



7 AUG 92

AN ETHNOGRAPHIC STUDY
OF AN UNEMPLOYMENT INTERVENTION

by

George Harrison Shorey
B.Ed., University of Alberta, 1981

A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for the Degree of

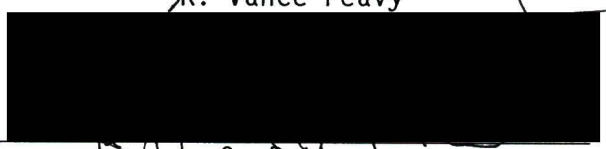
MASTER OF ARTS

in the Department of Psychological Foundations

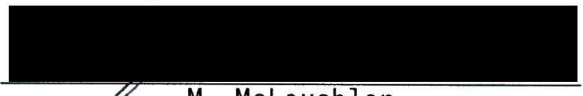
We accept this thesis as conforming
to the required standard



R. Vance Peavy



G. Potter



M. McLaughlan

© George Harrison Shorey, 1992

University of Victoria

July 1992

All rights reserved. Thesis may not be reproduced in whole or in part,
by photocopy or other means, without the permission of the author.

Supervisor: Dr. R. Vance Peavy

ABSTRACT

While the impact of unemployment has received considerable study, research addressing the question of how individuals experience the interventions designed to assist them, is limited. Utilizing the ethnographic interview method (Spradley, 1979), this study investigated how participants experienced a group job-search training program developed for those over the age of forty-five. Analysis focused on the meaning systems individuals employed when interpreting their experience. Five central themes were identified and discussed: (a) cultural contradiction; (b) feeling normal; (c) knowing someone cares; (d) belief in something to offer; and (e) finding direction. In light of these themes a broad-based definition of program success is suggested along with several recommendations for future program designs.

Examiners:



R. V. Peavy, Supervisor



G. Potter, Outside Member



M. McLauchlan, External Examiner

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT.....	ii
TABLE OF CONTENTS.....	iii
LIST OF FIGURES.....	v
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS.....	vi
DEDICATION.....	vii
CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION.....	1
Purpose of the study.....	2
Mode of inquiry.....	4
CHAPTER 11 LITERATURE REVIEW.....	7
Health and social costs.....	8
Intervention strategies.....	13
Types of unemployment.....	16
Summary remarks.....	18
CHAPTER 111 METHODOLOGY.....	20
Supporting agency.....	22
Intervention program outline.....	22
Research informants.....	24
Ethnographic interviewing.....	26
Descriptive questions.....	29
Structural questions.....	31
Contrast questions.....	33
Ethnographic analysis.....	35
Domain analysis.....	36
Taxonomic analysis.....	39
Componential analysis.....	40
Thematic analysis.....	44
CHAPTER IV RESULTS.....	46
THEMES:	
Cultural contradiction.....	47
Feeling normal.....	49
Knowing someone cares.....	51
Something to offer.....	54
Finding direction.....	56
Other observations.....	59

CHAPTER V DISCUSSION.....	61
Shifting orientations.....	62
Considering program success.....	65
Study limitations.....	67
Implications and Recommendations.....	68
Structural features.....	68
Content areas.....	69
Process considerations.....	70
REFERENCES.....	72
APPENDICES.....	76
A. Letter of consent.....	77
B. Letter of agreement.....	78
C. Call for participants.....	79
Research study information sheet.....	80

LIST OF FIGURES

	page
No. 1. Ethnographic Interview Research Process.....	23
No. 2. Ethnographic Interview Elements.....	28
No. 3. Structure of a Domain.....	32
No. 4. List of Hypothesized Domains.....	38
Universal Semantic Relationships.....	38
No. 5. Taxonomy of Reasons for Experiencing Support.....	41
No. 6. Segment of Componential Analysis.....	43
No. 7. Cultural Themes.....	45
No. 8. Shifts in Perspective.....	64

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Certainly a key contribution providing the impetus for this study, was the support and trust consistently offered by the sponsoring agency counsellors. Norrie Preston, Annette Wigod, Coline Neilson, Ann McCorquodale, and Elizabeth Azmier Stewart, each contributed professional insights and raised stimulating initial questions that served to clarify aspects of the inquiry. Their early guidance and support has been sincerely appreciated.

Professor Rey Carr's involvement through the better portion of this study was highly valued both for his scholarly feedback, and in particular for the personal encouragement he provided. Dr. Geoffrey Potter helped me focus and was always a calming influence. The kind assistance of colleague Elizabeth Banister was supportive. As well my appreciation is extended to friend Judy Mow, whose computer skills kept potential administrative problems at bay.

My sincere gratitude is extended to Dr. Vance Peavy, a special man who in his own quiet way tossed me a line when I was susceptible to being set adrift. As well, Dr. Peavy has been instrumental in helping me see the power of a qualitative orientation.

Alison and the lads were wonderful throughout. I thank Al for her wisdom, and each of them for helping me keep my perspective.

Finally, participants shared many personal aspects of their intervention experience and individual worlds which contributed both to the quality of the research and the learning experience of the author.

DEDICATION

To the participants of this study -
wishing you fair winds and a following sea.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

I've learned that it's okay to be a little insecure about things....it's okay to be honest. They made me feel that....I'm not a failure despite the fact that I'm a little indecisive.... that I have a lot to offer. And so it's been a very constructive period. (Janet, describing an aspect of her employment counselling experience)

The complexity of unemployment is reflected in the range of approaches and findings associated with its study. It can impact upon individuals, families, organizations, and at times whole communities. Research inquiries aimed at describing the experience of unemployment have aligned the process to everything from what Amundson and Borgen (1982) term an emotional roller coaster, to what others have called a living death (Finley & Lee, 1981; Winegardner, Simonetti, & Nykodym, 1984). The psychological, physical health and social consequences linked to unemployment have been well documented (Feather & Davenport, 1981; Kasl, Gore, & Cobb, 1975; Liem & Rayman, 1982; Shelton, 1985). These investigations among others have led to a broad cross-section of recommended interventions designed for both the general population (Liptak, 1990; Pryor & Ward, 1985; Steinweg, 1990) and groups of individuals sharing particular characteristics (Myers, McWilliams, Flanders, & Kohut, 1983; Shifron, Dye, & Shifron, 1983).

Among the several coping and assist strategies recommended, one approach that is typically encouraged is a design that incorporates job-search skills training within a supportive group setting (Borgen & Amundson, 1984; Chandler, 1984; Trimmer, 1984; Steinweg, 1990). While the value of this approach has been supported primarily in terms of its

effectiveness regarding reemployment (Chandler, 1984; Trimmer, 1984), little is known about how unemployed persons experience the specific interventions in which they engage.

It is understandable that there would naturally be concern as to what extent a given unemployment intervention assists individuals in reentering the workforce. There may be a danger however in assuming that the personal meaning and value of an employment counselling experience lies in direct connection to this issue.

Furthermore, during a recessionary economy, there is a dramatic increase in the type of unemployment known as "demand deficiency", meaning "not enough aggregate demand in the economy to provide work for the entire labour force, no matter how the labour force is trained." (Shifron, Dye, & Shifron, 1983, p. 527) As put forth by one of the agency counsellors associated with this study; experienced and skilled individuals may well be "doing all the right things" in terms of job search, and still find themselves not being able to secure employment.

Purpose of the Study

The objective of this research then, was to develop knowledge and understanding as to how six unemployed, mature job seekers (age 45 and older) experienced a group oriented program of job-search skills training (that is, employment counselling). In other words, to derive a meaningful interpretation of the experience through the individual descriptions and points of view offered by informants (research participants).

What application might the knowledge gained from this inquiry

receive? Those involved in the design and implementation of a given intervention, could find the knowledge beneficial in a number of ways. For example:

- (i) affirming existing approaches and features, lending support to their ongoing and more widespread use;

I learned alot about how to communicate what you have to offer....by listening to how they (group members) responded....and was able to see what was working and what was not working....very gently for everybody. Others saw things in me I'm not aware of....some strengths, some weaknesses....(Daniel, comments in relation to how an interview role-play exercise was experienced)

- (ii) identifying new components and ideas, or those requiring an increased emphasis, enhancing the relevance of program design;

the loss....rejection....I knew it would be so easy to sink....I started writing. I've been writing for almost a year now....every evening or you know....early morning. I allowed myself that spiritual time....(Chris, commenting on a self-initiated change that provided some support and structure. Chris and others suggested it might be useful for members to share creative ideas that were found to be supportive).

- (iii) providing feedback as to what extent clients' descriptions of their experience match counsellors' perceptions of it, enabling counsellors to more accurately assess their own understanding;

I don't like that....I didn't want to rock the boat. They really stressed you should look below your level....and I don't agree with that, that really bothered me. Too many people they said are over-qualified....but I don't believe in working way below your ability, unless the job's not that important (to you) or for survival. It's a good thing stressing the job market is tough....but I don't believe in selling yourself short. (Daniel, reflecting on the role of education and the job search).

- (iv) to develop an appreciation of the individual meaning and

personal value an employment counselling experience of this nature has for a group of it's participants. One of the study participants, Debbie, provides an example recalling a one-on-one session with an agency counsellor:

I went there at a time when I really needed someone to talk to.... and there was somebody that listened....which was really (with emphasis) important to me at the time. And quite often I think we strayed from the subject of how do you look for a job, how do you find a job....I think they left room enough to just talk about why do you want a job, why do you need a job....and it's really nice to have somebody to talk to who listens cause at that time I really needed that, I didn't have anybody else, which I think was.... personally, was really good because it's amazing how hard it is to find somebody to talk to....I'm one of those people....that people always come to me when they have problems. So when you (with emphasis) have a problem, where the hell do you go!

Mode of Inquiry

In their research addressing the 'experience of unemployment', Borgen and Amundson (1984) noted the challenge of selecting a research approach that lends itself to rapport-building, given the personal and emotional nature of the issue being discussed. Leininger (1985) stresses that research credibility is enhanced where signs of trust, respect, and friend relations are evident in the research process. These considerations were deemed equally applicable to this study concerned with the experience of an unemployment intervention program.

The research approach selected for this study followed naturally from its purpose. The aim of explicating the meaning of the employment counselling experience in addition to the intended characteristics of the research process as indicated above, suggested the following guidelines or

rationale for choice of methodology:

- (i) it is important the approach be conducive to building rapport, as the desire is to have participants openly discuss their experience;
- (ii) as the intent is to understand how other people see their experience (that is, from their perspective and in their own language), the approach should encourage participants to adopt the role of teacher and co-researcher, whereas the position of the researcher will be more that of learner; and
- (iii) the research vehicle selected should employ methods of exploring and analyzing experience that lead to discovering how participants organize their knowledge (meaning systems they employ), so as to facilitate the development of a conceptual understanding.

In view of these guidelines, the research approach selected for this study was ethnography. An ethnography is a written cultural description (Agar, 1986). The specific method or ethnographic technique employed was the 'ethnographic interview' as laid out by Spradley (1979). Ethnography begins with a conscious attitude or the premise that the researcher does not yet understand the meaning of a given experience for participants. This meaning is what one is attempting to discover. The ethnographic interview method additionally lent itself to this particular inquiry because it views language (that is, the native, experiential descriptions, terms, and phrases provided by informants) as a bridge to meaning when

incorporating methods of analysis (domain, taxonomic, componential, and thematic) that systematically uncover how individuals structure their knowledge (Spradley, 1979). In other words, to formulate an understanding of the meaning systems people employ in relation to their experience. The theory, procedures, and analyses associated with ethnography and the ethnographic interview specifically, will be expounded upon in the chapter outlining methodology.

As indicated, this research focuses on a specific cultural "scene"; how six job seekers over the age of forty-five, experienced a group oriented unemployment intervention program. An ethnography that is focused on a particular cultural scene can be conducted on a small number of informants within a limited period of time (Leininger, 1985; Spradley, 1979). To provide the reader with a further context as to why a study of this nature was deemed important, a review of relevant literature will now be presented.

CHAPTER 11

LITERATURE REVIEW

....you begin, sure I will find a job, I have the skills. Then you go....well maybe my skills aren't good enough....then, maybe I should do some upgrading....and then you go down....and like, I don't have any skills that apply to what they want on the market and I'm too old, and I'm too fat, and I'm too ugly, too everything else! And you go down to a point to where you think well, I will never, never find a job....(Kelly, recalling an aspect of the job search experience).

The purpose of this chapter is to sensitize or in some cases re-familiarize the reader to the documented broad range of issues related to unemployment. In view of the complex and diverse nature of both the experience of unemployment and individual reactions to it (Liem & Rayman, 1982; Hepworth, 1980), it is believed that a general understanding of this phenomena will provide a foundation from which to view the interventions designed to address it.

A review of the social and health costs related to unemployment will initially be conducted followed by a discussion of interventions. Related to and following the topic of mediating strategies will be an outline of the different types of unemployment. An awareness of the three main kinds of unemployment is considered of value in that the manner in which unemployment is viewed can influence the focus an intervention might take. The final section will summarize and integrate the salient features of the review, offering a supportive introduction to the Ethnographic Interview methodology discussion to follow.

Health and Social Costs

Unemployment studies (Angell, 1938; Eisenberg & Lazarsfeld, 1938; Zawadski & Lazarsfeld, 1935) from the 1930's specifying the adverse consequences linked to joblessness, parallel a number of findings from two later decades (1970's; 1980's) in which the subject received increased attention. Research noted the stress of unemployment may result in depression and a lowered self-concept characterized by feelings such as frustration, self-doubt, guilt, apathy and purposelessness (Amundson & Borgen, 1983; Cohn, 1978; Feather & Davenport, 1981; Finley & Lee, 1981; Hesson, 1978; Winegardner et al., 1984). Increases in the incidence of suicide have also been identified (Boor, 1980; Dooley & Catalano, 1980; Hammermesh & Soss, 1974). The effects of unemployment on individual family members and the system as a whole have included bitterness, fear, alienation and the breakdown of healthy family functioning or equilibrium (Liem & Rayman, 1982; Hesson, 1978; Shifron et al., 1983; Steinberg, Catalano, & Dooley, 1981; Weeks & Drencacz, 1983).

Issues linked to unemployment that could be classified under the broader context heading of societal impact, include an increased demand for mental health services (Brenner, 1973) as well as law enforcement due to heightened criminal activity (Zawadski & Lazarsfeld, 1938; Tiffany, Cowen, & Tiffany, 1970). As acknowledged from a social economic standpoint, "Although the economic impact of lost wages and increases in payment of unemployment benefits is obvious, the hidden cost of unemployment associated with increased utilization of other social services is not obvious" (Shelton, 1985, p.18).

The question of how unemployment is experienced by individuals in terms of the dynamics of the process has been investigated by a number of researchers (Borgen & Amundson, 1987; Eisenberg & Lazarsfeld, 1938; Finley & Lee, 1981; Marsden & Duff, 1975; Winegardner et al., 1984; Zawadski & Lazarsfeld, 1935) and then presented in terms of a stage-based or cyclic description.

Amundson and Borgen (1982) developed a much cited representation or model of the 'dynamics of unemployment' which equated the experience of job loss to the stages of grief (denial and isolation; anger; bargaining; depression; acceptance), suggested by Kubler-Ross (1969), and the job search phase to the burn-out cycle (enthusiasm; stagnation; frustration; apathy), as outlined by Edelwich and Brodsky (1980). Other researchers have similarly suggested that the 'job loss' (as distinguished from 'job search') phase closely resembles Kubler-Ross's proposed stages of grief-response (Finley & Lee, 1981; Winegardner et al., 1984). Alternative descriptions delineating certain patterns of the experience (shock; optimism; pessimism; fatalism) have also been offered (Bakke, 1960; Marsden & Duff, 1975).

There is an attractiveness in terms of conceptual clarity, the models cited above might offer to understanding the dynamics of unemployment. Similarly, they might be experienced as supportive to certain clients if personally perceived as normalizing their experience somewhat. However, it is suggested that such models need to be used with caution (if at all), as research evidence associated with the studies lends at best mixed support as to their representativeness. As Sinfield

(1981) states, having reviewed a range of unemployment studies (suggesting predictable cycles) from the 1930's through the mid-seventies, "for very many unemployed....the idea of a fixed pattern of stages does not seem appropriate" (p. 38). A few examples will serve to illustrate the limitations associated with a cyclic or stage-based representation. Winegardner et al. (1984) proposed that the experience of unemployment "closely parallels the feelings of the terminally ill patient" in that "in both cases, the stages of denial, anger, bargaining, depression, and acceptance are experienced" (p.154). The research findings section of their report stipulated however, that "only 34%" of study respondents identified with the stage distinguished as bargaining. Borgen and Amundson's (1987) model which connected the phases of job loss (equated with grieving process) to job search (equated with burn-out), and likened the process to an emotional roller coaster, was found to be only "generally representative" of just 52% of the participants interviewed in their study (p.182). Despite the mixed findings, results were purported to be somewhat representative of their model. They did however, also draw attention to the importance of considering context (for example, older rural workers; unemployed managers and professionals; unemployed in a working class community), or identifying population sub-groups in future studies.

Although variability within any given context might be viewed as being potentially unlimited (considering differences in personal experience, education, values, beliefs and the like), researchers nonetheless have conducted unemployment studies with a selective group or

context-focused approach (Allan, 1990; Mallinckrodt & Fretz, 1988; Merriam, 1987; Myers et al., 1983; Pappas, 1986; Rife & Kilty, 1989). To illustrate, some research studies with older unemployed persons have identified issues of concern (for example, age discrimination; lack of skill transferability), later reported as characteristic of that group (Allan, 1990; Myers et al., 1983). While offering some insight as to what may be perceived as typical issues for individuals sharing similar features, researchers caution against assuming too much in this regard. What is repeatedly stressed is that the subjective experience of unemployment tends to be just that, an individualistic response (Gregory, 1986; Kasl, Gore, & Cobb, 1984; Liem & Rayman, 1982; Shelton, 1985). The implication of this issue is captured in a comment made by Pryor and Ward (1985) in their literature addressing the question of intervention strategies:

Before any techniques can be used effectively, it is important for the counselor to be free as possible of any preconceptions about the case at hand and to, as far as possible, consider the client's situation from his or her client's perspective. (p.6)

Although individual responses may vary considerably, the subjective reactions observed within a context focused group (for example, Gregory Pappas's research of a Barberton, Ohio working-class community experiencing a plant shut-down) may give rise to collective patterns of meaning where it's members share basic values and beliefs (Pappas, 1986). Consider the following observation by Pappas in connection to shifts in the meaning of work for individuals of the working-class culture studied:

The Seiberling workers had come to view their work in some ways like careers--stable situations, with a predictable transition of jobs in

the plant, based on effort and achievements. They were committed to Seiberling....The personal identity and pride (following the plant closing) that had been derived from participation in the rubber industry was cancelled for the Seiberling workers. Commitment to their new jobs was difficult to develop, especially given the marginal nature of many of those jobs. The dull necessity of earning a living is the only thing left to replace their previous involvement. The trajectory of work life is disrupted and expectations of future rewards are brought into question. Seiberling workers felt a security not unlike that of (career professionals) before the closing and experienced a (fundamental) sense of loss (after). (p. 183)

This example from Pappas's research serves to illustrate an important qualitative research feature; that similar themes and/or patterns of meaning can arise despite a large degree of individual variability in factual detail. In other words, although the Seiberling workers may have reacted to their job loss each in his or her own individual manner, they may nonetheless experience common or shared features of meaning (for example, loss of identity; loss of sense of community; inability to forge a commitment toward work due to lack of job security and reasonable predictability). This is what Wertz (1986) and others (Bertaux, 1983; Kvale, 1983) have referred to, in Wertz's words, as "persistence of meaning through the factual variations" (p. 200).

It should also be kept in mind that although the majority of studies reviewed purported the adverse aspects of joblessness, a few (Borgen & Amundson, 1987; Shelton, 1985) did note the positive effects (for example, improved family relationships; meaningful reevaluation and renewed sense of self-worth) experienced by some study participants.

One can see that the experience of unemployment is indeed a multi-faceted issue with a diverse range of potential health and social

consequences. An awareness of the complexity associated with the phenomena of unemployment provides a base from which to appreciate the strategies created to address it.

Intervention Strategies

The interventions (here referring to programs outside of or augmenting existing income maintenance schemes such as Unemployment Insurance) designed to assist the unemployed could be categorized under two broad headings; task and maintenance. These categories were identified by Amundson & Borgen (1988) in their research concerning group employment counselling. Task refers to the practical skills training associated with vocational upgrading (technical skills training; education upgrading) or job search (for example, resume writing; telephone canvassing; interview skills training). Maintenance interventions on the other hand, are those functions that serve more directly to enhance ones self-esteem and provide support (for example, peer support groups; educative components designed to encourage alternate perspectives).

In actuality task and maintenance interventions may not be all that distinct in terms of their function from the users point of view. For example, education upgrading (task) may be more highly associated with improvements in self-esteem (maintenance) for one person, whereas for another might be primarily a matter of practical skills training or fulfilling a qualification requirement. Similarly, heightened self-confidence arising from peer and counsellor support, may directly link to improved interview skills and performance.

As mentioned at the outset, this research is concerned with the experience of individuals engaged in a specific form of intervention (that is, employment counselling within a supportive group setting). Employment counselling refers here to job-search skills training (in group workshops) and the supportive counselling (one-on-one sessions with an agency counsellor) related to this function. This type of intervention incorporates both task and maintenance components, a design encouraged by specialists in the field and valued by program participants (Borgen & Amundson, 1984; Chandler, 1984; Pryor & Ward, 1985; Steinweg, 1990; Trimmer, 1984).

Some of the key supportive features of employment counselling within a group setting, are encapsulated in a comment by Borgen and Amundson (1984):

Through this form of involvement clients can reduce their isolation, receive encouragement from others, develop more effective job search methods, re-assess their interests and abilities, and consider alternate career paths. The delivery of this type of service seems to be well handled by various outreach programs and in many respects seems to be the most effective intervention method currently available. (p.68)

Furthermore, a group setting can facilitate the development of job search skills by providing unique learning opportunities in a safe setting (Trimmer, 1984). Role-playing an employment interview situation with peers (rotating positions of interviewer, interviewee and observer), serves as an example. As well, the daily structure and social support provided to individuals involved in a group job-search program, can offset to some degree the potential loss of activity, routine, and sense of community associated with one's previous job (Liptak, 1989; Mallinckrodt & Fretz,

1988).

Amundson and Borgen's unemployment related research deserves particular attention in view of its relevance to this study. The majority of their works (Amundson & Borgen, 1982; Borgen & Amundson, 1984; Amundson & Borgen, 1987; Borgen & Amundson, 1987) have addressed the experience of unemployment per se, highlighting the process or dynamics by which individuals react to job loss and job search. One of their studies (Amundson & Borgen, 1988) however focused on the issue of "factors that help and hinder in group employment counselling" (p. 104). Trained, graduate students interviewed a broad cross-section of individuals who had taken part in various job-search groups. The central research aim was to identify factors that make job-search support groups effective interventions.

Results of the study referred to above were presented as confirming the positive reactions to job-search groups and adding information in terms of what participants specifically find helpful. For example, "A positive outlook. The development of a positive attitude and a positive self-image."; "Leadership. Receiving the benefit of counselors' assistance, expertise, and positive attributes." (p. 109) Knowledge of these and other factors provides useful information in terms of providing a more focused sense of what is deemed helpful. The level of depth or specificity provided is somewhat limited however. For instance, what are the positive attributes of counsellors as perceived by participants? What do clients see as the most meaningful aspects of the experience in relation to developing a positive self-image? This is where a research

approach such as the one (ethnographic interview) described herein can explore further, dimensions of meaning underlying sub-categories or factors such as the ones identified.

Certainly there are a range of other mediating and coping strategies (for example, volunteer/community work; survival part-time jobs; independent support groups; development of leisure/avocational interests; financial budgeting workshops) that have been recommended (Pryor & Ward, 1985; Steinweg, 1990) to help alleviate the adverse impact of unemployment. This study will focus on a group employment counselling intervention that incorporates two key features that include job-search skills training workshops and related one-on-one counselling support. Task and maintenance components additionally underly the program's design.

It is suggested that the thrust or focus (for example, employment search skills training) of an intervention strategy, stems in large part from the type of unemployment presumed. Shifts in the predominant kind of unemployment may well warrant revisions to the strategies and approaches comprising various programs. A brief discussion will serve to illustrate.

Types of Unemployment

Shifron et al. (1983) provide a succinct overview of the three basic types of unemployment proposed by Rees (1979). The first type is termed "demand deficiency unemployment":

This type of unemployment occurs when there is not enough aggregate demand in the economy to provide work for the entire labour force, no matter how the labour force is trained. This implies that in the economy as a whole there are more unemployed individuals than vacant jobs. This type of unemployment increases

sharply in a recessionary economy ... (p.527)

The second type constitutes what is considered the normal rate which accompanies high economic activity. It is divided into three categories, "frictional," "structural," and "seasonal":

Unemployment that accompanies the matching process between vacancies and job seekers is 'frictional unemployment.' Unemployment that results from a mismatch between the skills necessary to fill existing vacancies and the skills of job seekers is 'structural unemployment.' The temporary unemployment that is determined by the weather or the calendar is 'seasonal unemployment.' (p.527)

The third category is referred to as "hidden unemployment", or what Sinfield (1981) refers to as the "silent reserve" of the discouraged (p.156). It may be statistically identified as a labour force shrinkage (The Globe and Mail, 1992), and essentially means that people give up the search for work, believing there's little hope in securing employment. Shifron et al. (1983) describe the "hidden unemployed" as follows:

....those people who wish to work but are discouraged from actively looking for a job. Hidden unemployment like demand deficiency unemployment increases during recessionary times. Once the discouraged workers stop their job search, they are dropped from the unemployment statistics even though they are still unemployed. (p. 527)

They recommend that during recessionary times when many individuals may have little control over their employment status, the focus of interventions for these people be maintenance of physical and psychological wellness, until such time as employment becomes available.

In their research concerning job search discouragement and older workers, Rife and Kilty (1989) note that "... one's perception of personal job search self-efficacy will ultimately be measured cognitively by

whether or not employment is found. Lack of success due to an economic labour market demand deficiency will only continue to reinforce the older unemployed workers feelings of depression, isolation and job search discouragement." (p.90) Borgen and Amundson (1984) lend support to this view stating that when there are not enough jobs available, the perceived effectiveness of job search groups can naturally be undermined, particularly if the service were accessed by the general population of unemployed. Trimmer (1984) stipulates that group job search is an "effective approach to reducing 'frictional' unemployment - those unemployed people who possess vocational skills which are currently being sought in the labour market." (p.115)

In view of the foregoing it would seem appropriate for counsellors and unemployed persons alike to be cognizant of the type(s) of unemployment in effect, as it may well influence the degree of appropriateness and effectiveness of selected interventions.

Summary Remarks

Research studies mapping the impact and experience of unemployment have provided an important foundation from which to develop an awareness of the complex and diverse nature of this phenomena. Increased sensitivity to the range of issues outlined can, it is suggested, discourage one from developing preconceptions about how individuals experience job loss. The knowledge provided from this broad base of research has in turn led to the development and implementation of a range of intervention strategies. Group job-search skills training has received considerable support as an

effective approach and as such, study participants were selected from a local program adopting a similar strategy. Notwithstanding the purported value of this sort of program, attention to the kind of unemployment experienced should be carefully considered if the intervention is going to be appropriately tailored to the needs of clients.

Unfortunately little attention has been given to the question of how unemployed persons experience the interventions designed to assist them. Those studies that have explored this issue have provided useful information in terms of what components and features participants consider helpful. A further and more in-depth appreciation of the ways in which clients construct meaning around certain aspects of their experience would be of assistance in both broadening our scope of understanding and providing a more detailed template for future program design.

As this study is exploring relatively uncharted waters and is intended to investigate the meaning of the experience, a qualitative research approach has been selected. A form of ethnography will be utilized employing the specific technique known as ethnographic interviewing. The theoretical underpinnings of this mode of inquiry along with format and analyses, will now be discussed.

effective approach and as such, study participants were selected from a local program adopting a similar strategy. Notwithstanding the purported value of this sort of program, attention to the kind of unemployment experienced should be carefully considered if the intervention is going to be appropriately tailored to the needs of clients.

Unfortunately little attention has been given to the question of how unemployed persons experience the interventions designed to assist them. Those studies that have explored this issue have provided useful information in terms of what components and features participants consider helpful. A further and more in-depth appreciation of the ways in which clients construct meaning around certain aspects of their experience would be of assistance in both broadening our scope of understanding and providing a more detailed template for future program design.

As this study is exploring relatively uncharted waters and is intended to investigate the meaning of the experience, a qualitative research approach has been selected. A form of ethnography will be utilized employing the specific technique known as ethnographic interviewing. The theoretical underpinnings of this mode of inquiry along with format and analyses, will now be discussed.

CHAPTER 111

METHODOLOGY

"Rather than studying people, ethnography means learning from people." (Spradley, 1979, p. 3) This statement captures the essence of the ethnographic method. It's two key tasks are to discover and describe how other people make sense of their experience, from their point of view. (Agar, 1986)

Ethnography refers to researching a culture, or a particular cultural scene as is the case in this study. It can also imply a written cultural description. Spradley (1979) illustrates how culture is conceptualized in relation to ethnography:

By restricting the definition of culture to shared knowledge, we do not eliminate an interest in behavior, customs, objects, or emotions. We have merely shifted the emphasis from these phenomena to their meaning. The ethnographer observes behavior, but goes beyond it to inquire about the meaning of that behavior....The ethnographer observes and records emotional states, but goes beyond them to discover the meaning of fear, anxiety, anger, and other feelings. (p. 6)

The ethnographic interview (the specific ethnographic technique utilized for this study) is a strategy that focuses on language as a useful bridge to meaning. It involves a description of selected aspects of a culture. The theory of meaning it employs is known as ethnographic semantics, which is based on the assumption that cultural meaning can be discovered through examining how people use their language. (Geertz, 1973)

The ethnographic interview method incorporates a systematic sequence of inquiry while remaining open to emergent themes and issues.

The initial phase of the research is exploratory in nature providing a rich base of descriptive data. For example, the first interview commenced with the following question to participants:

I am interested in learning what your experience at Ability Personnel was like for you? I'd like to hear you describe it in your own words....from your perspective....so I can gain a sense of what it was like for you personally?

Data from this and other descriptive questions are then organized (according to shared features of meaning) into categories of knowledge known as domains. The research mid-phase (follow-up interview) is a more focused point of inquiry and attempts to limit the scope of the ethnography in terms of making an in-depth analysis of a few selected domains. Domains in this study were selected in accordance with what informants rated as the most important in order to understand their experience, and as to their relevance or connection to the specific cultural scene under study (that is, the unemployment intervention experience). The final phase returns to "a broader perspective of finding the relationships among domains to gain a holistic picture of the culture". (Spradley, 1979, p. 134) In other words, are there common themes and patterns that emerge despite the descriptive variability among informants?

Spradley summarizes the fundamental features of the ethnographic research process in the following comment:

The ethnographer must keep in mind that research proceeds on two levels at the same time. Like a cartographer engaged in mapping a land surface, the ethnographer both examines small details of culture and at the same time seeks to chart the broader features of the cultural landscape. An adequate cultural description will include an in-depth analysis of selected domains; it will also

include an overview of the cultural scene and statements that convey a sense of the whole. (p. 185)

The three broad phases of research and their accompanying activities and modes of analysis are depicted in Figure 1, p. 23.

Supporting Agency

Two key meetings took place involving the sponsoring agency's coordinator, counselling staff, and the researcher prior to commencing the study. The first explored a range of issues and questions associated with the proposed project, researcher's background and the like. Prior to the second meeting, copies of a proposal draft stemming from the earlier discussion were forwarded to the agency counsellors in order to clarify the study's purpose, method, format and potential implications. Having had an opportunity to review and discuss the written draft, the staff and researcher met a second time to further refine and co-construct the research proposal. Satisfied with the proposed study, the agency coordinator signed a supporting Letter of Agreement (see Appendix B).

Intervention Program Outline

The unemployment intervention program from which informants were selected offered group job-search skills training workshops (for example, resume writing; effective job search strategies; interview skills training) and associated one-on-one counselling. It also provides information regarding education programs and training and employment opportunities. Sponsored by the federal government and funded under the

Figure No. 1: Ethnographic Interview Research Process*

12. Writing the ethnography
11. Discovering cultural themes
 10. Making a componential analysis
 9. Asking contrast questions
 8. Making a taxonomic analysis
 7. Asking structural questions
6. Making a domain analysis
5. Analyzing ethnographic interviews
 4. Asking descriptive questions
 3. Making an ethnographic record
 2. Interviewing informants
 1. Locating informants

Note: Initial steps begin with a wide, exploratory focus. Commencing with Step 7 the focus narrows to an in-depth study of a few selected domains. The latter synthesis phase investigates relationships across domains and common themes.

* adapted from Spradley (1979)

Outreach Program of Canada Employment and Immigration Commission, it is a free, volunteer program. Eligibility criteria require participants to be: over the age of 45; unemployed and; have specific employment objectives in mind.

Participants from this particular program were selected because the intervention incorporates features (job-search skills training; peer-group setting) considered among the most effective for securing employment and coping with the stress associated with looking for work (Borgen & Amundson, 1984; Chandler, 1984; Trimmer, 1984; Steinweg, 1990).

Research Informants

In ethnographic research, the term informant (referring to study participants or interviewees) is used in a specific manner that differentiates it from concepts like subject or respondent. Spradley (1979, p. 30) notes the difference between research with subjects and research with informants by considering the types of questions each approach might formulate at similar stages of a study:

Research with Subjects:	Research with Informants:
1. What do I know about a problem that will allow me to formulate and test a hypothesis?	1. What do my informants know about their culture that I can discover?
2. What concepts can I use to test this hypothesis?	2. What concepts do my informants use to classify their experience?
3. How can I operationally define these concepts?	3. How do my informants define these concepts?

As can be seen, informants are viewed more in the line of co-researchers and are "a source of information; literally, they become teachers for the ethnographer" (Spradley, 1979, p. 25).

In line with the purpose of the study, informants were selected in terms of both their proximity to the unemployment intervention experience (program participation within six months of their research involvement), and having attended at least one of the job-search skills workshops (in conjunction with any individual counselling sessions). As the aim is to learn from people who have knowledge and experience in connection to the phenomenon under study, an established level of involvement and currency (accessibility; recall of detail) is deemed important to study quality (Leininger, 1985; Osborne, 1990; Pelto, 1970). A Call for Participants letter and information sheet (see Appendix C) were forwarded to a randomly selected pool of potential informants who met the above criteria. Six mature job-seekers took part in the research study. The question of co-researcher number is referred to in a comment by Osborne (1990):

The number of participants needed is variable. The researcher needs as many participants as it takes to illuminate the phenomenon (Wertz, 1984). Sometimes one person may be sufficient, but usually more than one person is advisable for reasons such as attrition or because some participants may not illuminate the phenomenon. The aim of the research is to achieve perspectival understanding of a phenomenon and identify it's structure.

Specific demographic criteria were not incorporated in the selection process as this would presuppose hypotheses and/or objectives not complementary to the purpose of this study. In view of the limited

research associated with how unemployment interventions are experienced by participants, this study was exploring relatively new territory and as such avoided imposing additional criteria.

Informants partaking in this research provided a rich, diverse context of background and experience in relation to the phenomenon under study. Some were close to bankruptcy at the time they accessed the service, while others were financially secure. Some had only been out of work for a few months, whereas others had been actively job hunting for nearly two years. Certain participants were undergoing other major changes (for example, a recent divorce) in conjunction with being unemployed, while others were not. This range of variability highlighted the broad cross-section of individual contexts entering the study. As Wertz (1983, p.197) stipulates, "...in the realm of meaning, factual variation is the very 'good' means of achieving stability and consistency." Could it be that an informant having a very dissimilar situational context from another, nonetheless experiences aspects of the program and attributes certain meanings, in a similar way? The researcher remains open to this possibility, understanding that meaning as presented from the native point of view is what one is attempting to discover. The essences (shared features of meaning) of the phenomena under investigation are of prime concern rather than the contextual variability or descriptive detail presented (Ferrarotti, 1983; Kvale, 1983).

Ethnographic Interviewing

The nature of the qualitative research interview, of which

ethnographic interviewing is one variation, is captured in a comment by Kvale (1983) when referring to the aspect of research focus:

The qualitative research interview is focused on certain themes of the life-world of the interviewee. It is neither strictly structured with standardized questions, nor entirely "non-directive," but is focused on certain themes. Within the area focused it is then up to the interviewee to bring forth the dimensions which he or she finds important. The task of the interviewer is to focus upon, or guide towards, certain themes, but not to guide the interviewee towards certain opinions about these themes. (p. 176)

The ethnographic interview is much like a friendly conversation in terms of tone, however proceeds along systematic lines employing specialized questioning (descriptive; structural; contrast) and follow-up modes of analysis (domain; taxonomic; componential; thematic) designed to elicit the meaning systems informants utilize in relation to the focus of inquiry. In other words, to develop an understanding of how individuals organize their knowledge and construct meaning with respect to a specific cultural scene (for example, employment counselling experience). Elements characterizing the ethnographic interview are depicted in Figure 2, p. 28.

"Because it involves a complex speech event, ethnographic interviewing requires practice to acquire the necessary skills. Practice also reduces the anxiety which all ethnographers experience when they begin interviewing a new informant" (Spradley, 1979, p. 68). A Pilot Interview was conducted prior to commencing the research in an effort to gain familiarity with the different questioning techniques and phases of inquiry (initial exploratory to focusing on selected domains). Additionally the pilot interviewee provided feedback as to which questions and explanations might be revised somewhat due to a lack of clarity.

Figure No. 2: Ethnographic Interview Elements *

1. Greetings
2. Giving ethnographic explanations
 - 2.1 Giving project explanations
 - 2.2 Giving question explanations
 - 2.3 Giving recording explanations
 - 2.4 Giving native language explanations
 - 2.5 Giving interview explanations
3. Asking ethnographic questions
 - 3.1 Asking descriptive questions
 - 3.2 Asking structural questions
 - 3.3 Asking contrast questions
4. Asymmetrical turn taking
5. Expressing interest
6. Expressing cultural ignorance
7. Repeating
8. Restating informant's terms
9. Incorporating informant's terms
10. Creating hypothetical situations
11. Asking friendly questions
12. Taking leave

* adapted from Spradley (1979)

Twelve one hour taped interviews (two per informant) were conducted and subsequently transcribed for analysis. Prior to commencing the first interview Letters of Consent (see Appendix A) were signed by each informant. Four of the participants chose to be interviewed in their own homes, while two met with the researcher at a private meeting room on campus. Three ethnographic elements emphasized by Spradley (1979) as central to effective ethnographic interviewing, were incorporated in this study:

- (i) the purpose of the interview was made clear to informants at the beginning of and throughout interviews as required to retain the research focus;
- (ii) explanations were provided regarding note taking, tape recording and in particular the informant's function as co-researcher and teacher to the ethnographer; and
- (iii) specialized ethnographic questions (descriptive; structural; contrast) were interwoven throughout the interviews, each receiving emphasis at different stages.

Descriptive Questions

The first interview was designed to encourage informants to openly explore and discuss their 'intervention experience', providing an initial base of descriptive data. The opening descriptive question (see p. 21) enabled informants to select aspects of their experience they deemed important or felt comfortable sharing at this stage of the inquiry. The purpose of descriptive questions is two-fold; to elicit a large sample or

survey of language in relation to a particular cultural scene, and to provide further, rich description on focused aspects related to the scene. Spradley (1979) highlights the importance of descriptive questions stating they "form the backbone of all ethnographic interviews. They will make up most of the questions asked in the first interview and their use will continue throughout all subsequent interviews." (p. 91)

Examples of some of the different forms of descriptive questions that were utilized are as follows:

Grand Tour question:

Could you describe for me the interview skills workshop? What it entailed. Basically walk me through what went on during that time. I'm interested in learning what an interview skills workshop is about....

Hypothetical-Interaction question:

If I was able to listen to what you were thinking....when you were preparing that statement of your employment goals....which was going to be shared with the group, what would I hear you saying?

Example question:

A little earlier you made the statement, "I think I'm more systematic." Can you give me an example of what "more systematic" is like for you now?

Experience question:

Can you describe or help me to see, what the experience with the agency counsellor....the one-on-one follow-up session.... was like for you? How you experienced that time? How you felt about it?

A key principle associated with asking descriptive questions is that "expanding the length of the question tends to expand the length of the response" (Spradley, 1979, p. 85). Expanding allows the informant to view

the question from different angles, while also offering some time to think about it, and prepare an answer. From the researcher's point of view it facilitated a more relaxed, conversation-like presentation of a question, which may well have contributed to the building of rapport.

Structural Questions

Although structural questions are utilized primarily during the follow-up interview subsequent to domain analysis (to be outlined later in this chapter), they can be and were used concurrently with descriptive questions during the initial interview. Their purpose is to further our understanding as to how informants organize and categorize their knowledge. Structural questions assist in this task both by verifying hypothesized domains (categories of knowledge sharing a feature of meaning) and adding to our knowledge as to the structure of confirmed domains by identifying new components known as included terms (see Figure 3, p. 32). A few examples of structural questions will serve to illustrate the foregoing:

Verification Question:

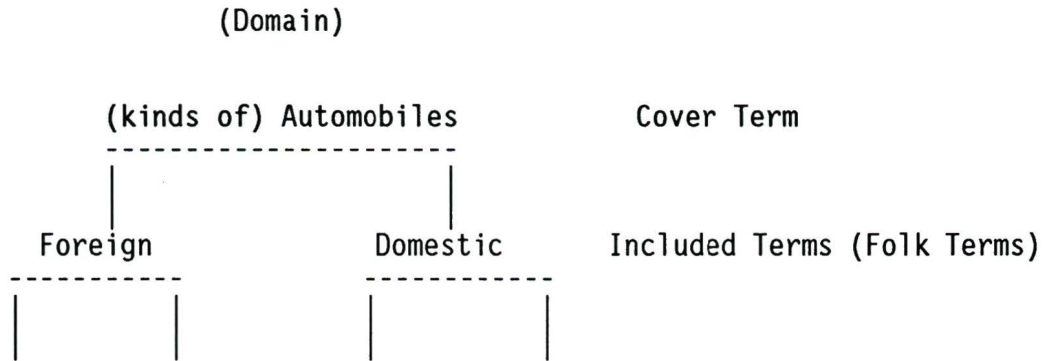
You mentioned several different ways of being "reaffirmed" during your involvement with the employment counselling program including; feedback from group members, viewing your completed resume, conducting a good information interview, and having counsellors continually emphasizing your strengths. Were there any other ways or experiences that led to your feeling reaffirmed?

Substitution Frame Question:

I'd like you to complete the following sentence. One of the things I found particularly challenging or difficult during the group workshop was _____.

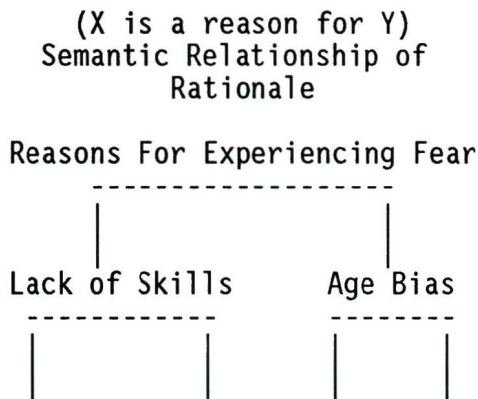
Figure No. 3: Structure of a Domain **

Example #1:

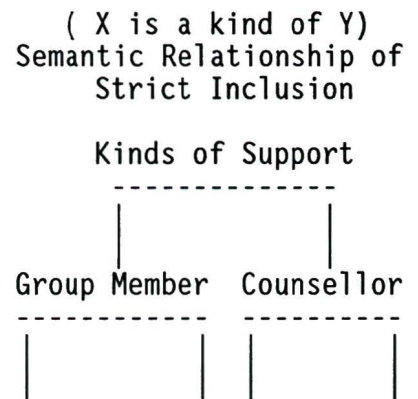


- * A domain is a symbolic category of knowledge, the members of which share at least one feature of meaning.
- * This "shared feature of meaning" is known as the semantic relationship. In this case the semantic relationship is one of Strict Inclusion or "X is a kind of Y".
- * A cover term is the first element in the structure of a Domain.
- * All Domains have two or more included terms. These are folk terms that belong to the category of knowledge named by the cover term.

Example #2:



Example #3



** adapted from Spradley (1979)

Included Term Question: (included terms may present themselves before any cover term has been discovered for the domain)

Interviewer: Is there a similarity, understanding there may not be, among "one-on-one chances to talk" during the program; "follow-up job leads"; and availability of counsellors for future sessions if needed?

Kelly: Yes....I think, ya....they all show someone cares.

* (The interviewer went on to question whether there were additional 'ways of showing someone cares' which features the semantic relationship of Means-end or X is a way to do Y.)

Spradley (1979) highlights the function and value of structural questions in the following comment:

Structural questions all function to explore the organization of an informant's cultural knowledge. They lead the ethnographer to discover and verify the presence of folk domains, cover terms for these domains, and the included terms. By using structural questions, the ethnographer does not need to impose analytic categories to organize the data from interviews or participant observation. Ethnography is more than finding out what people know; it also involves discovering how people have organized that knowledge. (p. 131)

Contrast Questions

Contrast questions assist in finding additional relationships among folk terms. They do this through application of what is referred to as the Contrast Principle. This principle states that "the meaning of a symbol can be discovered by finding out how it is different from other symbols" (Spradley, 1979, p. 157). In other words, it's meaning also depends on what it does not mean. Focusing on differences among folk terms with shared features or similarities (as discovered via the use of structural questions), enables a further discovery and clarification of meaning within a given domain.

Utilizing different types of contrast questions assisted in the process of distinguishing (sometimes subtle) features of meaning and discovering new relationships among folk terms. Consider the following examples from the study:

Contrast Verification Question:

Interviewer: You mentioned a number of different kinds of fear; fear that maybe your "skills are out of date", fear that "maybe nothing's out there", fear of not being able to "say the right things" in an interview. Would you say there's any difference in these kinds of fear?

Janet: They teach us how to prepare for an interview...and stressed, stressed alot transferring skills...skills we had, good in other jobs. But this fear is there...even if I have skills...who knows, maybe I can't find the job.

(Janet went on to clarify that one type of fear had to do with all the skills you had to offer, affecting your confidence in your self; whereas the other had to do with employers and the job market, affecting your trust in the world outside.)

Dyadic Contrast Question:

Interviewer: What distinguishes...in your view, group member support from the support received from counsellors?

Chris: I think in the group you're taught more about your specific problems in looking for a job or laying down what you really...what kind of job you want. In the individual ones you can be more personal, your frustrations....anger....

Rating Question: (seeks to discover the value placed on sets of symbols by having informants rate them (for example, best; most difficult; worst; most helpful; most interesting)

Interviewer: Out of the various difficulties we discussed with regard to the job search skills exercises, do you have a sense of...or what would you say was the most difficult part for you?

Pat:where we had to write a letter off to a big company. I can't project going off to a job that doesn't exist. I have difficulty detaching myself and making a game out of it. I have to relate it to my personal experience it seems....I can't relate to writing to a big corporate firm as a stenographer. Role play is

difficult for me. I can't pretend, I can't detach myself, I can't see how I would ever....project myself....

Pat had illuminated an aspect of the exercise experience that was further explored, that is, the issue of connecting personal experience to scenario design.

Descriptive, structural, and contrast questions each received special emphasis at various stages of the research, however were blended and interwoven as the individual interview situations dictated. They proved to be effective tools in helping informants teach the interviewer about how they structured and organized their knowledge in relation to their employment counselling experience. Although introduced separately, these tools are used in conjunction with various modes of analysis to which the focus of discussion now turns.

Ethnographic Analysis

Ethnographic analysis involves "the search for the parts of a culture (or cultural scene) and their relationships as conceptualized by informants" (Spradley, 1979, p. 93). It is based on a relational theory of meaning and the underlying principle of categorization. In an effort to help simplify and organize their experience, individuals categorize it in ways that are meaningful to them. Cultural categories or symbols are utilized to reduce the inherent complexity of human experience. Folk terms (words and phrases from the informants language) serve as the primary type of cultural symbol used in ethnographic interviewing (Spradley).

Of concern is the meaning symbols have, which is based on their

relationship to other symbols. The relational theory of meaning is founded on this premise. Casagrande and Hale's (1967) research demonstrated that the definition and meaning of a symbol was dependent upon the relationship that linked it to other symbols. For example, a leg was defined as "that with which we walk", the relationship being that of function (X is used for Y). Spradley (1979) stipulates there are a limited number of semantic relationships within any given culture, and proposes the use of nine specific universal relationships as particularly conducive to ethnographic analysis.

Applied in sequential fashion, four types of ethnographic analysis led to both the discovery and description of selected aspects of the informants cultural knowledge. Each mode of analysis will be addressed in turn.

Domain Analysis

Domain analysis involves a search for the larger units of cultural knowledge called domains. The process of discovering domains primarily involves a search for the similarities (semantic relationship) among folk terms (Spradley, 1979). Having observed a number of terms being used in the same way, the ethnographer hypothesizes they may be included terms within a domain (a cover term may or may not be evident). Structural questions serve to confirm or disconfirm the hypothesis. Consider the following sample of language (data) recorded from the interview with Daniel:

There's alot of things you always think....you are the only one that

has a problem...you want a job, you can't find a job. But here you're in a group of people, well everybody's looking for a job and some have been looking alot longer than you have. And of course some need money, and others can get by, or are still on U.I., or whatever. So it puts everything in perspective. I think it certainly helps.

Within this sample of language there appears to be a similarity or relationship among some of the phrases. It seems that knowing "everybody's looking for a job"; "some have been looking alot longer than you"; and "some need money", are ways that help put Daniel's situation in perspective. As such a hypothesized domain was created. The highlighted phrases were noted as included terms, and 'put things in perspective' identified as a potential cover term. Although the terminology varies slightly, it was part of what Daniel presented and not a category imposed by the researcher. The connecting semantic relationship was one of Means-end (X is a way to do Y). For example:

INCLUDED TERM: 'knowing some have been looking alot longer than you'

SEMANTIC RELATIONSHIP: (is a way to)

COVER TERM: 'put things in perspective'

A sample list of hypothesized domains from the initial interview with Daniel are shown at Figure 4 (p. 38), along with Spradley's (1979) proposed nine universal semantic relationships. For each informant, the selected hypothesized domains from their initial interviews were presented for verification in the follow-up session. Where a potential domain was considered to exist, however no cover term evident, only included terms would be offered. The process of expounding upon the

Figure No. 4: List of Hypothesized Domains

Initial Interview: (Daniel)

<u>DOMAIN</u>	<u>SEMANTIC RELATION</u>
Reasons for feeling stuck	X is a reason for Y
Kinds of job-search skills	X is a kind of Y
Characteristics of the counsellor	X is an attribute of Y
Ways to ease rejection	X is a way to do Y
Reasons for gaining hope	X is a reason for Y
Kinds of support (help)	X is a kind of Y
Ways to put things in perspective	X is a way to do Y
Ways to feel normal	X is a way to do Y

Spradley's (1979) proposed Universal Semantic Relationships:

1. Strict inclusion	X is a kind of Y
2. Spatial	X is a place in Y, X is a part of Y
3. Cause-effect	X is a result of Y, X is a cause of Y
4. Rationale	X is a reason for doing Y
5. Location for action	X is a place for doing Y
6. Function	X is used for Y
7. Means-end	X is a way to do Y
8. Sequence	X is a step (stage) in Y
9. Attribution	X is an attribute (characteristic) of Y

internal structure of selected domains is the subsequent function of taxonomic analysis.

Taxonomic Analysis

While domain analysis gives rise to a broad spectrum of domains and an appreciation of the cultural landscape as a whole, taxonomic analysis narrows the focus of study to a limited number of selected domains for more in-depth exploration. Although the inquiry is more channeled at this phase, the researcher stays mindful to the emergence of potential new domains and cultural knowledge. Adopting an approach that maintains a balance with regard to the two strategies (broad overview and focused approach) is important as it is in line with the goals of ethnography (Spradley, 1979).

The question as to which domains will receive focus is directly related to the purpose of the research. This study is interested in learning how informants experienced an unemployment intervention strategy. It is believed that the knowledge gained from such an inquiry might assist counsellors in further understanding the psychological reality of their clients (as related to the employment counselling program), and perhaps bring forward implications for future program design. As such, the criteria for selecting domains were stated as follows: what aspects did informants suggest as most important for an outsider to understand their experience? and, what features of their experience were deemed most meaningful or of particular value to them? These criteria parallel recommendations offered by Spradley (1979) in relation to this issue of

focus. Chapter Four outlines these findings.

A taxonomy reveals subsets of folk terms and the way these subsets are related to the domain as a whole. It continues to incorporate the relational theory of meaning and organizes all categories on the basis of a shared, single semantic relationship. Figure 5 (p. 41) provides an example of a folk taxonomy based on the semantic relationship of rationale (X is a reason for Y) for the large organizing domain of "reasons for experiencing support". Notice each level throughout the taxonomy is based on this single relationship, X is a reason for Y. This taxonomy serves to represent the meaning of various symbols in the domain by showing their relationship to other symbols within the category.

Employing the discovery principle of similarity helps to elicit the internal structure of domains and the relationships among subsets within the folk categories selected. However, there is additional meaning not revealed by this aspect of similarity, that remains to be uncovered. The components of meaning or attributes that distinguish symbols within a contrast set (subset) can be discovered through the application of componential analysis, contributing to a richer appreciation of the meaning underlying folk terms.

Componential Analysis

Componential analysis seeks to organize and represent the attributes associated with symbols of a given subset or domain category. The collective and unique attributes of a symbol are what distinguishes it from its member symbols within a contrast set. Symbols are distinguished

Figure No. 5: Taxonomy of Reasons for Experiencing Support
Based on Semantic Relationship of Rationale: (X is a reason for Y)

Informant: Kelly

Reasons for Experiencing Support:

-Knowing someone--- cares	-Available for future sessions- -Counsellor follow-up job leads	-It was open-ended -Three month contact
	-Group members helping---	-Ongoing "sympatico" -We would share leads -Offer strategies
	-One-on-one opportunity to talk-	-Let it all hang out -Get direct resume feedback -Have some personal attention
-Believing I'm--- O.K.	-All in the same boat--	-They've (group members) been in the dumps -We've seen life-- all over forty-five -Unemployed and sharing
	-Knowing there are other very skilled people out of work	
	-There's a number worse off and surviving	
	-Knowing I won't stay down---	-Learning emotional phases
-Feeling energized--	-Not "racking"----- myself	-Counsellors always pointing out my strengths
	-Treating self to old---- passions (painting)	-Allowing myself to explore
	-A sense of "wonderful----- togetherness"	-Being on a shared journey
	-Being confident----- I'm on track	-Doing the right things, knowing what experts say

from one another by way of the discovery principle of contrast. The principle of contrast stipulates that the meaning of a symbol is also dependent on what it does not mean (Spradley, 1979). Contrast questions outlined previously, employ this principle focusing on differences rather than similarity, as with structural questions. Also, when relating these dimensions of contrast (attributes) to folk terms within a category, multiple semantic relationships are introduced (Spradley). Figure V (p. 43) reveals two separate segments of componential analysis involving the folk terms "counsellors always pointing out my strengths" and "one-on-one opportunity to talk", from individual subsets within the domain "reasons for experiencing support". The multiple semantic relationships and range of attributes represented in Figure V, illustrates the degree to which componential analysis contributes new dimensions of meaning to data yielded by previous modes of analysis.

Understanding the components of meaning associated with particular aspects of experience as well as the manner in which cultural knowledge is organized has provided a rather detailed map of how informants interpret their experience. The ethnographic interview methodology to this point has been concerned with a search for parts of the cultural scene under investigation, and the relationships and contrasts among those parts. The culminating phase of analysis (thematic) is aimed at developing a broader, more holistic view of the culture through examining relationships among domains, identifying general themes that organize the experience into dynamic wholes (Spradley, 1979).

Figure No. 6:Segment of Componential Analysis

Attributes and associated Semantic Relationships
(as conceptualized by informants)

Example 1:

Folk Term: Counsellors always pointing
out my strengths

Semantic Relationship:

is a part of ...
was a way to ...
was a reason for ...
was a part of ...
was a kind of ...

Attribute:

gaining confidence others
believe in me
help stop racking on myself
(putting self down)
believing I do have
something to offer
keeping my dignity intact
boost to a sagging ego

Example 2:

Folk Term: One-on-one opportunity to talk

Semantic Relationship:

was a way to ...
was a reason for ...
was a part of ...
was a way to ...
is a kind of ...

Attribute:

get expert feedback
letting it all hang out
having permission to
explore what really want
access personal job search
tips
special friendship,
one-way attention

* adapted from Spradley (1979)

Thematic Analysis

Cultural themes, in relation to ethnographic research, have been viewed as broad premises or cognitive orientations that express themselves in a number of domains or categories of cultural knowledge (Agar, 1976). They collectively serve to illuminate the world view of informants as it pertains to the experience or cultural scene under study.

There exist a number of individual strategies for analyzing, or more appropriately, discovering cultural themes. This study approached the task from two recommend procedures suggested by Spradley (1979). The first involved conducting an inventory of cultural domains and then examining their dimensions of contrast. Recurring ideas and patterns emerged, at times in the form of assertions, that connected aspects of the experience across domains. The second procedure incorporated themes elicited from the domain inventory in an attempt to create a summary overview of the cultural scene. Additional patterns emerged when conceptualizing the experience as a whole, giving rise to both major and minor themes.

Figure 7, p. 45 provides examples of two major themes that surfaced in connection to the employment counselling experience. The first, "finding direction", relates directly to aspects of the experience as indicated by the attributes listed. The second, "mid-life is a cultural contradiction" is a type of universal theme (see Spradley, 1979, p. 200) that each informant gave witness to at different stages of the inquiry.

It is considered that utilization of the four types of ethnographic analyses outlined and their accompanying specialized questions and techniques, proved invaluable to helping achieve the goals of this study.

Figure No. 7: Cultural Themes*

(recurrent themes associated across domains)

Example 1: "Finding Direction"

	F	
	I	
	N	
	D	
-reassessing what you want from a job	I	
-identifying transferrable skills	N	--provided push for retraining
-screening out what don't want through information interviews	G	
	D	--brought about a new sense of self
-viewing all my accomplishments on a resume	I	
-allowing myself space, time to reflect	R	--made for a more focused, efficient use of time
-counsellors allowing permission to explore	E	
	C	
-seeing time as opportunity	T	
	I	
	O	
	N	

Example 2: "Mid-life, Cultural
Contradiction"

	C	
	U	
	L	
	T	
	U	
-age as a value and a handicap	R	
-seeing the look on their (employers) faces	A	--pretty sceptical toward employers
-a youth oriented society	L	
-are you well experienced or stuck in ways	C	--abandoned by own society
-supplementing retirement (employers bias)	O	
-not supposed to happen at my stage (starting over)	N	
-why should I have to, I've contributed	T	--anger just there, no real target
	R	
-those pamphlets, all young faces	A	
	D	
-much younger than you doing the interviewing	I	
	C	
	T	
	I	
	O	
	N	

* adapted from Spradley (1979)

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

A fundamental feature of ethnography is that the process of translation is involved in both the investigative and communicative phases of the research. The previous methodology section outlined the manner in which both interviewer and informant co-interpreted and verified the ethnographic data. This chapter addresses the challenge of communicating that text by organizing the discussion around five cultural themes: (a) cultural contradiction, (b) feeling normal, (c) knowing someone cares, (d) something to offer, and (e) finding direction. It is suggested that these organizing themes will provide both a broad perspective as to the nature of the informants experience, while at the same time presenting individual orientations, drawing directly from the narrative. As such the presentation of ethnographic text is designed to illuminate the general through the particular, a valued feature of ethnographic writing (Spradley, 1979). A final section will present a brief collection of program suggestions and ideas offered by participants during the interviews.

It should be kept in mind that this chapter is concerned with describing what was discovered through interview and analysis, while the "discussion" chapter to follow will address the relevance of these findings.

Cultural Contradiction

This theme is intended to provide an initial context from which to gain a sense of how informants felt about their seeking a job at mid-life. Their unique individual situations have previously been commented on, drawing attention to their diversity. Notwithstanding this variation, there was a common view that resonated among informants about the incongruence of "starting over" (as one member put it) at mid-life. Although more directly related to the experience of unemployment than the intervention per se, it offers the reader an initial orientation to the issue of being an older job seeker from the point of view of the six participants. Consider the following comments from each one.

Pat: I didn't expect to be having to go out for work....not now, you know, beyond what I'd like to do, volunteering, earning something on the side. My brother's retiring, my sister's secure, and even my ex is well set....here I am....

Kelly: I'm starting from scratch, there's this conflict....and fear....yet wanting to feel I can cope....there's a bit of me saying, "hey, why do I have to"!

Chris: The rug was pulled out from under me....after twenty years, twenty years. I felt alone....unsure....rejected!

Daniel: I'm not the only one at my age that's ever looked for a job. But when I graduated they (employers) sought us out, not the other way around. It was easy to find a job, they looked for you. But the world's not like that any more.

Debbie: Looking for a job you value at mid-life....it's so important, and you have to deal with all this anger....

Janet: You never planned for this back in the sixty's, you never thought about the possibility of needing to start a new career at this stage....your looking to start anew, at the threshold, yet....you're on the downslope.

These comments draw attention to this shared orientation of incongruence,

being out of step with and at times cheated by society. There is a fundamental break in life's anticipated pattern. Supplementing this feature of the cultural contradiction theme for a number of informants was the issue of age in relation to the job search.

Being middle-aged and seeking employment was viewed as both a value and a handicap, with emphasis on the latter. While informants were strengthened (as will be outlined in a later theme) by an enhanced awareness as to the potential value of being an older applicant (degree of experience and skills; mature judgement; work ethic and commitment), there nonetheless existed a level of fear and distrust towards the attitudes of those doing the hiring. Might they equate being older with any number of handicaps such as being "stuck in your ways", "having less energy" or "only being in for the short term"? Additional comments from informants illuminate this issue further:

Debbie: I saw reality, I saw the handicap....the way employers' expressions would change when you walked in....you could sense there was something, it had to be your age....
When you looked at the literature, those pamphlets, all the young faces....let's face it, we're a youth oriented society.

Chris: The age thing wasn't an issue for me....but I can see how it might be for employers....maybe they have a problem with you passing through, maybe you're used to old ways....

As presented this theme of cultural contradiction can be viewed on two fronts: to be starting anew in what is perceived as the autumn or mid-phase of one's life is not congruent with the pattern in which informants anticipated it would unfold, and; being an applicant over the age of forty-five may be considered either a value or handicap by employers depending on their individual orientations. Underlying this theme is the

dynamic of having little control over this aspect of their experience. The issue of regaining some degree of personal control over their situation is one that permeates each of the major themes to follow. Although the meaning and experience of cultural contradiction as it has been described was very much a reality for informants, other aspects of their intervention experience as will be described, both transcended and lessened it's potential impact.

Feeling Normal

This umbrella theme is associated with a number of linking features characteristic of the informants' experience. It refers to them coming to feel that they are not alone in their job search; that it is normal to experience a number of ups and downs; that they are not somehow failures or outcasts; that they are OK. In describing their intervention experience, individual informants drew attention to various facets of this theme as it related to such issues as feeling isolated and alone as a middle-aged job seeker; questioning their emotional stability, and; feeling one is somehow abnormal or a failure, having not been able to find work. How did they interpret the meaning of their experience and subsequently shift their perspective to the healthier and more facilitative view of being normal and not alone? Related descriptions from the narrative provide a window from which to consider this question:

Kelly: (referring to an opening workshop exercise)we took a couple of minutes, to talk to our next door neighbour....why are they here, what have they done, that sort of thing....and then presented them instead of ourselves....you could be in their shoes, you learned very quickly they were struggling just like you....

Debbie: I came in very fearful, I bet they (group members) know alot, we're going to claw each other....we're all in the Victoria job market....but I found just the opposite! We helped each other, shared ideas....

Janet: Having a program for over forty-fives is definately an asset, we all have a certain working background, mindset,....we were very empathic to each other....

Having referred in their interviews to the tendency of linking "not finding work" to "being a failure", Daniel and Janet followed up with these reflections:

Daniel: They (counsellors) tell you you should count on at least six months to a year, before you may get anything....that it will take time, and not to be overly hard on yourself....and I've been more patient, I have a better, um....there's more balance.

Janet:the market is very tight they (counsellors) told us, they helped us see....to be more realistic. I became more realistic, knowing, few jobs out there....I sealed down my expectations.

Having experienced strong emotional swings due to repeated rejections during the job hunt, Daniel commented on the meaning of receiving information (emotional cycle handout and discussion) regarding this issue:

....because they asked everybody, they had this line, this curve. They asked everybody where you are on this line at this moment.... it's like, um, emotional states. You recognize the stage you're in, it helps....because they (counsellors) tell you this is what's happening, it's kind of....well OK you recognize it, you recognize it for what it is, it's that stage....

Considering the self-assessed severity of one's situation in relation to certain members seemingly worse off, lightened the load for many. As Kelly put it, "when you know there's a number worse off and surviving, you know you'll be all right, you'll cope". Pat observed, "....some (group members) have been out of work for months, others have

little money,....you have to respect them".

These and other cultural sub-categories (for an example, see Figure 5, p.41) drawn from the narrative serve to illustrate cultural knowledge in action. As can be seen, the components of meaning aligned to various aspects of the intervention experience contributed in several instances to a re-evaluation of one's personal situation and a shift in psychological reality. In other words, a movement from initial self-descriptions such as being alone or a failure, to that of feeling normal, no longer alone, and more realistic.

Related to the cultural theme of "feeling normal" but warranting a separate focus in view of it's individual dimensions of contrast, is a theme that proved central to a number of informants' employment counselling experience. That is, the theme distinguished as "knowing someone cares".

Knowing Someone Cares

I remember being at home, alone....and in came this call, some time after I'd finished the program. It was one of the counsellors. "I just thought of you when this job came in this morning".... (Kelly then whispers very quietly) This is just a blessing....because it means somebody actually thinks I'm worth something....to actually mention it to me. And there's no pressure. Prior to that I had felt desperately alone.

Informants reported two cultural categories distinguishing the meaning associated with no longer being alone. One has to do with a certain comfort derived from knowing there are others in your predicament, sharing a similar set of circumstances and experiences. This category was featured in the preceding theme. The other involves a feeling that someone

cares for you as an individual, recognizes your value. The meaning associated with this sense that someone cares was discussed in both the initial and follow-up interviews with Chris and captured in the following comment:

....at the time I went up there (to the intervention program) I felt I had been completely abandoned (by previous employer and colleagues)....I remember a number of reactions....I thought to myself, they got all dressed up for me....they're here for me.... I remember them even saying "we're going to stick with you"....they kept my dignity intact....it was wonderful.

For Pat, one of the signs that someone cared revealed itself in the counsellor's willingness to listen and offer "permission to explore", as it was interpreted:

I knew she was really listening....the counsellor picked up enough vibes from me that I was hesitant, not gung-ho on that (kind of work)....didn't really want to do it, not at this stage. Her picking up on that, mentioning that, allowed me....you know, gave me, permission to explore (underlying areas of employment interest).

One of the structural features associated with the employment counselling program referred to in this study is that it incorporates an open-ended follow-up. That is, after having attended selected workshops, former participants can utilize agency services as required on an individual basis. Some of the research participants returned to access additional workshops, while others took the opportunity to meet individually with a counsellor. Some of the informants stated this flexible, follow-up feature additionally served to instill the feeling that someone cared. Consider these brief examples from the narrative:

Daniel:and I found it was really helpful, to have somebody you could phone, make an appointment. And you see you knew you had half an hour or whatever it was....and they'd listen....help you work it out....they never really said how much time they can give you or

what they are willing to do....it's kind of open.

Debbie: (in identifying some of the attributes associated with how care was experienced)there's this quiet follow-up....they contacted me several weeks later to, to let me know about this subsidized training I was eligible for, provided leads, told me what was happening (in my area of interest).

While group membership was described as particularly helpful in such ways as knowing you're not alone, sharing job search ideas and gaining feedback, two of the participants experienced an added dimension. They had forged a close, ongoing friendship with a peer from the group:

Debbie:I made a couple of good friends, we get together every so often when one of us is really down. We usually meet for lunch....talk things through.

Pat:my friends, they couldn't understand, I had some fears.... very insecure. They gave me lots of advice; "oh just run off a hundred resumes to all those places"....I have a contact, a friend from the group....we know what it's like for each other....

Whether aligned with a special group member friendship, a program follow-up feature, or a noted counsellor quality, the importance of knowing someone cares cannot be overstated. In fact for some, it was stressed as the most valued aspect of their unemployment intervention experience.

Both coming to feel normal again and knowing that someone else cares, assisted informants in establishing an initial foundation from which to begin a restructuring process. The two organizing themes to follow: being confident in believing that one has "something to offer", and; having a plan or "finding direction", additionally helped participants regain a sense of autonomy.

Something to Offer

The meaning systems informants employed in connection to the theme of having "something to offer" involved a number of interrelated domains. The common feature of meaning interwoven among sub-categories was that of gaining self-assurance. This underlying dimension of developing trust and confidence in both the value of one's experience and skills and the ability to communicate that knowledge, emerged during interviews often explicitly and at times in a more tacit manner.

A number of informants described what might be termed a consistent, strength-based feature associated with the way in which counsellors tended to relate to informants. This manner of drawing attention to and focusing on client strengths (that is, skills; experience; attributes) was credited with helping clients enhance their perceptions of what they had to offer employers, as well as their self-image. Reflect on these samples selected from the narrative:

Pat: It's the best thing that's happened to me since sliced bread! They (counsellors) have a technique of reminding you to pull all the positives of your life....and to pick up if you stumble, and make the best of what you've got....

Daniel: They approach it from a different way....let you see, you know alot already....letting the group work. I'd think....oh that's right, I knew that but I forgot. So there was alot of confirmation of what you already know.

Janet: They reminded, showed the value and strength of being an older worker, mature....stable....capable. This is how many employers perceive you....which reinforces you. And you need all the reinforcement you can get.

Kelly: The counsellor was always challenging everyone to see their skills. One of the men had been doing the same thing for twenty years and was very down about finding a job. She pointed out the good skills he could transfer....that employers still needed. We

(group members) have this habit of racking on ourselves. The counsellor jumped on that right away....always pointing out my strengths.

On one level the completion of a resume provides the job seeker with what amounts to a marketing tool for his or her job search. On another, as suggested by informants, the process of compiling and organizing a record of relevant skills and experience serves to structure that knowledge and clarify what one has to offer:

Kelly: In learning the format of a resume I was also learning alot about myself that I'd forgotten. There's something about seeing yourself on paper....wow, I can do all this! It's a real boost.

Chris: Putting together a resume was very good for me emotionally. It helped confirm I do have some skills. It made me consider some new areas I hadn't thought about. I felt I was on the right track for once.

Pat: I have a lot of skills, I've been round and about. But the resume (previously) had been a big stumbling block for me. They made it so easy, though. Writing to a specific goal made you focus.... helped you think about yourself, less scattered.

In relation to this theme, informants were involved with what might be conceptualized as two avenues of learning. Although some had recently been upgrading in certain areas (for example, personnel management and computer training), by and large each had already developed a breadth of transferable skills and experience. They needed to learn however, both what kinds of skills and knowledge they possessed in different categories (for example, technical; administrative, communication), and in what ways these were applicable to areas outside their familiar parameters. Once an appreciation of what they had to offer was developed (through for example, counsellors pointing out their strengths; creating a resume; receiving feedback and encouragement from group members), they needed to learn ways

of communicating that knowledge.

An underlying meaning of learning how to approach and conduct both information interviews and employment interviews was discovered during an interview with one of the informants:

Daniel: I had all these clues (from the program) how to tackle it! How to be effective in an interview, how to get the receptionist on your side when you want to speak to someone. It improved my confidence, I believed I could do it. I knew how to get across.... show them the things I've done that would be good for them.

Later analysis and a follow-up interview clarified the underlying meaning associated with this part of the narrative. The job search clues and techniques were "parts of a strategy" which in turn was connected to the category of "reasons for gaining control". Embedded within the discussion as well was "a kind of shift in perspective" where the informant's cognitive orientation had altered from "what you (employers) can do for me" to "what skills and experience I have to offer". In others words, coming to trust that one has something worthwhile to offer, and developing the skills and confidence to communicate it.

As described by informants and discovered through exploration with them, certain elements of the unemployment intervention experience contributed to a wider and more explicit appreciation of their talents.

Finding Direction

The earlier theme of cultural contradiction revealed how informants experienced aspects of their unemployment situation and the prospect of searching for work. Various folk terms such as being isolated, feeling abandoned, alone and unsure colored certain individual perceptions. Yet it

was found that these descriptors were no longer prominent as they referred to personal viewpoints developed during the intervention experience. In conjunction with their experience, a number of them were able to achieve a focus, establish a goal, or at the least clarify what it was they were no longer interested in pursuing. Through varying degrees of reassessment and self-exploration, they were engaged in a process of "finding direction", a key organizing theme of their experience.

Contrast rating questions as described in the methodology section were utilized to discover what valued aspect of their experience stands out in particular:

Daniel: I think I'm much more systematic, knowing what I want and what I don't want....They wanted you to have a goal but they didn't push, if you were hesitant they'd encourage you to explore....Yes, I'm quite systematic now, things are falling into place, I'm on track. Now when I'm really down I go through my list, and I say "yes I've done all the right things".

Chris: I have a plan now!....before I was all over the place. I went from helter-skelter to having a plan. The resume workshop provided a structure. I have a job (described as a survival job) but I'm planning some other ideas on the side. More like what I want to do, a business. In my spare time I'm reading up on and talking to people about my other interests.

Pat: I haven't just breezed in, picked up a job and earned good money. But I've had a chance to consider what I want from a job, I've narrowed it down. But probably the biggest change for me is admitting to myself "hey, I don't think this is it". What I thought I wanted I don't. I'm still in turmoil, but I've grown....

In some cases the "finding direction" theme was associated primarily with having a strategy or systematic approach to the job search. In others it had to do with moving and focusing energies in the direction of one's interests. Although different, they each share two important features of meaning. Both enabled the informants to achieve a personally valued degree

of focus and control. This is not to suggest that informants no longer experienced any isolation or doubt. On the contrary, they reported that similar emotional reactions (characteristic of the cultural contradiction theme) continued to ebb and flow to varying degrees in their present experience, however were no longer dominant.

Finding direction was described in a number of ways by participants and it was evident it resulted more from a combination of experiences, than any single process or event. At different stages of the ethnographic interview the theme of finding direction would surface. In some cases attention was drawn to the counsellor's attitude in encouraging exploration, in others to specific activities or tools such as the Jackson Vocational Interest Inventory (JVIS):

Pat: It (JVIS) made me realize I was having problems. It doesn't tell me what I can do but makes me feel alot more secure about where my interests definately are not. I said to myself "well look, don't bang your head against a brick wall....you know life is for the living....and maybe I can find an area more suited to me.

This feature (inter-connecting a blend of experiences to form a plan or structure) of Pat's experience was characteristic of the manner in which other informants gained a degree of focus and self-direction.

Although presented as five distinct cultural themes, it is stressed that these fundamental features of experience should not be construed as operating in isolation of one another. Collectively, it is hoped that they have provided the reader with a broad perspective as to the key features of the unemployment intervention experience, exemplified through selected individual narratives.

Other Observations

Up to this point the discussion has focused upon those features of the employment counselling experience identified by informants as most central to it's understanding. As it happened, the aspects described by informants were those assessed as most meaningful and of personal value. Periodically, the interviewer presented descriptive and structural questions to explore whether informants experienced any difficulty or problem areas in connection to the intervention. Primarily during follow-up interviews, some of the participants shared observations. At times these gave rise to suggested additions or revisions. Consider the following statements and observations:

(1) Pat:where we had to write a letter off to a big company. I can't project going off to a job that doesn't exist. I have difficulty detaching myself and making a game out of it. I have to relate it to my personal experience it seems....I can't relate writing to a big corporate firm as a stenographer.

Pat suggested: where possible allow participants to design activity scenarios, drawing from their own experience to keep exercises as relevant as possible.

(2) Daniel: They really stressed you should look below your level....and I don't agree with that, that really bothered me. Too many people they said are over-qualified....but I don't believe in working way below your ability, unless the job's not that important (to you) or for survival. It's a good thing stressing the job market is tough, but I don't believe in selling yourself short.

(3) Daniel: I'm very uncomfortable on the telephone. I wasn't good with that way of arranging information interviews. I don't like calling up cold to someone who's never heard of me, so I designed my own system.

Daniel's suggestion: encourage personal revisions where it won't detract

from the purpose of the technique. Daniel added that clients will only succeed with what they're reasonably comfortable with. Daniel's revised technique to secure an information interview was as follows:

First send an introductory letter briefly outlining who you are and the nature of the information sought after. Indicate you'll be calling in a week to make an appointment. In this way they're expecting the call and can establish whether or not they can assist.

Daniel reported this system was very effective in securing information interviews.

(4) A number of informants described personal ideas and resources they'd accessed that either supplemented their job search or enhanced their lifestyles (for example, volunteer work; journal writing; free community programs; library research).

A suggestion was made that a group session be established to share creative ideas participants had incorporated in their lives and found helpful or interesting.

CHAPTER V
DISCUSSION

Through the application of Spradley's (1979) ethnographic interview method, both knowledge and understanding have been developed with regard to how six mature job seekers experienced an unemployment intervention. From informants' individual descriptions, five central themes emerged from a rich array of underlying domains. These themes elucidated meaning associated with aspects identified as important by informants, and additionally offered insight as to the process of individual change. Change here refers to a shift in cognitive orientation from a perspective initially characterized by isolation and insecurity, to one of renewed direction and self-assurance.

As this discussion is intended primarily for an audience of counsellors, it will begin by reviewing the findings in relation to the issue of change, and with reference to existing research. This opening critique will give rise to consideration of how program "success" is viewed from the perspective of participants. Following a discussion of study limitations, a section will be devoted to addressing the implications and recommendations associated with future program design.

Three areas will receive focus:

- (1) recommended "structural" features;
- (2) key "content" areas; and
- (3) "process" considerations

A closing section will offer recommendations for future research.

Shifting Orientations

As outlined within the "cultural contradiction" theme, the six informants involved in this research experienced initial reactions to being unemployed (for example, alone; unsure; rejected; angry) similar, in the sense of lessening their sense of well-being, to those identified by participants in related studies (Liem & Rayman, 1982; Winegardner et al., 1984). Following repeated rejections, the job-search phase of unemployment can often lead individuals to adopting a general state of apathy and stagnation (Borgen & Amundson, 1987; Sinfield, 1981). This however, was not the case for any of the informants involved in this study, even though faced with similar difficulties. They had not lost hope, given up, and joined the ranks of the "hidden unemployed". On the contrary, they had developed a sense of direction, confidence in what they had to offer, and felt more supported. Although job loss has been linked to a corresponding loss in identity (Lawrence, 1980; Pappas, 1987; Portwood, 1985), participants were able to reconstruct a sense of meaning and direction in their lives despite the condition of being unemployed.

The meaning informants attributed to certain aspects of their experience at times brought about a corresponding shift in perspective or a gradual movement away from a previous orientation. The four themes (feeling normal; knowing someone cares; something to offer; finding direction) directly related to the intervention organize and illustrate the shared features of meaning experienced by participants, as well as the link of that meaning to personal perspectives. Figure 8 (p. 64) provides

a sectioned outline depicting how the meaning attributed to experience was described by informants as bringing about corresponding shifts in perspective and other changes. Of note is that informants reported these orientation shifts as highly valued and fundamental to their adopting a personally healthy perspective. The inherent importance of this observation has implications for how "program success" is viewed and warrants further attention. Prior to considering this issue, study findings related to previous unemployment intervention research will be discussed.

The results of this study further emphasize the value of group membership within a job-search program as highlighted in previous research (Borgen & Amundson, 1984; Trimmer, 1984). Related findings included (a) knowing they are not the only ones experiencing job loss, (b) receiving feedback as to the value of their skills, and (c) feeling in community with others. Mallinckrodt and Fretz (1988) noted that recognition of personal skills and abilities by others in similar circumstances often reassured an individual's sense of self-worth. This aspect of group involvement was evident as well for participants of this study.

The value of incorporating varied learning styles and techniques within a job-search program, in view of individual preferences and aptitudes, has been highlighted by Pryor and Ward (1985). Similar findings were observed in the present research as descriptions of informants varied with regard to which learning methods were personally effective. The use of varied mediums (role play; lecture; modelling-observational learning;

Figure No. 8: Shifts in Perspective

(some underlying elements of change)

Initial Orientation:

- (1) alone; not normal; rejected; isolated
- (2) self-doubt; unsure; no skills; too old
- (3) adrift; helter-skelter; anxious; no plan

Experience:

- (1a) one-on-one opportunity to tell story; seeing others in similar boat; follow-up lead from counsellor; encouragement from group members; discussing common emotional ups and downs
- (2a) creating resume; counsellor emphasizing strengths; learning interview techniques; positive feedback from peers
- (3a) exploring range of interests; organizing experience and skills in resume; learning how to job search; reassessing values and goals

Meaning Attributed to Experience:

- (1b) I'm not the only one having problems of this nature; there is someone who cares; it's normal to have emotional swings
- (2b) I have worthy skills and experience; I can communicate what I have to offer; I have unique, worthwhile attributes as an older applicant
- (3b) I know I'm on the right track; I'm going about this in an organized, effective manner; I'm going to find the right job at this stage

Revised Orientation:

- (1c) not alone; normal; there's people that care
- (2c) self-assured; confident have something to offer
- (3c) have a plan; systematic; found a direction in line with interests

Sample Resulting Changes (offered by informants):

feel better about myself; when down, don't stay there long;
 looking after myself, eating right, allowing for leisure; more
 settled and patient; accepting survival job while continuing to
 research field of interest; better time-management; looking out for
 others, not totally focused on self

Note: individual sections are not all inclusive.

visual aids; discussion) proved worthwhile in light of the various preferences and difficulties described.

Allan (1990), Liptak (1989), and others have drawn attention to the issue of encouraging job seekers to adopt as realistic a perspective as possible in terms of their anticipated duration of unemployment. Informants in this study indicated that as a result of being informed of local market conditions and "typical" job search durations, they adjusted their expectations accordingly. A more realistic perspective reduced their anxiety and allowed them to accept rejection with less frustration.

Findings related to earlier research reaffirms the value of incorporating these components in future intervention programs. Other results from the present study suggest the potential value of including additional components (for example, an open-ended follow-up; encouraging reassessment and exploration). These features will be outlined in the implications and recommendations section.

Considering Program "Success"

As noted at the outset, group job-search skills programs have primarily been supported in terms of their effectiveness regarding reemployment (Chandler, 1984; Steinweg, 1990; Trimmer, 1984). There is no denying that securing employment was a central goal for those involved in this study. Yet as a result of the underlying meaning connected to various aspects of their experience, several personally important changes occurred, despite not finding a job. As interpreted by informants and conceptualized in four interconnecting themes, "feeling normal", "knowing someone cares",

believing you have "something to offer", and "finding direction", were individually valued "successes" linked to the intervention experience.

The point being stressed is that while there may be an understandable tendency to leap to the generalization that "success equals whether or not one finds a job", such a view might be inclined to overlook or treat as ancillary, personal changes in other areas of equal merit. Additionally there is a danger evident when the two assumptions embedded within such a view are considered: (a) work is currently available for the job seeker, and therefore (b) if you don't find employment, you have failed. When "demand deficiency" unemployment is prevalent, assumption "a" may well be false for certain individuals. Whether or not employment opportunities exist, assumption "b" does not take into account the multitude of variables associated with first finding and then actually managing to get hired. It is not being suggested that individuals (clients; counsellors; program sponsors) are oblivious to the various personal benefits associated with group job search programs, nor is the importance of landing a job being undermined. In view of this study's findings, what is being proposed is a "stretching" of the notion of success to take into account the potential equal significance of other dimensions of the intervention experience not directly aligned to the issue of securing employment. Therefore, faced with "demand deficiency" or "structural" unemployment, a revised view of success might incorporate guidelines such as whether or not clients perceive they are not alone, are not failures, have established plans, are cared about by others, have adopted realistic perspectives, and/or have not become apathetic.

Study Limitations

Certain limitations associated with this study limit its scope as a representation of a given cultural scene, meaning the experience of an unemployment intervention. To begin with, those who choose to participate in research of this nature may be of an orientation limited to a certain perspective. It should be noted however that informants were willing to share not only aspects of their experience found to be personally positive, but also areas of discomfort and difficulty.

In attempting to offer both an individual perspective as well as a more cultural, holistic interpretation, the question of the research's limit of six informants comes into view. This restriction is offset somewhat by the diversity of individual contexts involved, which enhance to some degree its representativeness. Additionally, notwithstanding the factual variation associated with individual experience, a saturation in terms of shared experiential meanings emerged among the group.

An ethnographic study may often incorporate more than one method of research (for example participant observation supplemented by survey). Although this research was restricted to the use of a single method, the ethnographic interview is nonetheless a viable, stand-alone procedure, appropriate for a study of this nature.

Implications and Recommendations

Implications for future program design emerged from the ethnographic narratives and corresponding analyses of the six study informants. Recommendations listed should be considered in light of the limitations

discussed. Parallel features addressed earlier in relation to previous studies will not be listed in an effort to avoid redundancy. This section will draw attention to the main elements derived from the study considered conducive to an effective intervention. It will be organized around three sub-headings as follows: (a) structural features; (b) content areas; and (c) process considerations.

Structural Features:

(1) Open-ended follow-up: When the actual collection of workshops or formal aspect of the program is over, the client should still be able to access supportive services such as a follow-up counselling session, administrative support, additional workshops and the like.

(2) Both group and one-on-one components: As has been described, the inclusion of both these features provide valued support, but often of a different nature. For example, some individual time with a counsellor was regarded as an opportunity to be more personal in terms of sharing concerns deemed inappropriate for the group.

(3) Life-stage criteria: A number of informants involved in this study stressed the value of being in a group with people of their own age range or perceived life-stage. They described the "over forty-five" criteria as encouraging their involvement and improving their comfort level.

Content Areas:

(1) Opportunity to "tell their story": It is recommended that participants be accorded the opportunity to talk about their experience either with a counsellor or in a group setting as appropriate. It may not be required, however the opportunity should be made available.

(2) Information that helps normalize: Educating participants with respect to the emotional ups and downs often associated with the job search due to repeated rejections, a scarcity of financial resources, and other related pressures.

(3) Balance of task and maintenance: Supplement the teaching of task related job-search skills (for example, resume writing; interview role-play) with activities designed more directly to encourage support (for example, group discussion of job hunt frustrations and concerns; communication of qualities valued in fellow members)

(4) Member ideas: Include a session which encourages the sharing of member ideas and creative interests which offer personal support and a more balanced lifestyle.

Process:

(1) Strength-based process: Consistently focus on client skills and strengths in an effort to rebuild self-confidence and encourage an acknowledgement of their personal worth.

(2) Opportunity to explore; reassess: Encourage an open, flexible approach to self-assessment when considering future goals related to employment. A job for the sake of a job may prove counter-productive. Help clients reframe unemployment as an opportunity to explore future directions.

(3) Client ownership: Encourage where possible, client involvement in creating exercise scenarios drawing from their own experience. Additionally they should be stimulated to share their own job search suggestions and/or ideas related to existing techniques.

Recommended Research

Further studies investigating how individuals experience unemployment interventions would serve to build on the existing limited body of knowledge. Methods incorporating other approaches such as participant observation may shed light on aspects of the experience not accessed through client description.

The question as to what extent job search programs take into account the prevalent "type(s)" of unemployment would be of value. In other words,

might programs be promoting somewhat elusive goals if their content and approach is not realistically in line with existing economic and labour market conditions?

Certainly unemployment does not occur within a vacuum. As noted previously, it can impact upon the equilibrium of the entire family system (Shifron et al., 1983). The question of how an unemployment intervention is indirectly experienced by individual members of a family would be of interest. Such a study could illuminate both the nature of the experience for family members and the extent to which they might require additional support.

REFERENCES

- Agar, M. H. (1986). Speaking of Ethnography. Beverly Hills, CA: Sage Publications.
- Allan, P. (1990). Looking for work after forty: Job search experiences of older unemployed managers and professionals. Journal of Employment Counseling, 27, 113-121.
- Amundson, N. E., & Borgen, W. A. (1982). The dynamics of unemployment: Job loss and job search. The Personnel and Guidance Journal, 60, 562-564.
- Amundson, N. E., & Borgen, W. A. (1987). Coping with unemployment: What helps and what hinders. Journal of Employment Counseling, 24, 97-106.
- Amundson, N. E., & Borgen, W. A. (1988). Factors that help and hinder in group employment counselling. Journal of Employment Counseling, 25, 104-114.
- Angell, R. C. (1938) The family encounters the depression. New York: Scribner.
- Bakke, E. W. (1960) The cycle of adjustment to unemployment. In A. Sinfield, What unemployment means (p. 37). Oxford, Eng: Martin Robertson.
- Boor, M. (1980). Relationships between unemployment rates and suicide rates in eight countries, 1962-1976, Psychological Reports, 60, 562-564.
- Borgen, W. A., & Amundson, N. E. (1984). The experience of unemployment: Implications for counselling the unemployed. Scarborough, Ont: Nelson Canada.
- Borgen, W. A., & Amundson, N. E. (1987). The dynamics of unemployment. Journal of Counseling and Development, 66, 180-183.
- Brenner, M. H. (1973). Mental illness and the economy. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Casagrande, J. B. & Hale, K. L. (1967). Semantic relationships in Papago folk definitions. In J. P. Spradley, The ethnographic interview (p. 108-109). New York: Holt, Reinhart & Winston.
- Chandler, A. L. (1984). Using an abbreviated job club program in a job service setting. Journal of employment counseling, 21, 98-102.

- Cohn, R. M. (1978). The effect of unemployment status change on self attitudes, Social Psychology, 41, 81-93.
- Dooley, D., & Catalano, R. (1980). Economic change as a cause of behavioral disorder, Psychological Bulletin, 87, 460-468.
- Edelwich, J., & Brodsky, A. (1980). Burnout: Stages of disillusionment in the helping professions. New York: Human Sciences Press.
- Eisenberg, P., & Lazarsfeld, P. F. (1938). The psychological effects of unemployment, Psychological Bulletin, 35, 358-378.
- Feather, N. T., & Davenport, P. R. (1981). Unemployment and depressive affect: A motivational and attributional analysis, Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 41(3), 422-436.
- Finley, M. H., & Lee, A. T. (1981). The terminated executive: It's like dying, The personnel and guidance journal, 59, 382-384.
- Hammermesh, A. S., & Soss, N. M. (1974). An economic theory of suicide, Journal of Political Economy, 82, 83-98.
- Hepworth, S. J. (1980). Moderating factors of the psychological impact of unemployment, Journal of Occupational Psychology, 53, 139-145.
- Hesson, J. E. (1978). The hidden psychological costs of unemployment, Intellect, 106, 389-390.
- Kasl, S. V., Gore, S., & Cobb, S. (1975). The experience of losing a job: Reported changes in health, symptoms and illness behavior, Psychosomatic Medicine, 37(2), 106-122.
- Kvale, S. (1983). The qualitative research interview. Journal of Phenomenological Psychology, 14(2), 171-196.
- Kubler-Ross, E. (1969). On death and dying. New York: Macmillan.
- Lawrence, B. S. (1980). The myth of the mid-life crisis. Sloan Management Review, 21(4), 76-95.
- Leininger, M. M. (1985). Qualitative research methods in nursing. Orlando, FL: Grune & Stratton.
- Liem, R., & Rayman, P. (1982). Health and social costs of unemployment. American Psychologist, 37(10), 1116-1123.
- Liptak, J. J. (1989). Irrational expectations in the job search process, Journal of Employment Counseling, 26, 35-40.

- Mallinckrodt, B., & Fretz, B. R. (1988). Social support and the impact of job loss on older professionals, Journal of Counseling Psychology, 35(3), 281-286.
- Merriam, S. B. (1987). The experience of job loss as perceived by young and middle-aged adults and those near retirement, Journal of Employment Counseling, Sept., 1987.
- Myers, J. W., McWilliams, J., Flanders, J., & Kohut, J. (1983). Counseling the older rural worker: A report, Journal of Employment Counseling, June, 1983.
- Pappas, G. (1986). The magic city: An ethnography of unemployment in a working class community (Doctoral Dissertation, Case Western Reserve University). Dissertation Abstracts International, 47(8).
- Peavy, R. V. (1989). Qualitative research proposal making. Discussion paper: Department of Psychological Foundations, University of Victoria.
- Pelto, P., & Pelto, G. (1979). Anthropological Research. In M. M. Leininger, Qualitative research methods in nursing (p. 48) Orlando, FL: Grune & Stratton.
- Pryor, R. G., & Ward, R. T. (1985). Unemployment: What counselors can do about it, Journal of employment counseling, 22, 3-17.
- Rife, J., & Kilty, K. (1989). Job search discouragement and the older worker: Implications for social work practice, The journal of applied social sciences, 14(1), 71-92.
- Shelton, B. K. (1985). The social and psychological impact of unemployment, Journal of Employment Counseling, Mar., 1985.
- Shifron, R., Dye, A., & Shifron, G. (1983). Implications for counseling the unemployed in a recessionary economy, The personnel and guidance journal, 61, 527-529.
- Sinfield, A. (1981). What unemployment means. Oxford, Eng: Martin Robertson.
- Sinick, D. (1990). Counseling older persons: Career change and retirement, Vocational guidance quarterly, 25, 18-25.
- Spradley, J. P. (1979). The ethnographic interview. New York: Holt, Reinhart & Winston.
- Steinweg, D. A. (1990). Implications of current research for counseling the unemployed, Journal of Employment Counseling, 27, 37-41.

- Trimmer, H. W. (1984). Group job search workshops: A concept whose time is here, Journal of Employment Counseling, 21, 103-116.
- Wertz, F. (1986). The question of reliability of psychological research, Journal of Phenomenological Psychology, 17, 181-205.
- Winegardner, D., Simonetti, J. L., & Nykodym, N. (1984). Unemployment: The living death, Journal of Employment Counseling, 21, 141-155.
- Zawadski, B. & Lazarsfeld, P. (1935). The psychological consequences of unemployment, Journal of Social Psychology, 6, 244-251.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

Letter of Consent

I hereby give my consent to participate in the study entitled: The Experience of an Unemployment Intervention Strategy: A Focused Ethnography.

I understand that the persons responsible for this study are:

Dr. R. Vance Peavy (research supervisor)
George Shorey (researcher)

University of Victoria
Department of Psychological Foundations
Faculty of Education
Ph: 721-7804

Mr. Shorey has outlined the purpose of the study as follows: To develop knowledge and gain an understanding of how unemployed, mature job seekers (age 45 and older), experience a group oriented job search skills training program.

It has been explained to me by Mr. Shorey that he will tape record the research interviews in which I participate. I understand as well that he may at times take notes during the course of an interview. Only the researcher and his supervisor will have access to the tapes. Tapes will be coded numerically and destroyed on completion of analysis.

I am aware that at any time I may withdraw from the study. As well I may refuse to respond to any question during the interviews. If I have any study concerns or questions that arise during the course of the research, I can bring them forth at the time of the interview, or contact Mr. Shorey or Dr. Peavy by telephone (721-7804).

YOUR SIGNATURE INDICATES YOU ARE WILLING TO PARTICIPATE, HAVING READ AND UNDERSTOOD THE ABOVE:

SIGNATURE

DATE

APPENDIX B

Letter of Agreement

I hereby provide the consent of this agency to support a study entitled: The Experience of an Unemployment Intervention Strategy: A Focused Ethnography.

I understand that the persons responsible for this study are:

Dr. R. Vance Peavy (research supervisor)
George Shorey (researcher)

University of Victoria
Department of Psychological Foundations
Faculty of Education
Ph: 721-7804

Mr. Shorey and the staff have discussed the study and the purpose has been explained as follows: To develop knowledge and gain an understanding of how unemployed, mature job seekers (age 45 and older), experience a group oriented job search skills training program.

Mr. Shorey has asked for the agency's assistance in providing a list of potential participants, of which he will select up to six. Through a letter forwarded by Mr. Shorey, potential participants will be invited to contact him by phone if they are interested in volunteering. Participation will be entirely voluntary and clients may withdraw from the study at any time. Mr. Shorey has assured me precautions for confidentiality and anonymity will be strictly adhered to. Research participation for clients will comprise two, one-hour tape recorded interviews.

If I have any study concerns or questions during the course of the research, I can contact Mr. Shorey or Dr. Peavy by telephone (721-7804) as required.

YOUR SIGNATURE INDICATES THAT ON YOUR BEHALF,

THE AGENCY _____

SUPPORTS THE STUDY AS OUTLINED.

SIGNATURE

TITLE

Date

APPENDIX C

Call For Participants

Dear _____,

George Shorey, a graduate student at the University of Victoria is conducting a research project on the subject of employment counselling. He had asked for our cooperation in identifying potential participants. In this regard we have randomly selected a list of our clients to invite their participation.

We feel that this is a worthwhile research project and also believe that it would be interesting and beneficial to those who participate.

Enclosed is George Shorey's detailed description of the project. If after reading it you are interested in participating, please contact him at the number indicated.

Yours Sincerely,

Co-Ordinator.

Research Study Information Sheet

This letter has been forwarded in the sincere hope that you will be interested in assisting with a University of Victoria research study concerned with learning how mature job seekers (age 45+) personally experienced an employment counselling intervention program (Ability Personnel-Job Search Skills Training).

Participants will be asked to describe their experience in their own words, offering their unique perspective. You will not be required to fill out any surveys or questionnaires. Through open-ended, exploratory interview questions, you will be invited to "tell your story".

What is the role of the University and Ability Personnel in this study?

Under the direction of Dr. Vance Peavy (Dept. of Psychological Foundations in Education), I will be the sole person conducting the research. I am presently a 2nd year Master of Arts student and have past experience in adult career counselling and job search skills training. The sponsoring agency staff are supportive of this study and in conjunction provided a randomly selected list of potential volunteers.

What about confidentiality and anonymity?

The independently conducted interviews will be taped for follow-up analysis. Only the researcher and supervisor (Dr. Peavy) will have access to the tapes. The names of participants will be changed in the final write-up. The interviews will take place at private meeting rooms arranged on campus, or in participants homes if preferred.

How much time is involved?

At the convenience of participants, two separate 1-hour interviews will be scheduled. They can take place during April or May, during the evening or day, and would be at least one week apart.

Why me?

Because you are the expert! You took part in the program as an unemployed job seeker. Your experience is important. This study is trying to learn from individual participants, and values your unique perspective.

If you are interested in participating and/or require additional information, please ph. 385-1428 (evenings), prior to April 15, 1992.

VITA

Surname: SHOREY

Given Names: GEORGE HARRISON

Place of Birth: GROSTENQUIN, FRANCE

Date of Birth: MAY 9, 1956

Educational Institutions Attended:

UNIVERSITY OF WINNIPEG	1974-1975
UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA	1977-1981
UNIVERSITY OF VICTORIA	1990-1992

Degrees:

BACHELOR OF EDUCATION	1981
-----------------------	------

PARTIAL COPYRIGHT LICENSE

I hereby grant the right to lend my thesis to users of the University of Victoria Library, and to make single copies only for such users or in response to a request from the Library of any other university, or similar institution, on its behalf or for one of its users. I further agree that permission for extensive copying may be granted by me or a member of the University designated by me. It is understood that copying or publication of this thesis for financial gain shall not be allowed without my written permission.

Title of Thesis:

AN ETHNOGRAPHIC STUDY OF AN UNEMPLOYMENT INTERVENTION

Author:

(Signature)

George Harrison Shorey

(Date)

6 July 1992