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**GOING HOME:
A STUDY OF UNEMPLOYED FEMALE WORKERS'
PERSPECTIVES ON UNEMPLOYMENT**

**THE DOCTORAL THESIS OF
LINDA HUGHES-BOND
FACULTY OF EDUCATION,
UNIVERSITY OF OTTAWA.**

MAY, 2001



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THIS THESIS IS DEDICATED

TO MY PARENTS, ALICE MCGRATH HUGHES

AND JAMES LLOYD HUGHES

...WHO GAVE ME ROOTS

TO MY HUSBAND,

JAMES MILTON BOND

...WHO GAVE ME WINGS

AND TO MY CHILDREN,

HUGH HAWLEY, JAMES HAWLEY,

AND KATIE HAWLEY TRUELOVE

...WHO GAVE ME A REASON

Going Home: A Study of Unemployed Female Workers' Perspectives on Unemployment

**PhD Thesis of
Linda Hughes-Bond
Faculty of Education, University of Ottawa**

Abstract

In spite of the recent positive economic growth, millions of Canadians continue to experience the impact of unemployment. Although half of the jobless are female, women remain seriously neglected in the unemployment literature, with the few existing studies tending to be non North-American, to focus on blue-collar workers, to rely on quantitative approaches, and to result in contradictory findings.

In this qualitative study, conducted from a constructivist, feminist perspective, semi-structured, in-depth individual interviews and a focus-group interview were conducted with 12 unemployed women. In an atmosphere of safety and mutual respect, the women were considered the experts best able to articulate their job loss experiences.

Findings largely confirm those of earlier studies of male and female unemployment, in that job loss tends to produce negative affective reactions such as shock, fear, anger and betrayal, often followed by feelings of self-blame, low self-esteem, anxiety, and even depression. Specifically, Jahoda's (1982) deprivation model of unemployment is supported by this study in that the destructive effects of job loss appear to be linked to the loss of essential categories of experience previously provided by the institution of employment. These include: income, routine, social contacts, meaningful activity, a sense of identity, and a sense of purpose. Findings also tend to negate long-held assumptions regarding the primacy of the domestic role in women's self-definitions.

Moving beyond the deprivation model, the findings of this study suggest that a relational model of unemployment might better illuminate our understanding of women's job loss experiences, in that it acknowledges the centrality of relationship in female, if not human, psychological development (Gilligan, 1996). Women's unemployment, according to this proposed model, is experienced as varying degrees of disconnection, or loss of relationship, along the dimensions outlined by Jahoda's model.

The relational model also informs our understanding of other important and related issues, such as the failure of the alternative role of homemaker to ameliorate the destructive impact of unemployment, and the difficulties which many women, if not all individuals, experience during the re-employment process. Implications of a relational model for unemployment theory, for workplace policies, and for the implementation of support services and re-training programs are discussed.

Thesis Advisor: Dr. Janice Ahola-Sidaway

Committee Members: Dr. Margaret McKinnon, Dr. Colla MacDonald, Dr. Ann B. Denis

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This thesis is grounded in a belief in the centrality of relationship in our lives and in the power of the relational web by which we are surrounded to enhance and enrich our development as individuals. It is important, therefore, that I acknowledge those persons who have supported me, in different ways and at different times, and whose connections with me have culminated in the completion of this project.

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As my primary family has expanded, my "web of relationships" has come to include many relatives-in-law, as well as nieces and nephews and their spouses, each and every one of whom is a bright, articulate and loving human being. I appreciate the wisdom, energy, and diversity which they have brought into my life and which have broadened my understanding of the human condition.

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PART ONE
GROUNDWORK: THE CONCEPTUAL AND METHODOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK
OF THE THESIS

In 1999, pop culture singing icon Shania Twain released a song that resonated with the life experiences of millions of women and which further established the singer as a spokesperson for the modern female. The song, entitled "Honey, I'm home and I've had a hard day!", turns gender stereotypes upside down and presents an image of womanhood that is more corporate than culinary, more breadwinner than bread maker.

This song, and its popularity, reflect on-going changes in our understanding of women and of the role of formal employment in their lives. The intention of this thesis is to further clarify this understanding, particularly when formal employment ends.

Chapter One: Introduction

According to recent reports, most Canadian women now hold paid jobs and, in fact, form almost half of the Canadian labour force (Vanier Institute for the Family, 2000; Statistics Canada, 1998). Participation rates of female workers in this country have risen steadily over the past century, the Institute report notes, from 16.2% in 1911 to 58.1% in 1998. Now firmly embedded in the Canadian economy, women's earnings provide more than \$30 billion in taxes annually and a combined income that accounts for about one-third of the country's Gross National Product. As well, 55% of working women provide more than 30% of their household income. A similar trend exists in the United States, where 77% of mothers of children ages six to 17 had jobs in 1996, as well as 62% of mothers of preschoolers (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 1998).

This increase in the proportion of women in the labour force is, according to one American economist, Howard Hayghe, one of the most significant social and economic trends in modern history (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 1998). Because of its significance, it is essential that the phenomena associated with this trend undergo critical and careful examination. One such phenomenon, which accompanies women's increased participation in the workforce, is women's experience of involuntary separation from this workforce, or, as it is commonly called, unemployment.

Unemployment, it would seem, is a topic that should not require urgent attention in a country which is currently enjoying

the fruits of economic prosperity. As of June, 1999, for example, the ranks of the unemployed in Canada had fallen by about half a million persons, dropping the unemployment rate to a nine-year low of 7.6% (Statistics Canada, 1999). The introduction of supplementary measures of unemployment, however, as tools for evaluating more accurately the degree of labour market slack and the extent of hardship associated with joblessness, reveals the need for on-going vigilance in the study of the impact of job loss on dislocated workers (Statistics Canada, 1999). What facts have these supplementary measures uncovered?

First, although the unemployment rate has dropped to 7.6%, this figure still represents approximately 1.2 million Canadians who are, by conventional definitions, unable to find work. The plight of over a million individuals is hardly a reality that warrants our complacency. Because women's rate of unemployment is roughly the same as that of men (Statistics Canada, 1999), we may conclude that approximately two-thirds of a million Canadian women are currently experiencing the impact of job loss.

Second, the inclusion of groups formerly neglected in unemployment statistics provides a more realistic, if somewhat less comforting, picture of joblessness in this country. If, for example, we include those discouraged searchers, or persons who have stopped looking for work because they believe there are no jobs available, the rate of unemployment rises, particularly in certain regions of the country. In Newfoundland, for example,

the inclusion of discouraged searchers in the overall jobless rate raises this figure to 23.1% (Statistics Canada, 1999), a serious state of affairs, indeed. The inclusion of the "marginally attached", or those workers who are waiting for recall following a temporary lay-off, would have raised the rate of unemployment in 1998 by 0.7%. Finally, when involuntary part-time workers are included in national rates, the effect is an increase of 2.3%. The significance of this figure, for the purposes of this study, is that the rate of unemployment for women increases much more than that of men when involuntary part-timers are added to the mix.

According to these more sophisticated measures, then, it is clear that a disturbing number of Canadian citizens, many of them women, are struggling with the impact of joblessness. What is equally clear, is that this struggle involves many more people than those who have been identified as "the unemployed", either by conventional or by supplemental definitions. For unemployment, as a recent Canadian study suggests, is not an individual issue (Statistics Canada, 2000a), but one which affects the spouses and children of the dislocated worker. In 1997, this study reports, 1.4 million Canadians were looking for work. Because 84% of these people belonged to families, it was estimated that an additional 1.1 million people were affected by their job loss.

In spite of the official position on joblessness, then, it is apparent that unemployment, and its impact on millions of

Canadians, remains an issue which warrants our attention. In particular, it is important to examine the experiences of dislocated female workers, a group long-neglected in the unemployment literature. Although the workforce is now evenly divided between men and women, and women are at least as vulnerable to job loss as their male counterparts, research has not kept pace with these changing demographics. Despite extensive research establishing the impact of job loss on men, few studies have been conducted which a) include women in the sample, b) isolate the experiences of women in the sample, or c) focus exclusively on unemployed women (Leana & Feldman, 1991; Dew, Bromet & Penkower, 1992). The results of a search of relevant databases on January 23, 2001, illustrates this point.

A search of the database PsychINFO, entering the keyword "unemployment", yielded a result of 1492 studies between 1967 and 2001. When this result was combined with the keyword "human females", the result dropped to 68 studies. After limiting the search to studies which were available in English and which had been conducted in recent years (between 1990 and 2001), the final number of studies involving both unemployment and human females was reported as being 25.

A search of the database Sociofile was equally revealing. The keyword "unemployment" yielded a large number of studies, namely 6143. A second search, using the keyword "unemployed women" resulted in a total of 81 studies. After limiting this search to studies in English and those published between 1990 and

2000, the number fell to 30.

Given labour force statistics, the neglect of women in the unemployment literature is no longer acceptable. It is the purpose of this thesis to explore this important area of study.

Chapter Two: The Conceptual Framework of the Study

The conceptual framework of this thesis consists of a) the overarching ontological and epistemological perspectives of the study, b) the theoretical discourse which surrounds the issues being investigated, c) the recent research which illuminates our emergent understanding of these issues, and d) the specific research question which this thesis addresses. In order to facilitate an understanding of this framework, a diagrammatic representation is presented in Figure 1.

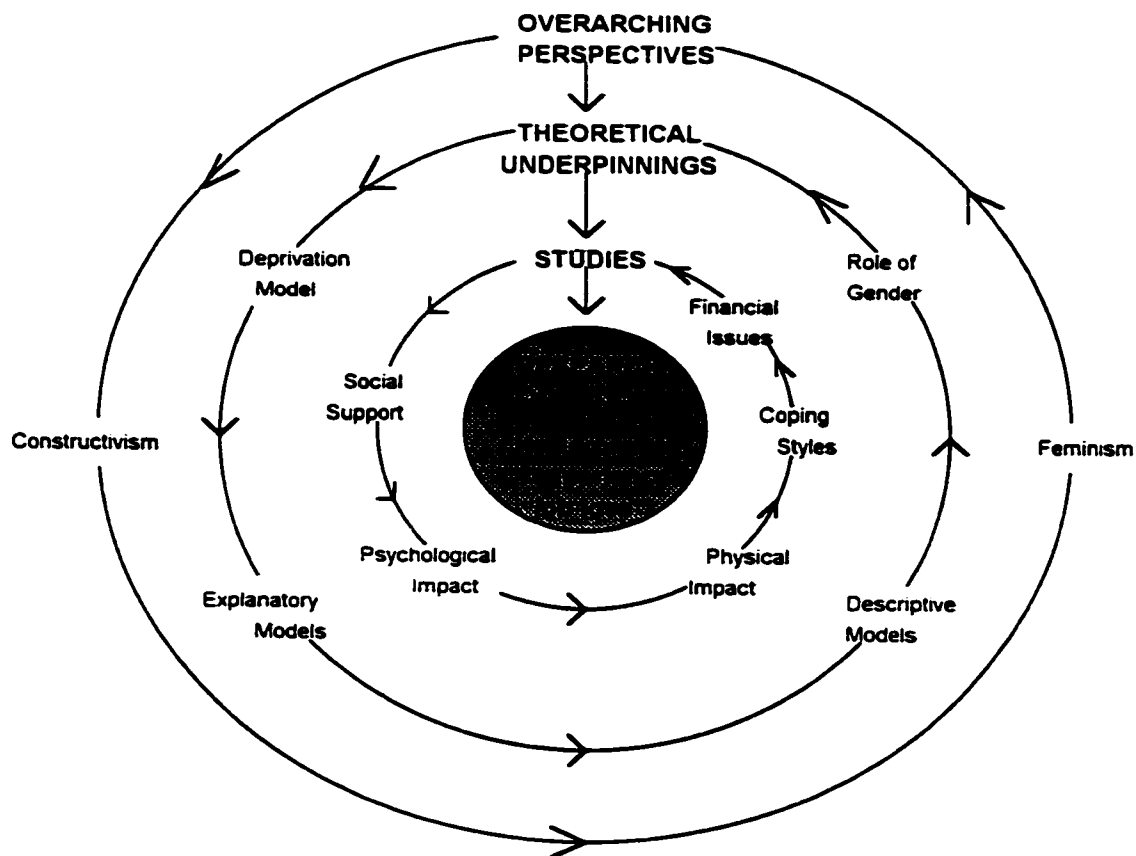


FIGURE 1: THE CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK OF THE THESIS

Throughout this chapter, in order to nest the current study in the broader body of knowledge, a discussion of the various elements of this framework will be presented. As well, the questions which are the focus of this thesis are discussed.

A: Overarching Perspectives

The paradigms which shape an investigation are critical in that they "direct our attention away from certain phenomena and toward others" (Barnett, 1997, p.351). In other words, as paradigms shift, new questions are asked and different answers emerge. The overarching conceptual perspectives of this study include constructivism and feminism.

A Constructivist Approach

In adopting a constructivist stance for this study, the ontological position is taken that what is real and meaningful, particularly in the case of human interaction, is mentally constructed by individuals according to their own social, intellectual and experiential perspectives (Merriam & Simpson, 1995). Although events, persons and objects do exist as tangible entities, according to this world view, the meanings ascribed to these tangible phenomena are, in fact, the constructed realities of the individuals involved (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Understanding a particular phenomenon, then, necessitates an understanding of these constructed realities.

In order to understand the phenomenon of unemployment, in these terms, it is essential to examine the lived experiences of unemployed individuals as they perceive and interpret them. In

the current study, then, it is important to present the voices of the participants, as well as the author's theoretical interpretations, in the final product. Rather than attempting to quantify the women's responses to job loss by means of an external, psychometric measuring tool, it is more useful, from a constructivist stance, to attempt to grasp the reality of the job loss experience, as it is lived by each of the participants, and to examine this reality in relation to what we have come to believe about the unemployment experience.

A Feminist Approach

From a feminist perspective, earlier literature, such as Gilligan's (1982) study of moral development, Shakeshaft's (1989) critical examination of Maslow's hierarchy of needs, and Hartmann's (1978, 1994) theory of the development of a gender-based division of labour clearly demonstrate the need a) to specifically examine the female experience in the development of theory regarding human behaviour, and b) to question persistent assumptions as to what is "normal" and "appropriate" for men and women alike. Without the inclusion of the perspectives of girls and women in the theory-building process, there is a danger that the male experience will become a standard for human experience in a specific area, with deviations from this standard being viewed as deficient and abnormal. Specifically, as women now represent half the work force, and are at least as likely to become unemployed as their male counterparts, an understanding of the sociological and psychological ramifications of unemployment

is incomplete without the inclusion of the female voice.

B: Theoretical Underpinnings

The theoretical underpinnings of this thesis consist of a) the prominent conceptual models which facilitate our understanding of the unemployment experience, and b) social role theory which addresses the significance of gender in women's lives. A discussion of this literature follows.

Models of Unemployment

As a review of the current research will later substantiate, job loss tends to result in physical, emotional, and psychological distress for the displaced worker. The various theoretical explanations for this distress reflect the differing vantage points of their proponents. Prior to presenting these proposed explanations, several introductory remarks are essential. At the outset, it is important to emphasize that it is the loss of formalized employment, and not the absence of work, that is the focus of the unemployment literature being discussed. Second, because this discourse has developed over a period of 60 years, the scholarly literature presented in this section will reflect both current and historical perspectives. Third, in the interests of conceptual clarity, the analysis has been organized under two broad headings: descriptive and explanatory models of unemployment. Finally, in assessing the strengths and weaknesses of the models, particular attention will be paid to their appropriateness for an understanding of women's unemployment.

Descriptive models of unemployment.

The models of unemployment which have been identified, for the purposes of this discussion, as "descriptive" are, in fact, just that - they describe how the phenomenon of unemployment occurs and what the effects on individual workers, their families, and society at large appear to be. Two important manifestations of this category are the stage and mental health models of unemployment.

Beginning at the turn of the century with the work of Freud (1962, orig 1905), psychological phenomena have tended to be conceptualized as occurring in stages. The unemployment literature, from the time of the Great Depression (Eisenberg & Lazarsfeld, 1938; Bakke, 1940) to the 1980s (Fortin, 1984), reflects this tradition. The Marienthal study (Jahoda, Lazarsfeld & Zeisel, 1933), for example, considered a "classic of empirical social research" (Neurath, 1995, p.91), and one which would dominate research on unemployment for the next 60 years and beyond (Fryer, 1992), documented a steady decline into apathy through a series of stages.

Developing from the broadly-held assumptions in psychology that a) social phenomena change over time and that b) response to stress occurs as a progression through distinct stages (Fryer, 1985), stage models of unemployment describe the process as one resembling bereavement. The dislocated worker, according to this approach, experiences denial, revolt, then acceptance of the job loss, followed by five stages of job search: hope, anxiety,

distress, discouragement and resignation (Fortin, 1984).

The stage model is compelling in that there is empirical evidence to support the notion that the unemployment experience does, in fact, change over time (Dew, Bromet & Penkower, 1992). As Fryer (1985) points out, however, there is little consistency in the order, number, duration or characteristics of the changes as experienced by individual unemployed workers, rendering the use of the term "stage" inappropriate for these purposes.

On a broader conceptual level, the positivist world view which is implicit in the stage approach is problematic for a study of unemployment undertaken from a constructivist perspective. In such a study, which proceeds from an ontological premise that reality is indeterminate and individually constructed (Guba & Lincoln, 1994), the attempt to divide the process of unemployment into discrete, predictable stages would be artificial and unhelpful. In particular, the stage model is inconsistent with the lived experiences, including the unemployment experiences, of many women, whose development is characterized by "multiple patterns, role discontinuities, and a need to maintain a 'fluid' sense of self" (Caffarella & Olson, 1993, p.143), in a life organized around relationships (Gilligan, 1996).

Much of the unemployment research of the late 1970s, the 1980s, and 1990s conforms to what might be called a mental health model. These studies relied on standardized questionnaires and measurements from the mental health field which permitted the

study of large numbers of people and comparisons across populations and over time (Fryer & Payne, 1986). This vast body of research provides convincing evidence that job loss does, in fact, result in significant psychological distress for the dislocated worker. This distress may be manifested in a variety of ways: elevated levels of anxiety and depression (Alvaro & Fraser, 1994); lower mean levels of happiness and present life satisfaction (Banks, 1995); increased feelings of isolation (Singh, Singh, & Rani, 1996); loss of self-esteem (Muller, 1992); a decreased sense of self-efficacy (Goldsmith, Veum, & Darity, 1996); and ultimately a resigned adaptation to unemployment, which results in a lowering of expectations for future success (Warr, Jackson & Banks, 1988). Alcohol disorder and suicide have also been linked to the psychological strain of unemployment (Dooley, Catalano & Hough, 1992; Pritchard, 1990; Rowland & Huws, 1995).

A second wave of research adopting the mental health model addresses the fact that responses to unemployment are not homogeneous. Studies suggest that the age, level of employment commitment, availability of social support, social class, and gender of the dislocated person may significantly affect the degree to which psychological distress is experienced (Leana & Feldman, 1991; Underlid, 1996; Walsh & Jackson, 1995; Winefield, Tiggeman & Winefield, 1991).

The contribution to the unemployment literature of studies based on the mental health model is very clear. Well designed

quantitative studies, using reliable, consistent, replicable data collection methods and statistical analysis have provided convincing evidence "that unemployment causes rather than results from poor psychological health (Pernice, 1996, p.340). However, several limitations of this approach, particularly in terms of its appropriateness for a study of female unemployment, are equally clear.

First, the overwhelming majority of studies of the psychological trauma which follows job loss have been based on exclusively male samples (Leana & Feldman, 1991). From a critical feminist perspective, this is problematic in that research in other areas, such as Gilligan's (1982) study of moral development, has shown that the absence of the female experience in the development of theory may result in an understanding of phenomena which is incomplete and which restricts our conceptualization of human behaviour to the male experience.

That said, simply adding women to the sample does not render the mental health model adequate. This is due, primarily, to the limitations of the data collection instruments themselves.

Studies measuring the psychological impact of unemployment have relied primarily on self-report questionnaires as a means of data collection. Like most psychometric instruments, these have been developed and honed based on prior research. Because this research was conducted almost exclusively on males, there is a danger that the full range of experiences of female workers will not be elicited using this technique. Experiences not previously

conceived of by the author of the questionnaire, for example, will not be offered as possible responses, and will thereby remain invisible.

A second difficulty arises from the fact that many of the tests used to calculate the impact of unemployment were originally intended for the identification of mental illness. This is problematic in that it individualizes and pathologizes an issue that is essentially a social one. Although the dislocated worker may demonstrate signs of physical and psychological distress, these symptoms will usually disappear without further treatment once re-employment has been achieved (Jahoda, 1988).

Finally, the reliance on questionnaires ignores the complexity and ambiguity of the unemployment phenomenon (Pernice, 1996). Forcing an answer leaves no room for mixed feelings; a person relying on government assistance is unlikely to express a lack of desire or willingness to return to work, particularly when asked to do so in writing. The perspectival nature of meanings and realities may thereby be lost in this context.

To summarize, descriptive models of unemployment conceptualize job loss as a process that changes over time and that causes varying degrees and varieties of psychological distress. The reliance of these models on quantitative methods and a positivist, gender-specific world view, however, render them inappropriate for a study of women's unemployment conducted from a constructivist, feminist perspective.

Explanatory models of unemployment.

Explanatory models of unemployment focus on the issue of why unemployment results in the psychological impairment documented by the studies which exemplify the descriptive models of job loss. Important examples of explanatory models include the poverty model, the expectancy-value and agency models, and the deprivation model of unemployment.

Perhaps the most straightforward explanation for the psychological distress following unemployment is that it is a direct result of financial strain. Many studies, including the classic Marienthal project, report an on-going concern with economic issues among the unemployed (Jahoda et al., 1933; Winefield, Tiggeman & Winefield, 1991). The substantial cut in income, even among the well-off, results in enforced economic restructuring, often triggering conflict and role modifications within families (Fryer, 1995). Whelan (1992), following a survey of 3833 respondents, concluded that poverty was clearly a mediating factor in the unemployment process.

As an overarching explanation for the effects of unemployment, however, the poverty model is unsatisfactory. It is not clear why, in the many cases where adequate financial support is available, the psychological effects of job loss persist. Although variables have been identified which explain the differences in people's responses to unemployment, it is equally important to understand why there are so many similarities, even among those in differing financial positions

(Jahoda, 1982). As Feather (1997) suggests, "other variables that relate to the quality of life and the categories of experience that are available to the unemployed are also very important influences on psychological well-being" (p.42). The remaining models under examination address this "quality of life" issue.

Advocates of the expectancy-value and agency models of unemployment view job loss as a phenomenon which frustrates the individual's natural propensity to strive to control his or her own life. From an expectancy-value perspective, a person chooses between various courses of action based on expectations (beliefs about whether or not an action can be successfully performed and beliefs about the anticipated consequences of an action) and valences (the subjective value associated with the anticipated consequences (Feather, 1992). Positive expectations and positive valences result in the psychological state of positive motivation.

Unemployment, according to this framework, frustrates the individual's feelings of positive motivation toward a job that was desired and needed. This frustration, in turn, leads to the sadness and depression frequently associated with job loss (Winefield & Tiggeman, 1994).

Fryer and Payne (1984) develop a similar perspective in what has come to be known as the agency model of unemployment. According to this model, people are viewed as being essentially active agents, "striving for purposeful self-determination,

attempting to make sense of, initiate, influence and cope with events in line with personal values, goals and expectations of the future" (Fryer, 1995, p.270). When unemployment strikes, this sense of agency is frustrated as poverty and general economic insecurity limit life choices and inhibit one's ability to plan for the future. For many, this frustration leads to the various manifestations of psychological impairment identified in unemployment studies.

For others, however, unemployment is viewed as an opportunity for growth. In their initial study, Fryer and Payne (1984) were able to locate several individuals who responded positively to job loss by vigorously pursuing other important goals and activities. Unemployment or employment, according to this model, may be either positive or negative depending on the quality of the experience, particularly in terms of the individual's ability to exercise personal agency.

The expectancy-value model of unemployment has proven very useful in understanding, and even predicting, job-seeking behaviour among the unemployed (Foreman & Murphy, 1996; Schwarzer & Hahn, 1995). Individuals whose expectations and valences regarding work are positive tend to seek, and to find jobs with greater frequency than individuals with negative expectations and valences. As a means of analyzing the multidimensional aspects of the impact of unemployment, however, Feather (1992) suggests that other measures, such as causal attributions, self-efficacy levels and availability of financial support are needed to

supplement the expectancy-value approach.

The agency model of unemployment is compelling in that it accurately portrays human beings as conscious, active agents striving to control their own lives. It addresses the fact that responses to unemployment are not homogeneous, and may, in some cases, be extremely positive and proactive. As well, this model has focused much-needed political attention on the devastating impact of poverty which often follows job loss.

Although the agency model accounts for differences in individual responses to unemployment, it does not account for the similarities, over many decades and in spite of remarkably different circumstances. In particular, this model does not explain why the loss of a bad job, where agency would appear to be restricted, often results in psychological distress. Finally, in emphasizing individual responses, both the expectancy-value and agency models of unemployment do not put equal emphasis on the social dimension of human life. From a constructivist perspective, which conceptualizes reality as being mentally constructed by the individual within a social context, the lack of balance between individual response and social influence is problematic.

In Fryer and Payne's (1984) study of proactive unemployed persons, for example, the meaningful activity which replaced unemployment invariably took place within socially organized and regulated settings such as volunteer and political work. Agency, it would appear, operates within a social context and with

institutional support.

In another study of active coping in unemployment, married women's ability to exercise agency was restricted by domestic responsibilities which appeared to expand following job loss (Walsh & Jackson, 1995). From a critical feminist perspective, this study underlines the need to examine women's experiences of job loss within the broader social structure of their lives. It is within this social structure that women's domestic role continues to be assigned primacy over their workplace role, in spite of labour market statistics documenting women's significant public participation (Lopata, 1994). To be meaningful, then, a study of women's unemployment must take into account society's conceptualization of women and of the role of the institution of work in their lives. The agency model does not include this perspective.

The deprivation model.

Jahoda's (1982) deprivation model of unemployment attempts to maintain a balance between the importance of individual response and the power of social influence in what Jahoda calls a "non-reductionist" approach to the study of unemployment (Jahoda, 1989). Her findings are based on an intensive, 13-month study of the Austrian village of Marienthal, which was rocked by widespread job loss in the aftermath of a factory closure in 1931/32 (Jahoda, Lazarsfeld, & Zeisel, 1933).

During the Marienthal project, a team of researchers lived and worked among the 478 village families, 358 of whom were

drawing relief. While participating in the political, economic, and social life of the community, they amassed a huge collection of data including life histories, family files, meal records, library records, teachers' reports, financial records from businesses and individual time sheets detailing how each day was spent (Jahoda et al., 1933). From these data emerged a conceptualization of employment as an institutionally regulated phenomenon which provides both manifest and latent consequences.

People work for the manifest consequence of money; beyond this, however, employment meets many deeply held psychological needs. These include: a) the provision of a time structure around which to organize one's day, b) the opportunity for social contacts with one's peers, c) the development of a sense of shared purpose within a social context, d) the establishment of a sense of personal identity and status within the community and e) the opportunity to engage in regular, meaningful activity (Jahoda, 1988). Warr's (1987) "vitamin" model of unemployment builds on Jahoda's categories to include physical safety, the opportunity for control and environmental clarity (awareness of expectations and outcomes).

When these "categories of experience" (Jahoda, 1989, p.74), typically imposed on the individual by the institution of employment, are forcibly removed through job termination, former workers are faced with the destruction of a habitual time structure for the waking day, a sense of purposelessness, a narrowing of social contacts, a loss of status and identity and

an absence of regular, skilled activities, in addition to economic strain. The result is the emotional, financial and psychological trauma identified in the unemployment literature. Even when the categories of experience in the workplace had been less than ideal, Jahoda suggests, they were preferable to the emptiness of unemployment.

Jahoda does not dispute the agentic nature of human beings, nor the fact that many jobs are psychologically destructive (Jahoda, 1981, 1984). In accordance with the stage model, her own studies have introduced the notion that the process of unemployment appears to change over time (Jahoda et al., 1933; Jahoda, 1982). It is, however, the emphasis on the "ontological indivisibility of self and the social world" (Jahoda, 1989, p.72) which sets the deprivation model apart from others.

According to this model, there is a "continuous interaction between individuals on the one hand, and the structure and functioning of society on the other" (Jahoda, 1989, p.73). In modern society, individuals have come to rely on the supportive role of the institution of employment to enforce the categories of experience which meet, whether adequately or inadequately, the deep-seated psychological needs described above. When unemployment hits, the institutional support is removed; the needs remain. Although some individuals are able to rely on their own resources, in fact usually turning to some other form of institutional support (Fryer & Payne, 1984), the majority of the unemployed are unprepared, either by their education or by

previous life experiences, to cope on their own (Jahoda, 1984, 1992). The resulting deprivation of essential life-sustaining experiences, according to this model, accounts for the widespread psychological distress which research has identified as a common response to job loss.

Implications.

Jahoda's deprivation model of unemployment provides an appropriate lens through which to explore women's unemployment because it places adequate emphasis on the power of social institutions and the degree to which our connections to these institutions, and to society in general, shape individual behaviour and the interpretations which we assign to the phenomena in our lives (Watson, 1996). From a constructivist perspective, this emphasis is crucial (Charon, 1995). In particular, it is important to understand how the cultural conceptualization of women and of the role of work in their lives shapes women's experiences of unemployment.

It is equally important, however, that the power of the individual not be lost in a study which, from a critical feminist perspective, seeks to empower individual women to share their personal stories. For this reason, an understanding of models which emphasize individual response to job loss, such as the agency and expectancy models, is also essential.

Finally, the deprivation model itself must be re-examined in terms of its applicability to the female experience of job loss. The categories of needs delineated by Jahoda, for example, which

were distilled from studies of unemployed men, cannot be unilaterally superimposed on the experiences of employed or unemployed women. It is not clear, for example, that public status and identity are essential for psychological well-being. Meaningful activity is personally defined (Haworth, 1986); it may be that domestic responsibilities fulfil this requirement for many individuals. The achievement of a sense of purpose, it seems, might also be possible within the domestic sphere. Conversely, Jahoda's (1982) stated assumption that women are protected from the devastating effects of unemployment by returning to the position of homemaker may be more a reflection of the unconscious acceptance of women's assignment to the domestic role within a patriarchal system (Chafetz, 1991) than an accurate description of women's lived experiences and/or occupational aspirations.

Women, Work, and Social Roles

Throughout the immense body of unemployment literature, women's voices are largely silent, except in discussions of the impact of job loss on the family (Dew, Bromet, & Penkower, 1992). This neglect of women in job loss research stems from two related beliefs about women and work. First, the widely-held perception has been that women are not as vulnerable to the psychological devastation of unemployment because, as Jahoda (1982) herself explains, "an alternative is available to them in the return to the traditional role of housewife." (p.53). In recent research, this perception that the role of housewife cushions the negative

impact of job loss among women persists (Lai & Wong, 1998).

Related to this alternative role theory is the assumption that women, because of their commitment to the domestic role, have a lower degree of work commitment than their male counterparts. In the face of job loss, according to this argument, women are less likely to experience the mental, physical, and psychological distress identified in the male unemployment literature (Rowe & Snizek, 1995).

Underpinning these interpretations about women and work is a broadly held view of a society divided along gender lines. The notion of "social role", particularly as it is interpreted by Lopata (1994), provides us with a theoretical framework for examining this issue.

Gender and social role.

In Lopata's view, individuals participate in the life of a society by occupying one or more social roles. A social role is a "set of patterned, mutually interdependent relations between a social person and a social circle, involving negotiated duties and rights" (Lopata, 1994, p.4). Individuals often occupy a number of roles, or a role cluster, at any given time, and roles may change as individuals move through the life cycle.

Cultural models, contained within the society's shared ideology and manifested in the existing social structure, define for members of a society their proper role, or roles, within that particular structure. Within a society, then, an individual arrives at self-definition by drawing on these cultural models,

or on the "cultural repertoire of images and representations" (Mackenzie, 2000, p.126) which both shape and constrain one's perception of which role or roles are appropriate for selection.

Traditionally, social roles have been rigidly divided along gender lines, with women assigned primarily to the domestic sphere as wives, mothers and homemakers, and with men assigned to the public sphere of formal work as provisioners (Levinson, 1996). Although there is much debate as to whether this division has resulted from biological (Archer, 1996), psychological (Hollinger, 1991) or sociological factors (Blumberg, 1978; Chafetz, 1991), or a combination of all three, there is little disagreement that the result for women is a position that is economically and politically unequal to that of men in virtually all modern societies (Andersen, 1993; Blumberg, 1978).

Within the Traditional Marriage Enterprise, as Levinson calls it, the woman has primary responsibility for housekeeping, family life and the care of children and husband, or what Coser (1991) calls the "social survival" of the family. Her authority, however, is secondary to that of her husband, the designated head of the household who is responsible for the family's "material" survival. Although a woman's work is valuable to the family in such a system, it has no "exchange value" in the formal economy (Armstrong & Armstrong, 1994), thereby leaving her financially dependent and with "little sense of inner authority, especially in relation to males" (Levinson, 1996, p.40).

As modern society has evolved, so too have the social roles

of its individual members. The significant entry of married women into the formal work force is evidence of this evolution. Other indicators of change in the area of gender roles include the cohabitation of unmarried couples, more sexual freedom on the part of females, and the introduction of the negotiated marriage, with sexual, money and work issues being open to discussion (Armstrong & Armstrong, 1994; Lopata, 1994). As well, research indicates that traditional, work-centred definitions of the fatherhood role neglect the importance of family roles to many modern men (Barnett, 1999; Cohen, 1993). Along with the evidence of change, however, is evidence of substantial societal resistance to these changes.

Women's work.

When women enter the workplace, they often enter an environment where their traditional roles of nurturer, supporter and caretaker are reproduced. In 1994, for example, 70% of working Canadian women could be found in teaching, nursing, clerical, and sales and service positions (Statistics Canada, 1995). Even in blue-collar jobs, women have been found to be assigned to "gender-appropriate" sections of the workplace, such as reception, cafeteria or cleaning (McKinnon & Ahola-Sidaway, 1995).

The low salary and low prestige which our culture assigns to predominantly female jobs reflect the secondary, subordinate status assigned to the traditional woman's role as wife and mother. Full-time women workers in Canada continue to earn only

81% of male earnings (Statistics Canada, 2000b). Skills associated with females tend to be rated as being less valuable than those associated with males (Gaskell, 1993). Female managers tend to supervise other women, not men, and to be concentrated near the bottom of the chain of command (Reskin & Ross, 1992).

Family roles are still expected, by society and by the women themselves, to be given highest priority by working women (Coser, 1991; Lopata, 1994). This is reflected in irregular employment patterns, including part-time, flex-time and non-workday schedules, especially among mothers of young children. (Statistics Canada, 1994). For women, the presence of children tends to increase the likelihood of work interruptions, especially if they're not married. For male employees, on the other hand, marriage and the presence of young children decrease the likelihood of interruptions in work patterns (Cook & Beaujot, 1996). As well, a 1994 report reveals that employed women with a spouse and at least one child less than age five spent 5.3 hours per day on household activities, around 2.0 hours more per day than their male counterparts (Statistics Canada, 1994).

The combination of domestic and public roles by a large number of modern women has elicited much concern regarding role strain, role conflict and home-career conflict, terms which refer to the stresses - physical, sociological and psychological - which women allegedly confront in their efforts to adequately balance multiple roles (Lopata, 1991; Tipping & Farmer, 1991).

Lopata (1994) takes issue with these concerns as being based on a restrictive definition of the wife and mother roles.

First, the notion of role strain and conflict is based on a "scarcity" model of human resources which assumes that human energy is fixed and limited. When individuals occupy several roles, according to this model, their energy is depleted and distress results. Recent research suggests that this conceptualization of the human potential may, in fact, be erroneous and needlessly pessimistic (Barnett, 1999; Coser, 1991). The "role-expansion" approach (Barnett, Marshall, & Singer, 1992) suggests that human beings, including women, may wither "when faced with a simplistic life after a more complex social involvement" (Lopata, 1994, p.256). Multiple roles, rather than causing unmanageable stress, may, in fact, benefit both men and women alike (Barnett, 1999; Rothbell, 1991). This benefit may stem from the fact that individuals involved in multiple roles are provided with "more than one arena in which to obtain the role-related rewards that directly influence psychological well-being" (Barnett, 1999, p.635). In fact, individuals who occupy only one role, such as non-working women, may be more vulnerable to negative circumstances within that role.

Lopata's second concern is that the issues surrounding role conflict, and its negative impact on families and children, appear to centre exclusively on working mothers, with no parallel worries about the effects of working fathers. This reveals a

continuing bias that the role of homemaker and caregiver is primarily that of the female, and that this role should take precedence over other roles in her life. Whereas fathers may be fully engaged in their professional lives without fear of criticism regarding their commitment to family, women's involvement in the workplace often raises concerns in this area.

Finally, professed concerns about role conflict are not being translated into changes in the workplace, which is organized around a model of male workers who can commit themselves without prejudice to their jobs. Policies which would assist mothers in the management of family and professional duties, such as parental leave, flex time, and on-site child care are often on the books, in corporate settings, but are missing in practice (Barnett, 1999). If multiple roles are a problem, it seems that the only solution for the woman is to remove herself from the workplace and to reassume her "primary" role of homemaker.

Implications.

To summarize, it appears that the impact of social roles remains a powerful influence in the lives of modern women and men. Although the majority of women now work outside the home, their occupations, wages, and on-going household responsibilities reflect the persistence of the traditional housewife role model and of the secondary status often assumed to be inherent in the woman's public role. As well, it would appear that concerns about role conflict continue to be constrained by predominant

social structural assumptions about the roles of men and women in modern society. In a study of women's unemployment, awareness of these assumptions is essential.

In the face of unemployment, then, do women cheerfully revert to the domestic role that has long been considered their birthright, and indeed their obligation? How is news of the loss received by friends and family? How does job loss affect the family dynamic in terms of the decision-making process within the family, the control of money, and the sharing of household tasks? How does the unemployed woman view her "self", and her place in society now that her public role has been terminated? How are friendships affected by the woman's changed status? What is the direction and manifestation of the support offered the unemployed woman by friends, spouse and other family members? These are issues that need to be addressed in order to provide a more complete understanding of human unemployment.

C: Review of Unemployment Studies

Sixty years of research support the notion that involuntary job loss results in significant psychological distress for the dislocated worker (Leana & Feldman, 1991; Underlid, 1996; Walsh & Jackson, 1995; Winefield et al., 1991). This research underpins the various models of unemployment which were discussed in the previous section of this chapter and clearly establishes that job loss impacts negatively on the emotional, physical, and psychological health of the individuals involved, as well as that of their families. However, as was noted earlier, the neglect of

the female worker in this research is profound.

In recent years, a few studies of female unemployment have begun to emerge, undermining earlier assumptions that women do not suffer following job loss. These studies have included both quantitative and qualitative approaches to gain understanding of women's responses to job loss. Because of the paucity of research in this area, studies from the past 15 years will be included, and the implications for the current study will be presented following the discussion of both qualitative and quantitative studies.

Quantitative Studies of Women's Unemployment

Many of the studies which have examined women's unemployment, either specifically or exclusively, have adopted the quantitative perspective which was prevalent in the large body of literature surrounding male job loss. This research has produced important findings regarding a) the psychological and physical impact of job loss, b) the financial dimension of unemployment, and c) the effects of various coping styles in mediating responses to the unemployment experience.

Psychological and physical impact of job loss.

A Canadian survey study (Dickinson, Schissel, & Andre, 1992) of 6105 women ages 35-64 used statistical analysis to examine the impact of employment status on physical health. Participation in the labour force, it was found, appeared to be positively linked with good health, and, in addition, insulated women from negative lifestyle practices such as the use of alcohol.

Several quantitative studies refute earlier assumptions that female workers were somehow protected from the devastating psychological consequences of job loss. In a French study, for example, 632 new mothers were examined. Psychological stress was measured by statistical analysis of data gleaned from face to face interviews as well as from two sets of questionnaires mailed out over the course of the first year after childbirth (Saurel-Cubizolles, Romito, Ancel & Lelong, 2000). After controlling for other variables, such as marital status, age and educational level, the unemployed women in the sample were found to experience an excess of psychological stress compared to those who were employed. The connection between unemployment and stress was most notable among the women who had previously occupied the more qualified occupations.

The impact of job loss on psychological well-being, measured by the General Health Questionnaire (Goldberg, 1972), was examined in 86 unemployed and 79 employed 31-50 year old Chinese women in Hong Kong (Lai, Chan, & Luk, 1997). As has been documented in their Western counterparts, the unemployed women in this study displayed more psychological disturbance than their employed peers. Similarly, a study of 196 employed and 54 unemployed married women in India (Thakar & Misra, 1999) revealed that, in spite of the stresses associated with combining work and domestic roles, the employed women enjoyed better well-being than those who were identified as unemployed.

In a U.S. study of 141 female factory workers (Dew, Bromet,

& Penkower, 1992), 73 of whom were laid off over the course of the investigation, the effects of job loss on levels of depression and anxiety were measured using the Hopkins Symptoms Checklist (Derogatis, Lipman, Rickels, Uhlenhuth, & Covi, 1974). Because the lay-offs occurred after the women were already involved in an on-going study of the health of working people, it was possible to measure levels of well-being both before and after job loss. Results provided further evidence of the negative impact of unemployment on the psychological health of female workers, in that the occurrence and duration of the lay-off was found to be significantly linked to increased depressive symptoms. Rife's (1997) review of the literature surrounding women's unemployment concurs that depression and anxiety are common responses to job loss among female workers.

A study of 432 university-educated, unemployed Israeli men and women (Shamir, 1985) disputed the notion that domestic roles protect women from the psychological ills associated with job loss. Using the Depressive Adjective Check List (Lubin, 1967), a widely-used self-report measure, it was found that childless individuals suffered less than those with children. More housework, rather than acting as a buffer from psychological ills, in fact led to higher levels of depression among the individuals in this study.

A New England study (Bird, 1996), based on national longitudinal survey data from a representative sample of 1645 adults, concurs. Although some housework is reported as being

acceptable, and even beneficial, in terms of reducing stress, the study concludes that women are performing unpaid household work beyond the point of maximum benefit, whereas men are not.

Other researchers disagree. In a recent study in Norway, for example, 213 unemployed individuals were examined by way of structured interviews (Underlid, 1996). Women were found to be more active than their male counterparts, due to their roles as homemakers. This domestic activity was found, in turn, to correlate positively with a higher level of mental health.

As well, a study comparing the levels of life satisfaction and of happiness in 40 employed and 40 unemployed Indian women supports the Norwegian findings (Saxena, 1996). After recording levels of life satisfaction, perceived happiness, and anxiety, it was found that non-working women reported greater life satisfaction and happiness than their working counterparts.

The financial dimension of job loss.

Research suggests that unemployment has devastating financial, as well as psychological, consequences for women. A 1988 study of 114 American Latinas who were laid off from a California tuna factory supports this notion (Romero, Castro, & Cervantes, 1988). Responses to questionnaires and comments elicited during an open-ended discussion with each participant revealed that economic hardship was felt by almost all of the women, even in providing the basic necessities for themselves and for their families.

Findings from a survey of 379 unemployed male and female

U.S. workers suggest that the immediate negative economic impact of job loss merely foreshadows long-term financial difficulties for many unemployed females in the primary labour market (Gordus & Yamakawa, 1988). After analyzing the labour market status, net income loss, and household income statistics of male and female autoworkers at a major U.S. factory, it was established that dislocated women are more likely than their male counterparts to be forced to find re-employment outside the auto industry, and are more likely, therefore, to accept a larger cut in income, often with serious financial implications for their families.

Somewhat contrary to these findings, results from the Israeli study mentioned earlier (Shamir, 1985) support the notion that the psychological well-being of men is more strongly affected by job loss than that of women. This gender difference, according to the investigator, cannot be explained by either the alternative role or the lower work commitment hypothesis, but rather by the difference in the financial states of unemployed men and women. Because the women in the study did not report as much financial hardship as a result of the job loss as did the men, their superior psychological state was attributed to this economic advantage.

Coping styles and the impact of job loss.

Several quantitative studies focus on the mediating effect of personal coping styles on the unemployment experience. For example, in a study of 79 employed and 104 unemployed, working-class Hong Kong Chinese women (Lai & Wong, 1998), levels of

optimism were measured using a Chinese version of the Revised Life Orientation Test (Scheier, Carver, & Bridges, 1994).

Dispositional optimism, findings indicate, tends to moderate the effects of unemployment on psychological health, and may be, therefore, an important personal resource for coping with job loss.

An earlier study of 150 unemployed Swedish plant workers, 89% of whom were female (Brenner & Starrin, 1988), produced similar results. Among these workers, an attitude of Mastery or perceived control, measured by the Mastery scale of Pearlin, Menaghan, Lieberman, & Mullan (1981), had a strong stress-reducing effect on individual responses to job loss.

In a study of 94 male and 63 female laid-off employees from the Kennedy Space Centre, the coping styles of the participants were examined and compared based on gender (Leana & Feldman, 1991). Through the use of the General Health Questionnaire (Goldberg, 1972), Warr's (1978) 15-item measure of life satisfaction, and Pearlin and Schooler's (1978) research on coping with stress, researchers found that men relied on problem-focused activities such as job search, in order to cope with job loss, while women relied on symptom-focused activities such as seeking social support. Women's reliance on these activities as a coping mechanism was then offered as a possible explanation for their greater difficulty in finding re-employment.

In a study of older (over 50) unemployed female workers (Rife, 1995), the role of social support in mediating coping

styles was examined. Using the Geriatric Depression Scale (Sheikh & Yesavage, 1986) and an eight item scale to measure perceived social support, it was found that positive social support was linked to higher job search intensity. As well, it was noted that support from one's peers, that is, from fellow-unemployed persons, was perceived as being more positive than that of employed friends or family members, thus underlining the importance of peer support during unemployment.

A 1996 study of 24 unemployed, single-parent, head of household black and Hispanic women in Chicago, Illinois (Sloan, Jason, & Addlesperger, 1996) utilized self-report questionnaires to study the impact of social support. Findings indicated that support from friends was related to fewer reports of psychological and physical problems, and of negative life experiences in general.

Qualitative Studies of Women's Unemployment

In a few cases, researchers have studied women's unemployment experiences from a qualitative perspective. Some important examples of these studies examine a) the overall impact of job loss, and b) the role of social support in the job loss experience.

The overall impact of job loss.

Because of the emergent perspective of the qualitative paradigm, studies based on this approach tend to consider the experience of unemployment in a holistic fashion, rather than splitting off specific aspects of the process for examination.

Researchers in a study of 61 unemployed unionized garment workers in the New York City area, for example, conducted focus group sessions to attempt to identify the critical issues that face unemployed women (Donovan, Jaffe, & Pirie, 1987). Five areas of concern were discussed.

Loss of income was the most devastating aspect of the job loss experience for these women. Although most were in receipt of unemployment benefits at the time of the group sessions, many found that their incomes were insufficient to cover basic needs such as food, clothing, and shelter. The loss of a sense of fulfilment and of self-esteem was also an important concern. Contrary to the implications of the alternative role and social role hypotheses, the identities of the women in this study appeared to be, to a great extent, grounded in their roles as workers.

Job loss caused distress for the families of the unemployed women as well. Changes in financial status created conflict; loss of income created shifts in the balance of dependence within marriages. The loss of workplace relationships was found to be depressing and isolating. Finally, the lack of routines left the women feeling lost and without purpose.

A Swedish study of 40 unemployed women consisted of three interviews with the women over a period of about two years (Davies & Esseveld, 1985). Although the interviews were thematically structured, much freedom was given to the women to discuss areas of personal interest and concern. Findings were

similar to those described above. The women's initial relief at having more time to perform domestic duties soon gave way to difficulties in successfully finding a satisfactory structure for their day. Although housework provided some sense of meaning, it did not replace formal work as a source of identity. As well, any joy at being at home was lessened by the economic pressure to become re-employed. This pressure, it was found, often resulted in the women accepting jobs that did not meet their original hopes and expectations. These expectations usually included adequate pay, room for advancement, and the ability to mesh domestic and professional responsibilities.

A 1998 (Drewery) New Zealand case study of a single mother of late adolescent children focuses on the woman's struggle to maintain personal power in the face of financial dependence. Analysis of unstructured interviews with the woman reveals that agencies of the State, including the Welfare Office, gradually increase their surveillance over her domestic life and restrict her options for agentic action in public life. This approach, the author suggests, reveals society's deeper acceptance of a model of personhood that is based on property ownership and financial status and that devalues the traditional work of women and other forms of "nonmaterial" productivity.

The role of social support in job loss.

A few qualitative studies examine the role of social support in mediating women's responses to the unemployment experience. A 1995 British study, for example, examines the ways in which

partner support and gender mediate individual responses to job loss (Walsh & Jackson, 1995). Of the 75 participants, who were identified through community agencies offering services for the unemployed, 60% were female. Both men and women, findings suggest, cope better with the stresses of job loss when assisted by a supportive partner. Unsupported women, however, report greater difficulties in coping with problems and a greater need to elicit help outside the family.

A qualitative American study of 89 unemployed women from New York State examined the impact of social support in women's responses to job loss (Ratcliff & Bogdan, 1988). Specifically, these investigators were concerned with the nature of the support that was being offered to unemployed women. One-hour, tape-recorded interviews were conducted with participants whose past positions ranged from minimum wage jobs to highly specialized careers. Findings suggest that women do not receive consistent and strong support from spouses and friends in their efforts to become re-employed, but rather are surrounded by "caring others" who may, in fact, undermine their attempts to become re-employed by denying the legitimacy of their professional goals. Support that encourages unemployed women to give up their job search in favour of staying at home with family, when this is not what the women want or need, is not, in the authors' estimation, "truly supportive."

Implications From Earlier Studies

It is evident that the existing studies of women's

unemployment challenge assumptions about the secondary role of work in women's lives and about the impact of its loss on their well-being. For many of the women in this literature, the role of homemaker and mother is not sufficient to prevent the negative consequences which we have come to expect when the dislocated workers are male. Not only are the women psychologically bereft, but the financial implications for them and for their families also appears to be significant.

The existing studies, however, have several serious limitations. First, they are limited to a very small number and are, therefore, inadequate in providing a comprehensive view of the female unemployment experience. Second, the studies are often non-North American, with a small number examining the job loss experiences of either Canadian or American women. Third, the existing studies tend to focus on blue-collar and minority ethnic workers. It is not clear, therefore, whether different responses would be elicited from North American workers or from those with professional or white-collar status. Fourth, the extensive use of quantitative measuring tools in the vast majority of the literature surrounding female unemployment is problematic for the many reasons outlined in the previous section. Finally, the contradictory findings reported above leave many unanswered questions regarding women's unemployment and the studies have invariably issued calls for further research in a long-neglected area (Barnett, 1999; Lai, Chan, & Luk, 1997; Rife, 1997; Walsh & Jackson, 1995). Our understanding of female

job loss, it appears, is far from complete.

D: The Purpose of the Study

To summarize, the review of the literature surrounding unemployment documents a body of research which clearly supports the notion that job loss has devastating consequences for the well-being of dislocated workers. Much of this research, however, has been quantitative and based on exclusively male samples. Since women now form half the labour force, their neglect in this discourse is no longer acceptable. Explanations for this neglect, such as alternative role and lower work commitment hypotheses, may be based on the assignment of gender-specific social roles to men and women, rather than on any documented understanding of women's experiences.

The few studies which have specifically explored women's unemployment suggest that, in fact, job loss has serious psychological, financial and social consequences for female workers. Calls for further study in the area of women's job loss are consistent throughout this literature.

The current study is a response to these calls. Broadly stated, its purpose is to examine women's unemployment experiences. More specifically, the goal of the study is to explore the following questions:

1. According to their own perspectives, what are women's experiences in response to job loss?
2. How are unemployed women moving forward and integrating the job loss experience into the overall context of their

lives?

3. What do unemployed women's stories of job loss tell us about the causes of the distress which follows job loss?

Because it is imperative to view unemployment through the eyes of the women involved, and not through the lens of concepts and assumptions gleaned from studies of male unemployment (Stalker, 1996), a qualitative approach is clearly appropriate. In particular, a perspective is needed which respects the women themselves as the persons best able to describe their own experiences (Acker, Barry, & Esseveld, 1991; Kasper, 1994), and which acknowledges the intimate connection between the individual and the social institutions which shape our lives. The present study, in that its approach is feminist and constructivist, adopts such a perspective.

Wolcott (1992) identifies three "postures" which underlie qualitative research: theory-driven, concept-driven, and problem-focused stances. Feminist research, including this current study, falls under the heading of "problem-focused" research (Morse, 1994), in that it has an underlying political agenda, which is to challenge the social science status quo and to ensure that women's voices are heard, analyzed and presented. Within this context, theory, rather than driving the process, serves to focus the inquiry and to act as a "conceptual template with which to compare and contrast results" (Morse, 1994, p.221).

Subsumed within the overarching problem-focused perspective of this study are further goals of description and explanation

(Marshall & Rossman, 1995). The study is descriptive in that it documents the job loss and re-employment process as it is experienced by women, including the various events, beliefs, attitudes and structures which shape these phenomena. It is explanatory in that it attempts to a) enhance our understanding as to why the unemployment experience has the impact which is described by the women in the study and b) link this understanding to the larger body of unemployment literature.

To conclude, the overall aim of the study is to assist in solving the problem of women's neglect in the unemployment literature by hearing women's voices and by drawing on their personal experiences of job loss. Through the inclusion of the female experience, we may gain greater understanding of unemployment and of its impact on workers, both male and female.

E: Chapter Summary

In this chapter, the conceptual, theoretical, and research-based underpinnings of the current study were outlined. In order to a) examine and present the experiences of unemployment as they are perceived by the individuals involved, and b) broaden our understanding of human unemployment by including the female experience, a constructivist, feminist approach was adopted for the study. Jahoda's deprivation model of unemployment provides a theoretical template, which suggests possible explanations for the psychological devastation caused by job loss, and which supports the notion that the individual experience of unemployment must be considered within its broader social

context. Equally important in our attempt to understand women's job loss experiences is an appreciation of the on-going division of social roles by gender, the subsequent de-valuing of the feminine, and the insistence that women give priority to the roles which our culture has assigned to them.

Existing studies, for the most part, refute earlier assumptions that women's job loss experiences were ameliorated by their alternative role of homemaker and by a lower commitment to their professional roles. Both quantitative and qualitative studies suggest that women also suffer psychologically, interpersonally, and financially when jobs are lost.

The current study is an attempt to supplement the very limited number of studies, particularly those that involve North American women. Specifically, its purpose is to uncover and present women's perceived responses to job loss, and to interpret what these responses may tell us about unemployment in general. In this regard, it is problem-focused, because of its feminist agenda, as well as being both descriptive and explanatory in purpose. In the following chapter, the design which was developed in order to achieve this goal will be presented.

Chapter Three: The Research Strategy

A coherent research strategy involves the integration of at least two components: a) the intellectual puzzle which one is attempting to solve and from which evolve the questions which express it and b) a research design and methodology that are consistent with the ontological and epistemological stances reflected in these questions (Mason, 1996). In the previous chapter, it was explained that the "puzzle", in this instance, is to gain a better understanding of women's unemployment experiences by viewing them from the perspective of the women themselves. In this chapter, the methodology which was designed to facilitate this process will be discussed, and brief biographies of the unemployed women who participated in the study will be presented.

A: Methodology

In keeping with the descriptive/explanatory purpose of the study as described above, as well as the study's constructivist, feminist framework, a design strategy identified by Marshall and Rossman (1995) as the "in-depth interview study" was adopted. Using this design, it was possible to explore women's job loss in terms of the meanings which the women themselves assigned to the experience, within the overall context of their lives (Melia, 1997). Within the context of this design strategy, several specific methodological concerns were addressed. These include: sampling procedures, researcher qualifications, ethical considerations, data collection and recording methods, and data

analysis procedures. A discussion of these important aspects of the study will now be presented.

Participant Selection

In seeking unemployed women for the study, it was first necessary to carefully define what was meant by this descriptor. The term "unemployed", for the purposes of the study, does not refer to an absence of work, but rather to the termination of the contractual agreement between an individual and her employer whereby the individual had performed work for the employer in exchange for a wage. In most, but not all cases, this termination occurred as a result of a decision on the part of the employer. Individuals previously employed and actively seeking work, as well as those discouraged workers who may have given up by the time of the interviews, were included. Because it is the process of job loss that was being studied, women who had never been formally employed, or who had chosen to work in the home were not considered as potential participants.

The identification of participants who complied with this definition proved to be a challenging and time-consuming task. Apart from the first three women, who were referred by mutual acquaintances early on, the process of identifying and engaging the cooperation of the remaining nine unemployed women required persistence and patience, as well as the assistance of government program employees in several municipalities. To this end, on-going contact was established with three Job-finding Clubs, two offices of Human Resources Development Canada, two Alternative

School principals and various teachers, one office of the Ontario Works Program, and an Employment Assistance Office through which all local unemployed individuals are filtered prior to receiving government-sponsored training.

The unemployed women who were interviewed in this study were selected by a process referred to in the literature as "focused or judgmental sampling" (Arber, 1993) or "intensity sampling" (Morse, 1994), terms that are appropriate in that individuals were sought out for this study, specifically on the basis of their unemployed status, as being "experiential experts" in the area of unemployment (Morse, 1994, p.229). In contacting the various "gatekeepers", that is, the friends, colleagues, and agency workers who assisted me in locating the women, I, at first, requested that they refer to me any women who were "unemployed" according to the definition above, and who would be willing to share their experiences with me. There was no attempt on my part to select specific occupational groups, ages, or social situations. After being put in contact with the first six participants, none of whom had dependent children, I asked that only unemployed women with children be referred. Because I wished to explore the role of mother and homemaker as an alternative to formal employment, I believed that this stipulation was essential.

I did not reject potential candidates myself as this was done, according to the guidelines outlined above, by the individuals who had access to the unemployed women themselves.

The agencies were, in general, very protective regarding the identity of their clients and I was allowed contact only when it was initiated by the participants themselves. In one case, a former school bus driver who had originally agreed to participate simply stopped taking or returning my calls.

This sample, therefore, is not intended to be representative of the entire population of unemployed female workers; neither is there any reason to assume that it would be an atypical representation of the experience of unemployed women. More importantly for the purposes of this study, the sample does provide an opportunity to study in depth and at length the experiences of a small number of dislocated women, varying in age, marital status, social and parental status, and length of time since termination occurred. Because these women represent a variety of backgrounds, and yet share the common experience of job loss, their perspectives provide insights which deepen our understanding of the social phenomenon which we call unemployment (Arber, 1993; Guba & Lincoln, 1994; Marshall & Rossman, 1995).

Participants were sought in three municipalities located approximately 80 kilometres from a large urban centre. This location was selected for several reasons. First, this area provided a rich mix of businesses and individuals from which to identify a sample with reasonable variation in circumstances. Second, this area has been hit hard by factory closures and downsizing over the past 10 years, thereby increasing the likelihood of finding sufficient numbers of participants. Third,

the ease with which trust could be built between researcher and participants was enhanced by the fact that the researcher also lives in this general area and was able, therefore, to grasp and identify with many of the site-specific references made throughout the interview process (Kasper, 1994; Marshall & Rossman, 1995). Finally, previous experience on the part of the researcher in the re-training of dislocated individuals in this geographic area allowed the researcher access to gatekeepers who were then able and willing to refer unemployed women to the study.

In determining the size of the sample to be studied, focused sampling procedures were continued until a point of redundancy of information was reached (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). This occurred following the interviewing of 12 participants, a number deemed to be adequate by experts in the qualitative research field (Lincoln & Guba 1985).

The Researcher Role

Because, in qualitative research, the researcher is "the primary instrument for data collection and analysis" (Merriam & Simpson, 1995, p.98), it is important to consider my qualifications for this role. As a trained educator and administrator of an adult retraining program for many years, I have had extensive experience in the process of interviewing unemployed adults and in assisting them in the re-employment process. Success in this position required, as well as technical teaching skills, abilities that have been noted as essential to

the qualitative research process. These include: a) the ability to create a safe environment for dislocated adults who feel disempowered and undervalued (Neuman, 1997), b) the ability to be flexible to a wide variety of needs, approaches and opinions (Neuman, 1997), and c) the ability to observe behaviour and facilitate discussion (Janesick, 1994). Finally, as a woman and as an adult whose employment was arbitrarily ended by a cut in government funding, I believe that I was in an excellent position to act as an empathic, knowledgeable listener who was, as Kasper (1994) suggests, "familiar with both the seriousness and the consequences" of the phenomenon being discussed (p.269).

Attention was also paid to the notion that the researcher must be "reflexive in research" (McMahon, 1996, p.320). This is particularly true in an in-depth interview study in which sensitive issues may be discussed that trigger responses in the researcher as well as the researched. To this end, at various times throughout the data collection process, I found it necessary to reflect upon my personal experiences and opinions regarding the role of work in women's lives and to document these reflections in a journal. Being unemployed myself, and struggling with some of the same issues as the women in the study, I found myself feeling challenged and changed by the project in which I was, it seemed, also a participant.

Ethical Considerations

Ethical considerations for this study were guided by concern for the safety and privacy of the participants (Merriam &

Simpson, 1995). During the initial telephone call, and again at the first interview, participants were informed as to the purpose of the study, as well as how data were to be collected and used. This information was presented again, in writing, prior to the first interview, with the assurance that the participant could withdraw from the project at any time, without prejudice (See Appendix A). Participants were then asked to read and sign these forms before discussions began.

Confidentiality was an important consideration, because participants were being asked to share politically and personally sensitive aspects of their lives (Neuman, 1997). Details as to how confidentiality would be maintained were explained to the participants during the initial telephone contact and again at the first interview. To this end, all interviews were conducted by myself, pseudonyms were assigned prior to transcription, place names were changed, and tapes were carefully stored in a locked vault. A confidentiality agreement was signed by the transcriber, outlining the need for discretion and care in the handling of the tapes and hard copies, as well as the electronic manipulation of the materials (See Appendix B).

In the debate as to which will take priority, the rights of the researcher to know versus the rights of the interviewee to privacy and safety (Merriam & Simpson, 1995), critical feminists come out clearly on the side of the participant. As Kasper (1994) explains, "I assume that by conforming to her needs I am achieving feminist research expectations of equity and fairness

as well as 'doing' better science" (p.270). In keeping with this approach, participants in this study were not "persuaded", as other social scientists have recommended (Berg, 1995), to discuss topics with which they felt uncomfortable or unsafe. They were, on the other hand, encouraged to guide the interview to the extent that they were comfortable with that role.

To further promote an atmosphere of safety with the process, participants were informed that copies of all transcripts of their interviews would be sent to them for verification and minor revisions. This, in fact, took place immediately following transcription with the result that no major errors were noted. In terms of reciprocity, participants were told that a summary of the findings of the study would be sent to them following completion of the project.

Data Collection

In order to explore the women's personal experiences of unemployment and their strategies for resolving this phenomenon in their lives, two in-depth, one-hour individual interviews were conducted with the first nine participants. For the final three participants, the two interviews were collapsed into one long interview, in order to accommodate the fact that individuals involved were participating in an active job search, with several job interviews per week, and were unavailable for more than one session for this project. Lengthy interviews were considered necessary so that the unemployed women would be able to consider, in detail, their job loss experiences, and have time to reflect

on the impact of these experiences on various aspects of their lives.

The location of the interviews was mutually decided between the participants and myself, with four being held in my home. Four were held in the homes of participants, and the remaining four took place in a private room at a Job-Finding Club in the participants' community. These venues proved to be excellent as, in each case, there were no interruptions and the women were able to relax and discuss the issues without fear of being overheard or disturbed.

During the initial interview, the topics were introduced, and the participants given an opportunity to become comfortable with the issues, the format and with me as the interviewer through discussion of their personal backgrounds, their former workplaces, and the circumstances surrounding their job termination (Morse, 1994). In the second interview, discussion progressed to a deeper level, revolving around their present situations, and how losing their jobs has impacted on daily routines, relationships and feelings of self-worth.

A semi-structured interview format was utilized for two reasons. First, the use of a few standardized questions (See Appendix C) provided consistency from one interview to the next, thereby facilitating comparison of data (Merriam & Simpson, 1995). Second, the use of questions assured that important topics, perhaps forgotten by the interviewee, were introduced (Berg, 1995) and discussed. The schedule of questions, however,

was clearly not etched in stone. Flexibility, on the part of the interviewer, to the categories of experience deemed to be significant by the individual participant, allowed the interview to flow in different directions with different participants. This approach respects the notion, important in feminist research, that the participant, and not the researcher, is the expert in the area of that individual's personal experience of unemployment (Kasper, 1994).

Care was taken throughout the interview process to provide adequate periods of silence, so that the women had time to reflect on the issues presented and to complete their thoughts without interruption or editing by me (Kasper, 1994). This is part of the on-going concern, among feminist researchers, with "the realizing as fully as possible women's voices in data gathering" (Oleson, 1994, p.167). The resulting data are, therefore, rich with reflection and detail. As well, a visual overview of the data underlines the fact that I spoke very little during the course of the interviews, while the participants spoke at great length, sometimes for pages at a time. Both verbal and non-verbal prompts were used, where necessary, to encourage participants to expand on responses and to give illustrative examples of their statements, again so that thick data might enrich the final presentation (Fielding, 1993). Specific examples of verbal prompts include: a) Could you tell me a story about that? and b) What do you mean when you say...?

Attention was also paid to nonverbal communication. The

literature suggests that "interviewers must hear not only what the subjects say, but also how they say it" (Berg, 1995, p.49). Kasper (1994) emphasizes the need for this approach in research involving female participants, stating that hesitancy in women's speech patterns may be evidence of "the inadequacy of accepted forms of expression to reflect a woman's felt experience" (p.271). In the case of several of the participants in this study, nonverbal communication often included such behaviours as weeping and head-shaking, and signs of profound frustration and pain as various aspects of their unemployment were discussed.

A focus group interview was held following the individual interviews, involving four of the participants and lasting approximately one hour and a half. This approach was used in order to "promote self-disclosure among participants", as the literature suggests (Krueger, 1994, p.11), by providing a non-threatening environment within which a group of individuals who have something in common may openly discuss their common issues without censure, editorializing, or fear of exposure. As well, in keeping with the constructivist perspective which undergirds this study, the focus group approach embodies the belief that opinions and perceptions are often made in interaction with others (Berg, 1995; Lopata, 1994). It follows, then, that insights about unemployment might emerge during group discussion that would otherwise remain undiscovered, even by the women themselves.

The focus group sessions began with the establishment of

group rules, stressing confidentiality and attention to the opinions of everyone present. My role was to encourage comments of all types, such as changes of mind, expressions of disagreement or uncertainty and alternative explanations at any time (Krueger, 1994). Open-ended questions were introduced by me in order to a) elicit discussion of themes which I had identified from the individual interviews or b) clarify points from the interviews that required expansion (See Appendix D).

Field notes were written by me following the individual interviews and the focus group session, and consisted of my immediate impressions and reflections, as well as the identification of methodological problems and of points that required clarification in future sessions. These notes formed part of a reflexive journal, such as that described by Lincoln and Guba (1985), which also included a) the daily schedule and logistics of the study, b) a personal diary for reflection and speculation at times other than immediately following interview sessions and c) a methodological log for decisions regarding process (p.327).

Transcription of the interview and focus group tapes began immediately following the first interview and was concluded shortly after completion of the final interview, facilitating early examination of the data. The transcription yielded 650 pages of data, with 1.5 line spacing.

Data Analysis

Intensive content data analysis began following the first

interview, and was used to determine when a point of redundancy has been reached, thereby ending data collection. This was an inductive, iterative process (Huberman & Miles, 1994), and consisted of the uncovering of a) themes within each participant's interview, b) links between individual accounts and those of the women as a group and c) relationships between these overarching themes and the theoretical framework of the study (Kasper, 1994).

Data were manipulated manually, using a process which I have used during a previous study of similar magnitude. Salient statements of participants were identified according to tentative themes (drawn from the unemployment literature) and were colour-coded using highlighters on a hard copy of the transcribed data. "Theme files" were then created within Word Perfect by pulling similarly coded sections across the individual interviews together into a cohesive unit. The theme files were further subdivided into "sub-theme files" using the same colour-coding system, thereby reducing the 650 pages of data to 160 pages. Individual statements by participants about each sub-theme were then examined in detail, and comparisons drawn between the reflections of the 12 participants. Finally, these findings were discussed in relation to the broader body of unemployment literature.

The "write-up" (Wolcott, 1990) consists of two sections. In the first, the voices of the women themselves take precedence, and will provide the reader with a clear sense of their personal,

lived experiences of unemployment. In the second section, I discuss the data in relation to the existing research and to the theoretical framework of the study.

B: Biographies of the Participants

In order to better appreciate the experiences of unemployment as they are described by the women in the study, it is important to have at least some sense of who these women are, how they have lived up to this point, and how formal work has fit into the overall pattern of their adult lives. To this end, brief biographies of each of the 12 women will now be presented, using pseudonyms for all personal and place names.

Bonnie

Bonnie is a 34-year old single mother of one 15-year old daughter who is currently in Grade 11. She has lived all of her life in the same small town, having been raised herself by a single mother.

After high school, Bonnie worked at a variety of low-skill jobs, including waitressing, bartending and cab dispatching. Six years ago, she decided to make an improvement in her life and in her employment situation, and returned to college. Bonnie graduated with distinction with a double diploma in General Arts and Science and in Business Administration. After completing her education, Bonnie took a work placement at the Administrative Offices of her community and was looking forward to permanent employment.

At this point in time, Bonnie fell ill with Flesh-eating

Disease and was near death for several weeks. She has experienced some brain damage and memory loss, as well as heart problems, but remains hopeful that employment will be part of her future. She presently lives with her daughter, supported by Ontario Works payments. I believe that her experiences with long-term unemployment and with life-threatening illness provide an interesting perspective on the unemployment process.

Cassie

Cassie, a single mother of two sons, ages 16 and 18 years, grew up in a small village with a large extended family on the outskirts of a large Ontario city with her parents and one sister. She vividly recalls the trauma, at 12 years of age, of having her entire village expropriated and the citizens moved to the nearby city.

At 20, Cassie left home and worked as a skills manager for three years prior to entering university where she earned a degree in Psychology with an emphasis on Early Childhood Education. At university, she met her future husband, an engineer, whom she married following graduation and with whom she spent the subsequent year travelling around the world. Upon their return home, Cassie began her career in Early Childhood Education which has continued for 22 years. Her marriage ended three years ago.

In her most recent job, Cassie was the head teacher in the Junior Division of a local childcare centre. With no warning or discussion, staff members were called to a meeting where massive

downsizing plans were announced. The next day, in individual meetings, many of the staff, including Cassie, were given three months notice.

Cassie is now living on her Employment Insurance Benefits. Because her two sons are still living with her, this income is supplemented by child support payments from her former husband which she describes as "substantial".

Cathy

Cathy is a 40-year old married woman with no children, who grew up and attended high school in the area in which she is presently living. In 1978, she graduated with a diploma in X-ray Technology from an urban Institute of Medical Technology and moved to Western Canada, where she worked for two years in the medical field. Over the next few years, Cathy occupied accounting and clerical positions in a variety of organizations, including a heavy-equipment company, a printing company, and a shipping company.

While out west, Cathy married a man with his own construction company and, in 1984, they returned to the area where she had grown up to work and live. She secured a job with a community college working in the Continuing Education Office, a position which she held for 12 years, and which consisted of preparing course advertising materials and dealing directly with the public, assisting students and potential students with fee payments, course selection, and general information. At the time of government down-sizing, Cathy took a buy-out, feeling

confident that she would find another job, and feeling compassionate towards older women in the office whom she believed would have fewer opportunities for re-employment.

She was quickly re-hired by a local financial advisor, and worked as an office assistant with increasing levels of responsibility for the next two years, eventually becoming the Administrative Manager of two branches of the organization. Her salary at that time represented between 35 and 40 per cent of the total family income. Then, without warning, she was laid off with two weeks notice and some severance pay, on the grounds that financial cutbacks were necessary. She was replaced within a month by someone else, with no contact from her former employer who had stated in writing that he would re-hire her if the opportunity arose. At the time of the interview, Cathy was living on Employment Insurance Benefits, as well as being supported by her husband.

Dee

Dee is a 43 year old single mother of three children (ages 23, 19 & 17) who has been raising her family on her own since the youngest child was one year old. She grew up in Western Canada and attended high school there. At 19, Dee was married and moved east with her husband, leaving all other family members behind. They lived in the Maritimes for five years, followed by a move to Ontario where Dee currently lives in a small town. After the birth of their second child, Dee's husband left, then returned, only to leave again following the birth of their third child.

In spite of having been identified, in 1987, as having a serious learning disability, Dee has made many attempts to become educated, as are the other members of her family-of-origin. Once left on her own, for example, Dee began several courses including Secondary School upgrading, Jewellery Design, and a Dental Assistant program. She finally completed a two-year course in Recreation Facility Management at a community college, followed by a one-year diploma in Festivals and Special Events. She is currently working towards a degree in Leisure Studies at a local university, with on-going counselling and assistance from a learning disability support person at the university.

Following the completion of her college diploma, Dee worked for three and one-half years for an alcohol and drug treatment centre, developing the therapeutic recreation component of the program. She then secured a six-month contract with a local community to develop programs for youth within that community. In spite of drafting a successful proposal which would have obtained funds to extend the program, the new board decided to return the money and end her contract. At the time of the interview, Dee was living on Mother's Allowance, with the hope that a student loan would soon kick in so that she could complete her degree.

Della

Della is a 45-year old married woman, with four children ages 18, 16, 13, and 6 years. She was born and grew up in a

small village, close to where she now lives with her husband and family, and close, as well, to many extended-family members.

Della completed high school in this area, then moved to a nearby city where she found employment with a large insurance company for two years. She then married a railroader and moved to another urban centre where she again worked for an insurance firm as well as in a municipal office over the next eight years.

Returning to her childhood community following the birth of her second child, Della stayed at home for 10 years to be the caregiver for their children. In 1991, she re-entered the workforce and has remained there since, with the exception of a six-month maternity leave following the birth of her fourth child.

For the past seven years, Della has worked for the same insurance firm, acting as receptionist and general office assistant in two small branch offices, and earning approximately one-quarter of the family income. Her husband, still with the railroad, is absent every second week, leaving Della with sole responsibility for the home and children during those periods.

In spite of recent promises of prolonged employment, Della was laid off with no warning other than the required two-week notice. She was denied any severance pay and left, after seven years, with two weeks vacation pay.

Elaine

Elaine is a married woman in her late 50s, who has lived her entire life in the same small town where she was born, attended

school, married and raised her family. Elaine graduated with a Grade 12 Diploma from the Commercial class of her local high school, and took an office job at a local shoe factory for three years. In 1962, she was married, and subsequently had three daughters, born in 1965, 1967, and 1969. Elaine stopped work when her first child was born, and stayed at home for several years to be the caregiver.

In 1972, Elaine secured employment at a local factory, where she worked as an accountant for the next 26 years, earning approximately half of the family's income. Rumours of a factory closure had circulated for months prior to formal notification, and Elaine was kept on for an additional six months during the wrap-up phase. At the time of the interviews, she was living on Employment Insurance Benefits, as well as being supported by her husband, a custodian in a local school. Elaine's children are now all married, live close to their parents, and had produced two grandchildren, ages three years and 16 months, at the time of the interviews.

Julie

Julie is a 32-year old woman who was married for the first time at age 16 and has two children, ages 16 and nine years. She did not complete high school, which she attended in the same small town in which she still lives, with parents nearby. Julie's first marriage lasted almost 10 years and, during that period, Julie worked at a car dealership in the accounting department, then moved on to other office jobs in a nearby city.

Shortly after the arrival of their second child, Julie's husband left her. While caring for her children, she returned to school at a community college where she took a Network Specialist Course. The family was living on Social Assistance at this time. Unable to find work in the field for which she had trained, Julie again found employment at a car dealership doing warranty administration. Because of illness, which was exacerbated by the stress of her job, she was advised by her doctor to leave this position in 1997. Once again, Julie and her family were dependent on Mother's Allowance for their survival.

In 1999, Julie re-married a man who has what she describes as a "good job". His two children from a previous marriage, ages seven and 11, live with them also. Julie and her children are supported by her husband's income at this time.

Lucy

Lucy is 28 years old, and is a single mother of two boys, ages five and three years. She was one course short of her Grade 12 Diploma, but was successful in attending an area Business College where she completed a six-month course as a Legal Assistant.

Following this course, Lucy got a job in a computer engineering firm which she kept until the birth of her first child. She then remained at home as a caregiver for her two young children until her marriage broke down. Alone and on Mother's Allowance, Lucy applied for re-training, but, because of having a diploma as a legal assistant, her application was

denied. She was, however, allowed to participate in a re-entry program and was successful following this in finding work with an insurance company for nine months.

After this position ended, Lucy found permanent, full-time work as a documentation clerk with a company that manufactures bath tub controls. Just six months later, however, she was called into the office at the end of the work day on a Monday, and told that her job, for which she had received an excellent evaluation the previous week, was terminated due to shortage of work. She is now living on Employment Insurance Benefits supplemented by small child support payments.

Nina

Nina, like Elaine, has lived her entire life in a single rural community, albeit a different community, with many extended-family members close by. She is 53 years old, has been married for 28 years, and has not had children. Her husband has been unable to work for many years, leaving her the sole wage earner for the family.

Following high school, Nina got work in a local factory, where she spent five years as an office worker. She then became employed by a provincial court office where she worked for 25 years, and finally to the court office in an adjacent community for three years. After 28 years, she was telephoned while on vacation and pressured, with threats of redundancy and of a forced move to a distant locality, to accept a severance package of six months pay. She is now living on a pension, equivalent to

approximately half of her previous salary, and is supporting her husband as well.

Pam

Pam is one of three individuals who were interviewed for the study who had voluntarily terminated their own employment. She is a 32 year old, divorced woman with no children, who also grew up in a small town and completed high school there. She then attended a nearby university, graduating with a degree in Psychology and Criminology. Her father has been divorced twice, and she spoke of a very large extended and blended family who live in the area and with whom she has frequent contacts. She is currently sharing a house with her male cousin and several dogs.

In 1990, Pam was hired as a Constable by a local Police Service. She then attended Aylmer Police College for the 10-week officers' training program, followed by on-the-job training under the supervision of a coach officer. After eight years of service in a small, rural Service, Pam resigned her position and began seeking other employment which she hopes will offer better hours, more opportunity for advancement, and an improved working environment.

Prior to her resignation, Pam had received a substantial sum of money from the sale of the matrimonial home as part of her divorce settlement. Although she was ineligible for Employment Benefits because she left her job voluntarily, she was financially prepared to be unemployed for up to one year.

Reba

Reba is a 30-year old woman who grew up and received her secondary school education in a northern Canadian community. She moved to Ontario following high school and worked in a bar as well as for an income tax firm. She is presently divorced and has an eight-year old daughter who lives with her and her live-in partner who works in a local factory.

Following her separation and divorce, Reba returned to school and earned a diploma as a Health Care Aide. She then worked in a nursing home for four and one-half years until a car accident left her with a damaged back that no longer allowed her to care directly for patients. As an alternative, Reba took a job in the office of an organization that provides home care services in conjunction with local Access Centres. As Assistant Coordinator, she was responsible for scheduling and arranging required services as the requests came in for home care.

Six months after she started this job, and one month following an excellent job evaluation, Reba returned from her holidays to find the locks changed and her position terminated. She is currently living on her Employment Insurance Benefits, as well as being supported by her partner.

Sharon

Sharon is 50 years old and grew up and has lived most of her adult life in Western Canada. She was married and raised her two sons, who are now grown and living on their own. While her sons were young, Sharon was a stay-at-home wife and caregiver who took

university courses during the day. Once separated from her husband, she re-entered the workforce as a clerk in a bookstore in the day and continued her education at night, earning a Masters Degree in Marriage and Family Counselling.

In 1983, Sharon secured a job at the local university, where she worked her way up through reception, secretarial and administrative assistant positions. For the past eight years, she has acted as an admissions officer at the university. Finding the job less than challenging and a dead-end, she accepted a lay-off package and left her post to move east seeking new employment.

At present, Sharon is living with her sister in the Ontario countryside while she searches for work. She is living on the fruits of her lay-off package and will soon make the transfer to Employment Insurance Benefits.

C: Chapter Summary

Chapter Three has outlined the methodological parameters of the current study of women's unemployment. In keeping with its constructivist, feminist underpinnings, a qualitative method was selected. In this in-depth, interview study, semi-structured interviews and a focus group interview were conducted by myself, an educator and administrator with many years of experience in interviewing and assisting unemployed individuals. Twelve participants were identified by a process of focused sampling with the cooperation of many community agencies whose mandates are to work with dislocated adults. Throughout data collection,

care was taken to respect the privacy and safety of the participants, to provide them with an informed awareness of what was taking place and why, and to consider them the experts who are best able to describe their own job loss experiences. In order to facilitate the reader's understanding of the experiences of the individual participants, biographies of each of the women concluded the chapter.

In Part Two of the thesis, the voices of the women themselves will be given prominence. In listening to their stories, we may share in their unemployment experience and its impact on their lives.

PART TWO

IN THEIR OWN WORDS: THE VOICES OF UNEMPLOYED WOMEN

The 12 women interviewed in this study have spent much of their adult lives as active participants in the formal work force. Although the circumstances surrounding their daily lives and their personal job loss experiences vary greatly, the women all seek answers to questions that are central to their understanding, resolution, and integration of the unemployment process. Specifically, these questions include:

1. What's happened to me?
2. How will I manage?
3. What have I lost?
4. Who am I now?
5. Where do I go from here?
6. What have I learned from this?

In the following chapters, the 12 women of this study explore and interpret the unemployment process from the very personal perspective of their own lived experiences. In doing so, they attempt to find answers to the questions outlined above. In keeping with the feminist, constructivist underpinnings of this study, intimate snapshots of the job loss phenomenon will be presented using the words of the women themselves as primary data. Because of the richness and the volume of these data, snapshot summaries will be provided throughout the section in order to ensure clarity and continuity.

Chapter Four: The Immediate Impact of Job Loss

The large body of existing unemployment literature, although restricted mainly to the study of male workers, suggests that the loss of one's job is a significant life-changing event with a broad range of consequences. For the women in this study, some of these consequences are experienced immediately following job loss. In the aftermath of termination, the unemployed workers attempt a) to determine precisely what has happened to them and why, and b) to decide how they will manage what is perhaps the most immediate and obvious outcome of job loss, their loss of income. This chapter presents the participants' experiences and reflections regarding these two issues.

A: What's Happened to Me?

Initial Responses to Job Loss

According to the women interviewed in this study, the hours, days and weeks which immediately followed the termination of their employment were defined by emotional upheaval. As well, the women examined the nature of the process by which they were terminated, in an attempt to understand exactly what had happened and why.

Affective Reactions to Unemployment

For seven of the women in the study, notice of their impending unemployment came with no warning or opportunity to prepare themselves for such a life change. The emotional impact was swift and dramatic, and included both negative and positive manifestations. For the women who left their jobs voluntarily, a

similar pattern emerged.

Negative responses to job loss.

When Cathy's employer announced her lay-off in the midst of an ordinary work day, her reaction was profound:

I went into shock. I truly went into shock. I couldn't think straight. I got cold. I didn't know whether to sit down or stand up or get a coffee or leave or cry or call somebody...I was in shock, total...I got a cup of coffee and just sat at my desk, and literally stared out the window... I went for a walk. I was gone maybe twenty minutes or so. But I mean I could've been hit by a car; I just don't remember even walking. It was kind of a dangerous thing to do when you think about it...I mean you're not aware of your environment or surroundings or traffic or anything.

Reba, who arrived back at work following a two-week vacation to find the locks changed and her position terminated, describes her reaction in similar terms:

I felt like I'd been kicked in the stomach...I was devastated...absolutely devastated, crying, and just I think shock too. Shock, like I can't even believe this has happened.

Lucy, laid off from her 6-month position at the end of a normal work day, was "very upset", and "left there crying". Dee was equally distraught:

That was devastating to me. I just was devastated. I felt hopeless...I felt like I'd died or something... I felt so

horrible...It was like I got hit in the stomach and the wind was knocked out of me, [I] just couldn't believe it...

Della, like Cathy, found herself moving in a dream-like state:

I was dumbfounded. I was totally in shock... I went home. I managed to get out of the parking lot, and then from then on I'm not sure how I got home...Oh I was just bawling my head off...I stopped at my sister's and I went in and tried to tell her...I couldn't even get out what had happened...just sort of in a daze.

For five of the women, the initial trauma of the lay-off deepened into various degrees of depression. As Cathy describes her situation:

I was very alone. And I live semi-remotely. I just spent hours and hours just staring out the window, and had what I call stinky pyjamas days... Didn't eat much, didn't shower, didn't brush my teeth. I just didn't care about anything, nothing.

Nina, pressured by threats of impending redundancy into an unwanted early retirement from her 28-year career, experienced what she tearfully describes as a "nervous breakdown" and has "been on pills ever since". Elaine found the month of November "a very, very hard month to get through...Everything just hit me." For Della, depression is experienced as a loss of purpose that leaves her feeling immobilized:

Do I go out on my own ? Do I find another job? ...just sort of a total blank, you know...you can't see a direction. Like

usually you have a feel of, well, I should go off in this direction or I should...think about this or whatever, but this...was something else. There was no direction.

Reba found her role as mother overwhelming in the midst of her own pain during the early days of her unemployment:

I was very quiet, had periods of crying off and on, just basically devastated...really didn't want to have to carry on, you know, looking after Kelly. Like wanted them to leave the house, you know, kind of wanted to lie in my bed and put the covers over my head for a few days.

Fear of an uncertain future haunts both those who were laid off and those who chose their own unemployment. Elaine, who would like to work for several more years before retiring, faces a job market that is "not like 15 years ago that you could turn around and you could get a job some place else". Lucy's life has become a series of question marks:

There's a lot of unknowns at the moment: waiting for UI, waiting for them to say I can take training, and at the same time job hunting...Everywhere you turn, there's unknowns...Mostly too because you're waiting for answers. And it just didn't seem like you can get answers from anybody.

Sharon, who left her job voluntarily, finds her circumstances "just as stressful as when I was working because everything is uncertain". Although Pam gave up policing in search of a better lifestyle, she also finds the process "a little scary, because

you just sort of go, Wow, what am I going to do?"

Flooded by negative reactions such as fear, shock, and depression, many of the women seek understanding of what has happened as a way of calming their emotional turmoil. They question their own behaviour and abilities as part of this process.

For seven of the women, being terminated triggers feelings of shame and self-blame. Nina, for example, links her inability to find a new job within her organization to flaws in her personality:

The only way I could stay was if I could find a job within 40 kilometres of Butternut with classification 6 which is what I was. The other girls in the office, they were 8. And that, that ties back to when I said I wasn't really aggressive...The others all came in at 8, or ended up at 8 shortly after they came in. I should've grieved it...

Dee also regrets her failure to speak up for herself. "If I could do it over again," she states, "I would've been more aggressive. And I would've fought." She feels responsible for what has happened:

I felt like I was doing something wrong. And I felt like I screwed up...I wanted so much to just do well, and I keep messing up...I didn't even want to go near work because... I felt like I failed again...Like here I am an adult, and I couldn't do it. I couldn't get a good paying job. I couldn't support my kids.

Della believes these feelings are inevitable in the face of a lay-off:

When you're let off like that, no matter what the circumstances, you eventually feel that it was your fault because...going back to battered wives and everything, they blame themselves where it's certainly not anything to do with them, but you blame yourself...Well, if I'd have done this differently, done that different, or been a better employee or whatever...

Cathy, who was reassured by her former employer that the lay-off was not related to poor performance, nonetheless experiences periods of self-doubt:

I don't know whether this is a female trait or not, but I delved headfirst into "I must have done something wrong. I must have done something wrong."...It raised all my insecurities that, up until then, I didn't have many that were apparent. But when you're stripped down, boy, up they come! And they did...You've obviously done something wrong, you're worthless, you'll never get another good job.

Reba's self-talk is, at least in the beginning, equally negative. "I guess I felt not worthy," she explains. "During those first few days, I was trying to go through my mind, maybe what I had done...Obviously I wasn't smart enough to keep the job [and I'm] stupid because I can't get a job..."

Positive responses to job loss.

The three women who quit their jobs all speak about the

holiday feeling which characterized the early days of their unemployment experiences. Pam's description is typical:

It wasn't until about three weeks later that I realized, No, I'm not just on holidays here. I haven't had just like my regular summer holidays. I'm not going back...I went to visit my Mom, did some stuff around the house, spent some time with friends, and then I sort of went, Wow, now what am I going to do?... The unreal part of it was over.

Julie, as well, discusses the "relief" that followed her decision to leave and the first days that she "spent just relaxing" and enjoying the opportunity "not to be uptight and stressed all the time". Sharon's boyfriend came to visit from her home province and, in her words, "December was holiday".

For the women who lost their jobs involuntarily, there is also a positive dimension to their early experiences of unemployment. As Cassie describes it, "For the first short while, it was a relief...that I didn't have to do all of that stuff anymore. It gets exhausting. And so, what I'm doing is a bit of a break." Lucy concurs: "A lot of the tension that was building up, I don't feel as stressed as when I was working." Della finds that she's "much more calm...not as snappy with the kids", an improvement which she attributes to not having the "pressures and the bullshit that you had to put up with at work". Reba describes her day as being "more laid back...It's not the...hurry up, we gotta get you in the bath, we gotta get you in to bed". At the time of the first interview, Cathy described her

stress level as being "just about zero." As she explains:

My whole pace of my life has slowed down...I just don't feel pressured. Got to get there, got to get there. Oh my God, Oh my God. So when I get to work I gotta do this and I gotta do that. And then...what am I gonna have for supper tonight?

Nina, as well, feels "less pressure" and "less stress" than she did at work.

Snapshot.

The stories of job loss told by the women in this study reveal that the days and weeks which immediately follow their termination are indeed times of turmoil, marked by both negative and positive emotions. For many who were laid off without warning, the shock leaves them dazed and confused, unable to function normally as they attempt to come to terms with what has happened to them. Emotional pain and disbelief make decision-making and the performance of regular household tasks difficult. Without direction or a sense of purpose, several of the women feel immobilized and depressed. In attempting to make sense of what has occurred, many women experience feelings of self-blame and shame.

For those who chose their own unemployment, leaving what they perceived to be an undesirable job brings relief. The opportunity to pursue personal interests and to interact with family and friends lends a holiday atmosphere to the early days of unemployment for these individuals. This holiday feeling is

short-lived, however, as feelings of insecurity and fear of the future rise to the surface. For these women, as well as for those who lost their jobs involuntarily, the task of finding new employment is a daunting prospect and the threat of financial problems looms large. Whereas there is reportedly much less daily stress and pressure away from the formal workplace, it appears that the women are facing a new series of worries and challenges as unemployed workers.

Over half of the women in this study blame themselves, at least in part, for the job loss. In spite of exceptional work performance reviews prior to lay-off, as well as reassurances from former employers, the women perceive their termination as resulting from some level of personal failure or incompetence. Della's comment is interesting in that it reveals her awareness that the self-blame, like that of abused women, is probably unwarranted but painful nonetheless.

This tendency to self-criticize appears to be particularly strong early in the unemployment process for these women. As the shock wears off, and as the women have the opportunity to internalize what has happened, it appears that feelings of self-blame begin to dissipate. The women are now able to turn their attention to the behaviour of their former employers.

Examining the Termination Process

As feelings of self-blame dissipate, they are replaced by an examination of the termination process itself. According to the eight women in this study who lost their jobs involuntarily, the

manner in which this process was handled by the various employers contributed greatly to the hurt, anger and frustration which followed and which continues to affect their ability to move forward. Lack of warning, of consultation, of fairness and honesty, and of empathy characterized the job loss experiences of these women.

Lack of warning.

Five of the women received news of their lay-off in the course of a regular working day. As Cathy explains, "In the end, I was a little bitter about [this] because, you know, I could've...had the opportunity to better prepare myself." Della felt that she had been deliberately misled to believe that her job was secure:

We had just bought a new van last summer...I had gone to Martin and said, "Have you got any plans of laying me off or whatever?" I said, "We need a vehicle, and Barney needs one to go back and forth to work." And [he says], "Oh no, I can't see anything and I'll give you lots of notice." And then this is how you treat me after I talk to you in February...You tell me one thing and then you turn around and change your mind, and tell me something different.

Lucy felt similarly confused:

The week before I was laid off...I had just had my three month review...They were happy with my work. I was doing fine. She was confident that she had hired the right person for the job. And then the following Monday, you're laid off.

Like I mean, they just don't come in Monday morning and say, "We don't have any finances, you know, you're being laid off." They have to have an idea...They knew that I was a single parent. If you care about the people that work for you, try and give them some notice.

Nina was telephoned "out of the blue", while at home during her holidays. Feeling pressured and intimidated by subtle threats that her job would soon be "downloaded to the municipality", she agreed to accept a severance package and never returned to her desk after 28 years with the same organization. As she explains, up until this point in time early retirement "was never really broached as a subject; it was kind of hinted at."

Reba faced locked doors when she returned from a two-week holiday. Her telephone call to her supervisor resulted in her being told that she was fired, with no "verbal or written warning," in spite of the fact that her evaluation of the month before had been outstanding.

Lack of consultation.

Closely linked to the lack of warning is the failure on the part of most of the employers in the study to offer to their employees any opportunity to discuss the impending dismissal. Reba's attempt to probe the details of her termination were cut short:

She said it was because eight girls had called in for holidays and I didn't open their shifts, which would've meant whatever clients they had wouldn't have been serviced.

But that was my job and I had exceeded in that job a month previous...All that the other supervisor said to me was that the office was chaotic while I was away. And that's all I ever got...like not even give me an opportunity to defend ...whatever they were accusing me of... So to me, it was kind of a double whammy because not only was I fired but then I had no idea why. And there was nothing I could do to fight.

Had the situation been handled differently, Reba believes acceptance would have been easier:

If they had presented some kind of something that I had done ...I mean I probably would've been angry at the initial moment...but I could've said, "Yeah, you're right, when I had done that it really was a big screw-up and I can understand. Not that I like it, but I can understand why." According to the women, they were never consulted regarding

possible alternative solutions. As Cathy explains:

I feel that if I had been approached in this past job, and said you know, "Here's the situation, I'm in a financial crunch -- what do you see ?" So that they would value my input...But I wasn't, I was cut off. And it came not only as a shock financially, but also I always felt very highly regarded in my job, and I always felt that my opinion mattered and that I was part of a team. This is not how a team works.

Cassie also felt "taken for granted" and undervalued in the

process. With dialogue, she suggests, "we could've come up with different solutions. We could've job-shared. We could have done any number of things." Nina, as well, felt "betrayal" that her ideas were ignored:

When I wanted to continue working, they should have kept me and then if my job was downloaded, they could've either trained me to do something else ...or they could've helped me get on with the municipality to do that part of it.

Lack of honesty.

Six of the eight women who were laid off specifically refer to the lack of honesty and fairness in their termination process. Cathy finds resolution difficult under these circumstances:

I truly feel that I have not been dealt with honestly and I am a very honest person...I've always treated him with complete honesty and I expect that same back, so I have a sense of unfinished business as far as being laid off is concerned...You write me a letter stating that you wouldn't hesitate hiring me back if your financial situation changes, then ...three or four weeks after I'm out the door, you've hired someone else!

Lucy believes that standard seniority policies, which would have ensured fairness, were ignored in her case:

It's more the way that it was done. To me like, I always heard when they did layoffs it went in the order of last hired, and most companies stick to that. Well here, that's not the case...If the production manager, who was the

owner's wife, didn't like you, when it came layoff time you were one of the first to go. And to me that's not right because it wasn't based on ...how you performed your job. It was personal.

Nina, in her estimation, was not given the same opportunity as other employees of the organization:

Another thing I felt betrayal over also was a few years ...prior to the time I left, the bosses sort of made a position available for one of the younger guys that they wanted to keep as an employee...If they could do that for him, why couldn't they do something similar for me?

Lack of empathy.

It is clear that the manner in which the lay-off was handled was an important issue for many of the women in this study. The lack of warning, consultation, or honesty on the part of employers was interpreted as an absence of concern for the women as human beings as well as employees. Cassie is very articulate in describing how this lack of empathy made her feel:

Disposable. As a unit, we all felt violated, we all felt disposable. They treated us like a disposable diaper. You know, just used us up, and threw us away. I did say that to the Executive Director...She couldn't handle the emotions. She couldn't handle the fact that she had done something to people, that she had to recognize that we were people, that we weren't just statistics...I don't think they thought that deeply about us as people.

This inability on the part of Cassie's employers to attend to the human side of their employees transformed what might have been perceived as an essential organizational decision into a hurtful personal attack. As she explains, "It was such a violation...of me. And of my integrity, of my work, of the families that I worked with, of everything that we had established. They just have no idea." As well, friendships among co-workers were ignored:

We had formed really close-knit relationships and there was no regard for that at all...They could have acknowledged it. They could have simply said, "We are really sorry that we are hurting these friendships", or they could just acknowledge it. But they have yet to say, "I'm sorry". They haven't acknowledged anything.

Without empathy, Cassie explains, closure is difficult:

Companies have to realize that when they're dismissing people, there's an emotional part of a person that's part of that job, that they have to allow them to have closure. They have to allow them to close the book on that part of their lives without slapping them in the face.

There is a way, Cassie says, to achieve this. "When I hear of how other people have been handled through a similar process," she says, "how they've been cared for and cared about, that's important to me."

Snapshot.

For the women in this study, then, the manner in which they

were dismissed from their jobs reveals much to them about the quality of the relationships which existed between themselves and their employers. This revelation is shocking. In the women's own words, they were not a) warned of an imminent major life change by persons well aware of this impending change, b) consulted regarding alternative solutions to their dismissal, c) given any opportunity to defend their positions or their usefulness within the organization, d) given truthful answers to their probing questions prior to, during, or following the termination process or e) shown meaningful concern for the impact of this decision on their personal and professional lives. There was, in the opinion of the women, a better way to address the various problems which the employers and organizations were facing, even if those problems could only ultimately be resolved by their dismissal.

The perceived lack of caring or respect for them as individuals symbolizes for the women a fundamental separation or disconnection between themselves and their employers. In such a climate of disconnection, resolution is slow and healing is difficult. This process is further impeded as the women come to terms with the financial ramifications of unemployment.

B: How Will I Manage?

The Financial Impact of Job Loss

If, as the literature suggests, women contribute significantly, and often solely, to the financial well-being of themselves and of their families, it is reasonable to assume that

the impact of women's unemployment will have an economic dimension. Six of the women in this study, for example, had contributed 100% of their family's income prior to job loss; two contributed 50%, one 40%, and one 25%. Of the other two women, Cassie revealed that her children were well-supported by child-support payments from her former spouse, and Julie had become married while unemployed and was, therefore, financially dependent on her husband at the time of the interview.

The loss of income is clearly an important factor in the unemployment experiences of these women, and one which manifests itself at a very early stage of the unemployment process. "I don't worry about anything else", Nina says, "except financial." Bonnie finds herself "at survival mode. And surviving meaning having a roof over my head and money. And it's been a big driving force of a lot of my problems for the last year." Dee views money issues in a similar way:

My decision-making has always been riveted to money, like whatever I do...I don't have money to help my kids...I don't have money to fix myself up or, the big thing is to feel good about me.

In terms of financial impact, the women in this study are articulate in describing a) the impact on both essential and discretionary spending, b) the coping behaviours which they are using to contend with the loss of income, and c) alternative sources of income and the issues which surround these sources.

Impact on Spending Behaviours

As the women talk about the financial issues of unemployment, it is clear that their spending behaviour involves two levels of activity. The first, essential spending, refers to those expenses which are required for providing a reasonable quality of life, such as adequate food, clothing and heating. The second, discretionary spending, is dictated by choice rather than by necessity. The women discuss the impact of their job loss on these two areas.

Essential spending.

According to eight of the women in this study, finding adequate money for essentials is difficult following job loss. As Nina explains:

You're not bringing in the same amount of money that you can feel good about paying all the bills and stuff like that...I'm behind in my hydro bill...How am I going to pay my bills? How am I going to survive?

Lucy worries "that there'll be enough money to pay everything and make sure that there's food in the fridge." Della, whose family was just "starting to get comfortable with payments and everything else, and seeing a light at the end of the tunnel", now can't provide for her children in the way that she believes is appropriate:

The boys are in high school so they have lunches out. And I've had to make the oldest one... he's pretty well been using his own money for lunches. And I always thought that

I would be able to at least pay for their lunches and what not...It's summer and the girls need new shoes. And I think, well you can't just yet, just hold on.

Dee also finds herself unable to meet her daughter's needs:

I can't afford to give her any allowance. She owes her friend money right now. I can't afford to give her the money to pay the friend...Last week I wanted to buy her a Coles Notes...for her courses, \$5.50 each, I couldn't even afford it.

Dee has no telephone and even cuts back on food in hard times.

"You don't always eat as healthy", she explains, "like for a couple weeks we hardly ate anything. Well we ate, but it wasn't very good...I think one week, I had like McDonald's Happy Meal."

Reba, on the other hand, tries to avoid the fast-food route. "My objective now is to make sure to get the healthy [food] like the fruit, the vegetables, the meat...To buy all that junk food, you'd need like an extra \$100."

Bonnie's concern is "just being able to survive". As she puts it, "I don't know from one month to the next if I'm gonna make it". "I borrow from Peter to pay Paul," she says, "and Paul to Peter." Julie's unemployment experiences prior to her recent marriage were equally harrowing:

Thank God I have understanding kids. I can say that because they went without what most kids had...such as food! We waited in a food bank line. Christmases weren't existent. We waited in gift basket lines for gifts. And thank God,

some communities are very good and they helped us out...

Now that she is married, her situation has improved, but her job loss is still a financial concern for her new blended family:

We're in financial difficulty right now. He's got a good paying job, but with four kids and the demands of today's life -- the way your kids need to dress, the type of food they eat, the type of bikes they ride; I mean everything, it's just the society...it makes it hard for parents.

A few of the women were not experiencing serious financial difficulties in terms of essential spending at the time of the interview. Pam, for example, planned her own unemployment and had money invested to support herself. As a result, she feels that the loss of income "still hasn't really pinched yet." She does mention, however, a "change in my standard of living," as well as a need to "be a little more careful." Cathy also found that she and her husband did not have to "make any big changes." Elaine, six months after the lay-off, sees "no changes" in her ability to meet essential payments. Sharon anticipates financial adjustments "within the next month or so", when her severance package is used up and she starts living on E.I. benefits. At present, however, she is experiencing no serious financial hardship.

Discretionary spending.

Eleven of the women in this study describe changes in what might be called discretionary spending or spending on non-essential items and activities. These changes are focused in two

areas: social activities and children.

Travel, movies and eating out are mentioned by several of the women as activities which have been eliminated or cut back. As Lucy explains, "We normally every now and then go out for special treats here and there, or there'd be a movie, and it just won't be as often if at all at this point." Elaine no longer believes the expense of meals out is justified:

Maybe we haven't gone out as often to eat sort of thing. We were never ones to go out that much, but...on Friday we were usually so exhausted, "Hey let's go out for supper tonight." Friday night I always find the night that I hated to make a meal...But I'm home all day now, so why go out to a restaurant, you know, to me that doesn't make sense...

When asked about travel, Nina replied, "Oh no, we don't go away or anything". Cathy and her husband have cut back on dinners out and vacations, but do not view this as a hardship. "In fact," she states, "I probably appreciate going out for dinner more now than I did. And I probably appreciate holidays now more than I did."

The majority of the statements about discretionary cutbacks involve children. Pam and Nina, neither of whom have children, feel constrained in this regard as well. Pam says that she was forced to "take a step back and not buy something for my girlfriend's boys every time I walked into Bayshore." Nina's remarks are similar. "When any of my nieces, nephews, or great-nieces...get married, you can't give them, you know, what you'd

like to." Elaine no longer feels comfortable shopping for her grandchildren:

If I felt like going out and buying something special for the grandchildren...I wouldn't think twice of it...When you've got the extra income, that's more like extra spending stuff...There were times that I would see an outfit...pick it up sort of thing...[And now] No. I won't do it.

For the mothers, special occasions present financial challenges. As Della explains, "Krista has a birthday party she wants to go to, and I said, 'Well, I don't have any money for a birthday present.'" In the end, Della decided to use her creative talents to make a gift for her daughter to take. Reba was able to have a birthday party for her daughter, but adjustments were essential:

Where usually what we've done is we've taken them to McDougall's Farm in Munroe Hamlet. She usually has seven friends, so right there we're looking at \$80.00. This year what we did is we had her birthday party at home, which didn't affect her at all, but I really took notice of that and...kind of got down on myself that I couldn't provide the party that she normally had.

Other celebrations are also problematic. When asked about Christmas, Lucy replies:

I haven't even thought about that, to tell you the truth. I know it's not gonna be the same. The money's just not there...They're used to getting a lot more gift-wise, where

this year...they'll get less gifts. But other than that, everything will stay the same...Family will still be there and we'll still do the same things we do every year.

Bonnie's limited resources leave her little for these occasions. "We have Christmas and Easter," she says, "and they're special times, but I mean when you make \$946 a month and your rent's \$600...I don't need to explain any more." Helping children to understand these problems can be difficult, as Julie reports:

I would tell him...Jay, there's not gonna be much for Christmas this year because Mommy doesn't have any money. ...And he couldn't understand how come...his friend lived two doors up, and he got a Nintendo and Jay didn't. And I said, "Well Jay, 'cause Santa was out of them by the time he got to our house." And he says, "Craig lives two doors up, Mom!"...It broke my heart to see that he couldn't have what he really, really wanted.

Snapshot.

From the stories told by the women themselves, it is clear that the majority of the unemployed women in this study are experiencing financial hardship in providing the necessities of life for themselves and their families. Changes in eating practices range from depending on cheap, and often nutritionally poor food sources, to calling on adolescent children to purchase their own lunches at school. In the case of one participant, it was necessary to endure the humiliation of a food bank line in order to provide for her family during a difficult time.

The payment of hydro and rental bills is also problematic, as well as the provision of essentials such as school books and clothing for children. In one case, the participant lives without a telephone in order to save money.

In the area of discretionary spending, the women report that social activities, such as eating in restaurants, travelling and attending movies, tend to be severely restricted by the economic restraints of unemployment. As well, many activities involving children, such as buying clothing and providing memorable special occasions, have been cut or downsized in the aftermath of job loss.

According to their stories, four of the women in the study are not experiencing financial hardship. Although they have made some adjustments in the area of discretionary spending, the women do not identify these changes as being particularly serious. In one case, the need to cut back on entertainment is even viewed as positive in that special times are now appreciated more. There is, however, some concern by these women as to what hardships may result from upcoming cutbacks, such as the ending of E.I. payments, the depletion of savings and the switch from severance payments to unemployment benefits.

The women in the study, then, report varying degrees of financial impact following job termination. How are they coping with the reduction in their family income?

Coping Behaviours

The previous sub-section outlines a wide variety of cutting-

back measures, described by Reba as "money-scrunching," and by Nina as making "every penny squeak." These measures were employed by the women to make ends meet, as it were, while at the same time providing some sense of continuity in their own lives and that of their families. As well as cutting back, the women have found ways to access additional revenues from both internal and external sources.

Additional revenues from internal sources.

Many of the women display creativity when it comes to finding money for essential and discretionary spending, now that their incomes have been lowered or eliminated by job loss. Nina, for example, has cashed in some of her mutual funds in order to pay bills. Della is using her creative skills as a craftsperson to provide a gift for the birthday party her daughter will be attending. As well, she plans to "try and make money selling crafts." An income tax refund, originally targeted by Della and her husband for their new van, has now been reassigned to pay day-to-day bills. Bonnie accessed electric power for her family in a somewhat unorthodox fashion:

Lucky I lived in an apartment where my mom was across the hall. I went two months without hydro because I couldn't afford to pay. I ran an extension cord from my Mom's apartment over to my house to keep the fridge working, because I had no money.

Pam had recently been divorced and sold her home as part of this process. By accessing some of this money, she "was prepared to

be unemployed for a year."

For some of the women, the steps taken have been more extreme. Dee, for example, had listed her home at the time of the interview and plans a major restructuring in her life:

I'm trying to sell my home. I'm gonna move back home with my brother. He's gonna pay their [children's] expenses...and I guess they'll live there for free. He'll buy our food... I'm forgetting my dreams of going to college, university, back to get my graduate school...And now my daughter says she won't move out west with me. And she'll probably move in with her father...He left her when she was a year old, I've raised her my whole life. He's taking her.

During an earlier period of unemployment, Julie also "moved my kids a lot to cheaper places...which was really hard."

Financial desperation sometimes elicits desperate choices, as Julie reveals:

I made some bad decisions when it came to men because of looking for an escape, and somebody to help. And I made a few bad decisions that affected my kids badly...I was very badly abused. He went to jail...And my daughter was there and she heard everything. It affected her, still does affect her...I feel guilty every day for the fact that I put her through that.

Although Dee has not personally experienced the situation described by Julie, she has friends who did:

I have known girls who...have gotten married...to guys they

don't really particularly want to marry because of their kids and they have to...A friend of mine, couldn't even look me in the face and she married this guy. And she just said, "I'll have my own fun other ways." And I know she has extra-marital kind of relationships because she has to be with this guy because of her family.

Additional revenues from external sources.

Most of the women interviewed for this study rely on external sources of income as an essential way of coping with the financial challenges of unemployment. These sources include Employment Insurance, pension income, Mother's Allowance, lay-off packages, student loans, disability insurance, community charities, spouse's income and child support payments. Although necessary for survival, these payments are not without drawbacks on both financial and psychological levels.

On the financial level, the amount received from external sources is usually much less than the income earned before the lay-off. As Nina states, "You're not bringing in the same amount of money that you can feel good about paying all the bills and stuff like that." Della concurs:

Unemployment is not much, and you have to wait for so long to get it...it's only I think 55% of what you make, and when you're not making a whole lot, 55% percent isn't gonna be a whole lot.

Elaine agrees that with "55 per cent of your earnings," "naturally, you're gonna notice changes." Lucy finds living on

Mother's Allowance "tight, very very tight," especially after being in the work force and being able to "spend a little bit more." Bonnie also lives on Mother's Allowance, and finds, "one month my rent gets paid, the next month I'm fighting to get it paid."

The psychological dimension of receiving money from outside sources is also a factor. Lucy dislikes the loss of autonomy she feels while relying on "the system":

I didn't like being on it. They have a certain amount of control when you're on it. You gotta watch everything you do. They check your bank account...maybe every three months... You gotta watch where your money is. If they see that you're saving money, then they cut you. They give you less and less and less...Basically you live and spend that money every month so that they don't cut you, whether you needed to spend it or not.

For many, the experiences involve feelings of humiliation and public shame. Julie has used the services of a foodbank and describes this process:

It's terrible. Because my family's been well-respected in this town as my mom's a local businesswoman. My dad was well-respected. My family all work...I always think somebody's gonna recognize me...I was always ashamed, but I did it for my kids. If it had of been just me, I wouldn't have done it...I felt really low and sometimes very depressed and hopeless...Somebody get me out of here.

Somebody help me.

Sharon also finds the loss of independence troubling and shaming:

When I was younger Unemployment was for people who just didn't want to work. Now I know that's not true... but I really don't want the government to have to take care of me when I'm really capable of working...I kind of feel as if I've done something wrong...I'm used to being on my own and independent.

Della fears public opinion regarding individuals receiving government assistance such as E.I.:

They have to change their way of thinking that...you don't go to Unemployment just because you want to sit at home and collect unemployment. Like they have to change their mind that the people that are on unemployment aren't just lazy bums who want to sit at home and get money for nothing.

Dee's church members have been extremely supportive in times of financial need. However, as she says, "it's also a little humiliating because I have to go there every Sunday and I have to get my little cheque...It doesn't do a whole lot for your self-esteem." Like Della, Sharon and others, she expresses the concern that she will be perceived as "that Welfare riff-raff", and not as part of "quality kind of responsible society." Her thoughts about what this does to women like herself are quite disturbing:

It's like women have to prostitute themselves, like I prostitute myself in a different way. I use my student

loan. I get money from my church. I get money from Welfare...It's like I prostitute myself...You know, going to the church and asking for money, it's almost like spreading my legs and saying "Go for it", you know...They don't maybe see it that way, but it's really humiliating.

Confronting the bureaucracy which governs most sources of funding is also disempowering for some of the women. Bonnie, who has applied for disability payments, finds the process daunting:

The paperwork -- I needed to get a counsellor in to help me fill it out, because it was so in-depth that I couldn't do it, but if you cross your "t" or dot your "i"s the wrong way, they won't help you....There's no respect you know. There's none.

Sharon mentions that she's "heard from a lot of people" that "EI is always after you". Reba sees herself at the mercy of Human Resources Development Canada "because Unemployment doesn't pay you if you're fired."

Even support from spouses has its problems. As Elaine states, "Earning your own just gives you a little different feeling...bringing your own paycheque in." Sharon, reflecting on a time in her life when she was at home with children, agrees:

It wasn't so much of a stigma, it was that you were totally dependent upon someone else for any money. If you wanted to get a haircut, you had to ask somebody else. A lot of the women had allowances, but it's still an allowance... So most of us resented that. I know I did. That's why I liked

working. It was my own money that I had earned and I could spend however I wanted to. I didn't have to ask anybody.

Snapshot.

The women in this study have made both large and small changes in their lives in order to accommodate the loss of income brought on by the termination of their employment. Shopping for food and clothing is necessarily restricted by a shrinking budget. Bill payments are juggled and delayed in an attempt to keep multiple creditors at bay. Social activities such as movies and dining out are rare indulgences for many. Special occasions have been simplified or even eliminated in order to ensure that money is available for essentials.

As well as implementing dramatic cutbacks in both essential and discretionary spending patterns, the women are turning to other sources of income to bolster their dwindling bank accounts. Monies from mutual funds, savings accounts, student loans, disability insurance and income tax refunds are now being accessed in an attempt to meet financial obligations. More drastic measures such as selling the family home, moving great distances, and risking losing family members in the process are also being considered. Intimate personal relationships, one woman tells us, are sometimes formed in order to escape financial crisis.

Most of the women depend for economic survival on some form of outside assistance such as Employment Insurance Benefits, severance packages, or Mother's Allowance. This assistance,

however, is often financially insufficient and psychologically oppressive, according to the women in this study. Once in receipt of these funds, the women feel disempowered by the bureaucratic and regulatory demands that accompany the money. They also fear the criticism of their community as they perceive themselves being relegated to a lower echelon of society as a result of their unemployed status and their acceptance of financial assistance.

C: Chapter Summary

In the immediate aftermath of job loss, the participants in this study experience intense emotional upheaval. Although some positive reactions are noted, such as a lowering of stress and a carefree feeling in the early days of unemployment, negative responses to unemployment, including shock, fear and depression, are clearly prevalent. Apart from enjoying the absence of the pressures of combining professional and domestic duties, the women do not appear to be happy.

Many of the women cope with the trauma of job loss by searching for an understanding of what has happened to them and why. In their search for understanding, they look inward, at their own behaviour and abilities, and often find them wanting. They also look outward, at the actions of the employers who terminated their employment, and find their behaviour dishonest, uncaring and unprofessional.

In the midst of this emotional turmoil, the women also acknowledge and attend to the financial ramifications which their

job loss has created for them and their families. Cutbacks and lifestyle changes reflect the struggle to exist on a lowered income. Reliance on outside sources of revenue, although essential, causes both financial and psychological hardship.

The data presented in this chapter raise several interesting questions regarding women, work and unemployment. First, what do the emotional reactions, described by the women in this study, tell us about the importance of formal work in the overall context of these women's lives? Is it clear, at this point in the discussion, that the women view their primary role as being in the home and their work role as being secondary, as social role theory suggests?

Second, why is the manner in which they were terminated so important to many of the women in this study? If the job has ended, what difference does the method of dismissal make?

And finally, in considering how women are coping with the financial impact of job loss, what does their coping behaviour reveal about them and their primary concerns? How does their attitude to governmental and other forms of external assistance illuminate our understanding of the women's views concerning issues of power, independence and prestige? The author's views regarding these questions and other related topics will be presented in the discussion chapter of this paper.

Chapter Five: The Psychosocial Impact of Job Loss

According to Jahoda's (1982) deprivation model of unemployment, the devastating impact of job loss cannot be explained solely by the economic changes which it engenders and which the previous section clearly illuminates. As the name implies, unemployment, according to this model, also deprives the worker of categories of experience which are essential for her psychological and social well-being and which had previously been provided, to a greater or lesser degree, by her position in the formal workplace.

In order to understand what the unemployed women in the study may have lost, then, it is essential to have a clear sense of what, besides a pay cheque, their work experiences meant to them both personally and within the broader social context. As well, it is important to consider the so-called "alternative role" of homemaker, occupied by virtually all of the women in the study at the time of the interviews, to determine whether or not this role is successfully serving to replace the formal workplace role as a source of psychologically and socially enriching experiences.

A: What Have I Lost?

The Meaning of Work in Women's Lives

The 12 participants in this study had worked for much of their adult lives. It is evident, from the data presented in the previous chapter, that the salary earned by the women was an important and tangible result of this work. But what of the

intangible rewards? The women speak about work in terms that reveal both a personal and a social dimension.

Work and Personal Identity

For the women in this study, working was an important part of how they defined themselves and their role as functional adults. "It's who I am", Bonnie states. Julie is equally clear about the place work held in her life: "First come my kids and then my job." "It almost defined who I was", said Cassie. The women are articulate in describing what their work has successfully, or unsuccessfully in some cases, provided in terms of a) a structure around which they shaped their lives, b) meaningful activity involving skills, c) meaningful activity involving helping others, and d) an opportunity for professional growth.

Work as a source of structure.

The organized, regular activity of going to work provided the women in this study with a routine that helped form the rhythm of their personal lives. As Della explains, "The only thing that was stable in my life was...my job. You know, I knew I'd get up in the morning, I'd go to work, I'd have a good day, I'd come home...to deal with everything else." After three weeks of unemployment, Sharon is "ready to go back to work, because there's a routine to it." Elaine finds that establishing structure on her own is a difficult task:

Some days having too much time on my hands. I suppose I could get myself into a routine of going for a walk more

often than not, but again, you have a little bit more of an incentive if you have somebody to do that with...Some days can be very long.

Bonnie, as well, notes that "being at work you had structure. You had to be there at a certain time so therefore you had a certain time period that you could eat your breakfast...[Now] I don't have a structure at all."

For Dee, the discipline of her work schedule helped her achieve more in a day:

When I'm working, I'm usually up by about quarter to seven, 'cause then I would usually go to the pool every morning and do my swim. And then I would go to work. And now...I get up a little later...I'm not as diligent.

For many of these women, jobs are evaluated, and even left, on the basis of the particular routine which they established in the lives of the individuals involved. Lucy is seeking a job which allows for flexible scheduling because, as she explains, "with kids, some times you're running late. So if you come in a bit late, you can work your seven and a half hours, you're home a bit later that night." Julie, as well, considers her children in seeking a job that is 8:00 to 4:30 so that, as she says, "I can spend some time with them." Reba compares her most recent job to an earlier one which had required shift work.

I mean I worked my nights for a long time. I know what it's like...becoming a zombie and not functioning like other human beings because you're tired all the time...Kelly's in

school during the day. I'd be at work in the afternoon and I'd never see her...This was 8:30 to 5:30, so I was able to get home...I could spend more quality time with my daughter and not be biting the heads off of the entire family.

Pam cited shift work as one of the main reasons for leaving her hard-earned position as a female police officer:

It really starts to wear you out, physically and mentally. ...It's just hell for your family life and for your body...You don't get to see your family. You don't ever get to see your friends...It's very isolating, very isolating.

Pam also makes reference to the role which routine plays in her life in maintaining ties to her community. "I'm feeling less and less", she says, "that I have any ties to Butternut, because I'm not working in that community anymore...I don't have any real schedule that keeps me in contact with Butternut."

Work as a source of activity involving skills.

Work that is personally meaningful, according to virtually all of the women who participated in this study, consists of activities which require them to use their particular skills, which they have honed through education, training and experience, to produce an end result of which they can be proud. It is not enough, as Pam suggests, to be "just counting paper clips or something," in an "I keep you busy job", as she describes it. Elaine, for example, is pleased with her bookkeeping prowess:

I really enjoyed working with bookkeeping and math and stuff

like that. Even when I was going to school, math was my favourite subject. So it was a different type of a satisfaction, to be able to see at the end of the day or at the end of your month that your figures had come together. Lucy says, "I'm just in my element", when doing a set of books: It is very addictive...I mean I won't stop until I do get there. It might take me a long time, but I get there. And that's the way it is with books. It's that you might have to go over an account 20 times before you finally find the mistake and come up with a zero. And I like that.

Nina also found accounting intrinsically satisfying:

I always had a sense of satisfaction when we would balance at the end of the month...And I mean it was genuine. It wasn't making things balance. It was real balance. And we always got good audit reports which was very important... That made me feel proud and satisfied.

Sharon quit her job because "it was a lot of paperwork and it was just not very interesting work...And I felt incredibly unproductive and really depressed." She felt that her skills as a Marriage and Family Counsellor were being wasted and risked the uncertainty of unemployment in order to search for "something better", some place where, as she puts it, "I'm using my skills, that it's interesting to me, not just that I have to work to pay for this [or that]."

For others, an office setting offers the perfect environment for the exercise of the particular skills in which they excel.

Della "loved doing office work, working with numbers" in her insurance office, for example. "It was working with the computer most of the day," she continues, "I loved it!" The competence which she felt in performing her tasks was important for her self-image:

I think the satisfaction of knowing that this is my job and I do it well. And you go ahead and you do it, and it's done, and you feel good yourself.

Julie, as well, liked work in the car dealership business because she was "comfortable and confident" in her ability to perform the required tasks competently. "I feel like I did a good job", she says. "It makes me feel like I'm contributing to who I am."

For Cassie, Cathy, and Bonnie, meaningful work must include opportunities for leadership and creativity, skills which are important elements of how they view themselves. To ignore these strengths, Cathy says, would be "selling myself short". Bonnie thrives psychologically in the marketing field because "you can use your imagination more" and "each case is unique and can be looked at differently and done differently." Although Cassie's former position involved a lot of team work, she believes that this was "a waste of potential" in terms of her leadership and creativity skills. These are skills that she hopes to put to use in her next employment venture. "I do have the leadership skills", she notes, "and the people skills, and I should be doing that."

Daily tasks must have a certain degree of challenge and

difficulty to be satisfying. As Reba explains:

If I went to work at a self-serve gas station and I was pressing buttons all day, I wouldn't really feel that I was doing anything. I guess I just need to feel that there is some kind of mind work going on while I'm working and that I'm doing it well...You type something one day and next day you have to type it again, but you think of a better way or a better format to do it.

Part of the challenge comes from the opportunity to learn new skills. Cathy, for example, thrives on new situations:

I love a learning curve, and I'm quick and I'm fast and just keep it coming. I love it. I just thrive on it and I love challenges. And if I don't understand, I'll ask you.

Julie also describes herself as a person who likes "to learn new things, to try new things, to better myself." For her, getting back to work holds the promise of new information and skills:

Just feeling like I've achieved something again. I'm looking forward to a challenge, like learning something new...At this company that I applied for today, they just started an all new software package, and I'd like to learn it now.

Work as a source of activity involving helping others.

As well as finding meaning in the exercise of personal skill and competence, ten of the women who participated in the study also discussed the importance of helping others as a means of bringing a sense of value to their daily work activities and to their personal feelings of self-worth. Pam, for example,

identified closely with being a police officer and with the role of community helper which that position required of her. She is clear about wanting to maintain that aspect of her job in her next field of employment, teaching:

It's in helping those people learn and making them more aware of what they're getting into...And maybe helping them to build in areas where they may be weak or where they're not all that reality-based...It's a really positive sort of program for kids who have nowhere else to go.

Cassie is also committed to the care and teaching of children. Early education, she believes, involves "the most critical part of a person's life and if someone can impart joy as well as building blocks, that's the time to do it". "That's where my heart is," she explains, "I suppose that's how I define myself, a nurturer. To be able to do that, it's fulfilling, it's satisfying."

Dee, who facilitated a program for youth in a small town with a high crime rate, found personal satisfaction in reaching out to troubled youth:

It made me feel really good...because it was helpful...It wasn't creating programs for kids just to keep them off the street. It was creating programs to help kids feel good about themselves and empowering youth...dealing with the whole person, understanding why there were the problems...being a real big support system to them.

Bonnie tells us, "I like people. I like to know I'm making

a difference." Sharon is anxious to be "working with people" in her role as counsellor, a task that she believes will be "a lot more satisfying." Lucy took her clients' safety very seriously in her job where, as she explains, "one mistake...could cost somebody's life." "To me," she continues, "when you're handling the documents that are building these [whirlpool bath electronics], you have to do it diligently. You have to have some level of concern."

Work as a source of professional growth.

As well as welcoming challenge in their day-to-day work activities, the women in the study are not content to stay in one job or in one position within an organization throughout their working lives. Bonnie believes that the struggle to advance is an important part of self-development:

It's not the goal. Achieving a goal is the ultimate thing, but it's the work to get there...that's where you grow. Like that's what I found when I used to be a waitress and that's all I did and I had a minimal education. But I didn't stop there. I kept retraining and I kept going back to school. And to me I'm 200 times better a woman than I was back then.

Many others agree with this assessment. Cassie, for example, has already spoken of her desires to move on to a leadership role in her Early Childhood Education field. Sharon has left a secure position in one organization in order to find work that recognizes and challenges her specialized skills as a counsellor.

Dee is attending university and seeking work at the same time so that she can assume an administrative position in the future.

Cathy is looking for advancement prospects in her next job:

Growth potential. There's potential. If I take my next job, that's not the job I'm gonna retire in 25 years. There's gotta be a potential of moving forward, either through taking courses or advancement. I don't mind starting in an entry-level position, as long as I know that there is growth potential.

Lucy, as well, is seeking "a permanent position where you can build on your career, where you're not just gonna be here six months and there six months." Part of the reason Pam left policing was that she saw no room for advancement in a small town force:

You could end up doing that for 30 years...There's not a lot of room for career advancement, so if you take a constable's position in a small town police agency, that's where you're going to be for most of it because the other positions do not come open very often.

Julie also described her former job as "a nowhere position. That's where you'd be in ten years, if you stayed, in warranty doing lots of everybody's jobs and not getting paid for it." She hopes for better:

I wouldn't be content being put in a position in a job that's a nowhere job, that's "You do this and that's it." I like to try new things and learn about different things. I'm

always wanting to accelerate my career and go higher and higher, and like be in management. I push myself.

Snapshot.

It is clear that work provided the women in this study with much more than a paycheque. The routine which was enforced by participation in the formal workforce infused the daily lives of the women with an essential sense of order and rhythm. This rhythm, several of the women suggest, may be difficult to establish without the support of others and of the institution of employment.

It is important to note, however, that not just any routine is acceptable to some of the participants. For those women, priority will be given to finding a work schedule which allows them to successfully blend the routine of formal work with the routine of personal life. Shift work, for example, although it clearly assigns a routine to one's life, did not allow the women involved to sustain the quality of relationships with friends and family members which they desired and which was a priority in their lives. In fact, this aspect of the routine of work was so important for two of the women that they had left jobs because of it. The work schedules sought by Lucy and Julie also indicate a determination to successfully blend work and family life.

From the data, it is clear that all of the women in this study derived personal satisfaction and enjoyment from specific tasks which they performed in the workplace. Even those who left

their jobs were able to isolate particular activities which they found to be meaningful and which, in fact, clarified for them the type of work they would seek next.

Once again, not just any activities are acceptable. The women perceive themselves as having particular aptitudes and skills, and appear to find personal fulfilment when these aptitudes are required for the successful performance of their daily work activities. As well, a significant aspect of their fulfilment seems to be derived from there being some level of difficulty in the tasks required of them, giving the women the sense that they are doing a job that not just anyone could do. As skills and knowledge increase, many of the women hope to advance in their organizations to positions which further challenge their capabilities. Finally, for most of the women, using and developing their skills is meaningful in activities which involve helping others.

To conclude, the female participants in this study define themselves, at least in part, by the structure which their job imposes on their daily lives, as well as by the tasks which they perform in the formal workplace and the value which they assign to these tasks. In the following section, the women discuss the role of employment in providing them with a social identity.

Work and Social Identity

Jahoda's model of unemployment suggests that individuals depend upon the institution of employment for their social identity, that is, for a sense of belonging to a larger community

and of having a recognized and valuable role in that community. The 12 women who were interviewed in this study discuss their former jobs in terms of whether or not they provided a) an opportunity for social interaction, b) a sense of shared purpose within an organization and c) some degree of prestige within their workplace and within the larger community.

Work as a source of social interaction.

The social dimension of the workplace is clearly an important element of employment for the participants in this study. As Cassie expresses it, "The thing that I miss the most is the people. That once we leave a place, even though you may keep in contact with them, it's different. There isn't that daily contact." Elaine misses this contact as well:

Getting out in the public, getting away...like it wasn't a big office but at least you were out everyday to [say]

"Hello, how are you doing today ?" sort of thing.

Julie "liked the people"; Sharon misses the "contact with people and talking about stuff"; Nina "enjoyed meeting the people"; Della, after only three weeks of unemployment, finds she is no longer "going out, meeting people, seeing different types of people every day."

For many, the network of the workplace has been a very supportive one. As Cathy says of one of her earlier jobs, "It was a real family kind of environment." Cassie speaks of "really close-knit relationships" and Elaine describes her longtime friendship with co-workers in these words:

You come and go for that many years, day in and day out...

We had a lot of years...their families...you watch them grow up too. You get involved with a lot of things in that way.

Della also spoke of the "family atmosphere" of one of the offices in which she worked, and of close relationships with co-workers who "shared everything, like there were absolutely no secrets about anything there."

Work as a source of shared purpose.

At work, the women experienced a sense of shared purpose with their co-workers, a feeling of being an integral part of a social group that was working toward a common goal. Elaine is proud of how her office team pulled together, and of her role in this achievement:

We were an office as far as everybody pitched in...If you were done and had a good day or a good week and got done earlier...we'd turn around and say, "Is there anything I can help you out with?...I was the head girl in the office... If they needed any questions answered, I could help...

We could analyze it or decipher it out between us.

Cassie's staff was willing to "work through a lot of stuff", acting as "a cohesive group." When Julie succeeds at her work, as she explains, "It makes me feel like I'm contributing to the company that I'm working for." Cathy expresses a similar sentiment. "I enjoy problem-solving," she says. "I enjoy being part of the team, as well as working independently."

Pam misses the feeling of teamwork that came from working

with her fellow police officers:

I did work with an exceptionally good group of people... everybody incredibly supportive of each other... Wouldn't necessarily be friends outside the job, but have a good understanding for one another inside the job...When you needed something, you knew that one of them would do it for you.

And finally, Nina gives us an excellent description of shared purpose:

We were supposed to be a team, and you worked together, and if one cog doesn't work, you're gonna have something down the road like not balance in the financial end of it or something is misfiled...we can spend hours looking for it. You have to work as a team.

Work as a source of prestige.

Many of the women described the importance of being recognized, respected, and appreciated for the jobs that they were performing, both by fellow workers and employers, and by members of their communities. As Elaine puts it, "I got a lot of praise for the work and [my] capability and stuff that I was doing, so that gave me a lift." Cathy believes that the workplace is an important source of acknowledgement:

If you're working in a job...there's more people that notice what you do and you have a higher incidence of someone saying, "That was a great job, I didn't expect that much from you, but thank you, I really appreciate that."

Julie also likes to be complimented on her work: "It's always nice to have a pat on the back and get recognized."

Not all of the women received words of appreciation from their employers. Della, for example, received praise "maybe once or twice in eight years." Nina agreed that this happened, for her, "very seldom", but that she knew within herself that her work was good. Lucy's experience was similar:

Not that the company tells you [that] you did a good job, 'cause God knows you don't hear that, but...you feel it yourself.

For these women, fellow employees and the public that they were serving became a source of recognition for a job well done. As Nina says, after 28 years of work, "I never had a complaint from the public against me." Reba felt close to her clients:

I believe that I made good relationships with clients. You know...when they feel comfortable with you, they'd call me and they'd talk to you, and they were very appreciative...It made me feel like I was doing a really good job.

Julie's believes that the position which she held tells others, and herself, that she is worthy:

I want the job. I want the title...It gives me self-confidence that I can do it, and somebody says that I can. They've given me this title.

Dee develops this notion further, in suggesting that whereas one may gain a certain respect in one's community just through working, the level of the prestige and respect afforded the

individual will depend on the nature of the work which she performs:

I think the big thing is...what your career is...kind of tells society with what you are. And it's how you are as a person in society. Like if you say at a teacher interview, "I'm a sanitation engineer. I clean the toilets at the town park." Or I hear you say, "Oh, I'm a psychologist and I teach at a university," people treat you totally different.

In a similar vein, Pam believes that the very public identity that goes with having been a police officer will not easily be replaced:

And being a police officer is different than [other jobs]; it's a very visible position in the community...And it's a very powerful position in the community as well...It's a very different place to be at than to be a working person who just goes to an office and does whatever they do.

Without her work, Pam feels she has no sense of community connection:

There was a time when I was feeling very disconnected.. from everything...I'm feeling less and less that I have any ties to Butternut, because I'm not working in that community anymore...So I don't really feel all that connected to anywhere...So much of our identities are tied up in where we work that I think I need to be somewhere, ...working, so that I can decide which town I'm going to buy my groceries in, and go there. And which town I'm gonna

do my activities in, and meet people there.

Many of the women fear the loss of prestige and of their reputation within the community as a result of their job loss. As Bonnie says, "I don't respect myself because I'm not working," she explains, "but I don't think people around me respect me either." Sharon, as well, wonders if her current unemployed status receives much public understanding:

I think that there's some kind of stigma attached to it. I feel as if people wonder what the heck did I do wrong or I have a sense that people think that I'm a bit idealistic... "You knew the unemployment rate was pretty high, why did you think you were gonna get a job? And you had a perfectly fine job there, so why did you risk that?" Now no one has really come out and said that, but I feel that a bit.

Reba fears unfair judgment in light of the circumstances of her lay-off:

I think the perception is when you hear that someone's been fired, you automatically think that they really did something awful. I think "fired" is a very, very powerful word. And I feel...like even the few people that I've talked to about it, when they're saying "Well why?" and I'm saying "I have no idea," I think in the back of their minds they're saying, "Oh yeah!" I think that it doesn't matter what you say after that, that you're branded like that.

Cathy is concerned that her future job prospects will be affected in the small town in which she lives and works:

I was worried about what's he telling people. Had he not been truthful to me ? Was he telling people that Cathy was embezzling money or something ? Like I worried about that. I grew up in this town. He didn't. I have a reputation in this town...I wanted to protect it. I have to work in this town again. So I was very almost paranoid of what people were thinking.

Snapshot.

Work is important to the women in this study as a means of defining who they are within the context of the society of which they are a part. First, the participants clearly depend on their workplaces to provide them with the opportunity to interact with others on a regular, sustained basis. Relationships range from close personal friendship to professional collegiality to casual contact with members of the public. It is evident that these different types of relationships are important to the women, in varying degrees, and that losing or leaving their jobs has led to feelings of social isolation.

Second, work provides the women with a venue in which they can cooperate with others in establishing and achieving goals. Most of the women stress the significance of working together and the positive impact which teamwork had on their general feelings of well-being and positive self-worth.

Finally, having a job gives the women a sense of status in and connection to the communities in which they live. Praise from employers, co-workers and members of the public assures the

women that they have a valuable part to play in their organization and their community. Without work, the women fear misunderstanding and loss of their position in society. Does the role of homemaker provide the women with a satisfactory alternative?

B: Who Am I Now?

The Alternative Role of Homemaker

For a period of approximately 50 years following the seminal work of Jahoda and her team at Marienthal, unemployment literature focused primarily on the experience of male workers who, for most of this time period, made up the majority of the workforce. Women were visible, in this research, only in terms of being family members of the unemployed, wives and mothers who provided both practical and emotional support in the aftermath of job loss. The women of this era who were working, and who subsequently experienced unemployment, were assumed to be protected from the devastating effects of job loss by what Jahoda herself described as the "alternative role" of housewife and mother. This role, the theory proposed, would provide the previously employed woman with sufficient "categories of experience" to ensure her psychological and social well-being.

In spite of the fact that a) women now make up half of the Canadian work force and that b) many families depend, for economic survival, on the incomes of working women, earlier assumptions regarding the ameliorating effect of the alternative role of housewife for unemployed women persist, largely untested

and unchallenged. The 12 women in this study were all "homemakers" at the time of the interviews. Most were mothers of dependent children. How are these roles measuring up in terms of replacing what had previously been provided by employment, that is, a sense of personal and of social identity?

The Alternative Role and Personal Identity

As working women, the participants in this study tended to organize their daily lives around the time frame of their formal work. As well, their jobs provided them with meaningful activities involving skills and the opportunity to help others. Finally, there was potential for personal growth through challenge and job advancement. From the perspective of the women involved, does homemaking offer similar routines, activities and challenges?

The alternative role as a source of structure.

Finding a routine for the working day is a challenge for many of the women in this study. Elaine, for example, finds that she is able to complete her household chores in the morning. The afternoons, as she says, "can be very long." Della feels she has no routine at this point. As a result, she believes that she is accomplishing less at home than she did when she was in the formal work force:

My routine? I don't really have one...I have a craft show coming up. Before, I had to work and squeeze that in the evenings, and I'd be up sewing, and the kids were in bed... And now when I have the time, it just sort of sits there.

And I know this is coming up, and I should be making things, but I just -- I'm sort of in a limbo...I don't know what I should be doing.

Bonnie, whose life as an unemployed person "has no structure at all," finds sleep difficult. "I think if I had more productive days," she says, "I would be tired at the end of the day." Others note a similar problem. Lucy goes to bed later than when she was at work, finding there is "still a lot of energy at the end of the day." "Sometimes I read until about three in the morning," Sharon explains, "because I feel anxious about stuff."

Julie "missed routine. It was like I still got up with the kids and took the kids to school, and then it's like, well now what do I do?" As a result, she "stayed up a lot later" and "watched a lot more TV at night, because there was nothing to do." Della goes to bed earlier, but her sleep is disturbed since her job termination:

Sleeping, I never have a problem sleeping. But the last, probably three weeks, I dream like crazy, I toss and I turn, and I'm sure that that's what it is, you know... which for me is like totally out of character.

Several women describe their efforts to retain structure in their lives. Lucy builds her day around her children's daycare routine and her attendance at the Job Finding Club:

We still get up, get ready, go to daycare, and school. And I've been coming to the Job-Finding Club...I'm still trying

to keep them the same, yes. Although I get finished earlier here than what I normally would be from work, but I leave the kids at daycare so their routine doesn't get broken. Cassie and Julie also attend a Job Finding Club and plan their days around the timing of this course. As well, Cassie's routine is "based around food, meals...you know when you have teenagers." Dee is taking university courses and Cathy "has enrolled in a kick-boxing class two mornings a week." Pam finds herself "watching a lot more television. It's bad, very bad."

The activities of housework.

The tasks associated with homemaking do not fare well in the descriptions given by most of the women in this study. They are variously identified as "something you take for granted that has to be done" (Elaine), "just stuff you have to do" (Dee), "stuff [that's] gotta be done" (Lucy), and as "the normal stuff which you always do anyway, whether you're working or not" (Nina). For Sharon, to stay at home is to "do nothing." Reba describes herself at home as "bored out of my mind." Bonnie says, "I can't put a value to the day because I'm not doing anything," and Della admits that it "just doesn't do the same thing for me."

What is not clear, however, is why housework has been given such a poor rating as a source of personal satisfaction by the participants in the study. In many cases, it is not that there is a perceived shortage of activity, in the sense of having things to do. As Elaine says, "It's quite a work out....There's some days you definitely have to work real hard." "It's a big

job," explains Julie, and it's "hard work." Cathy has "a 3000 square-foot house to take care of," and Della agrees that "there was lots for me to do at home." Sharon tells us that she "could keep busy at it" and Cassie is amazed at how much work is involved in doing "the laundry, the cooking, the cleaning of the house, the keeping the kids on track...doing all the things that a parent does with their children in the home."

As well as acknowledging the amount of work to be done in the home, the women are also adamant that they value the role of homemaker, at least for others. As Julie explains:

Well I think...it's probably the most important [job] that there is, to raise good quality well-rounded kids. Some people...it's good for, I guess, but some people need something more. And I'm one of those some people.

Reba voices a similar sentiment:

I wouldn't say it's not a great accomplishment....If that's a person's goal in life, then all the power to them. I think it's great for some people....And I don't look down upon those people that want to do that, but for me, it's not great for me. I have to do more.

Cathy, as well, says, "I don't begrudge people who choose to stay at home and obviously they do find fulfilment in it. I don't." Della's sister is "quite happy to stay at home," she says, "but that's just not me." Bonnie believes that "there are women that love to be at home," and "that's acceptable too where that's what they need."

The "dirt" on housework.

Just what is it about the work that is done at home that makes it different, from the perspective of the women in this study, from the work that is done in the formal workplace? Why is it that Elaine, whose home at the time of both interviews was remarkably spotless, finds that the personal satisfaction which she derives from keeping a tidy home "is a different type of satisfaction completely" from the pride she felt in her formal work accomplishments?

The women appear to have difficulty articulating their feelings around this issue. When asked to compare what she did at work to what she does at home, Elaine replied, "As far as comparison, there's no comparison there I don't think." She did not, however, seem to know why this is the case. Cassie, who is amazed by how much work there is to do in the home, has no intention of staying there. "I need to be doing something else," is her explanation for this. Julie wants "some of the time to be for me, like a job, a good job." Apparently, for Julie, working at home is not time for herself, whereas working in a more formal setting would be. The women do offer some clues as to why housework is not their chosen line of work.

First of all housework does not, in the opinion of many of the participants, require much in the way of specialized skills. Without a degree of difficulty and challenge, there appears to be little sense of personal pride and satisfaction. Reba explains:

I think that just about anybody -- man, woman, teenager, or

whatever, can put a load of laundry in or dress their child for school or whatever. So I mean, yeah, it is an accomplishment to be able to do those and do those things well, but...I need more as a person than just to know I'm doing a fine job doing that.

Others, such as Lucy, express the same frustration:

With working, it's more challenging. At home, I mean it's not hard to do laundry, fold the clothes and put the clothes away, and tidy up the house because they're not a challenging thing....You can almost do it without thinking....You've done it how many times, you know. Where work...you're thinking, you're planning...That's a big difference.

Julie also believes her talents are wasted at home. "I get depressed sometimes," she says, "because I'm not using skills that I've worked hard for over my life to acquire." Della finds that, with housework, it's "hard to get motivated," and prefers her craft work because "it's creative."

The second negative characteristic of housework which emerged from the women's discussions is its repetitiveness. Cassie remarks, "There's so much monotony and tedium in housework, and you do it and do it, and do it, and it's still not done. And it's mindless. I mean if there's Zen, it's housework." Julie agrees: "It gets on my nerves because it's the same thing in and out all day, every day." Della paints a similar picture:

Well I think with housework you do it, and you know five minutes later you're gonna have to do it all over again. With work you do it and it's done and it's gone....You may get the same type of thing back again but it's somebody different, where at home...you're gonna have to do dishes or you're gonna have to clean the house, like, it's always gonna be there.

A third problem with housework, according to Dee, is its lack of remuneration. "It makes me feel good," she says, "when I can clean up my yard...or keep my house clean...but it's not the same as working and making money....It makes me feel better, but it's not tangible." Bonnie agrees. "It's not the same as working and making money," she says. Cathy also misses the financial reward:

It's just not what I want to do....I really do want to earn a good salary. There are things that...I don't have in my life, and I guess these are materials things right now, that I do want.

Finally, Reba believes that her dissatisfaction with being a homemaker reflects changes in the role expectations which women have for themselves today:

I need more as a person than just to know I'm doing a fine job doing that. I mean maybe my Grandma, that was her whole life, being able to excel in those things. Because I think that's all Grandma knew....Way back then, that's what you did, and that...was a good woman back then.

Bonnie agrees, stating, "Your school systems are teaching women to get careers and strive for all you can be." All you can be, it appears, is not a homemaker.

The women use expressions which trivialize the homemaker role and which suggest that they do not assign much value to this role. Bonnie, for example, says that she does not "enjoy being Molly Maid." Reba talks about doing "Mom Things" and "just The Housewife Thing." Della says that any attempt to make her into "Susie Homemaker" would surely backfire. It would be difficult to experience positive feelings of self-worth in a job that one describes in such demeaning terms.

Snapshot.

The alternative role of housewife does not provide the women in the study with an essential rhythm for their daily lives or with a positive sense of their value as human beings. Many women report difficulties in establishing regular routines, resulting in lowered levels of productivity and, in a few cases, problems with sleeping. In the absence of formal employment, several women have organized their lives around other outside activities such as Job Finding Clubs, children's daycare timetables and various types of classes.

Although many of the women maintain that there is plenty of work to do at home, and that they believe it to be important work, at the same time they trivialize housework. Described as work that must be done whether one is working or not, there is little personal pride to be gained from housework, according to

most of the participants. The activities associated with housework, the women tell us, require little in the way of skill, training or experience. They are repetitive, lacking in challenge and seemingly endless. There is no financial remuneration for one's efforts. And finally, it is suggested that housework no longer satisfies the needs of modern women who have been educated to appreciate their full potential and to anticipate its fulfilment.

In terms of providing a sense of personal identity, then, the role of homemaker is, from the perspective of the women in the study, inadequate. The women also discuss this role as a source of social identity.

The Alternative Role and Social Identity

How are the women in the study faring in terms of feeling connected to their community and having a valuable role in that community? Is there opportunity in the role of homemaker for social interaction, for a sense of shared purpose and of prestige?

Social isolation.

In fact, the participants in the study find themselves somewhat isolated and lonely. Elaine, for example, finds that she is now "home through the week as well as on the weekend." "You're not out and around with the public," she says. "When you [were] used to it, and then you're most of the day by yourself, that's quite a change in itself....You don't be in touch with the outside world the same."

Sharon, too, is "just too lonely without some contact." Except for her sister, who is at work all day, "days would go by, weeks would go by without seeing anyone." Reba visits a friend almost daily. "If I was sitting at home day in day out and not having social contact," she explains, "I think things would weigh more on my mind." Elaine uses a similar strategy. "I've just got in the car and gone up the street," she says, "just to walk through the stores sort of thing, not to spend a penny, but just browse through the stores."

Before joining the Job-Finding Club, Julie "missed talking to anybody but a kid." Della also feels isolated, "because you can go all day and the phone doesn't ring. And there's nobody to talk to other than the cats." When asked what she misses most about working, Nina replied, "The financial resources and the contact with people, like different people."

Lack of shared purpose.

Della misses the sense of shared purpose and of mutual appreciation that comes from working in a group:

At work, you know, there's somebody around and everybody else is working so well, you do it too....When [Barney] was home before and cutting wood...I was doing things in the house, and I found that I did more when he was home... 'cause if there's nobody at home to see what you're doing, you feel you can goof off.

Sharon says that "there's nothing really to stay at home for," because, as she explains, "I don't have a family that I'm

preparing meals for." Cassie, as well, states, "My kids don't need me here. I don't need to be here."

Housework does not appear to provide the sense of shared purpose which the women experienced in the formal workplace. Of the 12 women, only Julie describes her situation as "pretty divided" in terms of responsibilities at home. In some cases, the lack of sharing is not even questioned. When asked about household tasks, for example, Elaine states, "That's always been me...Do some of it in the evenings...like a good many mornings, you'd have your laundry done before you'd even go to work." Nina says that her responsibilities have not changed since she lost her job, and consist of "the normal stuff which you have to do anyway, whether you're working or not, like the dishes and the floors."

For others, the lack of sharing is a source of tension, as Reba explains:

Even when I was working at Wilson it was really hard because I'd be getting...home at 6:00, having to cook dinner, having to get Kelly bathed....Phil was home at four or five o'clock. So it was, Well, if I'm not getting home 'til six, why would you not come home and start dinner?

Four of the women find their job loss has exacerbated this problem. Cassie finds that her sons "have become quite dependent" since her unemployment began. "They feel now that...they don't have to do that any more because I'm here." Bonnie, whose daughter "at age 12 could cook a roast beef and

potatoes and vegetables," is no longer as helpful, "because she figures that I'm at home...that's my job....I'm home so therefore I'm at her beck and call." Dee's daughter refuses to help if she can't be paid an allowance, which Dee cannot afford at this time. Della finds herself "stuck with the dishes," a job previously done by her children. "They've never said it," she explains, "but I'm sure it's, 'Well, Mom's home and she can do it.'"

The tasks of running the home, it seems, are often left exclusively to the women in the study. Because of this, the alternative role of homemaker does not provide them with a sense of working together with others for a common purpose.

Lack of prestige.

In the previous section, the women described their jobs in the home a) as requiring little in the way of skills, training or experience, b) as being repetitive and boring, c) as lacking completely in financial remuneration, and d) as being incongruous with the personal fulfilment goals of a modern woman. Given these negative feelings on their own part, it seems unlikely that the women believe that their role is highly regarded or valued by others. Reba confirms this, in stating that being a homemaker is not "a valued thing like it used to be. I think housework is a given...because we have so many other things that we should be, maybe not should be but could be doing." Bonnie agrees:

Even when you're in conversation, you meet somebody and they say they're a homemaker, people automatically think, "What's wrong? Why aren't you working?" It's there. I

mean it's not tangible but it's there.

Homemaking, these two women suggest, is of little interest to others. Bonnie feels awkward with friends:

I have a hard time having a conversation right now....My goals in life are so minimal compared to where I was that to sit down with my friends who have a life, I don't feel like I add up.

Reba believes that she has little to share with her partner:

[Phil] will come home and say, "Well, what did you do today?"...It just seems like you have twice as much to add when you kind of have a life of your own that you can bring into your life together. And I don't really feel like I have any kind of life of my own to talk about right now.

Snapshot.

For the women in this study, the so-called alternative role of homemaker does not appear to be adequate in providing them with a sense of place and of value within their families and within the broader social communities in which they live. The lack of regular, sustained contact with others outside the immediate family is clearly problematic. Several women attempt to cope with this loss through visiting friends, or by joining groups and other activities which get them out of the house.

The activities of housework themselves do not appear to provide the women with the sense of shared purpose which many had experienced in the formal workplace. In some cases, little sharing of domestic duties existed, even when the women were

fully employed. Job loss appears to have exacerbated this problem for several of the women as they are now perceived as having plenty of time to complete all of the required domestic tasks without assistance.

Because housework is not valued by the women themselves, as was documented earlier, it does not provide the women with a sense of place in their communities of which they can feel proud. Two of the women express what is implicit in the conversation of others around the issue of housework. In their estimation, being a homemaker is not sufficient as a fulltime occupation, either from the point of view of society or of the women themselves. Domestic tasks, they tell us, are so mundane and so taken-for-granted, in fact, that they do not constitute adequate or meaningful fodder for daily conversation. A life spent in homemaking, it seems, is not "a life of your own," as Reba says.

C: Chapter Summary

It is clear from the data presented in this chapter that employment was important to the women in the study for reasons other than the financial remuneration which it engendered. As part of the formal workforce, the women's lives were necessarily organized around the time structure which governs much of modern life, that is, the working day. Feelings of positive self-worth were supported by on-going tasks that required skill and focus, that involved enhancing the well-being of others and that provided possibilities for professional growth. Opportunities for regular contact with others, for cooperating with others, and

for feeling valued in one's community were also noted as being important workplace benefits.

The alternative role of housewife, long considered a satisfactory replacement for the formal employment of females, did not fare well in the descriptions of the 12 women in this study. After years of juggling domestic and professional duties, women at home had difficulty structuring their days around housework alone. Tasks were found to be boring, repetitive and unskilled, with no room for advancement and no pay. Work was done in isolation, without the encouragement and support of co-workers, and without a sense of being truly valued either at home or in the broader social context.

Once again, these data raise important questions regarding women, work and unemployment. What do we learn, for example, about the meaning of work in these women's lives? How is the notion of "connection" manifested, both in the women's working lives, and in their experience of the unemployment process. If women are bogged down by the multiple roles of homemaker and worker, as the literature suggests, why are they so clearly dissatisfied at home? If they, and the society of which they are a part, hold homemaking and nurturing in high regard, as the women and all politicians avow, how do we understand the women's intense dissatisfaction with this role? Is it possible that, in every case, the tasks of formal employment were so stimulating that housework pales by comparison? In the discussion chapter, these questions and others will be addressed.

Chapter Six: The Integration of the Unemployment Experience

At the time of the interviews, the participants in the study were attempting to move forward with their lives and to integrate the experiences which surrounded their job termination into the overall context of their lives. This integration process involved a) a practical dimension in the sense of finding new employment or training opportunities and b) a psychological dimension in the sense of internalizing the lessons which their unemployment experiences have taught the women about themselves and the world around them.

A: Where Do I Go From Here?

The Job Search Process

All of the participants in the study were very familiar with the job search process. Eleven were actively pursuing employment at the time of the first interview and one hoped to begin as soon as her health sufficiently improved. Speaking from their personal experiences, these women were able to provide interesting insights into a) the psychological impact of the job search process, b) the efficacy of the various "helping" agencies, and c) the impact of support from friends and family.

The Psychological Impact of the Job Search

Most of the women in this study are committed to finding another job in order to avail themselves of the financial and psychosocial benefits which were discussed in the previous chapter. The search itself, as Pam suggests, is "full-time work." "You have to commit a lot of hours in a week," she says,

"and have a job search plan." For many of the women, this process is fraught with difficulties which impact negatively on their psychological well-being. For a few, positive consequences are noted.

The negative consequences of the job search.

Looking for work, according to the participants in the study, can be a discouraging experience. It is discouraging, first of all, because of the constant rejection. As Dee says, "It's a kind of shoot down your ego, you know, always hearing 'No'." Julie feels bad about herself "because I think, well why didn't they hire me?" As Lucy explains, "I'm frustrated with finding work with the amount of resumes I have out there and nothing is going."

Rejection also comes in the form of silence. "It's demeaning not to be accepted," Bonnie tells us, and even more so when no reply is given. "One out of ten resumes, you might get a response," Bonnie explains, "and even then it might probably be a denial." Elaine has had a similar experience: "Just sending out resumes wherever I hear of anybody needing [help], but I haven't had any replies at all." Cassie agrees: "Just not knowing...I find a lot of places don't call to let you know why you haven't been hired."

Rejection may be based on personal, rather than professional qualities. This form of rejection may be particularly damaging, as it concerns the individual's basic character rather than external issues such as training or experience. Nina, for

example, sees herself as a very shy person and believes that her shyness conflicts with the requirements of successful job hunting:

It damages your self-esteem too, I think, and your self-confidence. You know you want to get another job...and to make yourself go out and, now they say like you have to be pounding at the employers...to make myself go and be really pushy...To me, that's hard, I found.

Cassie, in contrast, feels rejected for her strength.

I'm a fairly strong individual and I think that must come across and people find that really intimidating...Some people just don't want to deal with people who are not going to do and say everything that they want them to do, and I'm not that person.

Age is cited as being problematic by three of the women. Nina expresses this point well:

I think in the end probably my age had something to do with me being forced into retirement...They kind of look at you like you're older, you know. And it doesn't matter what you have in your head or your brains or anything.

Julie and Bonnie feel discriminated because they are single mothers. Julie explains:

I've been to interviews and one of the questions they ask is, "Do you have children?" Well, yes, most people do... "Do you have reliable daycare?"..."Is that going to pose a problem that you have kids?" Well, no, I have to work to

raise those kids...I think it's discriminative. I don't think those are fair questions to ask.

The interview process is also discouraging for some of the women because they believe that it doesn't allow employers to truly get to know who they are or what they might have to offer. As Della puts it, "How do you get through to those people sitting over there that I've done all this, I know exactly what you want me to do, probably without much training? How do you get that through to them?" Reba agrees: "I mean an employer, when they're interviewing you, talks to you for what, five, ten minutes? How do they really know what you're like?" Cassie describes the situation as being "contrived":

They're coming up with questions that they feel are important questions that will somehow define how the individual they want is going to function in the role that they want them to function in. Well, you can't. I have learned over time that you have to be in those roles to know how to deal with situations. And every situation is unique.

Bonnie finds that just getting to speak with employers is difficult:

Now you can't even meet them personally any more to hand them your resume. I mean, they've got the doors locked so bad at the human resources departments, that you can't approach them on a personal level, so that they can see a face to the resume....You're just one of many numbers.

Julie is equally frustrated: "If they only gave you the

opportunity of meeting you and seeing that you will work, and they'd probably be quite happy. But a lot of places won't give you that opportunity."

The positive consequences of the job search.

A few of the women made positive comments regarding the job search process. Julie states that "it's a challenge and I like that. I like challenge." After much rejection, Lucy contacted a personnel agency who has helped her see her true worth:

I'm over-qualified. I went to a personnel agency back in March...and I was asking them to put my resume in for this entry-level type position, and she told me she wouldn't do it, that I was over-qualified and I was settling for too little.

Strengthened by this experience, Lucy is determined to get even more training and to find employment that matches her qualifications. Reba also felt empowered by a recent interview:

It was positive in a way because of the fact that I knew that I had made somewhat of an impression on her...I guess it gave me a little bit of confidence.

Cathy has learned to turn the interview process to her advantage, at least from a psychological perspective:

When you are going for an interview, I really feel that we should be empowering ourselves. Because not only should you be trying to sell yourself, but they should be trying to... sell themselves...Why should I come and work for you?

Dee agrees:

This time I thought...I'm giving you an interview because I'm selling my goods. But I'm not just here for you, I'm here for me too...So it was a two-way street. They learned from me and I learned from them.

Snapshot.

The job search process appears to be, for the most part, a negative experience for many of the participants in this study. The on-going rejection, either directly stated or indirectly communicated by failure on the part of employers to respond, threatens feelings of positive self-worth in that it causes the women to doubt their worthiness as potential employees. When this rejection appears to stem from personal factors, such as age, marital status or personality, it may be particularly damaging, because the women believe that they are being judged on who they are rather than on their job-related skills and aptitudes.

Even in small-town Ontario, the women tell us, it is difficult to gain access to a potential employer so that a personal connection may be made. The interview, if an individual manages to get one, does not, in the opinion of several women, provide employers with the opportunity to accurately come to know or evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of candidates for a position. In situations that are necessarily brief and stressful for both employer and candidate, the women perceive that valid assessments are unlikely.

In spite of the difficulties of job hunting, a few positive

aspects were noted. Specifically, a few women felt empowered by their ability to survive and even gain a degree of comfort with the interview process. As well, by going through the job search process, individual strengths and talents may be revealed that could lead to training and to occupations not previously considered.

To conclude, the women in the study find the job search process to be a challenging and frustrating one, with few positive aspects. It is not a task which they wish to undertake on their own and they turn, therefore, to helping agencies for assistance.

The Helping Agencies

At some point in their unemployment experience, all of the participants in the study had turned to an outside agency for advice and assistance. When asked about these agencies, the women referred to two organizations, namely, Human Resources Development Canada (HRDC) and Job-Finding Clubs. Who are they, and how are they meeting the needs of the unemployed women who accessed their services?

HRDC and Job-Finding Clubs.

HRDC is the branch of the federal government which concerns itself with the issues surrounding the employment, unemployment and re-employment of Canadian citizens. Eligibility for and payment of unemployment benefits, for example, is regulated by this office. All of the women in the study have had, or would shortly have, contact with HRDC in connection with their job

termination.

Job-Finding Clubs are privately-run organizations which are awarded funding by HRDC in order to offer programs specifically designed to assist unemployed individuals with the job search process. Small groups of clients attend three-week courses which consist of intensive training and group sessions, followed by an active job search. At the time of the interviews, six of the participants had attended Job-Finding Clubs in three different communities. Contact with HRDC is described by the participants as being "frustrating" (Pam), "not very helpful" (Dee), a source of "no information whatsoever" (Cassie), "no help at all" (Della), "very unhelpful" (Lucy), and "very intimidating" (Cathy). The Job-Finding Clubs, in contrast, are described as "accessible" (Cassie), "really good" (Julie), "helpful" (Sharon), and "really, really good" (Nina). The one negative comment about the Job-Finding Club was from Dee, who found it "so busy" that getting help involved waiting one's turn.

Why is it that the Job-Finding Clubs are largely perceived to be helpful, whereas the services of HRDC are unanimously criticized by the women in this study who had been exposed to these agencies? The difference, according to the women, lies in the fact that HRDC's focus is on procedure, whereas Job-Finding Clubs concern themselves with the specific needs of the people whom they are serving.

Emphasis on procedure.

Frightened and insecure, the women who have recently lost or

quit their jobs turn to the services of Human Resources Development Canada or to a local Job-Finding Club for advice and assistance. At HRDC, rules often get in the way. Lucy's attempts to start her training program and to keep her children's lives running smoothly, for example, are becoming entangled in bureaucratic red tape. Her application for training cannot be processed until she is approved to receive EI benefits. In order to take training, she must receive daycare subsidy for her children. Daycare subsidy can only be continued if she is either working or in training. As she explains, "If you gotta pull your kids out of daycare and then put them back in a month later because you're finally approved for training, that's affecting the kids."

Pam was rejected for training because she left her job voluntarily and does not, therefore, qualify for EI benefits, a prerequisite for most training programs. Bonnie, as a college student and not an EI recipient, also felt she "really fell through the cracks there" and received little help. And because of rigid regulations, Cassie found herself pressured to conduct "an exhaustive search" for jobs that clearly didn't exist in her geographic sphere.

There was no argument about the fact that HRDC has relevant information for the newly unemployed. As Pam says, "You can certainly go in and read the paper and look at that kind of thing. There's some resume writing little programs they have. And the job bank kiosks are there." Cathy agrees: "I know at

the Butternut HRDC there's a resource centre, and as long as you're willing to go in and search through everything, the information is there." The problem seems to be the manner in which this information is being disseminated.

Della and Cassie were both told, "There's the computer," and were left to their own devices. Della was horrified:

And I thought, what do you mean, I don't even get to talk to anybody?! You know, you go in and you put all your information in to the computer....You talk to no one....I didn't have a clue as to what you had to do.

Virtually all of the women who commented on HRDC voiced the same feelings as those of Della. Technology is fine, but, as Cassie says, "it just doesn't work like that when you're dealing with people." She goes on to explain, "There needs to be support. There needs to be that human element. There needs to be empathy and compassion." Cathy's comments are representative of what many others said:

I feel that when someone becomes unemployed, I think HRDC should be there to offer that person some support and some guidance, especially for someone like myself who's been laid off for the first time....And they were just more interested in punching the numbers in and processing the paper.... They should be bringing us in for workshops, and they should be talking about how to build your self-esteem, how to sell yourself, how to conduct yourself through an interview.... HRDC stands for Human Resources Development. I don't see

the development part of the picture.

Emphasis on people.

Unlike HRDC, the Job-Finding Clubs were reportedly providing the women with the specific help that they felt they needed at that time. They provided resources such as stamps, long-distance telephone calls, photocopiers and computers so that individuals with few financial reserves could conduct a proper job search. Sharon's experience was very positive. "Anything you need," she says, "anytime you wanted a letter done, it was done right then and there, you know. They couldn't have been better to us and more helpful."

As important as the practical assistance, however, was the opportunity to interact with a facilitator/teacher and to find help in a supportive, caring environment. Julie's comments are typical:

They really explained things, spent one on one with you, helped you out with your resume, printed it off for you, didn't charge you for it. They were really good that way... Sally helps you out with every aspect of a resume, and interviews, everything...like a mock interview -- tell you what to say, how to respond to different questions, and how to dress, and stuff like that. Yeah, it's good.

Nina also found practical help in a personally supportive atmosphere. "I came out of there with what I feel is a really good resume," she tells us. "and we went through like mock interviews and trying to sell ourselves."

Cassie agrees. "I found the Job-Finding Club much more accessible and more supportive," she says. "Shelley has been very, very supportive in...allowing me to develop a routine of job-searching. And at the same time, giving me the encouragement that I need not to be discouraged."

Snapshot.

In the face of job loss, the unemployed women in the study turn to two governmentally funded organizations for assistance in the areas of financial support, re-training, and re-employment. One of these, Human Resources Development Canada, is criticized by the participants for its rigid adherence to rules and regulations, a position that ignores individual circumstances and needs. According to the women, HRDC offices are replete with brochures and computerized information programs, but the unemployed worker is given little or no personal attention or guidance in accessing this information. The women are dissatisfied with this approach, suggesting that human contact and support is essential at this very stressful time in an individual's life.

The Job-Finding Clubs, on the other hand, provide the unemployed worker with the practical resources which they need in order to conduct a successful job search. More importantly, individual attention is given to the women, specific strengths are validated, and specific weaknesses are addressed in classes which attempt to target and correct them. All of this occurs in an atmosphere that is supportive yet demanding, and which

acknowledges the psychological dimension of job loss.

Apart from reaching out to government agencies, the women also seek assistance on a more personal level. In the following section, the women discuss the efficacy of this support.

The Issue of Support

The unemployment literature has identified the support of family and friends as an important factor in helping the displaced worker live with the reality of job loss while sustaining an active and productive search for work. Do the women in this study feel supported as they attempt to find new employment and to cope with the on-going difficulties of their unemployed status? The data reveal an interesting dichotomy.

The impact of positive support.

When asked whether or not they felt supported as they were going through the job loss and job search processes, most of the 12 women in this study respond in the affirmative. For many, this support is helpful in soothing a damaged self-esteem and in providing a buffer from the inevitable rejections of the job hunt. Julie's friend, Carla, for example, "is really good at, if I'm down, really boosting my self-esteem and telling me, 'Look at what you've done for all these years, and your kids are wonderful, and you've done it!'" Reba's partner attempts to keep her spirits up: "He's very supportive and really tries to boost my confidence, not to worry, that I'll get a job, and a good job."

The support which Pam and Sharon received from family and

friends helped them take the risk of quitting their jobs in order to find something more personally satisfying. Sharon explains:

My sons -- they were really encouraging about leaving. They said to me, 'Oh don't stay at a job that you don't like. There's no reason to. You don't have a mortgage to pay any more. You don't have us at home, you know. It's just you, and you will find something.'

Pam's family and friends were surprised that she left without having another job, but understood and supported her decision:

My dad was concerned that I was going to be unemployed, but he was happy to see me take the step because I was so unhappy....And some of my friends weren't surprised by it at all....Everyone was really positive.

Family and friends, especially co-workers, empathized with the women in their shock and anger regarding the way in which they were terminated. This support validated the women's feelings and helped to soothe their badly bruised egos. As Cassie says, "Most people that I have spoken to are shocked and empathetic towards me. And they just can't believe that anyone would dismiss someone the way it happened." Reba's co-worker was so outraged at the way in which Reba was fired that she quit her job. Cathy's friends called daily to keep her from withdrawing further and were, as she puts it, "appalled, totally appalled at the whole situation."

Friends have also been helpful in providing practical assistance. Cathy's friends call with suggestions, saying "I

heard so and so might be hiring, or Have you looked at this? or You'd be really good at that, Cathy." Reba's friends helped her investigate the legal dimension of her dismissal. "Roy pulled things off the Internet," she explains, "of wrongful dismissals and things like that. So they were really great." Nina's sister drove her to see her union worker on several occasions and, as Nina says, "offered to be here for me if I did go ahead with the lawyer and proceed that way." Pam has "free access" to a friend's office resources, and goes there to "search the Internet, use the fax, the photocopier, the printers, all those kinds of things."

When support isn't supportive.

In spite of their statements that they do, in fact, feel supported, there are indications that some of the women are fighting a rather lonely battle, often without even realizing it. Elaine, for example, who claims her family is "definitely supportive," lost a job that she loved and that she had held for 26 years. She describes her family's response to this event:

Well my husband is pleased to see me at home a lot more.

He feels that I'm getting more rested up, "Time to slow down," he says....He's quite happy to see me at home now....

[My children] were getting to a point that they were starting to pressure me, thinking that it would be better for me to quit work or to see if I could find something else, if I was determined that I was wanting to be working to pass my days sort of thing...

Bonnie's family members laugh at her plans to return to work, stating that her health will never allow it. Her mother is overly protective: "She doesn't want me to go out in the big, bad world. She wants me to be safe." Dee's family and friends do not support her plans to complete her university degree so that she can find better work. "They think I should be getting a job and, you know, making money," she explains.

Five of the women find themselves alone with their deepest feelings. Reba's partner has grown weary of her pain and of her frustration with her search for new employment:

He's kind of sick and tired of [it]. It should be over with now, you know. You should be OK now. ...We've sat down and we've talked about how it wasn't your fault and how you're not stupid...and still I come and get my face ripped off because you're right back to where you were...So I think in his mind it was OK to be right out of it for the first couple weeks, but now it's time to redirect the energy.

Without having shared the experience, Reba feels his ability to understand is limited:

I mean it's great for someone to say, "I understand how you must feel," but if they're not in your boat, they have no idea how you feel....Phil's never been fired so I mean [when] he says, "Well I can imagine the blow," but really no, no, no, you don't.

Sharon says, "I feel quite lonely." Her sons, who supported her initial decision to leave her job, no longer ask her how things

are going. "It's like they don't want to hear it that maybe I'm having a hard time." She doesn't talk to her boyfriend because "he was getting depressed because...his life was hanging in the balance too." Her friends, like Reba's partner, can't really empathize because they "have never been unemployed," and because "they're getting on with their lives...They're established."

Dee hesitates to talk to friends. "It almost kind of bothers them to hear about it," she says. Della was troubled by her husband's response to the news of her lay-off:

So I managed to get out that...I had just been laid off. And he says, "Don't worry about it." I could've drove him. You know, here I am a total basket case. I couldn't even see out of my eyes because I'd been bawling so much. And he goes, "Don't worry about it."

When she attempts to discuss the financial impact of her lay-off, Della's husband is angry. "I need to...be able to sit down and talk about it," she says, "but I mean it's always been like that... 'Don't tell me these things. I said I don't want to know them. Deal with them!'"

Snapshot.

The majority of the unemployed women in the study report that they are receiving excellent support from family, friends, and former co-workers. This support, according to their stories, has many positive benefits for the women involved. In cases where jobs were left voluntarily, friends and family provide validation for this decision and for the woman's right to seek

employment which better satisfies her needs and goals. In cases of involuntary termination, the women feel supported in their outrage with the way things were handled and in their belief that the lay-off did not stem from personal failing on their part. As well, the women receive much-needed practical assistance with such things as transportation and job searching activities.

For over half of the women, however, the support which they are receiving appears to be somewhat questionable. Elaine's family is happy that she is no longer employed whereas Elaine is clearly not. Bonnie's family discourages her from pursuing the employment for which she has spent years preparing. Dee's friends and family criticize her educational goals. For others, family and friends have grown tired of, or fail to truly understand, the women's pain, leaving them to cope with their feelings on their own.

With or without support, however, the women in the study must resolve the issues of their job loss and move forward with their lives. As they do so, they discuss the life-changing lessons which they believe their unemployment experiences have taught them.

B: What Have I Learned?

The Lessons of Unemployment

As well as searching for new employment, the women who participated in this study are also searching for new ways of thinking and being. They are asking hard questions about themselves and their unemployment experience. These questions

include:

1. Is honesty the best policy?
2. What good can I take from this?
3. What does society tell me about my role today?

Let us hear the voices of the 12 participants as they discuss these very profound and difficult issues.

The Honesty/Dishonesty Dilemma

According to the majority of the women in the study, job loss has taught them to question the wisdom of being honest. As they reflect on their recent life experiences, the women consider how honesty comes into play at work, during unemployment, and as they attempt to become re-employed.

Honesty and work.

The world of work, the women discover, is not governed by honesty and openness. Nina believed that she had a relationship of trust with her longstanding employer. "I was from the old school where you were loyal," she explains. That loyalty, she now believes "was another mistake." "In the end they had no consideration for that," she says.

Cathy was "brought up that you always tell the truth. You work hard. You do as you're told. The boss is always right." She is now shocked to find herself in a situation where "we play fair and others don't." "It really crushes," she says, "It really blows us out of the water." In the future, Cathy vows, "I will never be at the short end of the stick."

Bonnie believes that women, in order to be successful at

work, must "be deceptive" and "lie about who you are." They must, she explains, pretend they aren't involved in relationships "because people will think that she's gonna be married and having kids, so that's gonna affect her." On a deeper level, Bonnie believes, a woman must "pretend you're a man," or behave in a stereotypically masculine way in order to keep her job. You find women "walking around acting like men to keep their job intact," especially if this job infringes on what Bonnie calls "man roles."

Honesty and unemployment.

Living with unemployment exacerbates the honesty/dishonesty dilemma. Discouraged and lonely in her search for new employment, Sharon now regrets her honesty with her previous employer. "I think maybe now I probably should have just asked for a stress leave...gone back when I wanted to, and not worry so much about them." Having tried to do "the most honest thing," especially from the point of view of her former employers, she finds herself rethinking this decision. "I've worried about those kind of things all my life," she explains, "and right now it's more important to me to have a job."

The financial strain of unemployment has led three of the women down a path they would not have envisioned for themselves. Dee describes her feelings:

I guess what it's really taught me and I'm not proud to say this...because I'm a real moral person...but I guess I've learned that being honest isn't a good thing to do. I was

honest about my car and I didn't get my student loan this summer...I guess it taught me to lie.... I've embellished insurance things because I have no money and this is all stuff I really feel ashamed of....People used to go to prison for years because they couldn't afford a loaf of bread for their kids and they'd steal it...Sometimes moms have to do that.

Lucy hid part of her Mother's Allowance money in a jar because "if they see that you're saving money, they'll cut you." Cassie withheld information regarding child support payments from HRDC because, as she says, "I don't feel that they need to know" and "the EI that I make is my own money."

Honesty and the job search.

Looking for work also raises honesty issues. The interview process, in particular, illuminates this point. Bonnie, for example, has had serious health problems. She faces the difficult question as to whether or not this fact should be disclosed to a potential employer:

You're supposed to disclose all your information when you apply for a job. Do I tell them I'm sick ? I know I'm not going to get hired if you say you're sick, but if I don't tell them, is that unethical?...If you do get hired on the information you give, and even if you're doing a quality job, and that person finds out that you didn't disclose..., they're gonna think that if you hide that you could be hiding something else. So they aren't gonna trust you.

According to some of the women, interviews require a subtle form of dishonesty in that one must present a less than authentic version of one's self in order to be hired. Cassie feels she must "be careful not to say certain things or not to give certain impressions." There are, as she explains, "parts of my personality that I wouldn't show." "I would be dressing in clothes that I wouldn't normally dress in...and there may be things that I wouldn't say in an interview."

Della also finds the process phony. As she says, you have to "go out there and you have to be assertive and perky, and that's not always how you are, you know, and you have to go out and sort of play a role that's maybe not you." Dee describes trying to get a job as being like "selling my soul," hardly a feeling of authenticity. Cathy refers to the interview as "the little role-play thing," where the potential employer expects you to "do your little dance."

Bonnie agrees that "women have to use deception to get them to the job." This deception, as she explained earlier, may require them to hide their relationship status in an interview in order to avoid discrimination by potential employers.

Snapshot.

Honesty is no longer a straightforward issue for many of the unemployed women in this study. Having been, in their perception, thoughtlessly tossed aside, they now question the loyalty and trust which they gave to former employers. The workplace, rather than being a place where one can be authentic

and open, is now seen by many as a place where one must be cautious and self-protective, even phony. For women, their very "femaleness" may need to be altered or hidden.

As the strain of unemployment drags on, one woman comes to regret her honesty in leaving, rather than abusing, her former position. For several others, the financial hardship has driven them to commit acts of fraud and dishonesty that they could not have imagined committing at an earlier time in their lives.

In looking for work, the honesty issue again surfaces. In attempting to please potential employers, the women consider whether to lie about health problems, to change their appearance and their personalities, and in general to be someone they are not in order to get the job. Their frustration with this dilemma is very clear.

Not all of the lessons of job loss, however, are negative ones. In some ways, adversity has brought with it positive changes.

The Positive Rewards of Job Loss

Although this title may seem unlikely, some of the women in the study have indeed been able, after a certain grieving period, to assess their experiences in terms of the positive outcomes. These include changes both in the women's self-image and in their plans for the future.

Changes in self-image.

For many of the women, surviving job loss has given them a new self-awareness and an appreciation of their inherent value as

human beings. Cassie, for example, has gained insight into herself through the termination process and likes what she sees:

I have come to appreciate some of my unique and decent characteristics. I find that...I have been able to objectify myself somewhat to myself, and that's an interesting process for a person to go through...humbling but it really gives one perspective on one's self. And I've come to appreciate who I am more and not take myself so much for granted.

Cathy says, "I'm just accepting who I am and valuing more who I am as a person." Dee was better able to face a recent job interview, because, as she explains, "I didn't feel like a victim." Sharon is learning to trust in her own ability to make decisions. As she says, "I have discovered that everybody has to live their own life and cannot be ruled by what other people might think or their values or whatever."

Two of the women believe that they have gained personal strength in taking legal action against their former employers. Della, for example, has successfully obtained financial restitution based on the fact that her employer did not give proper notice of termination or proper severance or vacation pay. "That's the only way," she explains, "that this man will realize that he can't be a chauvinist pig...is to hit him in the pocket book." She continues:

It's like a freedom thing, like it's closed the door...And I think if I hadn't of done that, I would still have been the timid little mouse, sitting back and they can walk over the

top of you...Well, now I know. I was right. He was wrong.

And, you know, I can stand up for my rights.

Cassie, who is also involved in legal action, expresses a similar view:

Myself I want a public apology. I want them to understand that this is no way to treat people, that there is a way to do that, that there's a proper process...I'm not seeking any kind of revenge or any of that. I'm just seeking accountability, and that it doesn't happen to someone else.

Changes in future plans.

Because the women are learning to see themselves through new eyes, and to value themselves in spite of the rejection they have faced and continue to face during their job searches, their plans for the future are also changing.

For Cathy, accepting and valuing herself means a change in her priorities. "I'm in the process," she explains, "of detaching myself from who I am and what I do so that who I am is not what I do. Who I am is who I am." "I will never, ever," she says, "dedicate so much of myself to a job ever again." "I gave too much," she continues, "and when my feet were knocked out from under me, I was empty. I had nothing because I had given too much." In the future, Cathy states, she will give priority to her personal, rather than her professional life, and in so doing, will define herself by her interests and her relationships. "Work," she says, "will be at the end and not at the beginning" of who she is.

Nina refuses to let the betrayal and dishonesty which characterized her dismissal change her inherent positive outlook:

I try to enjoy every moment I can, you know, rather than try to see the negative, try to see good things in everything. Like I can enjoy looking at the flowers. I can enjoy listening to the birds sing...I try to enjoy life.

The unemployment experience also stimulates several of the women to consider new career goals. Cassie explains:

For myself, it has challenged me to reflect upon what I really want to do, where I really want to be within the next five years....Otherwise, I think I would have continued working in the place where I was. And not necessarily to my benefit or the people I'm working with's benefit, in that you get into a bit of a rut...you're not challenged and you don't grow.

Bonnie agrees that job loss "might give you a chance to change your horizons." Cathy voices similar feelings:

And I've also taken the time to sit down and say, ok, all limitations are taken away. What do you want to be? What do you want to do? And you know what, I still haven't answered that question because I enjoy so many diverse aspects...I guess I'm just not sure now what path to take as far as my work, my next career move.

Della believes that "everything happens for a reason...There's gonna be something better...you're not there because there's something else that you have to keep looking for."

Snapshot.

Being unemployed, then, has provided some of the participants with the time and opportunity to look more closely at themselves and at the lives which they had been living prior to job loss. In spite of the blow to their feelings of self-worth, some have come away with a better appreciation of themselves as human beings. In particular, they sense that, in the world of work, they must look after themselves, because others clearly will not. Two of the women are doing this by taking legal action against their former employers.

For one woman, who has devoted herself to her work during her entire adult life, caring for herself means redefining who she is beyond her role as worker. For others, it means maintaining a positive attitude, and reframing their current unemployed status as being an opportunity to grow, to find a better job, and to welcome new challenges into their lives.

Unemployment and Gender

In discussing the impact which unemployment had on them, the women in the study raise some interesting issues regarding the role of men and women in today's society and how this changing role helps shape individual responses to job loss. There appears to be some disagreement as to the relative impact of unemployment on male and female workers.

The male role and job loss.

Three of the women express the belief that unemployment is probably more difficult for men than for women. The reasons they

cite have to do with the social roles assigned to men and women.

"I think men," Cassie says, "may define themselves more by what they do." For this reason, when unemployment hits, a man "may feel more personal devastation than a woman...that it was actually a personal attack...that they somehow had failed. They have failed themselves, their families, their society." "As a woman," Cassie continues, "I look at it as very circumstantial...It really had very little to do with me and who I am, that I was laid off."

Nina agrees. "It would be more difficult," she says, "for men to lose their jobs" because "their ego is like, 'I'm the man, I should be out earning the living.'" Although Nina's job was important to her, losing it is "not the end of the world," she states. Cathy expresses a similar thought:

I think that it is harder for men because our society has always painted a picture of the man as the provider, you know. Back to prehistoric times, the men went out and hunted and the women stayed and gathered berries and prepared food and took care of children and each other.

Cassie also believes that the hero role assigned to males in our society leaves men particularly vulnerable to the trauma of job loss. She talks about a male colleague who lost his job when she lost hers:

Stu is the one I worry about the most, the male....And being a male at his age, he's 52, I think there are certain expectations...that men that age don't cry. They don't fuss

about these kinds of things. That they need to be strong enough to get out there and pound the pavement. They don't need the kind of support the maybe women are expected to need. But they do, they need all of it.

The female role and job loss.

Reba also comments that "men were brought up in the sense that they are there to support their families." However she, and others, believe that women's roles have changed to the point where unemployment is equally devastating for them. As Reba explains:

I think now...in the nineties is that women want to be kind of a little bit of everything. And they see themselves in more than one role, than the role of staying at home. And I think maybe society has moulded us to think or to want those things now that we know that we're allowed to go out and work...that we want to take advantage of it. And when we don't have the opportunity or the opportunity's been taken away from us, then we don't feel whole...we don't feel like the women that maybe we should be because the society's saying that we should be more...I think there's much more to women now than there used to be.

Bonnie has a similar opinion. Whereas in earlier days "men were raised to be the support of the family," she explains, "I think now it goes both ways; I think women are being raised to do the same thing." Having been taught to "value ourselves," Bonnie continues, women also want "to get careers and strive for all you

can be." The problem, Bonnie states, is that society's perception has not caught up with reality. "It's still the old bias," she says, "that the man is the main person."

Julie agrees. The notion that "the man goes to work...and the woman stays home with the kids," in her view, stems from "the dark ages." "That's not the way it is," she says, "You need two incomes. Like, get into the nineties!"

Della also supports this view. She rejects what she perceives to be the persistent attitude that if a woman has a job, "it's just for pocket money and, you know, get her hair done and frivolly [sic] little things." She is infuriated by the view that "if you lose your job, well, that's fine, you'll just putter around at home. And you're supposed to be happy there."

Cassie, as well, bristles at what she describes as "the little woman role," a vision of women that she considers outdated and which dictates that a woman is "to be complacent and subservient...to do whatever needs to be done to accomplish the male's ultimate goal." Today's woman, according to Cassie, is "not there to serve. They're not there as objects, [but as] thinking, feeling, needing individuals." Part of this need, according to these women, includes having meaningful employment.

If women are less traumatized by unemployment than their male counterparts, two of the women suggest, it may be due to their ability to adjust to different roles more readily than men. Nina describes women as being "more flexible...more like roll with the punches." "We can take life's knocks," she says,

"better than men." Bonnie agrees:

I think women are the most awesome people...I mean you take somebody that is so adaptable...[Men] work hard and they do their thing. But they don't adapt well to circumstances... Look at where women have come [from]. They still do all the things that they were made to be, you know, mothers and wives and menders, and now they're working, and still doing everything else.

Snapshot.

As the 12 participants in the study reflect upon their own unemployment experience, they consider the impact which their gender may or may not be having on this process. Three of the women express the view that men may suffer more trauma following job loss. This, the women believe, stems from the tendency for males to define themselves exclusively through their formal work. This tendency, in turn, is attributed to the on-going socialization of males to assume the role of provider and aggressor, a role which the women perceive as being a modern manifestation of the prehistoric role of the male as hunter and protector.

Many of the women disagree with this perspective, stating that women's roles are changing to such a degree that job loss is as devastating for them as for their male colleagues. Women are now socialized, the argument goes, to view formal work as a desirable and necessary goal. Not only do women seek the stimulation and the challenge of the workplace, but their

financial contribution to their families is often essential. If women do, in fact, cope with unemployment more successfully than men, two of the women claim that this is not because they do not identify closely with their jobs, but because women are better able to adapt to a variety of roles and identities.

C: Chapter Summary

To summarize, the unemployed women who participated in this study are attempting to move forward with their lives, both psychologically and professionally. This, the women find, is not an easy task. Looking for work involves coping with direct rejection, when one is turned down for a position, and implied rejection, in instances where employers provide no response or are inaccessible to job-seekers. This rejection erodes the self-esteem of unemployed workers and may reinforce feelings of worthlessness triggered by the original lay-off. As well, the interview process, although challenging and empowering for a few, is for many an artificial and frustrating experience.

Agencies, such as Human Resources Development Canada and government-sponsored Job-Finding Clubs, have been established to assist unemployed individuals cope with the stresses and challenges of job loss and re-employment. The women criticize HRDC for their emphasis on procedure and regulations and for the replacement of human contact with computerization. The Job-Finding Clubs, in contrast, are praised for providing technological and practical assistance in a supportive, caring atmosphere characterized by individual attention.

The support of friends and family members during this stressful time is important for the women in that it restores their self-esteem, validates their feelings of outrage, and provides practical assistance. In many cases, however, the quality of the support given appears to be questionable in that the women's goals may be subject to disapproval and the ability of friends and family to empathize may be limited by varying degrees of patience and understanding.

While searching for work, the women also search for meaning in the unemployment experience. They question the practicality of honesty and openness, suggesting that these values may be incompatible with workplace success, with survival in the midst of financial crisis, and with the highly competitive job search process. They assess the positive rewards of job loss, such as the commitment to valuing and caring for themselves, and the opportunity to consider new career paths that would stimulate their growth and development as human beings. Finally, the women discuss the role of gender in the unemployment process. A few believe that men, having been socialized to view themselves as providers and to define themselves through this role, suffer more than women as a result of job loss. The more common response was that women today also view themselves as providers, also define themselves through their work, and therefore suffer as much as male workers in the face of job loss.

These findings raise questions at both the practical and conceptual levels. Is there something to be learned, for

example, from women's unemployment experiences that could lead to changes in the ways we assist both women and men in their re-employment efforts? Is the support received by unemployed women from family and friends truly supportive? Can women succeed in the workplace without reframing their notions of honesty and intimacy? And finally, how are social roles for men and women shifting and what is the impact of this shift on our understanding of and response to male and female unemployment? These are challenging questions that will be addressed in the final section of the paper.

PART THREE

THE VIEW FROM HERE: THE VOICE OF THE RESEARCHER

In the previous three chapters, the unemployment experience was viewed from the perspective of 12 jobless women who have presented, in their own words, an intimate view of how they have suffered, of what they believe they have lost, and of how they are attempting to rebuild their lives. The voices of these women do not always speak in unison, but rather reflect the richness and diversity of 12 unique lives and of 12 personal realities.

There are, in spite of this diversity, themes about women's unemployment, in particular, and about job loss, in general, which may be distilled from the very personal experiences and insights of the women in this study. In this final section of the paper, these themes, and the women's perspectives on them, will be examined within the context of the larger body of literature which illuminates our current understanding of women, work and unemployment. From this examination, it may be possible to a) provide support for the existing literature, b) identify gaps in our knowledge which invite further study or c) suggest possible modifications to existing theoretical models of unemployment. A discussion of the soundness of the study, as well as implications of the findings for educational and governmental practice will also be presented in this section.

Chapter Seven: The Findings and the Literature

The themes to be discussed in this chapter revolve around the various topics which were so articulately discussed by the participants in the study as they attempted to understand and to describe their own unemployment experience. These include: affective reactions to unemployment and the significance of the termination process itself; the financial impact of job loss and methods of coping with this impact; the women's perspectives on what work had provided in their lives, both personally and socially, and the adequacy of the role of homemaker as a replacement for formal work; the challenges of seeking new employment and the availability of help and support in this process; and the impact of the job loss experience at a philosophical level, on personal values, on self-image and on one's view of the roles of men and women in today's society. These themes will now be discussed in relation to the larger body of literature regarding women and unemployment.

A: The Initial Impact of Job Loss

The women are articulate in describing their emotional reactions to job loss, as well as their perceptions regarding the termination process itself. It is important to consider these data in relation to other studies of unemployment.

Affective Reactions to Unemployment

The women's affective experiences of unemployment contain both negative and positive dimensions. How do their insights regarding these issues inform our current understanding of the

job loss process?

Negative responses to job loss.

The negative affective reactions described by the women in this study support the results of the few existing studies of women's unemployment, all of which suggest that job loss has negative psychological consequences for female workers (Lai et al., 1997; Saurel-Cubizolles et al., 2000; Thakar & Misra, 1999). The unemployed women display shock and fear, emotions which illuminate the degree to which their jobs were significant in the overall context of their lives. As other studies have also reported (Dew, Bromet & Penkower, 1992; Rife, 1997), involuntary dismissal from their jobs was perceived as being significant enough to cause depressive symptoms in several of the women in this study.

These reactions do not support the assumption, which is either implicit or explicit in much of the unemployment literature, that female workers are protected from the negative consequences of job loss by a variety of factors, including lower work commitment, the alternative roles of housewife and mother, or the financial support of a working husband. On the contrary, the intensity of the reactions described by the participants in this study suggest that the job loss experience is both threatening and profoundly disturbing on a personal level.

Lowered self-esteem and self-blame, such as that described by the 12 participants, have been identified in earlier studies of women's unemployment as common responses to job loss

(Callender, 1987; Donovan, Jaffe & Pirie, 1987). In this study, as in Callender's (1987) study of women laid off from their employment in a South Wales clothing factory, the women tend to oscillate between blaming themselves and blaming management for the job loss.

Of the seven women who engage in self-blame, four had described their reaction to the lay-off in a previous section as including symptoms of depression. This provides some support for the notion that coping styles may affect an individual's responses to the unemployment experience. Earlier studies (Brenner & Starrin, 1988; Lai & Wong, 1998) suggest that optimism and/or a sense of personal mastery on the part of the dislocated worker will lessen the negative psychological impact of job loss, thereby allowing the individual to cope more effectively. This, in turn, may be explained by the theories of learned helplessness and of learned optimism (Seligman, 1975; 1991), which suggest that individuals who connect bad outcomes to their own behaviour tend to become depressed, while those who see bad outcomes as resulting from external causes are less prone to depression. In this study, the women who blamed their job loss on their own shortcomings tended to be depressed, whereas those who focused on the inappropriateness of their employers' behaviour did not.

Positive responses to job loss.

Regarding the positive responses to job loss, a previous qualitative study of women's unemployment (Davies & Esseveld, 1985) reports findings similar to those of the current study, in

which many women find the days immediately following their lay-off to be less stressful, almost holiday-like. What is apparent from many of the women's stories is that this holiday feeling often relates to the fact that they are no longer required to juggle the combined duties of working woman and homemaker. The "alternative" role of mother and homemaker, it would appear, was never really an alternative but has always been a significant part of the women's reality, whether working outside the home or not. This notion is confirmed by recent statistical data which reveal that working women continue to take responsibility for more household and childcare duties than their working male partners. A Statistics Canada study, for example, (reported Globe and Mail, June 14, 2000) reports that the majority of Canadian children are now raised by parents who both work at full-time jobs. Working mothers, however, spend approximately two hours per day more with their children than fathers do.

In light of these statistics, it is not surprising that the unemployed women experience a sense of relief in the early days of the unemployment process. What is not clear, at this point in the discussion, is how long the performance of household duties, to the exclusion of a role in the formal workforce, will prove to be satisfying to the newly-unemployed women.

The Termination Process

In the midst of the emotional aftermath of job loss, the women in the study attempt to unravel the details surrounding their lay-off. Understanding their assessment of this process

requires an understanding of the role of relationships in women's lives.

A question of fairness.

Although many of the women perceive themselves as being at least partly to blame for their current unemployed status, their feelings of outrage and anger are aimed primarily at employers, whose behaviour they find reprehensible. The way in which jobs were terminated, it appears, is a key factor in the unemployment experience of these 12 women.

This concern with the nature of the termination is not new to the literature. In fact, a substantial literature exists which examines the relationship between perceptions of layoff fairness and such outcomes as organizational endorsement (Konovsky & Folger, 1991), the desire to sue the past employer (Konovsky & Brockner, 1993), and future organizational commitment (Reichheld, 1996). Predictors of fairness include adequate explanation of the termination decision (Singer, 1993), correctability or the opportunity to modify the organization's decision (Lind & Tyler, 1988), and adequate severance benefits (Konovsky & Folger, 1991). These studies, however, were conducted from the perspective of the organization, rather than that of the dislocated worker. Although there is concern, in this literature, with identifying the causes of perceived unfairness among laid-off employees, this concern stems from a desire to ameliorate the "implications for the down-sizing organization", as a recent study on perceived fairness noted

(Wanberg, Bunce & Gavin, 1999, p.71). In other words, the focus of this literature is upon how the perception of fairness will ultimately impact on the performance and level of commitment of workers who were not laid off, and on the likelihood of laid-off workers to pursue legal action which might prove costly to the organization.

In contrast, the current study attempts to examine the termination process from the perspective of the women involved, rather than that of the firing organization, and to understand why perceived unfairness is such an important factor in the overall unemployment experience, as documented by the women in this study. In the opinion of this author, an understanding of this issue hinges upon an understanding of the literature surrounding women's psychological development.

Women's growth in relationship.

Beginning in the 1980s, studies into the developmental patterns of females have begun to suggest that relationship and connection form an essential part of identity formation in girls and women (Caffarella & Olson, 1993; Chodorow, 1990; Gilligan, 1982, 1996; Josselson, 1994; Miller, 1997). The development of the self, these writers suggest, may best be achieved concurrent with, rather than prior to, the development of intimacy skills. According to this model, separation is not a necessary prerequisite for maturation and self-actualization, as the Eriksonian model, with its emphasis on individuation and autonomy, prescribes. Instead, development occurs within the

context of relationships that grow increasingly complex, and which, in fact, contribute to the emergence of the fully-developed "self-in-relation" (Jordan, 1997; Surrey, 1990, 1997).

In order for this emergence to occur, relationships must be defined by feelings of authenticity, by a sense of realness and honesty, by a belief that one's voice is being attended to, by an awareness of one's linkage to the larger social world, and by empathy, described by Surrey as an "on-going intrinsic awareness and responsiveness to the continuous existence of the other" (p.61). Within this world view, "the primary feature", Jordan (1997) writes, "rather than structure marked by separateness and autonomy, is increasing empathic responsiveness in the context of interpersonal mutuality" (p.15). A sense of morality defined by competing rights is replaced, within this paradigm, by the ethic of care and its emphasis on balancing one's responsibilities to self with one's responsibilities to others (Gilligan, 1995; McRae, 1995).

It is important to note that, within this relational paradigm, the individual is not ignored or sacrificed. As Jordan (1997) explains, "We acknowledge intrapsychic reality, but we see the context, the ongoing relational interplay between self and other, as primary to real growth and vitality" (p.31). In order for this interplay to be growth-enhancing, Jordan emphasizes, a balance must be struck between an approach that is too-accommodating and one that is egocentric.

For the women in the study, then, the way they were removed

from their jobs ignores these basic characteristics of meaningful relationship and triggers feelings of disconnection, or loss of relationship, from the employers who have terminated their positions in this manner. The employers, from the women's perspectives, were neither truthful nor empathic nor caring towards the individuals whose lives they were now profoundly affecting. On the contrary, their behaviour is characterized as a "violation" by one and as a "betrayal" by another.

The lay-off, the women believe, could have been executed in another way, a way which acknowledged their humanness and vulnerability, which exhibited care and concern for their personal and professional lives, and which, therefore, would have maintained a sense of connection to the organization and to the employer, even though hard decisions were being made. In contrast, the disconnection which the women feel as a result of the manner in which they were laid off appears to be a defining factor in how the women attempt to resolve and integrate the unemployment experience.

B: The Financial Dimension of Job Loss

Because employment, by definition, involves some form of payment, the loss of this aspect of formal work has been the subject of much of the research into the effects of job loss. How do the women's reflections, regarding changes in spending patterns and in coping behaviours, compare to the findings of earlier unemployment literature?

Spending Behaviour

The women in this study are articulate in describing the financial aspects of the unemployment experience. For most, but not all, job loss brings about significant change in this area.

The financial squeeze.

The voices of the unemployed women in this study support the findings of earlier studies of female unemployment which report financial strain in the face of female job loss (Gordus & Yamakawa, 1988; Romero et al., 1988). The degree of this strain, as prior studies (Donovan et al., 1987) and the current study illustrate, may range from cutbacks in essential areas such as food and clothing to the reduction or elimination of discretionary items and activities.

Regardless of the degree of economic deprivation, however, the financial constraints imposed by job loss are perceived to be problematic by most of the women in this study. These findings are in keeping with those of Fryer (1995) and Whelan (1992), who refer to this phenomenon as relative deprivation, and subjective distress, respectively. Financial hardship, they maintain, is not restricted to the poor unemployed, but is experienced in relation to one's level of expectation. In this study, all of the women, regardless of socioeconomic status, refer to the financial difficulties of unemployment, a fact which provides some support for the notion of relative deprivation. If one is accustomed to providing one's child with an expensive outing with friends for her birthday, as one of the women in this study

reported, the inability to continue this tradition may cause frustration and despair, in spite of the fact that such a celebration might seem to others to be a needless extravagance.

The discussion about discretionary spending raises two other interesting points. First, one participant comments that she and her husband no longer eat in restaurants, not because of financial strain, but because it "doesn't make sense." This remark reveals an attitude to "home" work that is repeated often throughout the interviews. Why, one must ask, does working outside the home warrant a Friday-night treat of eating out, whereas, after working at home all day, going out to eat is viewed as being irrational? This apparent devaluing of the homemaker role is a theme that will be discussed more fully later in this chapter.

The second point of interest is the frequency with which the participants referred to the shortage of money in terms which involved their relationships with the children in their lives. Even those without children of their own found that they missed the opportunity to provide presents and activities, an experience which brought joy to the adults and children alike. Special family times such as Christmas and birthdays are painful reminders to the women of their inability to live up to their own expectations of themselves as mothers, grandmothers or friends.

Once again, the relational dimension of the female identity is illuminated. At least at this stage of their unemployment experience, the women seem to feel the loss of income most keenly

in terms of how it impairs their ability to nurture and sustain their primary relationships, particularly with children.

Overall, the degree of concern which the women in the study expressed in regard to the financial impact of job loss suggests that stereotypical notions of the "male breadwinner", which have dominated the unemployment literature, may be outdated. The women in this study clearly perceive themselves as providers for their families and do not appear to be comforted by the fact of their gender in the face of their inability to provide.

The "negative cases".

Regarding the four women who report that they were not experiencing financial difficulty in the area of essential spending at the time of the interview, it is important to note several factors. First, unlike most of the other women, these four women all had knowledge of their forthcoming unemployed status well in advance of the job termination. The ability to prepare for future financial obligations may have had important positive ramifications for these women and their families. Second, it may also be significant that Employment Insurance benefits and/or severance packages were still in place at the time of the interviews for three of these women. It is not known what the financial impact would be once these resources were exhausted. Finally, it is interesting to note that none of these four women has dependent children; many of the comments by the other eight women regarding financial strain in essential areas related to their children and their inability to provide for them

in the manner which they believed to be appropriate. This supports earlier research which reported that women who were childless suffered less than those with children (Shamir, 1985), further weakening the alternative role argument.

Coping Behaviours

In discussing the women's coping behaviours in response to the financial ramifications of their job loss experiences, two important themes emerged. These include: a) the problem of interpretation in the research process and b) the difficulties associated with financial assistance.

A question of interpretation.

The coping behaviours described by the women in this study do not support the findings, or at least the interpretation of the findings, of an earlier study of unemployment which compared male and female coping strategies in the face of job loss. Leana and Feldman (1991) found that the men in their study tended to rely on job search activities and relocation plans while the women relied on support from friends and on group activities. These activities were identified as revealing a "problem-based" coping style for the men and a "symptom-based" coping style for the women. The women, the study suggests, did what was necessary to feel better, whereas the men went out and tried to fix the problem. This difference was then linked to the difficulty which unemployed women traditionally face in securing suitable reemployment.

A closer look at the study reveals that questions focused

almost exclusively on job-seeking behaviour. No attempt was made to discover how, other than by talking with friends, the women were filling their days. No activity, other than job searching, was considered important or relevant to the concerns of an unemployed individual. What is evident here is the tendency, all too common in the literature, to view and interpret women's experiences through a lens which has been ground, so to speak, on a grindstone of male-dominated research.

The women in the current study, it is clear, felt compelled to attend to the very real and immediate concerns which the financial stress of their unemployment posed for themselves and for their families. Effort was required in order to a) cut the costs of running the home while causing a minimum of disruption, b) find alternative sources of revenue while maintaining a sense of personal dignity, and c) preserve the integrity of family traditions and rituals while drastically reducing the economic impact of these occasions. It is important that these efforts, because they are home-based rather than reemployment-based, not be trivialized or described as activities which "do little to solve the problem" (p.74), as Leana and Feldman suggest regarding the behaviour of the women in their study. Furthermore, as the data indicate, most of the women in this study were also very involved in active job searches and retraining activities at the same time as they restructured their personal lives. Because the women attend to the more interpersonal, immediate symptoms which have resulted from their job loss and are articulate in

expressing their concerns in this area, one cannot assume that they are unconcerned about the overarching problem, which is their need to find a job.

Financial assistance.

An important aspect of coping with the economic implications of unemployment involved accepting financial assistance from outside sources. This clearly presents some difficulties for the women in this study. First of all, as several point out, there is usually a significant drop in income, a drop which is particularly intolerable to those already living on a tight budget. These data support earlier studies which suggest that the financial dimension of job loss is a major factor in determining the degree to which unemployment is psychologically damaging (Feather, 1997). Support is also provided for studies which suggest that women, who often work in low-paying, low-status jobs, may be particularly vulnerable to the negative financial impact of job loss; employment insurance benefits, which are based on one's income prior to lay-off, may be seriously inadequate for individuals who were already living close to the poverty line while employed (Gordus & Yamakawa, 1988).

Several women discuss the loss of personal power and autonomy which results from the acceptance of financial assistance from outside sources. Accepting money from others is perceived as a loss of freedom: explanations of one's lifestyle choices, compliance with bureaucratic regulations, and seeking

approval for personal decisions are perceived to be the unspoken price tags of financial aid. These findings recall the New Zealand study of the single mother on welfare who documented her feelings of increasing surveillance by the state and the erosion of her ability to behave in an agentic manner (Drewery, 1998).

The image of prostitution, presented by one participant, is a strong statement about taking money from her church, but it is a statement which reflects the feelings expressed by many others. Financial assistance is available, but at what cost? Is it at the cost of personal dignity and freedom? Is there a way to offer this assistance which upholds the integrity of the individuals involved? Why is being at home, in many cases raising children, not engendering feelings of worthiness for the support which is forthcoming? Does this in fact reflect, as the Drewery study (1998) suggests, a view of personhood that devalues traditionally female work, such as caregiving, and which assigns individual rights based on property ownership?

The data collected in this study suggest that women are no longer contented to be supported by government agencies or by other family members. Once again, these findings reinforce the notion that women's perceptions of their role (or roles) in society are evolving, are becoming more complex, and include both a public and a domestic dimension. As one important study of female development concludes, it may be that women, such as those in this study, find themselves living in a society that, from an economic perspective, requires women to work and in which

permanent full-time housekeeping, for financial and psychological reasons, is no longer a feasible or desirable goal (Levinson, 1996).

C: The Psychosocial Impact of Job Loss

Much of the unemployment literature suggests that the loss of employment involves more than the loss of income. The women in this study discussed their job loss in relation to what work had meant to them both personally and socially. As well, they considered their current role as homemaker in terms of its appropriateness as a replacement for formal work.

Work and Personal Identity

Work, according to the women in this study, provides individuals with both structure and meaningful activity for their everyday lives. The insights of the 12 women regarding these topics will be discussed in relation to the broader body of unemployment literature.

Work and routine.

For the participants in this study, job loss resulted in the loss of the routine which had given structure and a sense of rhythm to their everyday lives. These results support Jahoda's deprivation model of unemployment as well as other studies which identify the loss of routine as an important component of job loss (Davies & Esseveld, 1985; Donovan et al., 1987).

Also of interest is the tendency on the part of the women in this study to assess the routine of a particular job in terms of its compatibility with family life and with ties to friends.

These anecdotal data recall the statistical data which reveal that Canadian working women are more likely than their male counterparts to be involved in non-regular working patterns such as part-time and flex-time (Gunderson, 1998). It seems likely that many women think about and assess work routines, not only in terms of providing a regular order for their day, but also in terms of how this order will impact on other people in their lives, especially children and partners. Once again, the relational model of female development is reinforced, in that success in the public domain, as it is conceptualized by these women, appears to include a routine that leaves sufficient time for a meaningful personal life.

Work and activity.

According to the women themselves, their days at work are taken up with a variety of tasks that are interesting and important for the on-going success of the organization of which they are a part. This supports the deprivation model of unemployment which suggests that individuals look to the institution of employment to provide them with regular, meaningful activity. When it is perceived as being meaningful, this activity contributes to one's sense of personal worth and identity by validating one's degree of skill and competence. Now that these women no longer have access to the workplace, it is reasonable to question the availability of activities of this nature. It is not clear, at this point, whether or not housework can replace formal work in this regard, as some studies have

suggested (Underlid, 1996).

It is clear, however, that, for the women in the study, meaningful activity is often associated with the opportunity for connection with others, particularly in the form of helping. The centrality of relationship in female development is supported by these data. As well, this introduces the question as to whether women are assigned to traditionally female jobs through social role conditioning or are reframing the tasks assigned to them in a way that gives priority to their sense of connection to others. Lucy, for example, sees her job in whirlpool production in terms of client safety. Pam sees her work in policing as a means of helping families. Cathy views her various administrative posts as opportunities to get to know and help students and clients. Whatever the job description, the women tend to focus on and draw meaning from the relational aspect of the position.

Work and Social Identity

The women's comments concerning the social implications of job loss revolve around issues of status and connection. Their comments provide support for earlier studies.

Work and social status.

Jahoda's deprivation model of unemployment is again supported by the data in that the institution of work clearly provides the women in this study with a social identity. Through their jobs, the women feel connected to their employers, to co-workers, to the goals of their organization, and to the public which they often serve. As well, the women perceive that their

work gives them status in the communities in which they live.

In the face of unemployment, many of the women fear the loss of this status, as well as the misunderstanding and censure of members of their communities. Whether fired, laid off, or unemployed through personal choice, the women exhibit concern with how the job loss will be interpreted by their peers and fellow citizens. This reaction illuminates the degree to which the workplace provides these women with a sense of who they are in the broader social context. It also tends to refute the long-held assumption that women define themselves socially, not through formal work roles, but rather through the more traditional roles of wife and mother (Levinson, 1996; Lopata, 1994). In this study, all of the women with the exception of one, who is nearing retirement age, clearly see work as part of their future for many years to come. It would appear that the prescribed roles for modern women are shifting to include professional, as well as domestic goals, as some theorists suggest (Coser, 1991; Levinson, 1996).

Work and connection.

As well as supporting the deprivation model, these data also reinforce the relational model of female development. Feeling connected to employers, co-workers and members of their community is clearly an important issue for the participants. The breaking of this connection through job loss may be a significant factor in the psychological distress which follows. If women (or people in general) may best develop a sense of competence and therefore

of positive self-esteem through mutually empowering, authentic relationships as some theorists suggest (Josselson, 1994; Miller, 1997; Surrey, 1997), then it is reasonable to conclude that the severing of these relationships will impact negatively on the self-esteem of those involved. This was clearly the case for the women in this study.

The Alternative Role of Homemaker

Although the women in the study were all "homemakers" at the time of the interviews, their perceptions of this role reveal a lack of contentment with this lifestyle. What conclusions may we draw from the women's comments regarding the routines and activities of housework?

The alternative role and routine.

Contrary to Jahoda's original conclusion (1982), the alternative role of homemaker does not provide an adequate sense of routine and order for the lives of the participants in this study. Although several of the women stated that there is plenty of work to running a home, it seems that there is not enough around which to structure an entire day, or a life. Why is this?

It may be with children in school or moved away, and with the technological advances designed to assist homemakers, that keeping house is no longer a full-time job. It may be that the women, as Lucy suggested, have grown used to performing the tasks of housework during off-hours, and do not consider this as being legitimate mainstream work. It may be that women, having grown used to the stimulation and level of activity associated with

combining home and career, are in fact thriving in the multiple-role identities of modern life, as Coser (1991) and Barnett (1993) suggest. Returning to the single role of homemaker may be stifling to someone who has had a different, perhaps more fulfilling, life experience and who has enjoyed a more positive role-image in being able to competently handle the tasks of both worker and homemaker. Unlike men, whose image may be enhanced by the role of "family man" (Rothbell, 1991), women must seek enhancement of their image by adding non-domestic roles. Being labelled "just a housewife", as Rothbell states, is, in fact, "a most effective way to denigrate women" (p.28).

Many of the women have found a source of routine in activities outside the home. Several, for example, were attending a Job Finding Club and found that this gave a more satisfying rhythm to their day. For others, life was structured around children's daycare, university classes, and exercise classes. For those without structured activities, the days are described as being long and boring.

These findings support Jahoda's argument that individuals tend to depend, for the categories of experience needed for psychological health, on established organizations and institutions. When work is taken away, she argues, most of us are ill-prepared to fend for ourselves in terms of meeting our psychological needs and will turn to outside institutions other than employment for assistance (Jahoda, 1984). The women in this study who are successfully establishing a routine appear to be

using this approach.

The alternative role and activity.

The alternative role model rests on the assumption that, for unemployed women, the tasks of the formal workplace are replaced with the myriad of tasks associated with managing a household. The data from this study tend to confirm this assumption, in that the participants agree that there is work to do at home, that it is essential work, and that they are primarily responsible for completing it. What is not confirmed by these data is the further assumption, implicit in the alternative role model, that the replacement of the tasks of formal work with those of housework will result in similar levels of satisfaction for the individuals involved, and that this satisfaction will thereby protect women from the devastating effects of job loss. In fact, the women in this study are clearly dissatisfied with the tasks which now occupy their days. This dissatisfaction centres around the women's need for connection, and the esteem with which they and others view their current role.

First, homemaking, in the women's estimation, does not fulfil their need to be in relationship as an on-going part of their working days. Instead, they feel isolated and lonely, missing the interpersonal contact that was readily available in the workplace, as well as the opportunity to share goals and tasks with co-workers.

Second, in spite of their brief protestations to the contrary, it is clear that the women in this study do not value

the role of homemaker. The tasks of housework are, in their estimation, repetitive and boring, requiring little in the way of skills or training. The tasks which they had performed in the workplace were described as being challenging, interesting and requiring skills and talents. A closer examination of the data, however, reveals that the majority of the women had been employed in jobs that required them to perform what would appear to be repetitive, sometimes dull, tasks on a daily basis. Could it be that the women's dissatisfaction with housework stems less from the nature of the work itself, and more from the tendency on the part of the women, and of the society of which they are a part, to devalue traditionally female work?

However much our society pretends to glorify "motherhood" and homemakers, the bottom line is that, for homemakers, there is no bottom line. Housewives are not paid for their labours, and have been socialized to consider the maintenance of the home and family as their natural, God-given, and therefore unpaid duty (Chafetz, 1991). The thousands of hours of housework performed annually by women are not considered a viable part of the Gross National Product of our country; in other words, they don't count. Housewives who have spent a lifetime working at home are ineligible for Canada Pension Plan when they reach retirement age; once again, our government is stating that homemaking is not a recognized form of valued work in this country. Finally, the Labour Force Survey, conducted monthly by Statistics Canada to obtain estimates of unemployment, employment and numerous

other labour market indicators, does not count the efforts of unpaid housewives as work.

In the formal workplace, the tendency to devalue women and their work continues, with women remaining clustered in jobs that reproduce their domestic roles, such as nursing, clerical and the service industry, and continuing to earn, on average, only 72% of the wages of male workers (Statistics Canada, 1995). Even in factories, as Callender's study (1987) of garment factory workers revealed, jobs traditionally assigned to female lines, such as sewing, may be arbitrarily identified as being "unskilled" by management, and female employees paid less in accordance with this designation. Less demanding tasks such as cutting, traditionally assigned to male workers, are deemed to be "skilled", and are paid more accordingly.

Is it surprising, in light of these facts about women's work, that the women in the study find little personal satisfaction or social prestige in the role of homemaker? Is it any wonder that the women themselves a) trivialize their household duties, b) discount the wide variety of technical, organizational, psychological and emotional skills that are required to manage a busy home and children, and c) seek some degree of financial remuneration, of personal fulfilment, and of social status in what they perceive to be the more challenging and socially prestigious atmosphere of the formal workplace? Having experienced the social rewards of formal work, in terms of financial remuneration, social interaction, and prestige, is it

likely that they would now be contented with the isolation and perceived lower status of the homemaker role?

D: The Job Search Experience

In discussing their experiences surrounding the job search process, the women provide interesting insights regarding the psychological impact of looking for work, the government agencies set up to assist with this process, and the mediating effects of support from family and friends. In each area, the data illuminate the significance of relationship in the lives of the women in this study.

The Psychological Impact of the Job Search

In reviewing the unemployment literature, it is clear that, for the most part, the job search process has been examined as a series of behaviours that are performed by unemployed individuals in order to find work, with the level of success being mediated by factors such as the availability and quality of social support (Ratcliffe & Bogdan, 1988; Rife, 1995), coping styles (Leana, Feldman, & Tan, 1998), and the level of expectation of success (Rodriguez, 1997). A few studies have considered the impact of the job search process on the psychological well-being of unemployed workers. An earlier qualitative study of unemployed Swedish women (Davies & Esseveld, 1985), for example, reports that the women, after a series of unsuccessful job search attempts, begin to integrate factors of self-blame and self-deprecation as explanations for their failures. Goldsmith and Darity (1992) suggest that the feelings of helplessness which

result from lengthy periods of unsuccessful job-hunting may account for the depression which is often reported as being part of the unemployment experience.

For the women in this study, the job search experience leaves them feeling, for the most part, fearful and uncertain about themselves and their futures. Their stories provide further insights into the negative aspects of job-hunting.

As was noted earlier, relatively recent research is now challenging the traditional models of psychosocial development, such as those proposed by Erikson (1968) and Levinson (1978), which assume that human psychosocial development progresses through a series of discrete stages, with its goal or pinnacle being a state of separateness or autonomy. Although there is some support for the notion that female development also is characterized by identifiable stages (Levinson, 1996), as well as theorists who contest the linear nature of this approach (Bateson, 1989), there appears to be consensus that the issues associated with female development do not tend to revolve around the need to separate. For women, it is theorized that the underlying issue is to become one's own person, while maintaining connections with others through a web of relationships which are increasingly complex, as well as mutually empowering and supportive. As well, research suggests that females do not restrict their desire for connection to the domestic domain, but also seek meaningful connection in the more public arenas of their lives such as the workplace (Hughes-Bond, 1998).

Taken within this context, then, it is understandable that, for the women in this study, much of the job search process is a metaphor for disconnection and dysfunctional relationship. Their attempts to contact potential employers are often ignored or rejected, leaving them feeling cut off, helpless and silenced. Interviews are described as artificial, stressful encounters characterized by a) the employers' desire to remain detached and objective in order to assess the suitability of potential employees and b) the women's attempts to present an image of themselves that will be acceptable to potential employers, an image that is often neither honest nor complete. The women, viewing the process from a perspective that values connection and intimacy, question its efficacy as a means of truly getting to know who a person is or what she may have to offer an organization. When they are turned down for jobs, particularly for personal reasons such as age, personality or marital status, the women's feelings of disconnection are profound.

It appears, then, that the psychological distress which the women in the study experience as they attempt to contact potential employers stems largely from their perception that they are being ignored, rejected for who they are, or judged on the basis of an inadequate encounter that denies the value of openness and meaningful interchange. Because authentic connection is not possible in such an atmosphere, this aspect of the job search process proves to be a frustrating and disturbing experience for the women in the study.

The Issue of Support

As the data document, support, both practical and emotional, is provided to the unemployed women in the study by government agencies and by family and friends of the women themselves. Their reactions to this support provide interesting insights into the job loss experience.

Support from government agencies.

Because support implies some form of relationship, and given the relational context of women's sense of well-being, it is not surprising that, in many cases, the support offered to the women is empowering and reassuring to their somewhat damaged self-concepts. What is equally clear, however, is that the support described by the women is not always truly "supportive", in light of the frustration, anger and despair which it often seems to engender in those who receive it. The difference lies in the relationships underlying the support.

The data from this study support the writings of Josselson (1994), Miller (1994, 1997) and Surrey (1990, 1997), all of whom conclude following years of clinical research that psychological health and development, at least in women, require not just relationships, but certain kinds of relationships. Meaningful connections, according to these researchers, are defined by a sense of authenticity, or realness, and by mutual engagement and mutual empathy, leading to mutual empowerment. Relationships which fall short of these standards do not successfully promote psychological well-being, and are not, therefore, truly

supportive to the individuals involved.

The contacts with HRDC and with the Job-Finding Clubs which are described by many of the women illuminate this concept. In spite of the availability of staff and materials, the interactions with HRDC are unanimously characterized as being unsatisfactory and startlingly unhelpful. This, according to the women themselves, is due to the failure on the part of the HRDC personnel to relate to the newly-unemployed women in any of the ways outlined above. There is little opportunity for prolonged engagement, so that the women might feel that they are being viewed as individuals with individual stories that are worthy of time and attention. There is no sign of empathy, so that the women can feel that their feelings are being truly understood and validated. Finally, there is little attempt to provide practical assistance with the very real problems of the newly-unemployed.

The Job-Finding Clubs, on the other hand, adopt a different approach. The women are involved with a facilitator over a three-week period, with one-on-one interaction, group discussion, and practical assistance with the minutiae of job searching. The women feel listened to and understood, both by group leaders and by their fellow students, who are also struggling with the challenges of the job loss experience. As a result, the women feel validated, empowered and more competent to face the somewhat unfriendly world of cold calls and interviews. Within this type of environment, and within the context of these relationships, the support which the women feel is positive and strengthening.

These data recall the study of the role of social support in the job search activity of older women (Rife, 1995) in which the job-club model is praised for its utility in providing emotional and practical support to unemployed females.

Support from family and friends.

An examination of the women's personal relationships, and of the so-called support which the women assure us emanates from them, further underlines the impact which the quality of significant relationships appears to have on the self-esteem of those involved. In the aftermath of job loss, for example, most of the women feel empowered by friends and family in that they receive validation of their feelings of shock and outrage, and in that they are reassured of their worth as workers, mothers, wives and human beings in general. In these ways, the relationships fulfil the criteria for meaningful connection described by theorists such as Josselson and Miller and, in so doing, provide a positive environment for psychological health. In other ways, however, it is clear that the women do not feel the support of those closest to them.

Support to stay at home, when one clearly wants to work, for example, is not support at all. This was the experience of two of the women, whose stories recall the findings of an earlier study which called into question the quality of the support offered to unemployed women by their friends and family (Ratcliffe & Bogdan, 1988). For many women in that study, as well, support came in the form of encouragement to be happy at

home, rather than validation of and assistance with their re-employment goals.

For several women, their closest relationships did not provide them with a safe place where deep concerns and fears could be shared in an atmosphere of acceptance and empathy. Concern, on the part of the women, for the well-being of the loved one, rather than with their own problems, often dominated their exchanges with friends and family members. Some family members tired, fairly early on, of hearing about the women's problems and fears, and wanted the women to move on quickly to healing and action. In support of Miller's (1994) prediction, this lack of authentic connection leaves the women involved feeling insecure and self-critical, rather than competent and self-assured as they face the daunting task of finding work.

E: The Lessons of Unemployment

As a result of their job loss experiences, the women in the study question some of the assumptions upon which their views of themselves and their world had previously rested. In reframing their understanding of concepts such as honesty, self-image and the role of gender in their lives, the women raise important issues for us to consider.

The Honesty Issue

The question of honesty raises important issues for the participants in this study and, perhaps, for women and men in general. These issues include implications for workplace success as well as the broader notion of personal voice.

Honesty in the workplace.

Many of the women in the current study have come to the conclusion that their previously held views regarding the appropriateness of honesty and openness as guiding principles for life are not valid in light of their workplace and unemployment experiences. Workplace success, they conclude, requires women to deny their femininity, to be wary and self-protective and to hide their personalities and their true selves, particularly from employers. Nowhere is this more evident to the women than at the job interview, where one must question how much of one's history to disclose, how much of one's personality to reveal and how much of one's self to purposefully disguise in order to be what the potential employer may be seeking.

These data support the findings of Gilligan (1996), Stiver (1991), and of a recent qualitative study by this author which explored the career plans of adolescent girls (Hughes-Bond, 1998). These studies, along with the current investigation, suggest that the relational basis of female development may create tension for women as they attempt to find success in a workplace and a society which is characterized by a concern for individual rights, independence, competition and objectivity. What is disturbing is the conclusion, arrived at by many of the women in the current study, that they must forfeit authenticity and relational needs in order to meet professional goals. As Gaskell and McLaren argue (1991), this approach reflects the widely accepted deficit model of female workplace success, which

focuses on what is lacking in females rather than bringing under scrutiny the fundamental structure and ideology of the workplace itself. It may be, for example, that the workplace needs to be defined by openness, honesty and trust, if it is to be an emotionally and psychologically supportive environment for women and men alike. By validating, rather than pathologizing women's developmental need for connection, and by reframing our notions of the ideal workplace to reflect this validation, we may find that a workplace, and a world, which celebrates interdependence is a better one indeed.

Loss of voice.

The findings of this study also recall the findings of psychologists such as Brown and Gilligan (1992), Gilligan herself (1995, 1996), and Rogers, Brown and Tappan (1994) regarding the loss of voice which results from the on-going tension between women's desire for connection and relationship and the prevailing emphasis on separation and independence in modern society. These authors suggest that females, beginning in adolescence, learn to silence themselves in order to salvage relationships, to avoid conflict or disagreement that might threaten relationships, and to fit the cultural template for female behaviour that society considers appropriate. This issue of loss of voice is apparent in several aspects of the job loss process as described by the participants in this study.

First, the women expressed concern with the lack of consultation and/or warning during the termination process. Even

after long periods of employment with an organization, the women's voices were not attended to, or were deliberately silenced, before important decisions were made which would seriously impact upon their lives.

Second, in discussing the support received from friends and family, several of the women described their reluctance to share their pain and problems with those closest to them in order to avoid upsetting loved ones. One woman was prepared to suppress her hopes for re-employment due to her family's desire that she retire. Her wishes, it seems, were assumed by family members to be congruent with their plans for her.

Third, in turning to an agency such as Human Resources Development Canada, the women found themselves in a system in which the need to attend to regulations overshadowed the need to attend to individual voices. Once again, loss of voice is a defining factor in the women's recollections in this area.

Finally, the women, as noted above, have learned that the silencing of the self is necessary in order to get and to keep jobs in the formal workplace. In this way, it appears that they, like the girls in a five-year study of private school students in the American midwest (Rogers, et al., 1994), are "learning to muffle or silence their distinctive voices and to speak in another tongue - the voice of the culture" (p.5).

Unemployment, Self-image, and Gender

In this section, we examine the women's comments regarding their relationships with their former and future employers. As

well, their reflections upon the changing roles of men and women in modern society are discussed in relation to the literature.

The organization and the self.

As the women integrate the experience of job loss into the larger context of their lives, several come to the conclusion that, at least in the public domain, they must value and protect themselves, since many whom they have encountered in the workplace do not. In valuing themselves, they are determined to demand more for themselves in their future professional lives and to concern themselves less with the opinions and goals of others. Two women take legal action against their former employers, demanding acknowledgment of the inappropriateness of their treatment. One woman avows that personal goals and relationships, not work, will take priority in her life from this time forward. The world of work, in her estimation, represents an ideology that she cannot embrace and which does not support her as a human being. These findings recall those of studies into the so-called demise of organizational commitment on the part of employees (Ambrose, 1996; Reichheld, 1996). This phenomenon, according to the organizational studies, is linked to the widespread downsizing that has occurred across North America in recent years, with a resulting loss of trust on the part of employees and a determination to replace organizational loyalty with self-protection.

The loss of trust issue might also be reframed as yet another manifestation of the tension between the relational world

view of the women and that of the workplace, which they believe has failed them, but which they hope or need to re-enter nonetheless. It appears that, in the opinion of many women, the world of work necessitates a choice between valuing self and valuing others, rather than an interdependent merging of the two.

Changing roles, changing paradigms.

As the words of the women also reveal, their job loss experience is being played out in an historical context defined by changing social roles for men and women. Although the financial contributions of these women represent an essential, if not exclusive, portion of the family income, many of the women continue to receive societal messages which tell them that their professional role is secondary to their domestic one. Because it is viewed as being secondary, the loss of and replacement of this role, they are told, is not as significant as it would be for male workers. For these women, then, whose profound feelings of loss are clearly documented, the result can only be the confusion and frustration which we have heard expressed in their stories.

These data support recent studies which document the changing roles of men and women in modern society in spite of the reticence of society in general, and the workplace in particular, to accommodate these changes (Levinson, 1996; Lopata, 1994). The importance of their workplace role to the women in the study and their obvious despair in the wake of its loss support Barnett's (1997) statement that "at this point in time, there is more overlap in social-role occupancy than at any point in recent

history" (p.357).

The conclusion reached by two of the women, that it is women's flexibility that makes them more successful than men in handling the trauma of job loss, recalls the writings of Coser (1991) and of Barnett (1997, 1999), which question the popular notion that multiple roles are detrimental to psychological well-being. It may be that multiple roles, in fact, enhance well-being and encourage the development of flexibility, a quality which is invaluable in times of change. Women's need "to maintain a fluid sense of self" (Caffarella & Olson, 1993), may be linked to an ability to constantly redefine one's self. This, in turn, may give women, in times of uncertainty, a strength that is missing in lives defined by rigid roles and identities (Bateson, 1989).

F: Recap

In this chapter, the themes which emerged from the women's stories about their job loss experiences have been examined in relation to the broader body of literature concerning women and unemployment. These themes relate to: a) the initial impact of job loss, b) the financial dimension of job loss, c) the psychosocial impact of job loss, and d) the job-seeking experience. In the final chapter of the thesis, the main findings from these discussions will be presented, as well as an emerging model of unemployment which incorporates these findings. The soundness of the study will be discussed, and suggestions will be made as to what implications, for education and for the

assistance and re-training of unemployed individuals, may be drawn from the findings of this thesis.

Chapter Eight:

The Main Findings, Soundness and Implications

Broadly stated, the findings of this study confirm the results of the large number of studies which have investigated the impact of job loss on male workers, as well as the results of the few existing studies of terminated female workers. Unemployment, it appears, was a challenging and difficult experience for the women who were interviewed, an experience often initially defined by shock, fear, betrayal and anger, and culminating in more long-term psychological effects including anxiety, low self-esteem, self-blame and depression. The notion that women do not suffer following job loss was clearly not supported by the stories which have been shared in the preceding chapters.

In a general sense, the findings also largely support Jahoda's deprivation model of unemployment as being an appropriate conceptualization of the experience of job loss as it was experienced by the 12 participants in this study. The voices of these women, in many ways, echo those of the villagers of Marienthal, whose stories of despair and hardship have shaped our understanding of the job loss experience for over 60 years.

Specifically, then, in what ways do the experiences of the women in this study further strengthen Jahoda's conceptualization of employment and of unemployment? In what ways might their experiences expand our current understanding of the job loss experience? How might this broader understanding illuminate our understanding of other aspects of women's unemployment

experience, such as the alternative role of homemaker and the job search process? Finally, how might we apply what we have learned from this study to the educational, workplace, and governmental practices which affect the unemployed members of our community?

A: In Support of Jahoda's Model

The rich and varied stories told by the 12 women in this study provide compelling support for the conceptualization of unemployment which first emerged from the 13-month investigation conducted by Jahoda and her team in the Austrian village of Marienthal in 1932. First, we know that the women in this study, like their male counterparts in the vast majority of earlier unemployment studies, were indeed working for money. Further, we know that the money which they had been earning, prior to their termination, was used, not for the discretionary luxuries that have long been attributed to the shopping lists of working women, but rather for food, for shelter, for adequate transportation, for school lunches, for entertainment, for dental bills and for skating lessons. In other words, it was used for the necessities of a decent life, both for themselves and for their families. In the face of unemployment, then, the women in this study, as in others, face very real and well-founded financial concerns.

Second, we know that the institution of work provided the women with a sense of structure for their daily lives, a structure upon which they had become dependent, and without which they found themselves disoriented and unproductive. As other lives around them moved on in the familiar routines of work and

school, their own lives seemed to them to be curiously disjointed and out of sync.

Third, the unemployed participants in the study found themselves deprived of the myriad of activities which had formed the basis of their daily lives, activities which they had found interesting, challenging and which had rendered their lives meaningful in a variety of ways. In spite of the initial relief from the on-going demands of combining home and workplace responsibilities, the women consistently reported that the absence of tasks that required their particular skills and expertise was a particularly disturbing aspect of their lives as unemployed individuals.

Fourth, loss of employment was experienced by the women in the study as an unwelcome shrinking of their social worlds. Although contacts were made with family and friends on a regular basis following job loss, the enforced daily connection to others which had characterized their working lives was clearly and unanimously missed.

Fifth, the participants confirm Jahoda's hypothesis that the workplace provides its participants with a sense of purpose that goes beyond one's own personal and private goals. Having been removed from the organizational culture, the women find their lives lacking in meaning and direction, in spite of their on-going role as homemaker and, in many cases, as mother.

Finally, the 12 women tell us that they no longer have a clear sense of who they are within their communities or of what

their role is within those communities. Social status, previously defined for them by their role in the formal workplace, has become ambiguous and questionable.

The findings of this study, then, support the deprivation model of unemployment, which is depicted graphically by this author in Figure 2.

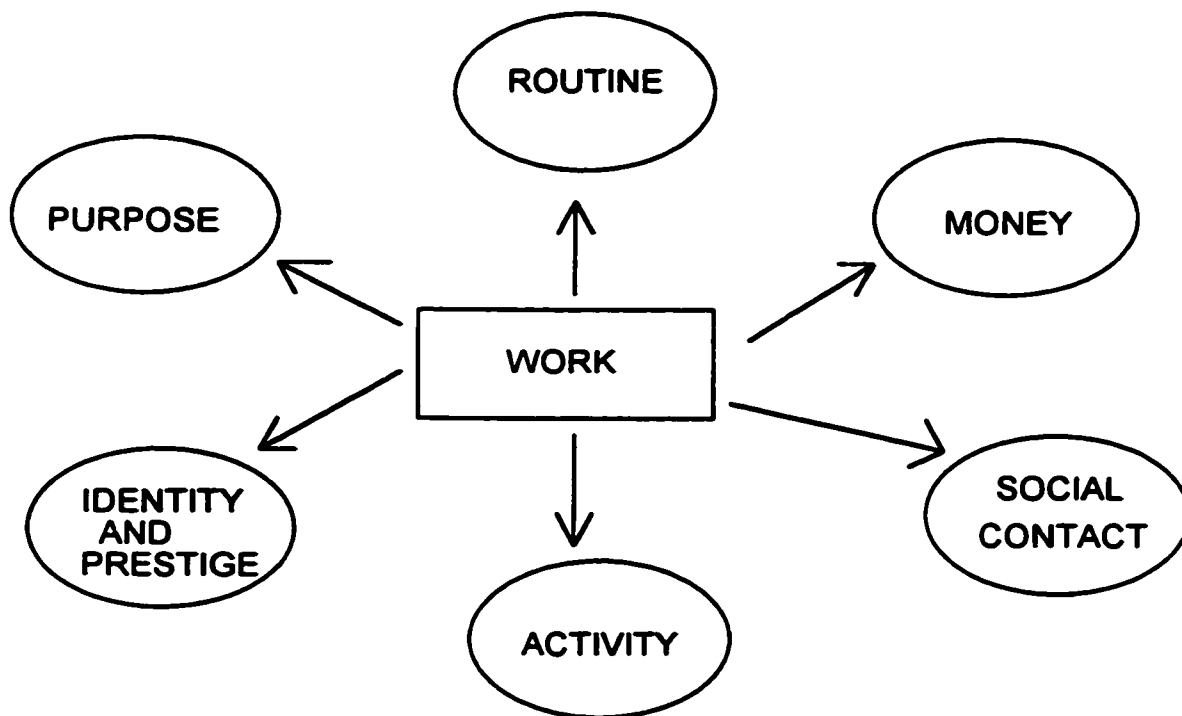


FIGURE 2: JAHODA'S CONCEPTUALIZATION OF WORK

This model acknowledges the importance of the financial outcomes of work, while at the same time recognizing the vital categories of experience which workers derive from participation

in the formal workplace. When unemployment hits, the women lose, not only their incomes, but also their sense of routine, adequate levels of activity, social contacts, a sense of status in the community, and a purpose for their lives. Although some individuals are able to, at least temporarily, replace some of these experiences in their lives, by and large their attempts to do so are unsuccessful, reaffirming Jahoda's belief that we have come to depend on the institution of work to enforce upon our daily lives the categories of experience upon which we have come to rely for our social, psychological, and financial well-being.

As well as providing further confirmation of the deprivation model of unemployment, however, the voices of the women in this study have also provided us with a new lens through which we may perceive the phenomenon of job loss, a lens which may serve to deepen our understanding of the deprivation model itself. This lens, so to speak, highlights the significance of relationship in women's employment and unemployment experiences.

B: Toward a New Model of Unemployment

Drawing upon a) the experiences of the women in this current study, b) the findings from earlier studies of women's unemployment and c) the body of literature concerning female psychological development, it is reasonable that we now move toward a new model of women's unemployment, a model which recognizes that relationships are the "central organizing dynamic in women's (but probably all people's) lives (Jordan, 1997, p.15). Viewed from the perspective of such a "relational model",

job loss may be conceptualized as an experience defined by varying degrees of disconnection, that is, of broken or impaired relationships. I would suggest that it is this disconnection, which occurs along the dimensions outlined by the deprivation model of unemployment, which causes a significant part of the psychological, emotional and social devastation long associated with the unemployment experience. The main findings of this study support this notion.

Disconnection and the Deprivation Model

A relational model of unemployment proposes that job loss creates a breakdown in the maintenance of many of the growth-fostering connections which, prior to termination, had helped to define and support the life of the worker. Behind the categories of experience which Jahoda has identified as being central to the unemployment experience lies the core issue of disconnection.

Finances and relationship.

There is reason to believe, for example, that the financial issues of job loss are, in many ways, issues of disconnection. Loss of income, as it is experienced by unemployed women, is often expressed in terms of its impact on the women's ability to be in relationship with friends and family in ways that are perceived to be adequate and fulfilling. Although the women are clearly disturbed by their loss of income in terms of its personal impact, it is the relational dimension of this experience which is most frequently and passionately articulated.

The coping behaviours often adopted by unemployed women,

previously criticized as being of little practical or agentic value, are clearly attempts to sustain and maintain key relationships, and to continue the relational tasks of nurturance and caretaking under very difficult circumstances.

The difficulties associated with reliance on financial assistance from public agencies or from an employed spouse are, again, relational as much as economic difficulties. In these cases, the quality of these connections is considered unhealthy by the unemployed individuals involved in that they are characterized by an unequal disposition of rights and power, as well as by a lack of mutual respect, as illustrated by the image of the prostitute presented by one of the women in this study. Although these relationships are clearly life-enhancing from a strictly financial perspective, they are just as clearly harmful in terms of their impact on the psychological and emotional health of the unemployed individuals involved. As well, reliance on public assistance is viewed as a potential source of separation between the unemployed individual and members of her community, a separation which might grow out of misunderstanding and prejudice regarding the issue of social assistance.

Routines and relationship.

The issue of routine, which has been identified as an important factor in the unemployment process, also has a strong relational component. Because the lives of friends and family members of the unemployed continue to be directed by the rhythms of the formal institutions of which they are a part, such as

school and the workplace, and because unemployed persons are struggling to function outside these familiar rhythms, connections are difficult to maintain. The unemployed find their lives unstructured and themselves cut off, out of sync, disconnected. Individual attempts to establish personal routines are difficult without either the support of others or of the institution of work.

That routine is an issue of connection is also made clear in the concern of unemployed females, during the re-employment phase, regarding the compatibility of work routines with the demands of home, family, and friendships. Shift work, for example, is rejected, when possible, because it makes staying connected, either to friends or to family, a difficult undertaking. As well, the tendency for women to adjust their professional timetables to accommodate personal and interpersonal commitments reveals that routines are perceived as tools which may enhance or impair our ability to sustain connections to others. A total disruption of these routines, therefore, such as that created by job loss, is perceived as having the potential to disrupt relationships as well.

Activities and relationship.

It is clear from this study, as well as from the broader body of unemployment literature, that unemployment deprives dislocated individuals of the many tasks which had filled their daily lives prior to termination. When workers perform tasks which, in their own estimation, require skill, expertise and

competence, and which provide opportunity for development and growth, there is personal satisfaction to be gained that does not necessarily involve others.

It would appear that there is also, however, a strong relational aspect to the issue of meaningful activity in the workplace, at least for women. The tasks of employment, as we have seen in the data, are often framed in terms of the opportunity which they provide for connection to others, a connection which may take the form of service, of caregiving, of nurturance, of teaching, or of protecting. When employment ends, then, the loss of activity is often experienced as a termination of activities which had facilitated connection to others. The teacher loses touch with students; the social worker is no longer called upon to assist a family; the daycare leader is cut off from young children whom she has nurtured since infancy; the police officer can no longer protect her fellow citizens; the factory worker can no longer make certain that consumers will get a product that is safe for their homes. Once again, job loss is perceived, at least in part, as an issue of disconnection.

Social contacts and relationship.

There could be little argument that the loss of social contacts which is so consistently and frequently cited by unemployed individuals as a negative result of job loss represents yet another relational issue surrounding this process. Former workers feel intensely their isolation from co-workers, clients and from the general public, because it is, in part,

through these relationships that individuals define their own identities.

The manner in which termination is handled may permanently damage or destroy workers' relationships with former employers, relationships which often had been perceived as being based on loyalty, honesty and trust. This betrayal of the employer-employee relationship may leave former workers with a profound sense of disconnection and, in some cases, with a distrust of professional relationships in general.

Purpose and relationship.

There is evidence that the loss of a sense of purpose which has been documented in this and other studies of unemployment is also an issue of disconnection. In the workplace, workers share common goals and strive to achieve these goals by operating as a team. This image of teamwork, common in both employment and unemployment literature, is one which clearly conveys a desire to connect as human beings and to interact for a purpose which goes beyond personal objectives. Even problems in achieving the broader goals, within this context, are viewed as opportunities to work cooperatively and constructively as a functional unit, and to deepen relationships through the sharing of a common struggle.

From this sharing and mutual empowerment comes an enhanced sense of competence and an elevated self-esteem, as well as a clearer sense of one's own identity. When this sense of shared purpose is lost, the unemployed individual again feels isolated

and unfocused, and an important source of feelings of positive self-worth disappears.

Prestige and relationship.

When women lose their jobs, they fear the loss of their connection to their larger communities and of a place in that community that is valued and esteemed by community members. If an individual's position is not valued in some way, the person will not feel validated as a human being or truly linked to the social environment of which they are a part. Fears about loss of prestige, therefore, are in fact fears of disconnection in the broader social context.

The Relational Model

According to the relational model, therefore, work provides an opportunity for connection to others, along the dimensions outlined by Jahoda's deprivation model, as Figure 3 illustrates. When unemployment strikes, disconnection occurs along these same dimensions, as depicted in Figure 4. Lack of money often a) hampers the unemployed individual's ability to sustain and nurture primary relationships, b) enforces the development of a dependency relationship between the unemployed individual and a spouse, other family members, or government agencies and c) triggers coping strategies which are relational in their focus. Loss of routine is experienced as a loss of harmony with the routines of co-workers, friends and family members, resulting in the potential breakdown of these alliances. Daily activities, that are personally challenging and which often facilitate on-

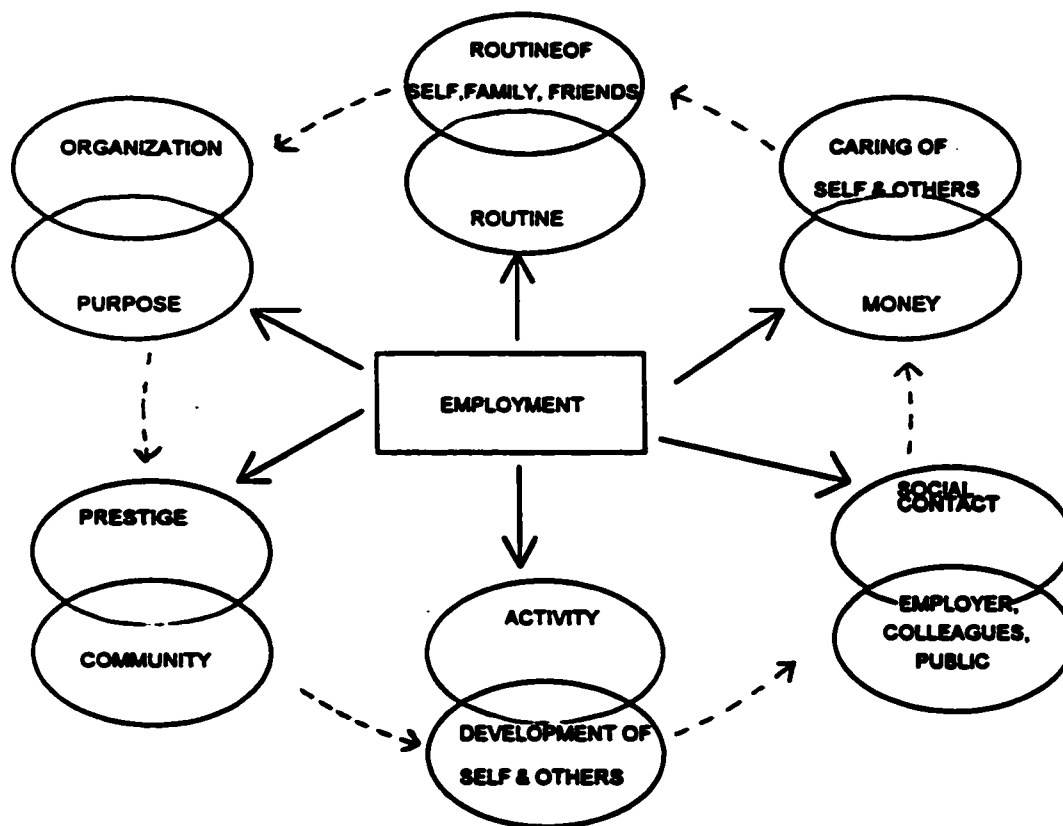


FIGURE 3: A RELATIONAL MODEL OF WOMEN'S EMPLOYMENT

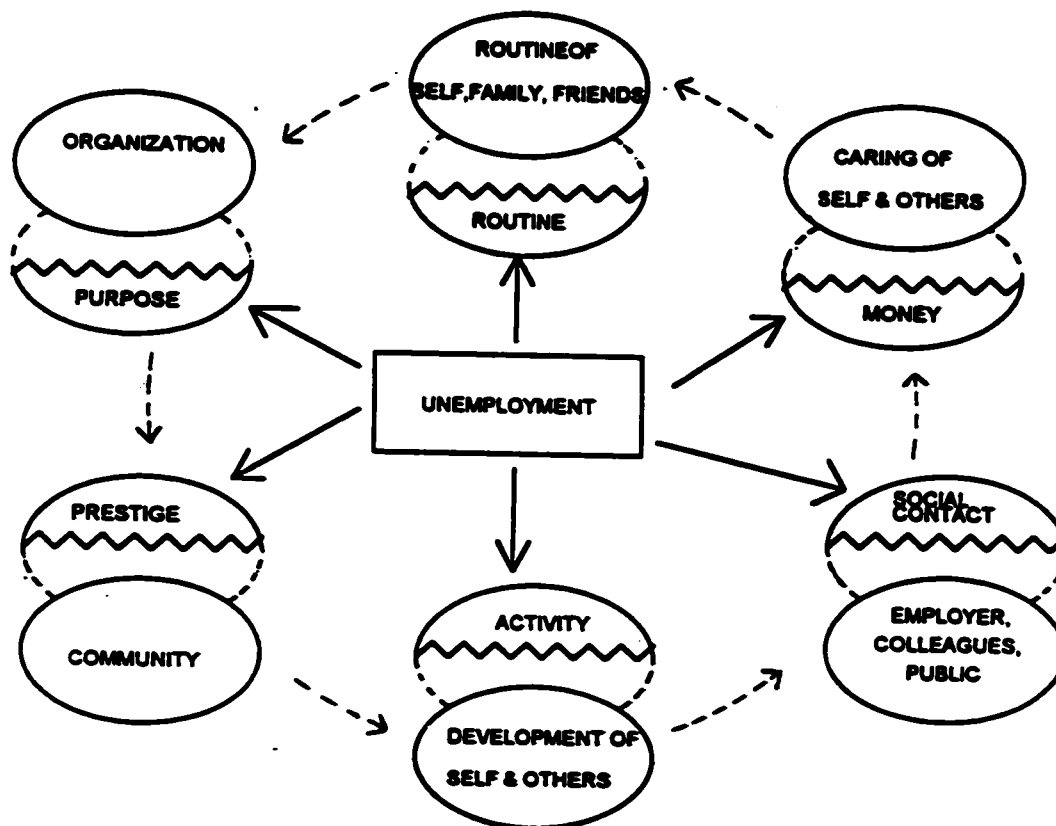


FIGURE 4: A RELATIONAL MODEL OF WOMEN'S UNEMPLOYMENT

going connections to non-family members, are no longer available. Contacts with co-workers, employers and members of the public are severely reduced. Loss of purpose is framed as the loss of opportunity to connect with others in working toward a common goal. Finally, unemployment brings an end to a much-needed sense of connection to the larger community in which one lives.

From this perspective, then, it appears that behind much of the pain of unemployment lies the pain of disconnection. Within this context, it is not difficult to understand why the negative impact of job loss prevails regardless of economic factors, and regardless of whether or not the job had been a particularly good or prestigious one. Whatever the circumstances, the loss of employment seriously impacts upon what many psychologists believe to be "the communal and deeply interdependent nature of human beings" (Jordan, 1997, p.10). This model also explains why "going home" cannot, for many, adequately replace the formal workplace.

The new model and the alternative role.

How might a relational model of job loss inform our understanding of the failure of the alternative role of homemaker to ameliorate the destructive consequences of unemployment. If there is enough work to do, then why is "going home" not enough?

The answer lies in the inability of the alternative role to resolve the relational issues which result from the loss of employment. There is no income, for example, with which the homemaker may support herself and her family, and act as nurturer

and caretaker in the ways to which she has become accustomed. The routine of housework, if an individual is able to establish one on her own, is inadequate as a basis around which to structure her entire day, and is incompatible with that of working friends and working spouses in terms of taking breaks together and having days off at the same time. The activities of housework do not bring the individual in contact with persons other than immediate family, and although these activities often involve caretaking others, there is little direct interaction during the working day. The social sphere of the homemaker is severely restricted, providing little or no contact a) with former co-workers, who continue to spend their days in the workplace, b) with employers, from whom they are now often completely alienated, or c) with former clients and the general public, with whom the unemployed individual now has no cause or occasion to interact. Even children are usually in school and unavailable for contact for most of the working day. Homemaking is often not a shared occupation, especially when a woman is not otherwise employed, leaving her with the sense that domestic tasks are to be completed without the assistance or cooperation of other family members. Finally, homemaking does not provide the woman with a sense of connection to her community. Being "just a housewife", by virtue of its unpaid, unpensionable status, offers little in the way of prestige or pride of place. After all, it is, as many of the women in this study noted, just the work that women "would do anyway", whether formally employed

or not.

The alternative role, therefore, does not relieve the pain of disconnection which defines much of the unemployment experience. It may, in fact, exacerbate it in that women may also feel guilty if they are unable to feel fulfilled in what society continues to view as their "natural" role. The legitimacy of the unemployed male's pain is never questioned. It is not certain if unemployed women enjoy a similar degree of cultural empathy.

The new model and the job search.

The relational model of job loss also illuminates the difficulties which the women in this study, if not all unemployed individuals, encounter during the job-seeking process. Again, these difficulties are largely issues of disconnection.

Contacts with government agencies such as HRDC, for example, tend to negate the relational needs of the unemployed individual. Women who are in varying states of shock, anger and grief, as a result of their termination, are presented with a variety of forms and directed to a computer for the job search process. There appears to be little emphasis in this organization on the need to resonate with the pain of the newly unemployed, to validate their suffering, or to empower them by being "emotionally available, attentive and responsive" (Surrey, 1997, p.42), as is necessary if interpersonal exchanges are to be truly supportive and life-enhancing.

Contacts with potential employers are equally lacking in the

qualities of growth-fostering relationships. In their efforts to hide undesirable characteristics and to emulate those which they may not, in fact, possess, unemployed individuals find themselves in a role-playing situation. Their authentic selves cannot always safely be revealed or validated within the parameters of such a relationship. The employer, hiding behind the mask of "objectivity", also plays a role, withholds her authentic self, and makes true connection difficult, if not impossible. Rather than experiencing mutual empowerment through openness and sharing, employer and applicant often remain disconnected strangers.

In attempting to become re-employed, then, unemployed individuals who already feel disconnected from their friends, family and community, are further disempowered by the isolating experience of the job search. Once again, the phenomenon of unemployment is experienced as a failure of relationship.

C: The Soundness of the Findings

Because of the constructivist, feminist underpinnings of this study, it is not my intention to convince the reader of the "validity" of the findings, as this term is applied within the positivist paradigm. If the notion of "truth" is replaced by the notion of "multiple mental constructions", as it is in this study, then the search for truth must be replaced with a search for an "understanding" of the realities of the individuals with whom we are in conversation (Wolcott, 1994). It is important, within this context, that the reader trust that the findings, as

presented, accurately reflect the participants' own interpretations of their unemployment experiences. I believe that this has been achieved in several ways.

First, the final product is replete with primary data, that is, with the voices of the unemployed women who participated in this project. If these accounts seem lengthy, this has been done so that the women might be given an opportunity to tell their own stories, and so that the reader might draw his or her own conclusions and interpretations, perhaps different ones from those drawn by this author.

Second, I have purposefully included data that do not "fit" with my final interpretation, particularly in the account of the financial impact of job loss. In keeping with the constructivist viewpoint, it would seem unlikely that 12 women would tell 12 identical stories of their unemployment experiences. It was important, therefore, that contradictory accounts also be included.

Finally, I have presented a detailed description of the data collection process, and of the participants themselves. With this information, the reader is better able to understand the context and the process of the study, thereby facilitating decisions as to whether or not the interpretations drawn from this study might be transferable to a different context.

Although there can be no assumption that the interpretations made by this author will apply in other settings, it is hoped that the explanations offered, taken in conjunction

with the larger body of literature, will enrich our understanding of the unemployment process. As well, these findings may stimulate further investigation by other researchers into the relational aspects of the unemployment experience.

D: Implications

The notion that the unemployment experience has a strong relational dimension has important theoretical and practical implications. If job loss is, in fact, a process that is grounded in disconnection, how might an understanding of this affect a) current theory regarding unemployment, b) workplace policies and c) our judgment of the appropriateness of current support services and re-training programs which are available to unemployed persons?

As in earlier areas of study such as motivation, moral development and psychological growth, the inclusion of the female perspective in our exploration of the job loss process promotes the development of theory that represents a fuller expression of the human experience. In this regard, the findings of this study suggest that much more work is needed in further exploring the relational aspects of the unemployment phenomenon. Jahoda, in her deprivation model, emphasizes the dependence of human beings on the social institution of the workplace in order to fulfil their needs for certain categories of experience. From the findings of this study, it appears that these categories of experience have much to do with being in meaningful relationship with those about us. More research which validates and documents

the female unemployment experience is needed to further develop this relational model of job loss.

In the workplace, employers who wish to foster a climate of organizational commitment must be made aware of termination practices that acknowledge and respect the relational needs of their employees. Consultation with employees, consideration of alternative measures, and open acknowledgment of the profound impact of job loss both on terminated and retained workers are essential steps toward the creation and maintenance of a productive and positive workplace environment.

As well, the centrality of relationship in the unemployment experiences of the women in this study have implications for how we should be helping these individuals cope with the trauma of job loss and the challenges of seeking re-employment. Government agencies such as HRDC, for example, must be aware of the profound sense of disconnection which characterizes unemployment for many people. The clinical, impersonal approach which has evidently been adopted by this organization only serves to deepen the feelings of isolation which terminated individuals are experiencing, further lowering their self-esteem and reducing the likelihood of successful re-employment efforts.

Rather than an approach that exacerbates the disconnection issue, a strategy is essential that ensures the newly-unemployed that their voices have, indeed, not been lost or ignored, and that their plight warrants individualized, interpersonal attention. The downloading of these tasks to other agencies,

such as the more successful Job Finding Clubs, is not adequate because many persons will never be made aware of, or avail themselves of these services.

There are also implications for the re-training of unemployed women. First, because of the isolating nature of the job loss experience, it is essential to provide an environment in which learning occurs as a result of interaction and in which the voices of both teacher and students are heard and validated. Second, opportunity for discussion of the psychological, social and economic consequences of unemployment should be provided to the newly-unemployed. Sharing of these experiences with those who have similar histories is an important part of the healing process, and might ameliorate feelings of disconnection for all concerned. Finally, educational institutions must be made aware of the particular challenges faced by unemployed women, in that the support which they receive in their re-employment efforts is often ambiguous, both on a personal and cultural level, thereby rendering re-training difficult. For example, issues of child care, transportation, and course expenses are particularly challenging for a woman whose income has been drastically cut by job loss.

E: Concluding Thoughts

The stories of unemployment told by the 12 women in this study provide another thread in the larger fabric of our understanding of job loss. In particular, they have given voice to the social nature of human beings, and to the relational

dimension of the unemployment experience, at least as it was experienced by these women.

I would suggest, however, that a relational model of unemployment may more fully explain the devastation of job loss, whether the dislocated individual is male or female. It may be that our earlier conceptualizations of the male role, of male development, and of the male unemployment experience have been shaped, as have those regarding females, by cultural expectations and the dominant ideology, rather than by the personal experiences of men. A study of male unemployment, if undertaken from a qualitative perspective that encourages open discussion and the inclusion of relational issues, might yield unexpected results.

"Going home", it would appear, is no longer either a psychologically healthy, or an economically feasible alternative for many, if not most women. In spite of this reality, however, women continue to be perceived as some sort of disposable labour force, which may be called upon in times of labour shortage, but whose primary role remains in the domestic sphere. If jobs are scarce, or if "family values" are perceived to be threatened, women are expected to return to their "rightful" place in the home.

As educators and researchers, therefore, it is essential that we continue to challenge and to test assumptions which define "appropriate" human behaviour according to gender. By expanding our understanding of how human beings respond to an

event such as job loss, we may expand the acceptable choices which individuals, both men and women, have available to them in times of economic, social, and psychological distress. With more choices at our disposal, we may more successfully resolve the difficult issues in our lives.

APPENDIX A: CONSENT FORM

CONSENT FORM

Principal Investigator: Linda Hughes-Bond

Affiliation: University of Ottawa Telephone no: 613-283-2601

Whenever a research project is undertaken with human participants, the written consent of the participants must be obtained. This does not imply, of course, that the project necessarily involves a risk. In view of the respect owed the participants, the University of Ottawa and the research funding agencies have made this type of agreement mandatory.

The purpose of the study is to obtain an understanding of unemployed female workers' perspectives on their own job loss experiences.

If I agree to participate, my participation will consist of attending 2 one-hour sessions during which tape-recorded interviews will be conducted by the principal researcher. I will also be asked to participate in a tape-recorded group interview session, lasting one hour and involving myself and four or five other unemployed women. As well, I may be contacted by the researcher by telephone following the individual and group sessions for clarification of specific points. I understand that the contents will be used for the purpose of gathering data for a doctoral research thesis and that my confidentiality will be respected.

I understand that since this activity deals with very personal information, it may induce emotional reactions which may, at times, be negative. I have received assurance from the researcher that every effort will be made to minimize these occurrences and that the names of support agencies will be provided if required.

I am free to withdraw from the project at any time, before or during an interview. I may refuse to participate at any time and/or refuse to answer specific questions without penalty.

I have received assurance from the researcher that the information I will share will remain strictly confidential. I, in turn, assure other participants that I will treat in the same confidential manner any information I may obtain in the context of this project. I have also been assured that individuals hired to transcribe interview sessions will be required to sign a confidentiality agreement.

Any information, requests or complaints about the ethical conduct of the project may be addressed to the Secretariat of the Ethics Committee (562-5800, ext. 4057). If I have any questions, I may contact Linda Hughes-Bond (283-2601). There are two copies of the consent form, one of which I may keep.

Participant's Signature Date

Researcher's Signature Date

Thesis Director Date

I, _____, am interested in collaborating in the study of unemployed women conducted by Linda Hughes-Bond, Doctoral Student in the Faculty of Education, University of Ottawa.

APPENDIX B: TRANSCRIBER'S CONFIDENTIALITY FORM

CONFIDENTIALITY AGREEMENT

I, the undersigned, _____, agree to respect the confidentiality of participants in the study of unemployed women conducted by Linda Hughes-Bond of the University of Ottawa.

I give assurance that no one, other than myself, will have access to the contents of the interview tapes. To this end, transcribing will be done privately and with the use of headphones. I will not discuss this project with others, nor will I discuss it with the researcher in a public place. I will not disclose any information obtained during the transcription process or during discussions with the researcher.

Following transcription, I will return all tapes, discs and written copies to the researcher. Copies saved on disc or hard drive will be destroyed.

In signing this agreement, I am aware that I am conforming to the guidelines for the ethical conduct of research on human subjects, as outlined by the Ethics Committee of the University of Ottawa.

Signature of Transcriber

Date

APPENDIX C: INTERVIEW GUIDELINE

A: Background Information:

1. Could you tell me about yourself (age? family structure? education? other training?)

B: Employment Before Job Loss

2. Where were you employed? how long? what did you do?
3. Tell me about good parts...bad parts?
4. Where did work fit in your priorities?

C: Job Loss

5. Tell me about how you lost/left your job? feelings?
6. Can you describe how your co-workers reacted?
7. Think back to the first days after your job ended.
...positive feelings?...negative feelings?

D: Life Now

8. Describe a typical day...changes in routines?
...best parts?...worst parts?
9. What do you miss about work?...not miss?
10. Do you feel you're working now?

E: Financial Impact

11. What % of family income were you earning?
12. Changes in spending?...basics? kids? celebrations?

F: Impact on Family Dynamic

13. Describe level of conflict in home now...causes?
14. Describe how decisions are made now...before?
15. Division of labour?

G: Support Issues

16. Describe reaction of spouse? friends? children?
17. Are they supportive? In what ways?

H: Reemployment Issues

18. Describe how you are attempting to find work.
19. Can you talk about services who have helped?

I: Recap

20. What would you say to another woman who has lost her job?

PROMPTS:

- Can you give me an example of that?
- What do you mean by...?
- Can you tell me a story about that?
- Why do you think it happened that way?
- You say that because...?
- How does that work?

APPENDIX D: FOCUS GROUP GUIDELINES

Section A: GROUP RULES (to be discussed prior to starting)

1. Issue of confidentiality and anonymity
2. Climate of safety to allow expression of divergent views.
3. Permission to change one's mind.
4. Active listening to others' viewpoints.
5. Taping in progress...Speak up!

Section B: POSSIBLE QUESTIONS

1. How important is work to a woman's self-esteem?
2. Is homemaking the same as/different from formal work in terms of how it makes you feel about you?
3. Is job loss more difficult/same for men as for women?
4. How important is it to you what other people may be saying about your job loss?
5. What are the most difficult aspects of looking for work?
6. If you could design it, what would your ideal day be like, in terms of outside work, leisure, housework, etc?
7. How has this process of talking about your job loss affected your experience?

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