonstrating how they are doing the best they can searching for jobs, body workers were concerned with finding support that could help them obtain food, a place to live, or transportation. Social support varied greatly across social class and the way people talked about their unemployment varied because of those support needs. Social support for unemployed people needs to be tailored to the needs of the person. Providing transportation to unemployment centers or simply training body workers how to communicate in text worker ways does not provide enough support for body workers because it is likely that their material needs are so great that searching for a job in a text worker way using weak ties is nearly impossible.

The nature of ties that unemployed people use is likely to change based on their needs. While findings in this study suggest that text workers primarily use weak ties and body workers primarily use strong ties, the support that unemployed people need may change during their unemployment. As resources are depleted or other needs arise, it is likely that unemployed people may shift from using weak ties to strong ties or using strong ties to weak ties. It is conceivable, for example, that a text worker may initially

use weak ties to help them negotiate their job search. However, as their weak ties fail to help them find a job they may need to rely on strong ties. The shift from weak ties to strong ties could occur for a number of reasons, such as the need to obtain financial or emotional support from someone close to them. Body workers may shift from strong to weak ties as their material needs such as housing are met and they can focus more on their job search. Both weak and strong ties play important roles in helping people manage their unemployment experiences. The shift in support may also occur because people are receiving support that they are not aware of or notice.

Invisible support is the idea that people may be receiving support that they do not know of or notice. Bolger, Zuckerman, and Kessler (2000) argue that invisible support is support that people unknowing receive and invisible support can occur in two ways. First, the support received occurs outside of the receiver's awareness. Under the context of unemployment this is likely to occur with weak and strong ties. For example, an acquaintance of an unemployed person may recommend that person for a job without letting the unemployed person know that they have made the recommendation. Support providers may also provide support for unemployed people without the unemployed person being aware of the support because the provider perceives a stressor that they can manage for the unemployed person without them needing to know of their assistance. It may be that unemployed people in this study received support from people and were unaware of that support.

A second way that participants may receive invisible support is through the skillful use of support that is done in such a way that the support receiver does not notice. At first this support may seem very similar to the previously discussed invisible support;

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however, the difference is the skillful use of communication in such a way that the person gets support without noticing that they are receiving the support. For example, when support providers commiserate with unemployed people about their experiences and make comments that suggest the unemployed person's experience is not as bad as another person's experience, the support provider is trying to offer support without the unemployed person seeking support or perceiving that they are receiving support. Research in unemployment and social support should explore how support providers may provide invisible support. The ability to provide helpful invisible support may help unemployed people manage uncertainty without creating further uncertainty or stressors.

Stigma and Uncertainty Management Research

Unemployment is a stigmatizing experience (Vishwanath, 1989) and this research confirms that claim. Findings from this study also show that unemployed people perceive that others stigmatize them as lazy. The way that participants choose to manage the stigma, by avoiding interactions with others, creates a contradiction. The best way for unemployed people find a new job is by expanding their network, creating new weak ties. To expand their network, others must know that they are currently unemployed and looking for a job. Withdrawing from interactions with others does not help expand an unemployed person's current network. It does, however, allow them to avoid face threatening interactions.

Participants' reactions to the unemployment stigma also demonstrate the influence of competing motives. Kramer (2004) argues that people manage their uncertainty differently depending on which motivation is the strongest. For these

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participants, the motivation to save-face and avoid stigmatizing interactions was often stronger than the need to seek information from weak ties. Unemployment is a complicated experience because unemployed people may have to manage multiple stigmas. People do not experience the unemployment stigma in isolation. For example participants near 50 years or older in this study were concerned that employers stigmatized them as old and unable to perform the work. The stigma of age cannot be separated from the stigma of laziness and managed in isolation. Unemployed people must manage both the stigma about age and unemployment simultaneously.

This study also provided some insight into the lives of felons and their unemployment experiences. Findings from this research demonstrate that felons must manage compounding stigmas such as the stigmas about unemployment and stigmas about felons. Current accepted employment practices allow employers to inquire about criminal histories. Doing so marks felons when their mark would have been concealed. Allowing employers to ask about criminal histories forces felons to avoid applying for good paying jobs because they know that employers of good paying jobs will ask about criminal histories. Instead, felons are forced to take temporary labor work that provides no benefits and is not consistent work. Research has shown that those felons who find employment after being released are less likely to recidivate (Skardhamar & Kjetil, 2012). However, if felons remain living in poverty, they have a greater risk of recidivating (Holtfreter, Reisig, & Morash, 2004). Managing the stigmas that felons experience during unemployment is important if felons want to avoid recidivating.

Stigma is an identity threatening mark (Goffman, 1963) and unemployment is a stigmatizing and identity destabilizing phenomenon (Garrett-Peters, 2009). Findings

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from the stigma and communication withdraw theme suggest that participants struggled to change or shift their identities. Scholars have argued that identities are like the faces of a crystal and people present different faces of the same crystal depending upon which face is most relevant to the situation (Tracy & Trethewey, 2005). However, identities are closely connected to the work that people perform and participants in this study struggled to craft or reshape their identities. Ted is an extreme example of someone who struggled to re-craft an identity. After retiring, Ted set out to accomplish numerous endeavors such as writing books and traveling the world. However, he still struggled to find a new identity for himself. Ted wanted to be known as a personal consultant but struggled to find consulting opportunities. Similarly, many of the body workers such as Jay, Walter, Kahreasa and others struggled to find another identity other than a laborer or felon. Those with criminal backgrounds struggled to escape the felon label. The job search makes escaping the felon label particularly difficult because felon job seekers are often asked to disclose their felon status on job applications.

Practical Applications

Findings from this research bring to light the differences in support for text and body workers. Text workers were more likely than body workers to have support systems included in their exit from the organization into unemployment. Examples include severance packages that provided career counseling, or financial unemployment support. None of the body workers had support programs built into their transition into unemployment and they were all forced to find support on their own. Body workers also tended to struggle the most with searching for jobs for numerous reasons. Two prominent reasons are their lack of resources such as reliable transportation and their lack

of access to the technology that they need to conduct a job search. Body workers would benefit greatly if they had access to computers and the skills to use those computers. While libraries have reinvented themselves as technology centers for people without access, many of the body workers in this study struggled with transportation to places such as the library. Either participants did not have access to transportation or they did not have the funds to support the transportation that they needed. Mobile unemployment centers would enable municipalities to bring the technology and training to those workers who do not have the means. Programs such as a mobile unemployment center would also help to combat the persistent digital divide. Mobile employment centers could be a van or truck equipped with wifi and computers that unemployed people could use to search for work. These centers would be best used in smaller cities and towns that do not have public transportation or public libraries. Scheduling weekly stops at each town would be a good way to provide consistent access to unemployed people in those communities. It would be best if those people operating the vans could also provide assistance using the computers to conduct job searches. Those without access and the skills to use ICTs would be directly served by such a program.

Whether a participant was a felon or not affected the way participants experienced unemployment. While I did not plan to ask about felon status, nine of the participants identified themselves as felons during their interviews. All but one of the felons performed body work, which is consistent with research that suggest that poor or low wage workers are more likely to become incarcerated (Neckerman & Torche, 2007). Felons in this study did not want to disclose their felon status while applying for jobs because they were very aware of the stigma that came along with being a felon. Felons

commonly feel that they are being punished by society long after they have finished their sentence (Aresti et al., 2010). Unfortunately for convicted job seekers it is difficult for them to hide their felon status because employers are allowed to ask about previous arrests and convictions on job applications. Unlike other stigmatized populations that may be physically marked, felons are only marked through institutional practices such as parole and job applications that ask about criminal history.

Participants that identified as felons resorted to temporary labor companies to earn money because they knew that other companies would ask about criminal history. Working for a temporary labor company allowed convicted felons to earn money but they did not receive benefits such as health care or paid-time-off. Often participants would use valuable resources to get to the temporary labor company only to be turned away because of a lack of available work. Allowing employers to ask about prior criminal history allows employers to discriminate against felon job seekers. Recently municipalities have begun considering "ban the box" legislation that would make it illegal for employers to ask about criminal history. This research suggests that municipalities should consider some form of "ban the box" legislation to stop institutionalized discrimination against convicted felons. Many of the participants in this study committed crimes more than ten years ago and those crimes do not necessarily reflect the person they are today.

One of the greatest frustrations for text and body workers is lack of perceived acceptance by others in society. Text and body workers alike talked about the desire for others to understand that unemployment is challenging and that they are trying to find a job. Discourse about work and specifically about the lack of work in America and

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around the world has not shed the experience of unemployment in a positive light. Policy makers often position unemployment as a social issue that can be fixed; however, when the policies fail to completely address the needs of unemployed people policy makers revert back to framing unemployment as an individual issue which places the blame for unemployment on the person (Graham & Paulsen, 2002). If unemployment were talked about in the same way as other stigmatizing marks such as illnesses like cancer, then the discourse about unemployment could enable people to be more open about their struggles; thus, allowing unemployed people and society to work together to solve problems that keep people unemployed.

Changing the discourse about unemployment is a difficult endeavor because understanding why unemployment occurs is complicated. Graham and Paulsen (2002) point out that discourses such as what it means to be a skilled worker, what it means to be unemployed, and what is welfare all contribute to an understanding of unemployment. Previous research about job loss by Buzzanell and Turner (2003) suggests that families of unemployed men use communication to background and foreground emotions, construct a sense of normalcy, and reinstitute traditional roles. Families in their study allowed their unemployed man to express his emotions while talking about his unemployment in a way that allowed him to still feel masculine. If society shifted discourses about unemployment from blaming the unemployed and labeling them as lazy to discourses that focused on solving social problems that leave unemployed individuals free of blame, unemployed people may feel more comfortable disclosing their unemployed status. When I began this study, my first participant, Ted, mentioned that it was important not to ask unemployed people how they were doing because obviously they are not doing well.

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Instead, Ted suggested that I being my interactions with unemployed people by saying something along the lines of "It's good to see you." Doing so allows the unemployed person to feel comfortable about the ensuing conversation. Although Ted's suggestion does not seem significant, it demonstrates the power that communication has to change how we talk about unemployment.

Strengths

Previous research has explored the experiences of specific groups of unemployed people such as the missing class (Newman, 2007). A strength of this study was the ability to explore the experiences of two different groups of people, text and body workers. By doing this, I was able to see differences and similarities in the ways that text and body workers experienced unemployment. Although I did not intend to make comparative arguments initially, the differences and similarities of their experiences were insightful enough to generate comparative arguments. For example, the support needs of text and body workers are so different that it would be counter-productive to provide the same type of informational support to both text and body workers.

An interesting unintended comparison that I was able to make focused on the experiences of felons and non-felons. Talking to felons or non-felons alone would not have allowed me to see the drastic differences in their unemployment experiences. By discussing the experiences of felons and non-felons simultaneously, I could understand how the felons became immobilized when employers would ask about their criminal history. Felons in this study wanted to get a job and normalize into society, but the

requirement to disclose their criminal history often prevented them from being hired because of the stigmas associated with the felon status.

A final strength of this study is the use of pictures that gave me a window into my participants' lives, allowing me to view their world in a way that cannot be done through interviews alone. The pictures provided a basis for useful metaphors such as feeling lost in grey skies and provided images of participants' material realities such as their vehicles or grocery bills that, in an interview alone, might not make a meaningful impression. The pictures also allowed participants to show their story without the need to use language. The interview itself is a textualization of lived experiences and may hinder some people from being able to share their stories. Using the pictures allowed participants to capture their lives in a way that they may not be able to communicate during the interview alone. This strength may be particularly useful for body workers as the interview process itself is a text work experience that may have hindered body workers' ability to describe their experiences.

Limitations

This study explores the lived experiences of unemployed people; however, it carries with it limitations as well. Participants were recruited for this study in three ways: posting the recruitment sheet on Craigslist, snowball sampling, posting the recruitment sheet at local unemployment agencies, and posting the recruitment sheet at a temporary labor agency. I had initially intended on conducting face-to-face interviews only but was forced to conduct phone interviews when I widened my search for participants beyond

my immediate surroundings. Participants seemed to feel more comfortable talking about their unemployment experiences over the phone rather than in person.

Widening my search allowed me to post my call on Craigslist and interview people I would not have otherwise been able to recruit. However, widening my search also meant that I had to conduct phone interviews with those participants who were not living near me. The nature of the phone interviews differed from the face-to-face interviews that I conducted. I felt more connected to stories I heard in person compared to some of the stories I heard over the phone. During face-to-face interviews I could read the body language of my participants to develop a deeper understanding of their experiences. When I noticed a participant was uncomfortable talking about a specific topic I usually rephrased my question to make them feel more comfortable and discuss the topic with me.

Where I was able to find participants was also a limitation of this study, although an interesting limitation. I predominantly found text workers via Craigslist. They would read my call and contact me via e-mail or phone and because of this, all of my text worker interviews were conducted over the phone. I found a majority of my body workers through local unemployment agencies who would hand them my flyer. Only three of the eleven body worker interviews were conducted over the phone, the rest were done via face-to-face communication. Text workers commonly browsed Craigslist pages looking for work or volunteer opportunities, so it is not surprising that I found more text worker participants online than in person. Body workers were coming to the unemployment agency looking for daily work and if the agency did not have work for them they saw my recruitment sheet called me. Not working that day meant that the

person would not receive any money. I offered participants 10 or 20 dollars to participate in my study and receiving a gift card was better than earning nothing at all.

In addition, the body workers in this study were drawn from an unemployment center that may limit the variety of people who volunteer for my study. The organization that I recruited body workers from is a temporary labor organization. Their mission is to supply people with temporary, labor focused, jobs. The majority of people that I talked to from this organization go there daily because the jobs they receive only last for one day. The brevity of the work assignments may attract certain types of people over others. Specifically, it may be more likely for felons to search for work at an agency such as this one because they know that they can get work for the day instead of being turned down because of their prior convictions.

Impression management was prevalent during interviews with both text and body workers. The stigmatizing nature of being unemployed and a felon lead participants to answer questions in ways that put them in a favorable light. I noticed impression management occurring when I would ask questions such as "what happened that you're no longer working at your last job" or "how did you end up in prison?" Instead of telling me that they ended up in prison for hitting a person, participants were more likely to describe it as an "altercation" saying they got into an altercation with someone. When I did notice impression management occurring, I used probing question to ascertain further details. By probing I was able to develop a better understanding of how their unemployment or felon related stigma affected their experiences.

A final limitation of this study is the lack of participant stratification over the amount of time unemployed. On average, participants were unemployed for 48 months

with a range of 1 to 68 months. This study did not attempt to discern differences in unemployment experiences over time and it is likely that how participants experience and manage their unemployment over time may change. I discuss this limitation further in the directions for future research as some of my data provided useful insight about future directions.

Directions for Future Research

Future research should continue to explore the interconnectedness of materiality and discourse in the context of unemployment. Findings in this study suggest that body workers may struggle in the job search process because finding a new job requires them to participate in a text bias process. The contemporary job search requires access to and knowledge to use the internet and computers. Unfortunately, research has also shown that the digital divide is not shrinking and people continue to live without access to computers and the internet (Witte et al., 2013). How body workers and the poor manage the digital divide may change the results of their job searches.

Unemployment is an interesting context for stigma management research because unemployed people may have to manage compounding stigmas. Unemployed felons for example had to manage the unemployment stigma and the felon stigma if they wanted to find a job. Further research should parse out other strategies that unemployed people use to manage the stigma of unemployment in different situations. For example, the relationship that an unemployed person has with others may change the way they manage the unemployment stigma. An unemployed person may accept the stigma of laziness around his or her family members but deny that stigma around others with whom they

have weak tie relationships. The context of the relationship may change how the person chooses mange the stigma.

More research needs to explore the unemployment experiences of felons. The contemporary search process and laws make it difficult for felons to search for a job without having to disclose their felon status. The stereotypes about felons made it difficult for these felons to overcome the stigma of being a felon. Future research should study how felons can use communication and stigma management strategies to manage the felon stigma. The nature of the crime committed and the type of job that a felon applies for will likely to affect how a felon can manage the felon stigma. Future research should continue to explore communication stigma management strategies employed by felons but parse how the differences in the type of work they are seeking.

Future research should also attempt to parse out the ways unemployment experiences change over time. This study did not stratify participants over the amount of time unemployed. However, I did develop a theme in the data that was not included in these findings that I think can speak to these differences. During my data analysis a theme emerged that I labeled as "escalating uncertainty." I initially tried developing the escalating uncertainty theme as a standalone theme but eventually felt that the theme was too similar to the stigma theme and I removed the escalating uncertainty theme. The escalating uncertainty theme made the argument that as participants continued to experience prolonged unemployment their uncertainty increased. As an example, immediately following termination unemployed people may not be highly uncertain because they may have a small savings to fall back on or they may perceive that finding a new job will be easy and quick. However, as people experience unemployment longer,

they may become uncertain about how to pay their rent or mortgage which in turn leads to further uncertainty. As people develop new uncertainties their overall level of uncertainty escalates. Those who experience unemployment for a short period of time are not likely to experience the complex and escalating uncertainty that long-term unemployed people experience. It is also likely that those who experience long term unemployment will experience a change in their social capital competencies. Findings from the stigma and communication withdraw theme suggest that those experiencing long-term unemployment will likely withdraw from communication with others. Doing so will affect their ability to enact their social capital to help them find new employment. Therefore, it is likely that long-term unemployed people will see an erosion of their social capital competencies. Future research should explore how the length of unemployment affects how people manage their unemployment experiences.

By studying how uncertainty changes over the duration of unemployment, scholars may also understand how uncertainty during unemployment becomes toxic. The discursive distancing used by text workers allowed them to ignore material concerns and talk about their uncertainty in such a way that minimized their material needs. Auyero and Swistun (2008) describe how people living in a lead and oil contaminated village framed there uncertainty about the contamination in a way that allowed them to ignore or justify the contamination. In doing so the uncertainty of the villagers became toxic to their own health and wellbeing. It may be the case that unemployed people are framing their uncertainty in ways that make their uncertainty toxic to them as well. Text workers may be particularly susceptible to this if they struggle to manage their desire to maintain

a text class image while failing to meet their basic needs. Future research should explore how some forms of uncertainty can become toxic for unemployed people.

Conclusion

This research explored the essence of what it means to be unemployed. After interviewing 31 unemployed people it is clear that regardless of social class position, everyone struggled to overcome unemployment. The overall process of unemployment can be described as creating certainty through the use of schemas that gives way to uncertainty when those schemas fail. Text workers enjoyed text class privilege that allowed them to discursively distance themselves from the material consequences of unemployment. Body workers struggled to meet their material needs and had to spend time trying to meet those needs as opposed to searching for a job. All participants describe unemployment as stigmatizing and avoided interactions with others as a way of managing that stigma. Their communication withdrawal creates a contradiction that unemployed people struggle to navigate.

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Time of Interview: **Date:** **Place:**

Interviewee:

Semi-structured Interview Questions

1. Tell me about your last job.
2. Tell me about how you came to be unemployed.
3. Describe a day in your life when you were working/ unemployed.
4. Describe who you were a year ago compared to who you are now?

Emotions
5. Describe your strongest emotions as you manage your unemployment.
6. Tell me about the worst/highest point during your unemployment so far.
7. How have you been managing/coping with these feelings?
Socialization
8. What did you anticipate unemployment to be like?
9. What has surprised you?
   1. How did you handle the surprises?
   2. Who did you talk to about these surprises?
   3. Where/how did you find information?
10. What worries you?
11. Tell me about a time you received good/bad advice
12. What would help you right now?
13. If you could change anything, what would you do differently?

Social Class
14. Before you became unemployed, what social class did you identify with? Now?

Images
15. What is this a photo of?
16. What is happening here?
17. How does this relate to your lived experiences?
18. Why is this a problem/benefit of your experiences?
19. What can you do about the problems in this photo?

APPENDIX B: CONSENT FORM

Consent Form

Project Title: Managing Unemployment: A Phenomenological Exploration of Social Class Differences.

Researchers: Jonathan Wickert is a doctoral candidate and primary investigator and Dr. Debbie Dougherty is an associate Professor and the faculty advisor for this project within the Department of Communication at the University of Missouri-Columbia.

Purpose: The purpose of this study is to examine the unemployment experiences of Americans across social class lines. Specifically isolating issues of socialization and uncertainty management work, this research seeks to unveil the way unemployment is and has been managed by currently unemployed individuals. This study will triangulate data from an interview and photographs captured by participants that symbolize your unemployment experiences. Data analysis will look at (1) how people manage uncertainty during unemployment (2) how individuals have experienced socialization into unemployment, and (3) the social class differences in the way people experience and manage uncertainty during unemployment. Participants must be at least 18 years old.

Time: In total, participation should take between 60 to 120 minutes, depending on how much you choose to participate and on what you have to say. Again, I remind you that the interviews will be audio taped.

Incentive: Each participant will receive a $10 Walmart Gift card upon returning the digital cameras (if you need a digital camera, I can provide one). You do not need to participate in the whole study to get your gift card.

Voluntary: Your participation is voluntary. You may quit at any time and you may refuse to answer any question without consequence.

Risk: There is minimal risk involved with the study. There is no more risk than you would experience in your daily interactions.

Benefits: The results of this study may help to promote understanding about unemployment experiences for Americans.

Confidential: Your identity will not be revealed in transcripts, written documents, or verbal presentations of the data. The following steps will be taken to protect your identity and confidentiality.

1.Consent forms will be separated from the data.

2.All identifying information will be eliminated from the transcripts and any reporting of data.

3.Your name will be changed on the transcripts to further protect your identity.

4. Images with identifying information will be either obscured or not submitted to publication.

5. You can refuse to answer any question asked.

6.Audiotapes and all research data will be kept in a secured location.

Contact: If you have questions, please contact Jonathan Wickert at (920) 286-9561 or Debbie Dougherty at (573) 882-0300. You may also email Jonathan at jew765@mail.missouri.edu or Debbie at doughertyd@missouri.edu.

Questions: If you have questions about your rights, contact Campus IRB:

Office of Research - (573) 882-9585 483 McReynolds Hall
Columbia, MO 65211

Thank you for your participation!

Jonathan Wickert and Dr. Debbie Dougherty

Signing this consent indicates that you understand and agree to the conditions

mentioned above

Signature_____ Date_____

APPENDIX C: DEMOGRAPHIC SURVEY

What is your birthrate? _____/_____/_____

What is your gender? _____

How long have you been unemployed? _____

Racial/Ethnic Identity - please circle all categories that you would describe yourself as:

- American Indian / Native American
- Asian
- Black / African American
- Hispanic / Latino

- White / Caucasian
- Pacific Islander
- Other

What is your current marital status? _____

Have you ever been married? _____

How many dependents (i.e. children) do you have? _____

What is your highest level of completed education? _____

What is your living situation (i.e. rent, homeowner, etc.)? _____

How many bedrooms are in your current home? _____

What's your primary mode of transportation? _____

Do you own a vehicle? If so, how many? _____

APPENDIX D: RECRUITMENT SCRIPT

Hello, my name is Jonathan Wickert and I am interested in talking to people who are currently unemployed. I am a graduate student from the University of Missouri and I am conducting research to understand what uncertainty people experience during unemployment and how they manage that uncertainty. The title of my project is Managing Unemployment: A Phenomenological Exploration of Social Class Differences.

The population that I am interested in studying is unemployed adults who are at least 18 years old. If you agree to participate, you will need to agree to be interviewed in a one-on-one conversational format interview that will be recorded. When you arrive, you will be asked to fill out a simple demographic survey, review and sign a consent form, and participate in the interview. Your total participation should take between 60-120 minutes depending on what you have to say.

Your answers will be kept confidential. Your participation will help further understanding about the ways people manage uncertainty during unemployment. If you have further questions, or would like to participate, you can call me at (920) 286-9561 or e-mail me at jew765@mail.missouri.edu.

VITA

Jonathan Wickert is a qualitative organizational communication scholar focusing on the assimilation process and issues of social class. His work explores how the assimilation process is a socially classed phenomenon. Previous studies include an exploration of how unemployment organizations are socially classed. Jonathan's specific interests include assimilation, uncertainty management, social class, and unemployment.