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University of Alberta

Making Sense of Women's Job Loss Experiences

By

Arlene M. C. Young

A thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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Each life converges to some centre

Expressed or still;

Exists in every human nature

A goal,

Admitted scarcely to itself, it may be,

Too fair

For credibility's temerity

To dare

Emily Dickinson (1830-86)

University of Alberta

Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research

The undersigned certify that they have read, and recommend to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research for acceptance, a thesis entitled *Making Sense of Women's Job Loss Experiences* submitted by *Arlene M. C. Young* in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of *Doctor of Philosophy*.

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To Margot and Andrew

Abstract

This qualitative research examines women's job loss experiences from a feminist perspective. Specifically it considers the job loss experiences of three women in Alberta in the late 1990s. The women described their experiences and discussed how they affected their relationships to others and to their work. The women found that the process of telling their stories helped them to make sense of their experiences, and to derive some meaning from them.

The research participants were professional women with designations as social worker, counsellor, or engineer, each with approximately 20 years experience in her organization. Two of the women were single; one was married and had one child. The research process involved a prolonged engagement with the women and their stories through audiotaped and transcribed interviews plus many informal discussions. The resulting stories were written collaboratively, and thus provide robust data on the women's job loss experiences.

All three women changed their identities as a result of their job losses. Two felt less worthy, and one of those two also suffered from an illness that prevented her from seeking other employment. On the other hand, one woman found new strengths, and took an exciting risk for herself and her family. All three women lost trust in employers.

The women's experiences fitted with Bridges' (1980) description of transitions that begin with an ending, and continue through a neutral time, or dark time (Pulley, 1997), of confusion before there is a new beginning. Transitions have some of the

characteristics of grief and mourning (Neimeyer, 1999, 2000; Rando, 1984, 1995). Through telling their stories the women accomplished two of the central tasks of mourning, they made sense of their loss, and derived some meaning from it (Neimeyer, 2000).

Recommendations for further research focused on qualitative studies with other women, and men, in many industries, and jurisdictions. Further recommendations stressed the importance of narrative construction in helping those who lose their jobs to make sense of their experiences.

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This research was carried out with the help and support of a number of people. First, I wish to thank the women who participated in this study. They gave generously of themselves trusting that telling their stories would help others. Second, I wish to thank my Academic Supervisor, Dr. Gene Romaniuk, and my committee. I am particularly grateful to Dr. Romaniuk who encouraged and supported me throughout my doctoral program. Third, I wish to thank those who provided practical assistance as I progressed. Special thanks go to Dr. Joanne Mc Neal, Dr. Ingrid Crowther, and my daughter, Margot, who read and commented on my drafts. Thanks also go to my friends, Joanne Kidd, Linda Whittle, Alan Meech, and my son, Andrew, for their personal support and interest in my research.

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Chapter 1:

Women's Job Loss Experiences

During the 1990s, there were numerous articles in the popular media about organizational restructuring and down sizing. The goal of these activities, whatever called, was cost reduction, frequently achieved by eliminating jobs and thus reducing payrolls. This research examines the experiences of job loss from the perspectives of three women who lost their jobs through public sector restructuring in the late 1990s. In the remainder of this chapter, I will discuss the context in which these job losses occurred and my orientation to the research. The second chapter will describe the methods I used to gather information, analyze it, and write the stories in collaboration with the women concerned. The succeeding three chapters present the stories of each of the three women. Each of those stories explores one woman's experiences of job loss, and what they have meant in her life. The final chapter discusses the women's job loss experiences in view of theories and research on the construction and role of narratives; transitions, grief, and mourning; unemployment; and gender.

In the 1990s, when Canada's economy was in a recession, the Alberta government eliminated an estimated 12,500 jobs from its public service and forced every public service employee to take a 5% cut in salary (Quality of Life Commission, 1996). The stated intention was to eliminate the provincial budget deficit and also reduce the provincial debt that the government attributed to the growth of the public sector. The ultimate goal was to reduce taxes and thus encourage greater business activity. Many critics did not share the government's view that reduced government

spending and lower taxes would restore Alberta's prosperity (Dacks, Green, & Trimble, 1995; Lowe, 2000a; Taylor, 1995). Rather, those critics thought that reductions in the public sector would lead to inadequate public services and higher costs for individuals through a combination of taxes and user fees.

By the end of the 1990s prosperity had returned to Canada (Applied Research Branch, 1997), but it is arguable whether Alberta's prosperity can be attributed to increased revenue from the petroleum industry or from decreased taxes. What is certain is that from 1985-1995 Canada experienced at least a 9% unemployment rate, the greatest level of unemployment since the Great Depression of the 1930s (Peters, 1999; Saul, 1995). In contrast to the Great Depression, however, job losses in the 1990s affected white-collar, management, and professional workers in both the public and private sectors—positions formerly thought to be secure (Cleary, 1995; Connelly & MacDonald, 1996; Goldenberg & Kline, 1997).

Assessing the impact on women of the job losses during the 1990s is a difficult matter that has to be inferred from incomplete data. Data on the decrease in both federal and provincial public services drew on statistics from four provinces, Alberta among them (Peters, 1999). Overall from 1991 to 1996, provincial government work forces decreased 22% for core administrative services and the federal counter part decreased by 15%. When the specific impact of reductions in health, education, and social services are considered, of the 72,281 provincial job reductions in Alberta, Manitoba, Nova Scotia, and Ontario, 73% (53,027) of the job reductions came from health, 17% (12,036) from social services, and 7% (4,829) from education. Since

women comprised approximately two thirds of the work force in education, social services, and health care, it can be inferred that women suffered disproportionately from public sector downsizing (Canadian Labour Congress, 1998).

Reductions to government employment and government expenditures in health, social services, and education unintentionally hurt women in particular (Dacks et al., 1995). The Alberta government "made its policy choices within an ideological framework whose narrow vision of the role of women in society is entirely consistent with the consequences of its economic and social policy decisions" (p. 270). Dacks et al. state that the decisions of the Alberta government were based on neo-liberal, laissez-faire economic policies, and the neo-conservative belief in a heterosexual patriarchal family structure. Further, family structure is seen as one in which the man works for pay outside the home, and the woman stays home to look after children, elders, the infirm, and volunteers within the community.

Dacks et al. (1995) demonstrated that budget cuts to the Alberta public sector had a triple impact on women. First, budget cuts were aimed disproportionately at areas where women are employed, namely, health, education, and social services. Second, social allowance benefits and tax relief for elders were reduced. Since women comprise the majority of elders and workers in health, education, and social services, they were affected by public sector budget cuts more than men. Third, the reduction in public services in effect reassigned caring and nurturing for children, the elderly, and infirm to families in which the majority of such duties are carried out by women.

Some women and men chose to react to the organizational restructuring and

downsizing by becoming self-employed (Hughes, 1999; Peters, 1999). Self-employment increased from 12.3 % in the 1970s, to 17.18 % in the 1990s. Hughes observed, first, that self-employment is gendered, and varies systematically according to the gender of the individuals who are self employed, so that men are more likely to be employers and women are more likely to work alone to generate income from their personal labour. Second, she reported that earnings from self employment are higher for the employer group than for the self-generated income group, but vary widely depending in part on the occupation, sector, and hours worked. Third, Hughes reported that many women choose to be self employed because the flexible hours permit them to combine work with child rearing, elder care, and other responsibilities. Fourth, she observed that women work fewer hours on average than men who are self employed. Finally, Hughes observed that women's self employment is concentrated in sales and service occupations that tend to have low earnings on average, whereas men's occupations are more diverse and earn more.

Job Loss Research

Three articles and a thesis reported that the greatest volume of research on job loss, prior to the 1990s, focused on the Great Depression of the 1930s (Cleary, 1995; Dew, Penkower, & Bromet, 1991; Goldenberg & Kline, 1997; Leckie & Rogers, 1995). Dew et al. found in their examination of literature from 1938 to 1990 that there was more research on men's unemployment than on women's or the effects on families. Others reported that job loss research prior to 1991 focused on men and

wives of unemployed men and speak to a stereotypic notion of the place of work in women's lives (Leana & Feldman, 1991).

During the 1990s, as I have shown previously, women lost jobs at the same or higher rate than men. Research on the effects of job loss reported that women and men suffered increased psychological distress at job loss (Dew et al., 1991; Leckie & Rogers, 1995), and some degree of financial distress (Cleary, 1995; Turner, 1995). Finding equivalent reemployment will alleviate financial distress, but if "the job loss profoundly alters one's view of self and place in the world, however, the extent to which reemployment will reverse these effects is unclear" (Turner, 1995, p. 214).

Two quantitative studies show that men and women use different behaviours in coping with job loss. One study on job loss in the Chicago area provides an interesting snapshot of the coping behaviours of men and women, but does not situate those behaviours within the individuals' contexts (Malen & Shroh, 1998). Malen and Shroh found that following their job losses men engaged in more problem-solving behaviours such as job search, and women in more support gathering behaviour such as talking with friends. Leana and Feldman (1991) found similar differences in coping in their research on men and women who lost their jobs at the Kennedy Space Centre. Leana and Feldman speculate that women's less frequent job search behaviour could be a reaction to the difficulty in finding work rather than its cause.

Qualitative research probes participants' experiences within context so that the individual's feelings upon job loss, and the meanings of behaviours such as job search or support gathering may be considered with respect to individuals. Marie Jahoda's

(1980) qualitative study in the 1930s was ground breaking in that respect. She went to Marienthal, Austria, where the factory had closed down and the unemployment rate was in excess of 20%. She found that the first reaction to unemployment was shock. With that shock, some people got into debt, but later learned how to manage. Second, there was a slight recovery as the people adapted to the new situation. Social organizations that closed a year before began to operate once again. Finally, people's adaptation was threatened as the economic hardship deepened.

Jahoda (1980) found a number of psychological as well as financial effects that were reconfirmed in another of her studies in 1980. By then, as she pointed out, Great Britain's social safety net ameliorated some of the financial hardships. The psychological effects she found were, first, a lengthening in the experience of time. Second, the unemployed experienced a reduction in social contact outside of what Jahoda calls the emotionally charged milieu of the family. Third, the unemployed suffered from the lack of collective activities and goals afforded by their employment. Fourth, the unemployed lost the status granted by their job, and that affected their personal identity. Fifth, the unemployed suffered from the absence of regular activity.

> These categories of experience correspond to more or less deep-seated needs in most people, who strive to make some sense out of their existence. They need to structure their day; they need to widen social experiences; they need to partake in collective purposes (and want the products that result from collective action); they need to know where they stand in society in comparison with others in order to clarify their personal identity; and they need

regular activities. (p. 84)

Linda Gilberto's (1997) qualitative study of job displacement among New York women aged 51-69, who needed or wanted to work, shed further light on the psychological effects of job displacement identified by Jahoda (1980). Gilberto found that those who were the most heavily invested in work suffered the greatest psychological losses. She also found that the way employees were informed of their job loss affected how they received it. Those who received it best were recognized for their contributions, and received rational explanations for the loss. Gilberto stated that the greatest negative reactions of shock, hurt, humiliation, and shame, were from those with pre-existing mental health issues, and those whose sense of purpose and status were threatened. Further, the length of unemployment after job loss led to increased anxiety and increased financial concern.

William Bridges' (1980) interest in job loss arose from his experiences leaving a college teaching position, and subsequently facilitating adult education groups for others undergoing life transitions. At first he found that the group members resisted working together because the content of their transitions differed, for example, death of a partner, divorce, or job loss. By the end of a course, however, the participants began to perceive patterns. "Each of us had experienced (1) an ending, followed by (2) a period of confusion and distress, leading to (3) a new beginning..." (p. 9). He noted that even positive changes in life can be difficult transitions because they involve the loss of relationships; changes in home life; personal changes in, for example, health status, sleep patterns, and sex life; or changes in work and finances. Further, that such

transitions could also involve inner changes, for example, a spiritual awakening, or a deepening social or political awareness. Any of those changes would involve the loss of a previous aspect of personal identity.

Bridges (1980, 1994) explained that the second stage of transition, the neutral zone, is characterized by confusion and distress. It is likely to be the most difficult phase in a transition. Emotional turmoil and confusion about the past and future can cause individuals to make hasty decisions in order to end the discomfort. Bridges saw the neutral zone as an essential, difficult phase of a transition from surviving a loss and moving toward a new beginning.

Bridges (1994) believed that the economy and employment have changed dramatically, and permanently. He argues that the old meaning of job, a bit of work to be done, is now more useful than the idea of a job as a particular set of tasks within an organizational hierarchy. He urged people to look for work rather than jobs, and become entrepreneurs who are aware of their skills, and able to market them. He discussed the strengths of this "dejobbed" system for the skilled worker who is able to work when, where, and how he or she chooses. He also discussed some of the weaknesses of a system does not to provide the psychological effects that Jahoda (1980) identified. There would no longer be fixed hours of work, collective goals, or status within an organization.

Bridges' (1991) book, *Managing Transitions*, prescribed behaviours for managers who want to lead a process of effective organizational change. Bridges foresaw a future with more independent contractors, but also foresaw that employment

in jobs within organizations would continue to some extent. *Managing Transitions* described organizational change in the same three stages as individual transitions emphasizing planning for change as well as reacting to it. The organization, particularly the organizational leaders, must decide what is ending, values, goals, processes, and what the organization will continue to do, even if in slightly altered form. Part of the transition, as with individuals, would comprise a neutral zone characterized by confusion. To make good use of that time, Bridges recommended the occasional time out, a re-examination of priorities, and the ultimate selection of the ones to carry into the future. Through it all, Bridges advised managers to make the changes as quickly as possible to limit the disruption to the organization. He also advised managers to be present during the transition, to tell the truth, and to let go of predetermined outcomes. Telling the truth meant keeping people informed about what was happening and why, and thereby thwarting the negative impact of ill informed rumours.

Bridges (1991) supported the use of outplacement counselling for those dismissed during an organizational change. He also quoted a German proverb to highlight his concern with the organizational survivors, "A great war leaves a country with three armies: an army of cripples, and army of mourners, and an army of thieves" (p. 121).

> This proverb comes from centuries of experience with the traumatic changes that accompany conquest, and it deserves at least a footnote in any organizational plan for strategic change. It reminds us that whatever

> conquerors gain, they leave behind three groups of survivors: those who have been wounded in the process of change, those who grieve over all that has been lost, and those whose loyalty and ethics have been so compromised by their experience that they turn hostile, self-centered, and subversive. These "three armies" are found among the winners as well as the losers in the corporate wars. (p. 121)

Pulley (1997) studied people who had lost their jobs and were doing well. Her interest was in what Maslow described as the "growing tip" where change and development occur. She, therefore, studied those who were managing the employment transition well. Pulley, like many others, believed that the structure of work has changed (Betcherman & Lowe, 1997; Bridges, 1994; Lowe, 2000b; Rifkin, 1995), and thus it was worthwhile knowing how to manage job loss effectively.

Pulley (1997) called the period after the job loss, the dark time, a time accompanied by serious soul searching. Emotions could include sadness, remorse, or anger. The turmoil and confusion of that time would be particularly difficult if friends and family failed to understand that the individual was mourning a loss. For many it would be a period of soul searching, questioning goals, and finding a reason for their loss and the hope they needed to move on. Pulley stated that hope could be as simple as needing to find money, or needing to resume habitual activities.

Two qualitative studies focused on the experiences of Canadian white-collar workers (Goldenberg & Kline, 1997), and the reactions of academic librarians (Leckie & Rogers, 1995) to downsizing. Goldenberg and Kline conducted semi-structured

interviews with 20 people and structured interviews with 61 others. They reported that two-thirds of the participants were women. Most of those who took part in the research thought they had been treated fairly by their former employers. Thirty-one percent mentioned being shocked or depressed, 11 % felt excited by the possibilities. Goldenberg and Kline report that families and friends were supportive to most who lost their jobs, but 10-20% distanced themselves from the individual. Because they did not report those findings by gender, I am left wondering how and to what extent women were affected.

Leckie and Rogers (1995) examined the reactions of 11 academic librarians to job losses in an organizational culture that used to promise lifelong employment. There was considerable shock, anger, and disappointment among those who lost their jobs. Those who were less than 40 were more optimistic about their job prospects. The greatest impact was on those who were in their forties and fifties. There was no indication of the gender of the employees, and thus no indication of how gender affected impacts or feelings. The researchers also reported that most of the oldest workers either did not wish to retire, or could not afford it. The shock of the job losses affected not only those who lost their jobs, but extended to colleagues who either supported or avoided the dismissed employees. There was ample notice to those who lost their jobs, but they reported finding it stressful to work through their notice period. They also discussed the lack of support for redundant employees from placement personnel within the university. The authors conclude that universities tend to minimize redundancy even though it is becoming more common. As a result of that

attitude, terminated employees are often neither understood nor treated well by other staff even those who were identified to help them. Leckie and Rogers suggested training managers to interact effectively with dismissed employees. The managers could then model more supportive behaviour for their staff.

Two qualitative studies with American populations are particularly interesting because they included a gender analysis (Straussner & Phillips, 1999), or examined only women's job loss experiences (Carroll, DiVincenti, & Show, 1995). Straussner and Phillips undertook an exploratory look at the experiences of 10 newly unemployed professional and managerial individuals and their families using unstructured, conversational discussions in 1994 and 1997. Less than half of the managers were women. Straussner and Phillips used both content analysis and participants' reports to identify individuals' reactions to unemployment. They found that those reactions fall into seven stages similar to those Kubler-Ross identified, but expressed in employment terms. Straussner and Phillips found that people progressed through all seven stages if unemployment continued for more than one year. The stages are characterized in turn by shock, anger and betrayal; optimism about the likelihood of finding better opportunities; role changes within the family and increased friction; increased guilt as family members find additional employment; increased isolation as recreation becomes more limited and family members become more critical of the unemployed person; increasing emotional upheaval including depression, hopelessness, despair, and increased eating or drinking; finally physical and mental breakdown, and the breakdown of the family unit. Two wives considered separation or

divorce but became even more resentful because that option was unaffordable without a greater income.

By 1997, Straussner and Phillips (1999) reported that 8 of the 10 individuals interviewed were re-employed; half resumed their previous careers; all lost income and benefits. For three quarters of the individuals family life had recovered to its previous level, but all remained anxious about their professional futures and feared another job loss. Straussner and Phillips observed that men tended to stay in the hopeful stage longer than women, and were unlikely to accept a job with less pay. Women were less concerned about the salary and status of new jobs, more willing to take whatever was offered, and expressed greater anxiety about the future. Straussner and Phillips speculate those differences could be due to women's more recent entry to the workplace, or that they are less likely to be hired than men.

Straussner and Phillips (1999) made a number of recommendations for counselling based on their study. They recommended that those who lose their jobs be helped through peer support, self-help, and educational groups. They also recommended that because job loss affects the whole family, there should be support and education for the whole family. They admonished counsellors to be sensitive to age and gender issues. Men remain in the hopeful expectancy stage longer; women are more prepared to take any job offered even at lower pay. It's also important for counsellors to encourage hope, flexible responses, and recognition that unemployment is temporary. Eighty percent of those in the Straussner and Phillips study had a positive outcome. It's also important for counsellors to encourage realistic

expectations and prepare for the stress of a new position.

Carroll et al. (1995) examined the job loss experiences of 10 nursing executives to address this question: "Does the trauma of job loss immobilize the individual or can this experience be transformed into a career transition that leads to a more meaningful job" (p. 12)? Half of the research participants did not foresee their job loss, but on questioning recognized some changes that foreshadowed the loss. Most of the nursing executives were aware of a lack of support from supervisors, increasing philosophical differences with the organization, lack of support for initiatives from other executives, and a lack of support or clashes with physicians. None had received any previous direct indications of poor performance.

In reviewing the interview transcripts, Carroll et al. (1995) saw pain as the primary theme. That pain persisted over time even after the participants were re-employed. The usual pattern they found began with disbelief, anger, and grief that culminated in a search for reasons and contributing factors. In spite of their initial shock, however, most of the participants were able to bargain for benefits beyond the original offer. Most of them were also shocked by how few of their colleagues stayed in touch, and got most of their social support from family members. On the other hand, family members did not always understand their pain at job loss because they perceived that nursing jobs were plentiful. Immediately after their job loss, the participants suffered from reduced self-esteem and increased self-blame for their job loss. They had a strong need for validation of their professional value. "The single most helpful support person was another person who had experienced job loss whether

within or outside of nursing. This person could relate to the intensity of the experience" (p. 15). Calls from those in the system who complained about it were the least helpful. Carroll et al. found that participants needed to curtail those calls to get on with their transition.

Carroll et al. (1995) recommended a number of things that employees could do to prepare for a job loss. They recommended that employees get to know themselves, and define and articulate their values, strengths, and areas for improvement. Further, that employees distinguish themselves from their jobs, and maintain the professional and social networks that comprise their support systems. Carroll et al. also recommended that employees watch for signs of impending job loss, such as the loss of support of supervisors and peers, or growing philosophical difference with the organization. They acknowledged that employees may not be able to change what will happen, but at least they could be forewarned. They admonished employees to plan for job loss as part of career planning, and to make use of outplacement and psychological counselling services for support in recovery from the pain of job loss.

My Interest in Job Loss

In quantitative research, validity depends on instrument construction and administration (Patton, 1990); "In qualitative inquiry, *the researcher is the instrument*[1] (p. 14). One of the requirements of qualitative research is that researchers clearly state their interest in and experience of the matter under study (Locke, Spirduso, & Silverman, 1993). First, I will outline how my interest in the subject developed by

discussing my experiences with job loss. Second, I will discuss key terms important to understanding my topic and approach. Third, I will situate my knowledge construction within my life experiences, and in light of readings and ideas that have influenced me. Finally, I will discuss the goals, organization, and limitations of this research.

My Experiences with Job Loss

My interest in job loss experiences arises from an organizational restructuring in the early 1990s within my workplace that eliminated all but two counsellors' jobs.

When jobs other than mine were cut, I felt sick and relieved. I had expected the regional offices to be closed down, but not the central office. I couldn't believe it! It was so unfair that good people, good workers, could lose their jobs. If they could lose theirs, I could lose mine. I was asked to move files, etc., from the closed office to mine. I dragged my feet because I just couldn't face the staff members who had been dismissed. My manager confronted me one day about my neglect and the two of us quarrelled. Since getting the news of the job cuts, she passed me in the hall occasionally, but never spoke to me. I felt uneasy. What was going on? Was there some plan to eliminate my job too? I spent my time either speaking with students, or figuring out what I was going to do with the rest of my life. Once the manager confronted me, we discussed what had happened, and expressed our anger, fear, and frustration. Each of us criticized the other for not communicating. She accused me of being selfish; I accused her of being insensitive. She stated that she needed help and support and wasn't getting it. I stated that I needed support and wasn't getting it. At

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[1] Emphasis as in the original text.

the end of the discussion, we hugged and wept.

Although I was one of the two counsellors remaining after the organizational restructuring, the job losses left me shaken. Given that counselling jobs were being eliminated across the post-secondary educational sector in Alberta, I feared that if I lost my job I would not be able to continue in my chosen occupation without relocating to another city or province. Relocation would mean moving away from my adult children and would force a choice between two loves, my family and my career. As a result of my experiences in organizational restructuring, I changed career direction. I applied to a doctoral program that, in turn, led to an academic appointment. My close brush with job loss, despite its positive outcome, prompted me to wonder what women experienced when they lost their jobs.

As I thought more about job loss, in general, I recalled my father's forced early retirement and my own experiences when leaving jobs. I started to question the difference between losing a job and leaving a job. I saw my father's early retirement as a job loss, and his company's betrayal of a hard working, faithful employee. Although my father had initially been shocked at the loss, he adjusted to the change within the following year or so and enjoyed his retirement. I also recalled leaving several jobs that I liked to follow my then husband in his career. I choose to leave those jobs, and do not define them as losses. Thinking about those experiences, and my reactions, has caused me to examine the taken-for-granted nature of my understandings of job leaving on the one hand and job loss on the other.

The differentiation between job leaving and job loss is not in the event, but in the subjective experiences and meanings constructed by the former employees. Questioning and analyzing gender and social relationships to observe and bring to the surface what has formerly been taken-for-granted is central to feminist theory (Olesen, 1994; Stanley, 1993, 1997; Stanley & Wise, 1990). Furthermore, Marxist feminist theorists, in particular, demonstrate how the ideas of public and private life have served to maintain the status quo of social relationships, for example, the wife at home keeping house for her worker husband, or more likely in contemporary Western society, that the husband's job is more important than the wife's (Hartmann, 1987; Hartsock, 1987). That women's paid employment is not valued as highly as men's is evidenced in part by women's lower wages and salaries. In 1990, Statistics Canada reported a ratio of women's to men's earnings for full-time workers of 67.7 %, and in 1999 of 69.9%, based on 1999 dollars. Women may choose to leave their jobs for personal reasons, for example, illness or injury, to follow their husbands, or to care for family members, but that begs the question of how free is their choice?

Key Terms

With that reflection on my experiences that gave rise to this research, I will discuss my understandings of some key terms.

Job loss. Job loss in this study includes employer initiated job loss arising from organizational downsizing or restructuring. Those who lose their jobs may refer to the loss as being fired, downsized, laid-off, made redundant, forced to retire, dismissed, taking a buy-out, or any number of other terms the individual uses to describe the

experience, and uses as she makes knowledge about that event. It is not how the job loss is described officially that is of interest in this research, but rather the individual's subjective perception that her job loss was not her choice.

Feminist psychology. Feminist psychology rejects the idea that women are a problem because they fail to fit male models of, for example, personality and psychological development (Grossman et al., 1997; Marecek, 1995). That is to say that feminist psychology is *for* women, not about them. Marecek states that feminist psychologists will choose methods according to the questions to be addressed. They may choose experimental and quantitative measures to re-examine sex differences in various psychological traits (Marecek, 1995; Tavris, 1992). On the other hand, they may choose research that is somewhat closer to clinical practice but with different purposes (Grossman et al., 1997), for example, research focused on biological events exclusive to women to examine the uniqueness of women's lives (Chodorow, 1997/1989; Gilligan, 1982; Marecek, 1995). Feminist psychologists may also focus their research on overlooked groups of women, by considering race, class, sexual orientation, among other factors (Greene & Sanchez-Hucles, 1997). Finally, feminist psychologists may make women's experiences the focus of their inquiry. This research on women's experiences of job loss is one such example.

Postmodern feminist psychology. Postmodern feminist psychology shares with postmodern theorists a scepticism about the purposes of research as being a search for universal truths or, in psychology, in the goals of predicting and controlling behaviour (Marecek, 1995). Knowledge production rather than being a search for universal truths

is seen rather as a series of questions to be addressed:

> Key among postmodern doubts are questions about the nature of knowledge: What can we know? How do we know? Who is the subject of knowledge? How does the social position of the knower affect the production of knowledge? What is the connection between knowledge and politics? How does a discipline (such as psychology) produce and warrant knowledge? How do its formal methods of knowledge seeking, as well as its everyday practices, inform the understandings of human behaviour that it produced and promulgates?...Many of these questions have a familiar ring to them. They echo, albeit in a general and more abstract form, the questions and concerns that feminists have been raising about psychology's knowledge of women. (p. 119)

Postmodern feminists question whether it is possible to separate research from its context and question both the possibility and value of objectivity. Rather, they seek partial knowledge, situated within particular contexts, and the development of communities of knowledge producers.

Sex. Sex identifies the biological differences between women and men (Status of Women Canada, 1996).

Gender. Gender is a slippery term for the culturally specific sets of characteristics that identify the behaviour of men and women and the relationships between them (Status of Women Canada, 1996). Gender refers to the way that the relationship between men and women is socially constructed. Like the concepts of

class, race, and ethnicity, gender is an analytical tool for understanding social processes. Studies involving gender analysis will consider among other things power relationships between genders, and categories such as race, class, and ethnicity. Furthermore, such analysis will expose the privileging of some experiences, ideas and values, for example, masculine over feminine, middle class over working class, and white over non-white.

The context determines what is considered to be gender-specific cognition and behaviour. For example, it may be unremarkable for a three-year old boy to play with dolls whereas other boys, and some adults, would question the gender of an eight-year old boy playing with dolls. Similar kinds of observations can be made about behaviours in relations to other social categories, for example, race, class, age, sexual orientation, ability, and religion. The categories are not fixed but rather are made within specific contexts (Biever, De Las Fuentes, Cashion, & Franklin, 1998).

Participants. The term, subjects, is used to describe those who take part in psychological experiments, but it is an inaccurate term in this research. "Participants" is the term in common usage in qualitative psychological research. The women who actively participated in this research collaborated with me in telling me the stories of their experiences. Without their participation, I could draw upon only my own knowledge and experiences.

Foundations of my Research

My commitment to feminist psychological research grew out of my life experiences and my reading. I am the only child of white, middle-class Canadian

parents. My father worked as a manager and was the primary breadwinner. My mother had been a legal secretary before marriage, but became a full-time housewife and mother until I was about 12 years old. Then she began working part-time as a secretary-library assistant at a nearby school. Both of my parents had hobbies and both were involved in the community through sports and volunteer work, especially through the church. Both encouraged and paid for any activities that interested me. My father expected me to go to university, but my mother wanted me to acquire the skills to earn a living. She was unconvinced of the usefulness of a Bachelor of Arts (BA). I attempted to reconcile those two opinions in my first two, academically mediocre, years in university, married at the end of my second year, and returned to complete my degree three years later. I reconciled the two perspectives by finishing my BA, and getting a good job.

I read a lot from the time I was in elementary school. By the time I was 10, my interest turned to adventure stories featuring girls or young women. The heroines were young women who created independent lives through their work and social relationships. My father gave me many books featuring boys and men as the adventurers that he had enjoyed in his youth. I enjoyed them, but could not relate as well to the central characters. They were boys and young men who went to sea. That was something that only the most exceptional girl could have done, and at that time I was unaware of any who had. By the time I entered high school, my interests had turned to stories about girls who transformed conventional situations to suit their

unconventional interests and aspirations, for example, Jo March in *Little Women,* and Anne Shirley in *Anne of Green Gables.*

Toward the end of high school, I began to read about ideas. The first book of that sort that I recall was *The Second Sex* (de Beauvoir, 1974/1949). I read it in my last term in high school. It has been very influential in my life and thought, but at the time I understood it in only the most superficial manner. Through de Beauvoir, I understood that women's suffrage did not bestow equality on women, and that there was still a long way to go. When I reread the book in the early 1970s, I was deeply affected by de Beauvoir's exploration of the place of women in society and philosophy. It resonated with the knowledge I had generated from my life experiences but was unable to express.

Simone de Beauvoir (1974/1949) stated that women are seen as the exception to the norm which is male. Women are the "other." Women's otherness is particularly noticeable in French where words and grammatical constructions are overtly gendered. Gendered language is less obvious in English than French, but it is gendered nonetheless. For example, in both French and English the word man is said to be inclusive of women, but it can also mean literally man. Canadian women perceived the ambiguity of interpreting "man" or "men" as applying to all humans and consequently mounted an extensive and successful campaign to be named specifically in the Canadian *Charter of Rights and Freedoms* (1982).

I studied history as an undergraduate, primarily because Social Studies had been my best and favourite subject in school. While I cannot claim to have the

makings of a historian, I learned some things that are relevant to postmodern theories. First, accounts of events will be told from the perspectives of those who write them. Persons writing about events in letters, diaries, dispatches from the war front, newspaper reports, official records, etc., will have partial information arising from their perspectives, experiences, and the context in which they write. The stories thus produced can be so different as to leave the reader wondering if they are discussing the same event. They are not. Second, an understanding of who wrote from what perspective, with what life experiences, and within, for example, what social, political, and economic contexts, is essential to understand that individual's construction of the event and the meanings created from it. Finally, in order to write a balanced history, assuming that is even possible given the historians' partial and situated knowledge, it is essential to use information from as many perspectives as possible, and to develop a complex understanding of perspectives and the events themselves.

My initial job after university was as a social worker in child welfare, a job for which I felt woefully under prepared with my BA. I ascertained fairly quickly that I felt most comfortable with the counselling part of that role. I had always enjoyed listening to other people and at times problem solving with them. At the same time as I was getting started in my counselling career, my family life changed. I had married young—too young—and had two young children by the time I was divorced. Staying at home with small children was rewarding and difficult, but generally unrecognized work. I found some comfort from the analyses of women's lives presented by the feminist writers I read at that time (Friedan, 1963; Greer, 1970).

While a full-time homemaker and mother, I campaigned for a safe means for neighbourhood children to get to school. My political involvement was grounded in activism to solve that particular problem, and was not heavily influenced by prior reading. It was, however, influenced by my father who questioned prevailing opinions. For example, I recall his outrage at the McCarthy hearings during the early 1950s. He also recounted his childhood memories of the Winnipeg General Strike (1919) and his disgust that the RCMP fired on the strikers. None of my friends' fathers questioned current events and opinions like my father. I argued with him, was often baffled by his opinions, but nonetheless, was encouraged to assume a questioning stance.

After I was divorced, I took my career more seriously. I wanted a middle class life for my children and that required more money than I was earning in various administrative capacities. I began studying psychology and counselling, and eventually completed a master's degree in counselling psychology. It was hard to work, study, and raise a family. It took commitment, every bit of my energy, and support from my mother and friends. It became more difficult when my mother, a constant source of moral and practical support, became very ill and needed long-term care. I could not provide the degree of support that she needed. I visited her several times a week, and on weekends brought her to my home, or took her on outings. My main memory of that time is of feeling constantly pulled to be somewhere else with someone else. Working toward the credential, however, increased my self-confidence and allowed me to get into a higher paying position as a student counsellor. My children and my mother were proud of my achievement.

Studying psychology gave me another perspective on the issues that women face in their lives. Until the latter part of the twentieth century, men researched and wrote psychological theory and research from a male perspective, for the enlightenment and benefit of men (Marecek, 1995). Before that time, Marecek states there were some women psychologists who conducted research focusing on women with the aim of changing psychological ideas about women. "Helen Thompson Woolley's work, like that of Mary Whiton Calkins and Leta S. Hollingworth, exemplified one way to marry feminism and psychology. These women set about empirical research that was self-consciously aimed at debunking sexist assertions about women" (p. 104). They used the research methods of the day with a view to correcting ideas about women. "Their strategy was akin to what Sandra Harding has called feminist empiricism. They were, to paraphrase Audre Lorde, using the master's tools to dismantle the master's house"
(p. 104). Their work, however, was not widely published, read, nor included in the courses I took.

The knowledge generated by most psychological research did not fit with women who were seen as exceptions to the universal, male model, or as a problem to be fixed (Marecek, 1995). In postmodern feminist terms, psychological research privileged men's right to produce knowledge. Feminist inquiry seeks to question the taken-for-granted assumptions of previous knowledge and to generate new understandings by, about, and for the benefit of women. Postmodern feminists acknowledge that the knowledge thus produced, like all knowledge, is partial, situated,

and governed by the perspective of the knower (Fougère, 1998; Fraser, 1995; Longino, 1994; Waring, 1999).

Toward the end of my master's degree, I became acquainted with feminist ideas about the psychology of women (Miller, 1976), and women's ethical decision making (Gilligan, 1982). Jean Baker Miller (1976) discussed women's psychological development in different terms than the stage theories that predominated at the time. Stage theories had been developed through examination of men's lives, and saw independence and autonomy as the desirable goal (Erikson, 1980). Women's lives differed from men's largely because of their experiences of motherhood (Chodorow, 1997/1989). Miller (1976) used the patterns of women's lives to show that women's psychological development occurred within relationships, and the maintenance of those relationships was as important as individual goals.

Feminist Ideas Foundational to my Research

Carol Gilligan (1982) and Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger, and Tarule (1986) had a particularly important influence on my research because their theories were based on the real life experiences of women. Carol Gilligan's (1982) research on moral decision-making is a foundation for contemporary feminist ethics and relates to this research because of women's emphasis on caring for others. Gilligan began by critically analyzing Lawrence Kohlberg's six stages of moral decision-making that posited a principled, human rights and social welfare morality as the highest stage of moral reasoning. Using a test that Kohlberg developed, women always scored below the level of principled decision making, at what Kohlberg called the interpersonal

accord and conformity stage. Women usually based their decisions on the predicted effect on interpersonal relationships, rarely at what Kohlberg considered the highest principled level.

Gilligan's (1982) critique of Kohlberg's work noted that his research had been conducted with men and boys, but the results were presented as universal, applying to men and women alike. When Gilligan conducted her research with women, she found that women's focus on caring and maintaining social relationships was more complex than Kohlberg thought. Women's moral decisions were not to comply with other's wishes or expectations, but were informed according to how they demonstrated care for others. In other words, women were concerned with how the decisions contributed to maintaining an ethic of care. Further, Gilligan found that women tested the adequacy of decisions by how they affected meaningful relationships. Men tested the adequacy of decisions by determining to what extent the decision maintained individuals' rights. Later research has examined the ethical decision making of both men and women (Gilligan & Attanucci, 1988). This research found that men and women use both principles of justice and care, depending upon the nature of the problem to be solved, and how the problem is presented to them, but that women use care more frequently than justice, and vice versa.

My master's research was an evaluation of an assertiveness training for women workshop. Assertiveness training was an approach that I had found effective in counselling individuals and in teaching communications skills. In my research, I found that women sought to balance their assertiveness with maintaining caring relationships

(Young, 1987). I presented the results of that research at an international conference (Young, 1988) and at meetings of women's professional associations in and around Edmonton. In my counselling experiences since then, both women and men have discussed assertiveness, and their challenges in balancing work and family needs. Further, that the need for balance is highly variable from one person to another, and cannot be predicted on the basis of sex alone. Increasingly, I came to appreciate that individuals solve problems within the unique contexts of their lives.

Women's Way of Knowing (Belenky, Clinchy et al., 1986) discussed a view of learning based, in part, on research in support groups for mothers. The ideas resonated with my own experiences as a learner. "Since mothering—the traditional role for women—has at its centre the teaching of the next generation, we were particularly interested in how maternal practice might shape women's thinking about human development and the teaching relationship" (p. 13).

Belenky et al. (1986) spoke about the importance of "voice" to the women they interviewed. They stressed that voice is more than academic shorthand for a point of view; rather it is about speaking up, speaking out, and being heard by others. Other research has expanded the idea of "voice" to include also the power and disabling aspects of "silence" (Mahoney 1996).

Belenky et al. (1986) found that women's perspectives fell into five epistemological categories, or put another way, into five ways of knowing.

1. Silence: Women do not know what they think, cannot voice their thoughts, and yield to external authority. For example, a new mother may feel overwhelmed, as

I did, by looking after small children and meeting the expectations of her husband and family. She may feel a sense of discomfort with her life, but disregard that disquiet because she has a nice home, a husband who is a good provider, and lovely children.

2. Received knowledge: Women are capable of receiving and reproducing knowledge from presumed all-knowing external authorities, but are not capable of creating knowledge on their own. For example, a woman may have learned all the skills necessary to take good care of a home and children. She has not recognized, however, that both her husband and herself accept that looking after the home and children are solely *her* responsibility.

3. Subjective knowledge: A women may know that her life is unhappy, she does not need anyone else to tell her, her intuition is sufficient, but she keeps that knowledge to herself. A woman may work at paid employment and look after a home and family. She resents the fact that she is working far longer and harder than her husband, but says nothing directly.

4. Procedural knowledge: Women learn and apply objective procedures for making and communicating knowledge. For example, a woman learns how to use research methods to gather information on the household division of labour. She discovers in the course of her research, that the household division of labour varies greatly between families, cultures, and through history. Tasks such as caring for livestock are assigned to women in one culture and to men in others. Further, that women or men who are sole parents, or in same sex relationships, will carry out tasks normally assigned to the other gender. She disseminates the knowledge gathered

through articles and lectures.

5. Constructed knowledge: Women view all knowledge as situated or contextual, recognize their capacity to make new knowledge, and value both subjective and objective strategies for knowing. For example, the woman who gathered information on the household division of labour becomes increasingly distressed when she realizes that although the tasks may change, women do more household work than men. Further, she observes that women, most of who also garden, farm, or work for wages, do more work overall than men. She formulates a theory about the essential nature of household production (food, clothing and personal services) and reproduction (childbearing and child rearing) attributing the under valuing of such work to patriarchy and misogyny (Waring, 1999). As women's understanding develops, therefore, they come to recognize the knowledge is socially constructed within specific contexts.

Research Goals and Organization of my Thesis

The goal of this research was to develop complex understandings about three women's experiences of job loss. That was accomplished through three qualitative case studies telling the stories of women who lost their jobs sometime during mid-career. Given the emergent nature of qualitative research design, that goal was refined as the research progressed. I started to examine job loss, and much of the literature I studied was reviewed earlier in this chapter. As I was doing that, I conducted interviews with three women who lost their jobs due to public sector downsizing in Alberta. As we collaborated in writing their stories, the participants told me how

important it was to tell their stories, and to be heard. They said that by telling their stories they made sense of what had happened. They knew that I understood their experiences when I told their stories accurately in writing. Together we created rich understandings of their job loss experiences.

Research Questions

What were three women's experiences of job loss?

How did their job losses occur?

How did it affect them and their relationships to others and to their work?

What meanings can be derived from their job loss experiences?

How does gender inform these meanings?

The Organization of my Thesis

A chapter discussing the research methods, and related ethical concerns follows this introduction. Following the methods chapter are three chapters each containing the story of one of the women who participated in this research. The final chapter analyzes the structure and content of the narratives, and how they helped the women to make sense of their experiences and derive some meaning from them. Relevant literature is reviewed and cited in the final chapter much as it has been in this one.

Who Will Be Interested in this Research

This inquiry will be of interest to women who have lost their jobs, family members, and friends of those who have lost their jobs, counsellors, researchers, and

employers. Anyone with a close association with someone who has lost their job will benefit from an enhanced understanding about job loss experiences. This research demonstrates the value of listening, and thus helping others to tell their stories of their difficult, perhaps traumatic, experiences of job loss. This research adds to the research on gender and job loss, and provides directions for further research.

Limitations

This research is about the experiences of particular women within their contexts. It is about the women' job loss experiences, and not their whole lives. The research considers the experiences of three women at mid-career in Alberta, Canada during the late 1990s in a climate of economic recession. The research is limited by the abilities and undisclosed biases of the researcher. The reader alone can determine to what extent the cases presented resonate with theirs or others' experiences.

Chapter 2:

Methods

This research has taken me in directions and challenged me with methodological, interpretive, and ethical problems that I had not contemplated at the outset. As I struggled with these problems, my research design emerged. The changes from what I initially proposed are not in the particulars of becoming informed, but rather in my own learning. My primary epistemological assumption remains that women who experience job loss are in the best position to develop their own understanding about that phenomenon (Longino, 1994; Stanley, 1997; Stanley & Wise, 1990). Further, that each woman who experiences job loss will derive unique understandings from her experiences. My ideas about how to analyze the masses of data I would accumulate were at best half formed when I began, and needed considerable development and refinement before I could contemplate writing the case studies. Eventually after some false starts, or perhaps because of them, I heard the participants. They said that telling their stories was important to them, and that through telling their stories they made sense of their job loss experiences. Making sense occurred in the context of our collaboration, and the understandings and meanings are in the stories themselves.

Where I Began

This research can be described as a critical qualitative inquiry because it challenges taken-for-granted understandings. My study is framed within my beliefs about the social world as gendered and as privileging male knowledge and knowledge

production. My research, therefore, explores women's understandings to identify the meanings they make of their job loss experiences and to examine how gender informs their experiences. Several authors influenced the initial design of this case study research (Merriam, 1988, 1998; Patton, 1990; Stake, 1995, 1998). Each of them stressed the importance in case study research of defining the case or cases to be studied. A case is a bounded system of intrinsic interest, or of interest because it sheds light on a particular phenomenon (Merriam, 1998). I elected to conduct case studies of three women who had lost their jobs and to provide thick, rich descriptions of those experiences.

Case studies can use quantitative or qualitative methods, or both, in order to examine the research question. My question guiding this research was, "What were three women's experiences of job loss"? That question is seeking "insight, discovery, and interpretation rather than hypothesis testing" (Merriam, 1998, p. 29). I assumed that the experiences of job loss are subjective, that meanings and causal attributions are made within a particular context, and are a matter of the individual's interpretation. Further, that the experiences of each woman would vary as a function of personal interactions and perceptions (Merriam, 1988).

Stake (1998) stated that qualitative research is subjective, often producing new puzzles rather than solving old ones, and it is slow and expensive. In addition, it does little to advance social practice, and is replete with ethical risks. Postmodern feminists see the subjectivity of qualitative research as essential to creating knowledge within contexts, that is to say, partial, situated knowledge (Appignanesi & Garratt, 1998;

Fivush, 2000; Fraser, 1995; Marecek, 1995; Oakley, 1998; Richardson, 1994). Stake (1998) acknowledged that subjectivity is an essential part of understanding the issues under examination, but that errors occur due to the researchers' shortcomings. He seemed to suggest that it was possible to find objective truth using qualitative methods if the researcher was sufficiently rigorous. Feminist and postmodern epistemologies, on the other hand, stated that subjective understandings will evolve, and the knowledge created will change as the research progresses. They also recognized that similar research undertaken by and with others would create different knowledge. Finally, those who read the research would interpret it in light of their context and understandings (Ricoeur, 1986). The latter understanding of the research process differs sharply from Stake's. It also differs from the goals of predicting and controlling behaviour, the stated goals of most psychological research early in the twentieth century (Marecek, 1995). This research like any other qualitative feminist research will create knowledge that is situated, partial, and formed by and within the contexts of the researcher and participants.

Participants

Four women volunteered to participate in this research, and I subsequently interviewed the three whose phone numbers were current. I identified the women by discussing my research plans with my colleagues, friends, and acquaintances who in turn contacted anyone they thought would like to participate. My aim was to recruit professional women who lost their jobs sometime during mid-career. While I had not defined precisely what those terms meant, there were two factors that, at that time, I

assumed demonstrated a commitment to work and would therefore make job loss difficult. The women who participated had approximately 20 years experience in their chosen occupations, and had advanced somewhat from their initial job within one or more organizations.

In the introductory chapter, I discussed the high level of public sector downsizing during the mid 1990s in Canada and Alberta. It is not surprising, therefore, that the participants in this research had lost public sector jobs. Each of the women was white, middle class, and had a professional designation as social worker, counsellor, or engineer. Two of the women were also managers in their departments. Each of them was highly committed to her job. Each experienced the job loss as a breach that changed the course of her life significantly (Bruner, 1991).

In speaking about participants, rather than subjects, I am revealing an aspect of my orientation to this research. The women participated not only by volunteering to be interviewed, but also by collaborating in writing the stories. They questioned and corrected my drafts of their stories until they were satisfied that their stories were accurate and detailed enough to be understood. That collaborative approach is common to feminist and qualitative research in general (Merriam, 1998; Olesen, 1994; Reinharz, 1992).

There was a delicate balance in the collaborative process. As the researcher and writer, I had different power than the other research participants. I determined the questions to ask, how to analyse the interviews, and, to a large extent, how to interpret the stories. It would be a disservice to the participants, however, if their stories were

not adequately and accurately told. My previous experience as a research participant highlighted that concern. I participated in a research project in which the researcher did a good job overall, however, I was misquoted. The misquote left me feeling misunderstood and, thus, negated my reason for participating. Given that the participants in my research checked what I wrote, and could withdraw from the research at any time, they also had considerable power over the research process.

I tried to equalize any perceived power imbalance in several ways. First, I specified the expectations for the research in initial discussions of the project, in the interviews, and in an informed consent form that each of the women signed (See Appendix A). Second, I met and interviewed the participants at locations and times convenient to them. Finally, I advised participants that I would use their interpretations in the case studies. If theirs and mine differed, I would include both. I wanted, to the best of my ability, to understand and interpret the participants' experiences from their perspectives, and describe them richly.

Learning About Job Loss Experiences

Interviewing participants was my principal way of learning about the three women's experiences of job loss. None provided journal writing, photos, or any non-verbal representations of their experiences. I shared with the participants my experiences of what I called a "near miss" of job loss, stated in the introductory chapter, and my interpretation of my father's forced early retirement. The interviews were tape recorded and combined features of the information sharing and discourse models of interviews (Franklin, 1997).

Franklin (1997) discussed three models of research interviewing. The first, information extraction, is one in which the interviewer actively structures the interview, usually asking set questions in a specific order. The interviewer is friendly enough to establish comfort, but avoids biasing the interview by not responding substantively to questions or observations. The second model, Franklin describes as the shared understanding model.

> The interviewer attempts to gain understanding of how the interviewee experiences aspects of her own life and/or the world of objects and other persons. The interview is construed as an interpersonal situation and it is recognized that the interviewer's characteristics, sensitivity, and other qualities are likely to affect what is said. The "presence" and necessary participation of the interviewer is not viewed negatively, as in the preceding model. Further, it is asserted that the interview is a process during which meanings are not only brought forth but sometimes newly formed. For example, the interviewee may change her mind about something said or see relations not previously articulated. (p. 103)

The interviewer comes with as open a mind as possible and with as few presuppositions as possible. The interviewer will aim to clarify what is said, will paraphrase or interpret while the interview is in process, and will do follow up interviews to corroborate interpretations. Franklin calls the third model, the discourse model.

> The interview is conceptualized as a situated speech event....The idea of an ongoing interactions between two (or more) people, carried out in the medium of language is paramount. It is assumed that both interviewer and interviewee have active roles in what transpires: The interviewer contributes, intentionally or unintentionally, to the spirit and perhaps the substance of the dialogue and so may shape it significantly. Assumptions that the interviewer can (or should) be "objective" and "distanced" (as required in the first model), or can bracket presuppositions (as in the second model), are called into question. Interviewers, like interviewees, necessarily see situations from a point of view infused with personal experience. (p. 104)

The interview is conversational and the interviewer may talk about her experiences. The topics are known beforehand but new themes arise and are encouraged.

As I stated previously, my interviews for this research shared some aspects of the understanding and discourse models. The hybrid characteristics were due in part to the requirements of the ethics review committee, and in part to my insecurity. In my ethics review application, I stated that the interviews would be unstructured and conversational, but there were some prompts that would help to keep the interviews focused (Merriam, 1988). I listed a few prompts, but the committee wanted a list of the questions, and I complied the following clarification.

> These are prompts that may be used during the interview if necessary to keep the interview focused on the experience, meaning and interpretation of involuntary job loss.

- What was that experience like for you?
- How has it affected you? Self? Thoughts? Mood? Family? Friends? Work associates? As a woman?
- How did you feel it in your body?
- Is there an incident that stands out?
- What does the experience mean to you?
- Has that meaning changed?
- What keeps you going?
- What will you take from this experience into the rest of your life?

Before I started the interviews, I reorganized the questions to make them easier to follow (Appendix B). In spite of the list of questions that I kept in front of me, and checked occasionally, I tried to keep the interviews conversational. Each interview followed a different course so that not all questions were asked of each woman, and the order of questions was highly variable.

The participants engaged in the process over several months. I conducted an initial audiotaped interview with each of the women. I transcribed the interview with all of the hesitations and pauses included, checked the transcript to be sure that the words on paper were precisely those used in the recording, and identified points that needed further clarification. I then conducted an audiotaped follow up interview that I transcribed and checked in the same manner as the initial interview. The initial and follow-up interviews were each approximately two hours in duration. The women and

I also had many informal discussions about their story's content and interpretation, usually over the phone or by e-mail, over the next several months.

After each interview, I wrote notes about the interview much as I would after a counselling interview. I recalled the setting, the major topics covered, and my impressions about the interview. Once I had verified the content of the transcript, I erased the tape, and changed the names on the transcript to ensure the anonymity of the woman interviewed. I read and reread the transcripts, noting parts that I wanted to follow up for clarification. Most of those clarifications occurred in a tape-recorded and transcribed follow-up interview, but there were also additions and corrections as I wrote, and revised, the stories in collaboration with the participants.

Analysis and Interpretation

With the transcripts in hand, I was ready to analyze the content of the interview, identify themes, and sequence events. There is some sense to describing analysis and interpretation together because the two processes are not as distinct in practice as they are conceptually. The process of selecting the significant parts of the transcript is also the beginning of narrative construction and interpretation. Some experiences are selected for inclusion in the narrative and others are not (Bruner, 1991).

My first method for identifying the meaning was simple enough conceptually, but very time consuming. It comprised a thematic analysis of the transcripts from each woman's initial and follow-up interviews. I selected the richest segments of the interviews and put them into a grid. The grid had five columns labeled from left to

right, time (before, after, during separation interview), number (for the place of the quotation in which interview), quotation (verbatim), paraphrase (my restatement of information and emotional content), and themes. I systematically worked through each interview, addressing each column for each quotation selected. Once I had a complete matrix for one woman's interviews, I made many copies of the grid, and cut it apart at each quotation. I sorted the quotations, by hand, into piles all over my dining room. I compared each quotation to the others, and kept only those that expressed new information, or expressed best a particular theme. Once I had the quotations sorted, I labeled each group according to a second order theme that seemed to describe it best. I reviewed all of the quotations in each group and compared them with the others, reconsidered, and sometimes changed the labels again. Once I was satisfied that the second order themes made sense, I organized them in a new document (Appendix C). The final step was to create a diagram to express the relationships between the second order themes (Appendix D). The process was time consuming, but it did prove to be an important step toward understanding the data.

The thematic analysis that I have described was, however, only one step in the process of making sense of the data. Having undertaken the detailed quotation-by-quotation analysis, I had to actually and metaphorically stand back to reflect upon what the women were saying. The standing back took the form of reading, thinking, walking my dogs, writing, and talking about what I was doing. Some theorists talk about the hermeneutic circle, in which the parts of a text must be understood in relation to the understanding of the whole (Schmidt, 1996). For me, the hermeneutic

circle resonates with the process of understanding the interview texts and moving back to try to understand the whole of what was said.

When I speak of finding the meaning of the whole, I mean what happened, how did it feel, and what did it mean? That discovery took a number of turns. Hermeneutics provided one way to approach the matter, and writing proved to be another (Richardson, 1994). While I did not follow Laurel Richardson's method in her way, I found that my understanding developed through the process of writing in my journal, and writing and rewriting case studies. That process involved cycling back and forth between the transcripts, data analysis matrices, second order themes, my journal, the participants, and the stories themselves. In writing the stories, I began to hear what participants said in a new way. They stated, and I understood, the role that making narratives filled in making sense of their experiences.

Presenting the participants' job loss experiences as stories fits naturally with what they said and how they said it. That idea is supported by psychological theories and theories of narrative research (Bruner, 1991; Coffey & Atkinson, 1996; Gergen & Gergen, 1988).

Precisely because it is a form of discourse that is known and used in everyday interaction, the story is an

> obvious way for social actors, in talking to strangers (e.g., the researcher) to retell key experiences and events. Stories serve a variety of functions. Social actors often remember and order their careers or memories as a series of

narrative chronicles, that is, as a series of stories marked by key happenings. (Coffey & Atkinson, 1996, p. 56)

The elements Bruner (1991) considered essential for narrative are present in the stories of the participants. The stories were about particular events in time, events that were breaches, sharp changes of direction, in the life stories in progress. The stories are coherent with understandable forms and qualities. That is to say, the narratives are in recognizable forms that imply a norm in the progress of life and mirror the culture in which they take place. Gergen and Gergen (1988) added to those ideas by stating that the point of the story, its direction, is important in structuring the narrative, for example, how I survived, overcame, learned, etc., and also in establishing causal links between events.

Feminist theorists have also considered narrative inquiry valuable, but have criticized it for incorporating much of the dominant male bias of our culture (Birch, 1998; Gergen, 1997; Sands, 1996; Scholnick, 2000). In particular, familiar narrative plots may not fit well with women's lives (Gergen, 1997; Sands, 1996), and may use androcentric metaphors such as argument and building rather than women's metaphors of conversation and friendship (Scholnick, 2000). Mary Gergen stated that story forms are gendered such that there are "manstories and womanstories" (p. 205).

> In general, the cultural repertoire of heroic stories requires different qualities for each gender. The contrast of the ideal narrative line pits the autonomous ego-enhancing hero single-handedly and single-heartedly progressing toward a goal versus the long-suffering, selfless, socially embedded heroine, being

moved in many directions, lacking the tenacious loyalty demanded of a quest. (p. 207)

Gergen (1997) examined the narratives inherent in the career paths of several women and concluded that their "career line was important, but it was not an ultimate end point. Whereas men seemed to sacrifice their lives to careers, women seemed to tell the story in reverse" (p. 212). She emphasizes that women thought their careers and success were important but not the goal of their striving.

> For women, career successes and failures are mingled with other issues of great personal importance. Thus the story line becomes less clearly demarcated. The narrative threads are more complexly woven by women. The story is about a person who is embedded in a variety or relationships, which all have some priority in the telling of the life. Ambiguity about any outcome complexifies the task of giving value to a particular event. (p. 216)

The narratives of the participants in this research interweave job, family, friends, colleagues, and community in the ways that are characteristic of women's life stories.

I recognize the importance of Gergen's (1997) observation about the complex pattern of what she calls "womanstories." Just as Gilligan (1982) added to the understanding of patterns in ethical decision-making, so has Gergen added the socially embedded, long suffering, selfless heroine to narrative possibilities. Gilligan and Attanuci (1988) found that both men and women are aware of, and use, both principled and care orientations to ethical dilemmas. Further, that women use caring orientations more frequently, and men use principled orientations more frequently. It

may be true that women's stories often follow the interconnected pattern Gergen described. It is also possible, for example, that single, widowed, or divorced fathers raising children would tell stories that are similarly complex. The narrative forms for women and men may not be essentially different, but will be highly variable depending on the individuals, their circumstances, goals, and their context.

Ethical Considerations

I stated in my proposal that the ethical considerations in qualitative research are numerous, but I did not fully understand the truth of that statement. I had anticipated the need for informed consent so that participants understood the research project, and recognized the importance of the interviews, writing and re-writing as I progressed. They were told in writing (Appendix A) of their option to refuse to answer questions, withdraw statements from the research, or to withdraw from it altogether, at any time, without any kind of penalty. I assured them of anonymity and privacy by securing records, whether on paper, tape, or disk, and by disguising the identities of the participants. I realized that individuals could become aware of thoughts and feelings previously not open to their consciousness, and consequently never revealed to others. Similarly, I also realized that interviews could uncover unresolved, troubling events and feelings that required the assistance of a therapist. Consequently, I had with me the names and contact information for three psychologists whom the participants could contact for assistance, at their expense. Those were the issues that I anticipated and that were handled as planned. It was the unanticipated ethical issues that posed the greatest challenges.

As I wrote the stories for each participant, I had to strike a balance between maintaining a narrative truth and the participant's anonymity. Dilemmas arose with one or more parts of each story. The participants and I collaborated in removing and disguising parts of the stories until I was satisfied that their anonymity was protected, and they were satisfied that their story was told. Participants thought that family and close friends would recognize their stories, as would former colleagues, but that did not concern them. They believed that removing more details would interfere with the narrative truth of their experiences.

The goal of the interviews and subsequent narrative development was to describe richly, and interpret the participants' experiences from their perspectives. That meant understanding each other, sharing stories, laughing, and crying together. That was a lot like friendship, but different in that I know details about a participant's job loss, but have no idea whether, for example, she is a vegetarian. If we had met socially, I would probably ascertain that fact during our first meeting. One of the participants asked me at the beginning of our follow up interview, if she would ever see me after the research was completed. I assured her that we would meet again. Her question prompted me to recognize that in agreeing to participate in my research project, we had entered into each other's lives. We have become characters in each other's stories, and have developed a quasi-friendship relationship (Clandinin & Connelly, 1994). Our presence in each other's stories is evidenced by two events that occurred following the interviews. In one case, my friend who participated in the research called me to discuss her most recent job difficulty because she thought I

would understand. What could I do? I would not refuse, but I did discuss my ethical concerns openly. We agreed that I would listen as a friend and provide advice if she asked. That was precisely the help she wanted. Another participant put me on the list of people to call when she got good news about her pension. It is both moving and humbling to realize the great responsibility in simply asking questions and listening carefully. That process created new relationships, and that fact constitutes one of the greatest differences between quantitative and qualitative research.

If researchers are not prepared to engage with participants, they risk using and discarding them. That conclusion is supported by my observation of research in another context. I volunteered a few years ago with a program for women from abusive relationships. The women were generous in telling their stories to researchers who they hoped would, by understanding their lives, ultimately improve understanding and support for women with similar experiences. The women felt used, however, when the researcher was not heard from again. They found that research process disrespectful because they were not valued as individuals, but as instruments in a research project.

As I mentioned, I have been and remain a friend of one participant in this research. She wanted very much to take part in my research to educate others about job loss. In our interviews, she also expressed the belief that only someone who had experienced job loss could understand it. It follows logically that I who had not lost a job could not possibly understand her experiences. I feared that I could threaten a valuable friendship if I did not tell her story accurately. After mulling it over, I

resolved that particular dilemma by discussing my feelings and fears with her. As with the other participants, I wrote the initial draft, and then we revised it collaboratively. That process reassured us both that we would continue to refine and transform the narrative until her story was told.

The issue of voice is complex and includes not only who speaks, or whose words are used, but also whether the experience of the individual or the phenomenon is put into the forefront (Clandinin & Connelly, 1994). I have emphasized personal experiences rather than an examination of the phenomenon. "People live stories, and in the telling of them reaffirm them, modify them, and create new ones" (p. 415). Each woman brought her story to the inquiry and the resulting narrative is collaborative. Each woman and I have influenced the other's story. "In personal experience methods we must acknowledge the centrality of the researchers' own experiences; their own tellings, livings, relivings, and retellings" (p. 418). Clandinin and Connelly stated that the researcher's own narratives of the experiences are the starting point. I began with an examination of the social and political context, and the extent of job loss, before narrating my experiences. I did that because the context determines so much of what happens, why it happens, and what it means to those who experience it.

Trustworthiness

The data and conclusions of this research are robust because of the methods used in gathering information, and writing the stories. First of all, the data has been gathered in audiotaped initial and follow-up interviews with participants, and many informal discussions. Second, the interviews were transcribed from the audiotapes and

checked to ensure they were accurate for both words and pauses. Third, the stories and interpretations have been checked and re-checked with the participants until they agreed that their stories were told, and the interpretations made sense to them. Those steps required a prolonged engagement with the data over several months. The resulting stories of job loss experiences are as rich as possible without violating anonymity.

Conclusion

In reviewing this chapter, I am struck by the responsibility of ensuring that participants' stories are told and heard. The participants collaborated with me in writing their stories in the hope that readers could gain a better understanding of their job loss experiences. I would fail the women who trusted me if I did not complete my part. The participants and I have become part of each other's lives as we collaborated in this research. This document of women's experiences of job loss exists because three women participated in my research project. The stories we collaborated in writing document our relationships with each other as well as the participants' job loss experiences.

Chapter 3:

Diane

Diane, a social worker who is a friend of mine, had worked for a social services department for 23 years when she was "out-sourced." Out sourced is the term she prefers because it clearly attributes the cause of her job loss to organizational change. She had a good career with the department. She had risen to a management position, liked her work, and planned to continue in it until her retirement in five years. Diane was single and 50 years old when she lost her job.

Diane was aware of my research interest from early in my planning, and wanted to participate. She saw it as an opportunity to inform a broad audience about her job loss experiences, and thus make those experiences more meaningful to her. We had two tape recorded interviews, and several discussions about my drafts of her story. The interviews were conducted at my dining room table over tea and cookies. Our discussions about the story and analysis were at her house or mine, and over the telephone.

Diane's story

Diane told me that she was apprehensive about her job for about a year before downsizing began in 1997. The social services department had merged with a non-social work department. She thought the merger had a negative effect on the social services work. The managers from the non-social work department had a work and educational background that differed from that of the social workers. With the merger, and the new manager's poor understanding of social work, she stated that the

department's mission of caring and providing high quality services to clients was replaced by cost cutting and currying favour with top management. The departmental morale deteriorated as one change after another was implemented and as rumours of restructuring and job losses circulated. Diane received two satisfactory, not excellent, performance appraisals from her new boss. She was aware that several others had received excellent performance ratings. She thought that the ratings she received did not fairly reflect the volume and quality of work she had undertaken. She had received an excellent rating from her previous boss of fifteen years. Diane felt apprehensive about her prospects in the department, reduced expenditures to put her financial affairs in order, and began to plan for the worst.

Diane and three other managers began meeting informally, and engaged a lawyer who could help them if they lost their jobs. Another friend, a co-worker in the department, heightened her fears by predicting that the four managers who had been meeting would lose their jobs because they were very good social work administrators, and the department no longer wanted people with those skills. The department was becoming uncaring, would not give primacy to social work, and would not want good social work managers to hinder the changes.

Several managers in the newly merged department chose to retire, but very few from the former social services department elected to leave, and take the severance package. Those who took the package were permitted to specify when they wanted to leave, and to continue working meanwhile. Eventually, there were more managers than management positions. As Diane said, "Then we all had to apply for our own

jobs." Some job losses seemed inevitable.

When Diane was called to meet with her boss a few weeks prior to Christmas, she was apprehensive. She called the three managers she had been meeting with and found that all of them had a similar meeting scheduled.

> We were all hauled in within half an hour of each other. My boss was there and there was a person from Personnel. The out placement person, I think was behind me, from what I can remember. They have their comments scripted on a piece of paper. They tell you that you weren't successful at getting the position, you will no longer go back to your office, and you are being offered a severance package. The agreement was already on paper. Everything was on paper. It was very brief. It wouldn't have taken longer than eight minutes.

Diane thought, "My career's down the drain! This is the end of my career with the department." The outplacement consultant asked if Diane wanted to speak with her. Diane responded, "You give me your card and I'll call you later." She said that she felt angry at being turned over to someone from outside the department, but later came to value the outplacement agency's assistance.

Diane recalled wanting to flee the room so that she could think of what to do next. She recalled gaining some control of the situation by saying, "I'm leaving this room now." She left, found a phone, and cancelled the next day's meetings. It was important to her to inform people, and not leave them wondering what had happened to her.

Diane described mixed but largely negative feelings when she heard she was

losing her job. She disbelieved that it could happen without her being consulted, and she could see no reason for it. Once she realized what was going on, she just wanted to get it over with and go out to meet her friends.

> It's like a funeral. This is the death of my career.
>
> It felt dark. I remember it being a very dark day, and I felt betrayed by the system that I had put a lot of years into. I couldn't believe what they were doing to me without even asking.
>
> I just kept thinking that this is unreal. Why am I here? Why would they do this to somebody for no reason? Why would the do this to somebody who'd worked as hard as I did? It was so unfair. I felt betrayed, and I probably still do. I don't think I even felt angry at that point because usually when something traumatic happens to me, I just figure out ways of coping.
>
> I just wanted to get out of there to meet with my pals. I thought, let's get this over with and get on with things. I got very task oriented very quickly. The anger came later.

Diane met the other three managers at a coffee shop where they exchanged stories, supported each other, and made plans to meet their lawyer the following morning. Diane was proud that she was successful in getting their association to advocate for them and pay their legal fees. Although the value of the severance package was fixed, each of them was able to tailor it to meet her or his individual needs, maximize pension benefits, and minimize income tax. Diane used her severance to purchase two additional years in the pension plan.

It was important to Diane that it was four managers who lost their jobs, not she alone. That underscored that the job losses were due to organizational changes, not poor performance. She believed the department targeted the four because they were effective social work administrators who objected to the changing departmental priorities and values. Because the four lost their jobs on the same day, they supported each other, and divided the tasks of negotiating with the association, collaborating with the lawyer, and investigating how to set up a business. Diane noted, however, that after two years she was no longer certain that group job losses signal organizational restructuring rather than performance failings. She has observed, through her work as an employee assistance counsellor, that some organizations choose to eliminate jobs one at a time. She called it "following the dribble theory" to minimize organizational disruption and negative publicity. At the time of her job loss, however, she thought that job loss could clearly be attributed to organizational change only if there were several who lost their jobs at the same time.

Diane was upset that she was not permitted to tell her staff that she was leaving in her own way. The staff members were told the following day that Diane would not be returning to work. In a subsequent job loss, Diane was able to tell the staff that she was leaving. She could, thus, bring closure by saying good-bye, and telling them that she had valued working with them.

Diane resented the changes her job loss and reduced income necessitated, but said that she did not mourn for a job that had become unsatisfying in a department that had become uncaring.

I mourned for the opportunities I was going to miss. I was not going to be able to retire when I wanted to. I had worked a long time and deserved to retire when I wanted to, partly because I wanted to be able to manage my own life. I'll never have a retirement party, and I have never been able to terminate properly with my staff.

Diane found that losing her job impacted every aspect of her life. Her relationships with all but her closest friends in the department became strained. Some co-workers phoned her in the month or so following Diane's job loss. Others have not called, or have spoken to her only when they could not avoid it.

The professional relationships around you all drop off. The minute you're not in a particular work place that's what happens?

I think part of it is they're scared. They're scared that what's happened to me is going to happen to them.

Diane asked former co-workers to alert her to job openings, but was very disappointed when none did. The three other managers who lost their jobs with her were a great support, and have remained close friends. She continued to have close relationships with some former co-workers especially those she perceives as "barriered" or somehow disenfranchised within the department, for example, recent immigrants.

I get together for lunch with some staff I worked with for a number of years, as often as I can, about once a month.

Her relationships with most former co-workers, however, fell into the background.

She limited contact with most of them because she felt that they no longer had much in common. She was also embarrassed when she was not working at a good, permanent job.

> I don't go to going away parties for staff who leave the department because that means I have to talk to people. I'll go to funerals, but I won't go to going away parties where you sit around and you have to socialize. I like to be able to decide who to talk to. I don't want to talk to people who cause me grief by bringing up that stuff all over again.

Diane avoided, in particular, her former boss.

> My boss has become a symbol of what happened to me. He symbolizes the loss of my career. I saw my former boss at a retirement party and I hid behind the people I was with until he left. I have no respect for him now. None! I have no desire to talk to him as long as I'm on this earth.

The loss of professional relationships affected Diane in another way. She believed that her professional association did not helped those who lose their jobs to move into other related lines of work. She was also in the position of applying for jobs with not-for-profit agencies she was formerly responsible for coordinating and funding.

> I'm really mad at my profession and I'm mad at the not-for-profit community because I have good skills, and for whatever reason, they decided they weren't going to hire me. Nothing to do with my competencies, it's more to do with the politics. More to do with—we're not going to hire her because she got paid too

much and we're mad at the department cause they're not giving us enough money.

It took Diane "five soul-destroying months" to find employment that was somewhat related to her training and experience. Her role changed from that of being successfully employed to being unemployed and looking for work. Searching for a job—writing résumés and letters of applications, researching organizations, talking to people about jobs, and preparing for interviews—was more energy demanding than a full-time job. Interviews were stressful; rejections were demoralizing. She could not go away for a few days for fear of missing an interview. Because Diane bought additional pension, and did not get her severance package until it was paid, she had neither employment income nor Employment Insurance benefits. Diane had to live frugally on her savings at a time when everyone else seemed to be living-it-up at Christmas.

Everybody else was having a good time and I wasn't having a good time. I haven't had good time at Christmas for three years. I hate Christmas! I hated Christmas before this because my own dad died at Christmas.

Diane stated that it would have been much easier to lose her job during the summer. In summer, she would have her garden to tend and all of her neighbours work outside. It would have been easier to let them know what happened. As it was, most of them didn't know that Diane lost her job with the department or that she was seeking employment.

Until Diane found another good job, the job loss meant that she earned less

than half of what she earned with the department, and consequently she had difficulty planning her life. "I don't have another breadwinner in the family—my cat doesn't make money." Diane had to postpone her retirement plans; could not take a vacation; rarely visited her family; did not buy clothes; and no longer hired someone to clean her house. Diane worried about keeping her old car repaired and getting adequate veterinary care for her elderly cat. She could not take a costly, prescribed medication because it was not covered by her individually purchased health plan. She developed high blood pressure, and, more recently needed expensive treatment to relieve tension in her jaw. Fortunately, Diane had planned to retire early, had money saved, had paid off her mortgage, and was able to manage financially, albeit with difficulty.

Diane was a mainstay in her family, but her role changed with the loss of her job. Without a regular income and paid vacations, Diane was unable to travel to help her family when necessary.

> I was always seen as the one in the family who was very successful and always seemed to sustain the rest of the family. And that has not happened at all in the last two years.

She felt reticent about discussing her difficulties and challenges with her stepfather because he was elderly and frail. She wanted to continue to care for him, but found that difficult.

> My stepfather will say, "It's too much for me, Diane."
>
> I'll say, "Don't worry about it. You know I'll survive. I'm a survivor."
>
> Then he'll say, "You will do what's right for you, I know you will."

Diane was grateful that her mother did not live to see her lose her job.

> When Mother was alive, I had to go home and help take care of her. That was something I enjoyed doing, and even though it was hard to do, I did it. It was in a period of my life when I knew I had six weeks holidays. I just used them and it gave me some security to feel that I could be a good caregiver. When you're a caregiver, you have to know that everything else is in place. I couldn't have done that in the last two years of my life. I couldn't have given my mother the time I wanted to give her, and that would have killed us both. That would have been awful. I just felt blessed that she had gone when she did.

Diane's siblings were supportive, and demonstrated their understanding and concern in different ways. One of her stepbrothers, the father of three young boys, was terrified that the same thing could happen to him. Diane said, "I heard somebody who was more panicky than before." He told Diane, that he did not want to lose his job as she had, so he started a business specializing in some of the work that he formerly did for an employer. Another stepbrother phoned her weekly, and her brother e-mailed regularly even when he was out of the country. Diane was pleased that her family rallied around her, but was pained by the loss of her principal caregiver role.

Diane's relationships with friends and acquaintances also changed. She stopped going to church.

> I went to church once and I thought, no I'm not doing that again. Everybody would ask me questions and I came home more upset than when I went. I called the minister and said, "I'm not going to church. So, you'll see me when

you see me."

Perhaps the most difficult part of speaking with church members was Diane's embarrassment over her changed role within the church.

> I went from being very stable in my employment situation to having no job, and in our society that is a very big deal. People see you as being the person with the job who's done well coping with things and all of a sudden you're the person who can't give money to the church, or can't give volunteer time anymore. I had to look for work. It changed the face of me to me.

Diane valued her friendships and relied on them for support. She cautioned that building a social life around work is dangerous because you risked losing your job and your social life at the same time. Nonetheless, some of Diane's non-work friendships have been disrupted.

> I think that some people couldn't stand it when I was mad, and probably didn't know what to do with me. I must admit there were some people I knew I just couldn't call anymore because I knew that I couldn't be angry, or I couldn't talk about what was bothering me, so I just stopped. I didn't encourage calls from them. Also I became ashamed when I got out-sourced for the third time, I couldn't face it.

Diane renegotiated relationships with some friends. She communicated with one friend by e-mail because the friend could not handle, in person, Diane's emotional swings. Diane disliked being told what to do. She wanted her friends to listen to her when she needed to talk, help her when she asked for help, and distract her when she

needed a break.

Diane did a lot of volunteer work, and it continued to be important for her to contribute to her community in that way. Her volunteer work was an enjoyable escape from remembering what she had lost. She could do things that she enjoyed, and get a lot of positive feedback on her contributions and skills. Diane's self-esteem was bolstered when shortly after she lost her job, she received an award for some of her volunteer work.

The effects of Diane's initial job loss continued over two and a half years as she worked in temporary jobs which paid less than half of what she made with the department. To Diane the jobs were "just work." They were not careers with steady employment, good pay and benefits, and opportunities for further education, advancement, or a good collaborative working environment. The employees in the temporary jobs seemed uncommitted to the work, and the work seemed uncommitted to the employees. Diane doubted that anyone noticed when she left.

Diane thinks that it has been particularly hard for her, as a woman, to lose her job.

> It's been very hard for women to get into places in the workplace where they want to be. When you take that away, it's very difficult. Although I have seen that men, a man was one of the four of us, went through pretty well the same thing as we did really. He lost his role, he was mad, but he hasn't had to fight for things like I have because he chose to retire. I've worked hard to get into a management position, and that was important to me to be at that level in an

organization. It's hard for women to get there, and it's hard for them to stay there.

Multiple job losses, the job with the social services department plus several temporary jobs, disrupted every aspect of Diane's life and she believed that the effects would endure lifelong. Her relationships with her professional community were changed to such an extent that she feels devalued and unwanted as a social worker. Her relationships with her family continued to be close, but her care giver role within the family changed. Her shame about multiple job losses also restricted her openness with her family, particularly her stepfather. She distanced herself from friends who seemed unable to handle her emotional swings, and role change from employed to unemployed. All of her relationships altered, as has her identity. She used to see herself as successful in work, family, and community. She was someone who had a lot to offer others, professionally, as a friend and supporter, as a volunteer, and as a financial donor. To some extent, she thinks that all of her capacities were diminished in her own and others' eyes.

On the other hand, Diane continued to seek satisfying employment until she was successful in finding another good job. Her new job, in another community and in an occupation related to social work, allowed her once again to gain more control over her life, to plan, be creative, use her skills, and make a commitment. She valued her family and friends who continued to support her. She also valued her volunteer work that gave her a continuing sense of competence. It's been hard to keep going, but Diane developed an even stronger belief in her ability to handle whatever came her

way. She credited her twenty-one year old cat with helping to strengthen her will to continue.

> He keeps me going. Last week when I was on evenings, he'd be waiting for me to turn the television on so he could sit in my lap. He's my symbol of resiliency. He keeps bouncing back after he's been ill. If he can, so can I.

Chapter 4:

Rebecca

Rebecca, an education counsellor, lost her job at a community college three years ago when she was 45 years old. Rebecca is married to Sheamus and they have one son, Luke. Rebecca had worked at the college for 18 years when her job was eliminated.

Rebecca and I have had some professional contact. She volunteered to be included in this research project because she thought her experiences fitted the profile of women I was looking for, and thus she could help. One of our discussions took place in person in an office meeting room, and a second took place via telephone. I sent drafts of her story and received changes and comments via e-mail. An unanticipated benefit to Rebecca has been that reviewing and editing my drafts of her story has helped her understand her reasons for leaving her second college job.

Rebecca's Story

Rebecca told me the job losses at the college were not surprising and confirmed her conclusion that the college had become a dysfunctional organization. The college staff learned about planned job cuts through a draft budget presentation less than 10 days after the Chairman of the Board made his annual "state of the college" address. At that time The Chairman of the Board had assured staff that there would be no staff cuts in the forthcoming budget year. Later, when the Chair of Counselling (the Chair) was called into the office of the Vice President of Student Services (VPSS), he was shocked to learn that the whole counselling department was

being eliminated. He was given a "courtesy" forty-five minutes to tell the counselling staff of the cuts prior to a meeting when all of the chairs would be told. The decision to cut the jobs had been made on the last day of the budget committee's deliberations when someone pointed out that the computer system needed upgrading. To accomplish that upgrade, more money had to be found, and counselling, along with some academic programs, were eliminated.

Rebecca described her own reaction as mixed. On the one hand she was caught off guard because of the previous announcement that there would be no cuts. On the other hand, it confirmed her belief about the poor quality of leadership at the college.

> That afternoon all of the chairs of all the departments across the college were advised of the cuts. At that point they weren't expecting cuts but rather the inside story on the budget before it was made public. When the cuts were announced, especially those to counselling, all but one chairperson expressed shock. If anybody was experiencing outrage and shock, it was our colleagues to the point that the chair of fine arts suggested shutting down the perpetually money-losing theatre. He said, "Shut it down!"
>
> The chairs of the nursing department and the early childhood department were aghast at the decision. They relied heavily on our service. Also, because they were involved in community agencies, they were very aware of the lack of mental health resources in the community, and the inability of those resources to provide timely support for the students.
>
> Rebecca contrasted the budget decisions leading to her job loss with her first

ten years at the college when she was "working at a dream job." The environment of openness, collaboration, and collegiality was ideal. She invested herself strongly in her work and identified personally with the college. Because Sheamus was also on the faculty, their lives and identities revolved around the college to a large extent—perhaps, Rebecca says now, to a greater extent than was good for them.

After ten years, there was a change in management, and a change in the organizational climate. The organization that had been ideal became toxic. Competition between individuals and departments dominated, people and departments competed with each other, and good work seemed to be measured by self-promotion rather than results. No one seemed accountable for decisions or work, and hidden agendas abounded. Rebecca and her husband considered moving elsewhere, but decided to remain primarily for Luke's sake.

> Sheamus felt concerned about taking the risk, not for us, but because of how it might impact Luke's stability, especially financially. It's interesting that, at the time, I didn't appreciate Sheamus' concern. Cognitively I recognized all of the arguments that he was making, but I didn't appreciate them at a deeper level. Now that I'm the main breadwinner in the family, I can understand what Sheamus may have been feeling.

Another consideration in their decision to remain was their strong connection to their community. That connection remained strong even as their commitment to the college was called into question by its deteriorating environment, an environment they hoped would improve.

> We decided that we were both well employed at the college, and we thought, OK if we just hold out long enough things are going to have to get better. Each year we kept on saying that it's bottomed out, but unfortunately we were always amazed, as the years went on, that things just got increasingly worse—beyond what we ever thought possible. We decided to recommit ourselves to the community and we built our dream home. We thought that if we're going to live in this area, we've got to find a way of creating an environment that would be positive and healthy for us.

Rebecca and her husband did a number of things to create a healthy and positive environment for themselves. They designed and built a new house that gave their creative energies an outlet. Rebecca also designed and created an extensive perennial garden that provided her with hours of "therapeutic activity." Creating an environment from a vision gave Rebecca and Sheamus peace of mind away from the worsening college environment. They also started a consulting firm to offer team-building workshops based on the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator. They recommitted themselves to their community because it was a good place to raise a family, by planning and building their new home and garden, and conducting team-building workshops.

While the college was taking a turn for the worse, Rebecca was doing some personal work that contributed to her development as a counsellor, and helped her become more grounded. Rebecca describes grounded as non-verbal, tactile, and difficult to express in words. Grounded is a feeling she could sculpt, or draw in

colours, that would vibrate or resonate with the sensations she expresses. She recognized that sculpting and drawing could be like taking an "express elevator to her feelings," but she rarely took the week or more that she needed to do it.

> Grounded is not willowy or wispy. It is solid like a rock cradled in the earth. Achieving that kind of groundedness allows me to light on or rest on a very shallow bowl or container. I felt before this period [early forties] that I was expending energy in trying to keep erect. Then I realized that I could just settle in into this little cup and put that energy into other things.

Rebecca attributes her growth, in part, to Jungian Psychology, with allowing her to "weave a tapestry rich in meaning and texture." The groundedness that resulted freed her energy to live in the moment, reduced her defence mechanisms, and allowed her to make clear decisions. As a result of feeling grounded, Rebecca was able to discontinue investing in what had become a dysfunctional relationship with the college.

The Chair told the counselling department about the job cuts five minutes after he heard about them himself. Rebecca's feelings in reaction were complex.

> I felt almost a sense of relief that finally this dysfunctionalism was out in the open now. It triggered in me an immediate anger. It wasn't a burning outrage-like anger it was just a very clear anger and assertive sense of wanting them to be accountable. I thought, OK, you're managing the college, you've made decisions that have affected, not just individuals but also a very core service to the college, and I want you to be accountable, not just to me but accountable to the college community.

Rebecca was determined to take action, whereas the Chair was in shock. The two of them shared thoughts and analyses over the years as they attempted to understand the dysfunctional behaviour that invaded even their own department. Unlike, Rebecca, the Chair did not perceive the emerging pattern. As she put it, he was not prepared "to connect the dots." Rebecca described her own reaction as a warm sensation, that began in her abdomen, and rose powerfully into her arms so that she could take action. It was a new experience for Rebecca to be connected to strong feelings and stay grounded. Rebecca's impetus to action was illustrated when she changed her e-mail password to "soaring" a few days later.

> I had such a tremendous sense of power–the word "soaring" came—and I said, this may be a very short soar, but I'm going to make the most of it. We very quickly engaged in making the administration accountable which was fun because they didn't have a leg to stand on.

Rebecca spoke with her dying father on the phone just after she lost her job. She had previously told her family about some of the things that happened at the college.

> When I raised the subject of job losses with my Dad, I think he heard resignation in my voice. It wasn't resignation, but I think he picked up my lack of surprise. And what he heard was that I was resigned and then wondered where is your fight?
>
> He said, "Don't let the bastards get to you!"
>
> I had no intention of letting them do that.

Her father's remarks lent support to her resolve to make the administration accountable.

Rebecca and the Chair started a number of advocacy activities in the days immediately after the cuts. She was proud that they were open and honest in their communications, sending e-mails to "all staff." They educated the college community, including support and maintenance staff, on counselling issues. When the college administration mentioned that another college had eliminated counselling without resulting difficulties, they found evidence to refute that claim. The other college was rebuilding the counselling program again because of difficulties arising from cuts. A counsellor from the other college sent an e-mail to Rebecca outlining what had happened and giving permission for her e-mail to be forwarded. They also discovered that a third college would refuse to refer students to them if there was no counselling program. In identifying these issues, Rebecca and the Chair put the discussion on a political level that made the college administration very uncomfortable.

Rebecca felt gratified that the college's students also began to question the inadequate justification for the job cuts. While she was away at her father's funeral, the students organized a protest rally that was attended by approximately one third of the college's students. Rebecca, the Chair, and students also started asking questions in various committees. For example, the administration claimed there was no need for counselling because there were so many community agencies providing similar services.

In a meeting, I specifically asked, for more details on what studies had been

done, and the answer by the VPSS amazed me.

She said, "I leafed through the Yellow Pages to see what agencies provided individual counselling services."

You know, in my mind it triggered embarrassment for a person who's so unconscious of what she's saying. It's the kind of embarrassment I experience when I see a politician on TV who is so incredibly transparent and insincere. In this case I was embarrassed not only by the facts she used, but in her use of those facts in this context. She'd just advised everybody around that table that their jobs are no longer there, and research by looking at the Yellow Pages was the best example she could use.

The students subsequently phoned each agency to determine the length of the waiting lists. They were tenacious in pointing out the lack of services to the president and vice presidents. Eventually, the administration announced that they would keep one counselling position. It was the first time Rebecca recalled the college having reversed a draft budget decision. Rebecca wanted to make them accountable, but thought any change was unlikely. It would have been unrealistic to expect to save the department. Rebecca was proud that through their advocacy they were able to save one position.

The effect of the job cuts and subsequent move was difficult for Rebecca, Sheamus, and Luke. Unlike Rebecca, Sheamus felt betrayed and reacted with shock and outrage. Sheamus was immersed in the college, teaching full-time, and working on some key faculty association committees. Rebecca didn't discuss her acceptance

and lack of surprise because the job losses were so painful for him.

> I had started to separate from the college and had sorted through a lot of boundary issues that were important for me. At one time, being involved and feeling that I was really contributing to the support of a learning community had been so much a part of my first experience at the college. Things had changed and I continued at first to take those initiatives because I didn't want to have the institution fail. Also, I identified so closely with wanting the college to continue to be healthy. Then I began to recognize that I could only do what I can do.

When Rebecca lost her job, Sheamus elected to retire earlier than he had intended, and before required. Rebecca and Sheamus expected to sell their house quickly so that they could resettle near Rebecca's new job, but that did not happen. In retrospect, Rebecca sees that as a good thing because it allowed Sheamus time to process some very strong negative emotions.

> I think what has been a positive, healthy part of our relationship as a family is that you can work through crisis situations. If you're as clear as possible about what's important to you, as a family, things can turn out in a positive way. It's one of these simplistic kinds of truths that you can work through it. Working through it, that's where the pain is. As you're working through it, you have a vision of something that is important to you and that vision is built on the principles or the values that you hold. I think Sheamus and I have been very fortunate because that understanding has been like the glue in our relationship.

It's not always easy, but I think there's something—a context to work within which is important.

Sheamus' retirement party was held after Rebecca had moved to the new job. At the party, Sheamus reported that Luke expressed his feelings respectfully and powerfully by saying that the college had lots of good people, including the parents he loved, but it had become a place that "sucks." Rebecca felt proud that her son stated his views in the moment, like his father, and unlike herself. Rebecca was assertive in her work environments, but expressing her innermost emotions directly was a continuing struggle. Later on at the retirement party, Sheamus confronted a board member who came up to shake hands. Sheamus knew he didn't want to speak with him, but the board member had made the overture. Sheamus took him aside and said, "It's important for you to hear how my life has been because of the decisions you made. There was no rationale other than to upgrade computers, which was your responsibility to do 5 years ago." Rebecca thinks that Luke understood his parents' views that the management of the institution failed to manage adequately. Rebecca regrets that her son, "a little kid," lived with parents who were over committed to an institution, downloaded their frustrations at home, and thus made their son aware of institutional problems that should not have bothered him at such a young age.

The job cuts came in March, and Rebecca's job would end in August of the same year. There were several months, therefore, to continue working at the college. Rebecca decided to make those few months as positive as possible, and to build bridges to the people she cared about and valued working with. Rebecca chose to

ignore those people who continued to contribute to the dysfunctional college environment. Reopening communications with staff was difficult at first. She found that initially staff would avoid her if possible although the curved hallways made that difficult.

> If there were some awkward pauses and so on, I was very comfortable in receiving them and not being triggered by things that were awkward. I just accepted it—just sort of absorbed it. I could feel that these individuals—I could see it in their shoulders and so on that they would begin to relax. The first couple of days many people couldn't even look me in the face. If you're in the hall, you can suddenly come upon somebody coming the other way because of the curve in the halls. I would all of a sudden be faced with people and I could see that physically they would go backwards. It was easy for me, for some reason, because I didn't take it personally, I sensed that it was more their own fears. I saw it as part of the sadness of a dysfunctional environment.

Rebecca would initiate a discussion with them and found that once she spoke to them, person-to-person, they relaxed and were open. Before Rebecca left the college, she e-mailed everyone on staff about the associations she valued in the college and how they would stay with her.

> The last day of work I decided that I wanted to sign off on my e-mail. I wanted not to say a whole lot of stuff but I wanted somehow to bring closure.
>
> I've worked with those people and the students for 18 years and its important for me to do this. So it was a two or three paragraph thing that just reflected on

> the positive things of the institution. It wasn't whitewashing what had occurred, but I dealt with that in one sentence. The rest of it was just being thankful for the relationships and so on. That was my last communication. What surprised me is how that e-mail affected people—even some of the instructors that I didn't know well. I was walking to pick up Luke from school a few days after my last e-mail. An instructor I did not know well was driving on the street when she saw me, stopped her vehicle, and came over to me. She thanked me for my e-mail and started crying. My e-mail just went through all the bullshit, the fears, the insecurities, the poison stuff that was going on, and it just kind of hit a chord. I didn't know that that would happen.

Rebecca found a new job before her contract with the college ended. The pay and benefits were not quite as good as she had at the college, but close enough to be acceptable. All of a sudden, she was the major wage earner and there was a different and unanticipated weightiness to her deliberations and decisions. Sheamus and Rebecca had always decided things collaboratively, but there was a shift. Rebecca stated that the shift was not in power, but rather in responsibility because her decisions clearly impacted other people. That shift helped her to understand better what some men have felt when they have made decisions out of a concern for the security of their families.

> I can appreciate that better in other people. Maybe cognitively I could understand it, but once you're really faced with it, it's sobering

The new job meant that she would be separated from her husband and son for

ten months until their house, now a financial albatross, sold. The separation proved beneficial for each of them in different ways. Father and son shared a household together and had the opportunity to reconnect, and sort out issues between them. Rebecca saw that as particularly beneficial during the critical time before Luke reached his teens. At first, Rebecca had difficulty accepting the changes in the father-son relationship.

> It was interesting coming back on weekends because it was very apparent that they had their way of sorting out their routines. After that first weekend, which was somewhat of an irritation for me, it was amusing. I just fell into their routine because I wasn't there during the week. They had come up with their own ways of doing things that wouldn't have been my way, but it worked for them.

The move before the house sold also meant that Rebecca was on her own during the week.

> Another benefit is that it was a real gift for me to have some time on my own. I don't think it's often the case to have time from parenting and being a spouse. It was very important for me to be working and renting a room where there was no one else at home. I really had a major amount of time to reflect and to reconnect with what is important to me. I would not have had that without the disruption. There was a lot of disruption, but at the same time, I would say that we are better for it. Based on my understanding from former colleagues, the college has continued to go into the dirt. I don't feel ill will toward the college

> because of the students, and a number of dedicated, good people working there. The sad part of a dysfunctional organization is that a lot of people, out of insecurity and lack of risk taking, stick with it. I just feel so free and unencumbered. I hope I will never be in a position where I will have to stick with something out of insecurity.

After our initial discussion, Rebecca accepted another job, her second since leaving the college. She credited her current manager and job with helping her to choose to move again. The new manager gave her overwhelmingly positive feedback, more than she was used to receiving and to some extent more than felt comfortable. The working conditions, however, were in other respects far from ideal with a workload that seemed insurmountable.

On the positive side, Rebecca's job loss and move into a new job allowed her to reconnect to the risk taking aspect of her personality that was more dominant in her twenties. At that time, Rebecca travelled abroad for extended periods, and worked in isolated settings in the north. She enjoyed those experiences greatly, but lost touch with that aspect of herself as she settled first, into the college, and second, into family life. Once she left the college, and recognized that her current job was dissatisfying, Rebecca felt free to inject more risk taking into her life by seeking work abroad.

Rebecca's current job also gave her an opportunity to reflect further on her work at the college.

> I think probably the big realization for me in my forties was that I could only do what I can do. Not just to say it, but to really be able to accept that without

the "buts" and the "ands." I think that the big challenge was to come to terms with the things that are important to me, and accept that however much I believe in things, I have limitations. I was more aware of that as I grew older, partly a matter of physical ageing. I don't have the energy to sustain projects that I know I kick-started at the college and followed to the very end. I can stand back and look at it and say, "Isn't that marvellous?"

I would now say, "Yeah, but at what cost?"

That's not to say that if I were in my twenties again I would not do some of those things. In retrospect, I wish I had done it differently. I realize that there are certain things that at the time, in the moment, I gave without reservation and I can see that the institution gained from that. I'm not resentful, but—and of course I'm never going to be in the position to be back to my twenties when I had the extra energy to follow through on my will—sometimes, it would have been better to recognize that a task can be done by another support area. I can't support everything, and I think I did that in certain initiatives that I was involved with.

Through her experiences of job loss, Rebecca developed a boundary between her job and herself. She had a greater awareness of personal limitations; a more tentative relationship with paid employment; less willingness to tolerate difficult work situations; and a greater willingness to risk moving to another job.

It's important for me to not always go with my former pattern. I won't necessarily jump in to do the same things. Even though my initial reaction

might be to jump in and do it because I think that's a core part of who I am, but there's now a bit of a drag. Now I say, "OK, let's examine this a little bit more carefully."

I'm also a person who identifies very much with the organization that I'm working with, and all things being equal, I don't want to change that. It's part of who I am. Through the lessons that I've learned in this experience, there are certain things that I think I would be less inclined to assume as my responsibility or hold up the institution in certain areas. I would still be inclined to want to support it, but I'm not as inclined to go the extra mile as I did with the college.

Rebecca's job loss and new job, allowed her to redefine her relationship to her work, and also allowed her to connect, acknowledge, and use her feelings more effectively.

I'm more guarded, but I don't see it as necessarily negative. Initially I may feel some tension around that, but when I take some time to myself and examine it, I recognize that sometimes tension is really important. It alerts me to issues that are important. If nothing else, the experiences have helped me to sustain that tension longer, and to not feel that I have to make an immediate decision. I can hold out longer, and then just wait it out and see. In some cases, I'll say yes, I'll go that extra mile on this project, but it doesn't necessarily mean I'll do that with the next activity. I've noticed this in the forefront when I'm gauging my current work.

Rebecca could not separate who she is from being a woman. My question

about how her job loss experiences affected her as a woman was, therefore, nonsensical, although she was too polite to have used that term.

> It's interesting because I could talk about that more vis-à-vis how it's affected the family and certainly my role as a mother and a spouse and all of those kinds of factors. I don't know what is woman and not woman. To me everything is woman. Not being a man, it's difficult for me to see whether these issues are different.

Chapter 5:

Susan

Susan volunteered to participate in the research after learning of it through a mutual acquaintance. As I stood in the vestibule of her apartment building and pushed the buzzer, a small attractive blond woman entered the building through the door behind me. She asked if I was Arlene, and when I answered that I was, she led me toward her main floor apartment. I could hear two dogs barking in anticipation of Susan's homecoming. Susan and I met three times in her apartment to discuss her experiences, and to revise my drafts of her story. Her final reviews and comments were done via e-mail.

Susan told me that she had moved into her apartment last summer, having sold her house so quickly that she did not have time to sort and reduce her belongings. She has lived on her own for the past three years since the second of her long-term same-sex relationships broke down. Susan suffers from severe narcolepsy, thus she is unpacking as her energy permits. So far, she has organized most of her bedroom and the bathroom. Narcolepsy is a sleep disorder characterized by excessive and constant daytime sleepiness, falling asleep at inappropriate times, and poor night time sleep (Siegel, 2000). Narcolepsy is frequently associated with overweight and depression (Daniels, King, Smith, & Shneerson, 2001). Narcolepsy interferes with Susan's tendency toward perfectionism, her preference for order and attention to detail that she states are typical of an engineer's personality.

Susan's Story

Susan began by telling me that she worked with an engineering department for 16 years, from 1980 to 1996, plus 2 summers while she was a student. When the department was downsized, she took a buyout. Susan was 40 years old and left largely because the working conditions had become unacceptable. She recognized later that her worsening narcolepsy and alcoholism played major roles in her decision, but at the time, she attributed it solely to departmental working conditions.

Susan described herself as an engineer: "I'm an engineer before I'm a woman." Susan began working in the engineering department as a student in civil engineering, and was hired full-time after graduation. Susan stated that she loved the many jobs she held in the department, jobs that became increasingly responsible over the years.

Susan's initial career goal was to be a physician. She changed her mind in university because she could not keep up the pace of studies in the pre-medicine program. Engineering was more manageable because she could prepare for exams, and ignore any term assignments that counted little toward the final grade. Although she did not realize it at the time, her lack of energy in university marked the onset of narcolepsy, a condition that has influenced her career and life decisions.

Susan stated that all of her work in the engineering department was politically sensitive, and got her adrenalin going. She thinks that probably helped her to counteract her narcolepsy so that she could function at closer to a normal energy level. After two years as a resident engineer in a small city, she became involved in locating and managing the mining of aggregate (the gravel that is the major material used in

road construction). In that position, Susan oversaw operations ensuring that the legislation and standards were maintained. She also had management responsibility for a number of aggregate prospectors and office staff. Susan showed me one of her personal treasures, a large flat rock that was signed by all of those she worked with and supervised. It was given to her when she moved out of aggregate locations and into planning. Susan values the rock because she knows that the staff had to go to a lot of trouble to locate it—flat rocks of that type are rare—and because it has the signatures of people she worked with and cares about. It is much more valuable to her than the official plaque she received when she ultimately left the department.

Finding and mining aggregate was politically sensitive for a number of reasons. First, the resource was becoming depleted, and the department was interested in locating sources for the long term. Many of the rivers in the province that actively deposited gravel were dammed. Susan stated that dams prevented the movement of rocks in the flow, and limited any replenishment of the gravel bars. Second, there were environmental, legislative, procedural, and ethical issues around locating, mining, and reclaiming the land where aggregate was found. Finally, when times were tough as they were through much of the 1980s, farmers with no other source of income were anxious to sell the gravel on their land. Susan was the one who often had initial contact with the landowners, decided which land to mine, and would often be the person who dashed their hopes.

By 1988, there were discussions within the department about flattening the organizational structure. Susan recognized that moving up in the hierarchy was

improbable, and thought it prudent to move laterally within the department. She was seconded first into systems planning, and then into property services. A major part of the latter job involved negotiating rights-of-way through aboriginal (First Nations and Métis) land. Those negotiations were complex in part because they involved provincial and federal governments as well as band councils. Very senior directors within the department, usually worked directly with the band councils, nonetheless Susan's boss asked her to take charge of negotiation process. She didn't realize it at the time, but she was being used to blindside the more senior directors.

> My boss liked to do little power grabs, and not consult with the people out in the regions. The first time I showed up, to meet the regional director, I said "I'm coming down to this meeting you're having with these guys, is there anything particular you want me to look into before I come down there?" The director didn't know a thing about it. We're talking a really senior person who had been blindsided.

Susan had worked with most of the directors before, had good relationships with them, and was able to work out the relationships among them amicably. Realizing that she had been used against other staff, however, was painful, annoying, and stressful.

She enjoyed the project in spite of the rough beginning largely because there was so much to learn. Working officially with aboriginal people was new to her, and she was anxious to learn as much as possible. She hired native people to write histories ensuring that the native perspective comprised part of the planning. Susan attended an aboriginal policing conference, and other events that would increase her

knowledge about aboriginal issues. It was at the policing conference that she learned what it meant to be a bridge between cultures.

> One of the speakers said, "If you want to be a bridge between two cultures, you have to expect to get walked on by both sides." And, that was my experience because I am a bridge between engineers and non-engineers, engineers and auditors, men and women, young and old. That was always a part of what I was doing.

Susan's boss told her that the directors in the field were not happy with her work after she had been working on the project for well over a year. She contacted all the people she had been working with, and found that the boss had misinformed her. She saw this as another attempt by him to instigate controversy, and thus maintain power. She could not confront him directly because, in characteristic fashion, he had gone away. Susan took the matter to the most senior manager to get advice. That manager was sympathetic, expressing the view that the job was poorly designed, and further that he had feared at the outset that the incumbent would be doomed to failure.

Susan's immediate boss was fuming that she went over his head, and accused her of "being insufficiently deferential to men." She told him to go away in much less polite language. Strong language was part of fitting into her work context. Engineers, technicians, machine operators, and farmers would restrain themselves when they first met her, but as Susan stated, "There's not men's language and women's language, there's just language." Susan found the sexism in the department, such as her boss's request for deference, more difficult to deal with than strong language. The engineers

she worked with respected her as a good engineer, and her gender was not an issue between them. Susan commented that many of her friends in teaching and social work could not believe what went on, for example, sexual harassment, and sexist and racist language. The department offered training programs to counter sexism and racism, and to promote inclusive, respectful behaviour. Management emphasized the importance of changing behaviour to avoid lawsuits, not because it was right to behave respectfully toward others. Over time, however, Susan found that sexism decreased.

The department had been downsizing continually since 1982. That downsizing had been done with consideration for the employees as well as departmental needs and priorities. The major downsizing in 1995-96, however, was different. It was done quickly, two thirds of the department was eliminated in approximately 18 months, and it was done at the expense of individuals as well as procedural, and ethical requirements.

> We'd already cut pretty much all the slack there was to cut. With the latest cuts they weren't going to allow the engineers to do any engineering. We weren't even allowed to review plans for engineering purposes to see if they met standards. It was just wrong. I felt like I had already violated all of my personal ethics on a variety of things. I felt that I was violating the professional ethics where my highest responsibility was for the safety of the public. I did not think we were fulfilling them and I thought it was wrong—just so wrong.

For several months prior to and during the first six months of the major downsizing, the managers within the department had been working on re-engineering

the department. The goal was to consider all of the work in the department, streamline it, reorganize it, and eliminate any that was found unnecessary. There was a huge consultative process involving everyone in the department and culminating in writing new job descriptions. Susan believed in the re-engineering process, and contributed many hours of work to it. Contrary to the stated process, however, one evening a few of the most senior managers met, decided which jobs to keep, which to eliminate, and redrafted job descriptions for the whole department. Susan felt betrayed, angry, and from that time refused to take part in the re-engineering process. She like many others had worked on and believed in a rational, consultative re-engineering process. She eventually discovered that the re-engineering process was window dressing, a sham that obscured the real power and decision making by a few top managers.

Susan almost left the department with that discovery, but the most senior manager urged her to take her Christmas vacation to think about it. She recalls two events that were important in her decision to leave the department. The first occurred the evening before her Christmas vacation began, just after she spoke with the most senior manager. Susan went to a bar with some friends.

> I remember being in there and I was so angry at everything at work. This was only the second time in my life I'd ever done anything destructive like this. I took a glass, and I threw it at the wall. I think my glass was probably empty because I can't imagine me throwing a glass with booze in it. It shattered. I've only ever done that one time before and that was when I was angry about a love relationship that died a painful death. That was in my first year working,

and I threw a beer bottle at a light post.

The second incident that finally helped her to take steps to leave the department occurred weeks later when she went to her hairdresser.

> He asked me how things are going and I said I was "hanging in there". He said, "God, how many years are you going to be doing that—hanging in there?" You know, I don't see this guy that often. I'm not there even every six weeks getting my hair done. Obviously this must be getting worse for him to be able to notice a problem. I think it was the day after that I went in and talked to one of my previous bosses and said, "O. K., how do I do this?" [Take a buy out and leave.]

By mid-February, Susan made her decision, and she was gone by the end of March. She felt relief and elation at leaving a negative environment that kept on getting worse. She recalled that there used to be a big send-off for people who retired. During the major downsizing, however, partings became so common that groups of people in the same area left on the same day, and only a cake marked the occasion. The department was filling some of the positions, and Susan applied because she thought she should. Part way through one interview, she decided that she just did not want to work there anymore. She was too upset about what had happened. Susan did, however, give parting advice to the people on the interview panel, "You have very competent staff, but you should treat the people that are left with more dignity and respect."

The first few months after she left the department went fairly well. Susan had a

plan. She was starting her own direct sales business, and she did consulting work with some engineering firms. She also served as an expert witness for a trial. Her business never really got off the ground, largely due to her deteriorating health. The contract work was successful partly because it fit with her need for flexible hours of work.

Susan was diagnosed with narcolepsy in 1987. At that time, she was obese and chronically tired. She was initially diagnosed with Pickwickian Narcolepsy in 1984 which Susan said meant she was so fat it made her lazy. The diagnosis was devastating to her self-esteem. She failed to lose weight on very strict diets, and sometimes needed up to 15 hours sleep. During an unrelated referral to a psychiatrist, Susan mentioned her need for a great deal of sleep, and was referred to one of the few sleep specialists in the province. She was finally sent to a sleep lab for testing. After the sleep tests, the doctor concluded that she had narcolepsy and that her excess weight was caused by the inactivity brought about by the disease. Susan started taking medication for narcolepsy, had her stomach stapled, regained energy, and lost weight. Even with successful treatment, however, on most days she functioned well for only 8-10 hours, that is to say, the hours that she was at work. She often napped after work before she could drive home safely from the office.

Susan says now that it's difficult to separate the stress of downsizing from the stress of her deteriorating health. It was only long after she left the department that she recognized that her narcolepsy, depression, and alcoholism played a role in her disillusionment with work. After leaving the engineering department, Susan changed medications for narcolepsy. It took 3 years to realize that the new drug was not

working, and likely had not since the beginning. In the three years following her job loss, Susan lived alone, and fell into such a deep depression that for months she left the house only to buy food for the dogs and otherwise see to their care. She credits the dogs with giving her a reason to live. Susan thinks that her deteriorating condition might have been noticed if she had been working at a job with regular hours or living with someone. As the depression continued and the narcolepsy was treated inadequately, her activities all but ceased, she became socially isolated, and her financial situation worsened. She stated that without medication to offset her daytime sleepiness, she felt the way most people feel if they have been awake for 36 to 48 hours. By the time Susan was able once again to take charge of her financial affairs, she was broke, and on welfare.

Susan recognized that her alcoholism interacted with her narcolepsy, depression, and the medications she was taking. She had her first drink and first blackout when she was 12 years old, and quit drinking on September 24, 1998 when a friend asked her to go to an Alcoholics Anonymous meeting. Susan stated that if she had not quit drinking she would not have survived the past three years because she would have committed suicide. Susan recognized that she used alcohol to cope with the pressures of work, her anger, and low self-esteem. Susan entered an alcohol treatment program at the Alberta Hospital, Ponoka, and later entered life skills and anger management programs through a men's recovery house. She valued the treatment she received, and regretted that there were not as many programs for women as for men. The programs helped her to develop healthier coping mechanisms, and

along with effective medical consultations, started her on the road to better health.

Susan grew up in a family with a loving mother and a domineering father. Her mother died in 1987, at the time that her narcolepsy was diagnosed and she had her stomach surgery. Susan was on sick leave when her mother was dying. It was a lot to deal with at one time, but sick leave permitted her to spend more time with her mother than if she had been working. After her mother died, Susan felt that she had a role to play in keeping her family together. Her mother had been largely responsible for raising Susan's niece, a role that Susan assumed after her mother's death.

Susan's mother and father moved to Edmonton when her mother was receiving cancer treatment, and after she had a terminal diagnosis. That proved to be problematic because her father would interfere more in Susan's life. "He went from managing 300 men to only having Mom and me to manage." Susan recalls that her father argued with all of the children in the family. The positive outcome of those arguments was that the children learned to think independently, and to express themselves. She attributes her father's training with preparing her for engineering. On the other hand, all through junior high school Susan left the dinner table in tears. The interaction with her father may have toughened her up, his stated goal, but it also devastated her self-esteem. Her father was very proud when she became an engineer. He bragged about it to his friends although he never mentioned it directly to Susan.

Once effective medication for her narcolepsy started working, Susan had a couple of part-time, temporary, minimum wage jobs. She stated that it was more humiliating to lose relatively uncomplicated jobs than to leave her job with the

engineering department. It was also an eye opener about the terrible working conditions inherent to such jobs. In a telemarketing job, Susan discovered a programming error in the spreadsheets that recorded time and contacts, and calculated pay. While she didn't expect kudos for finding an error, she did expect the error to be corrected. The result, however, was that the managers deflected her observation by saying, "Oh, this job's almost over, so don't worry." The problem, as Susan saw it, was that they continued to use the same spreadsheets to calculate pay in a manner that was both unethical and illegal. In a pet store, the sales clerks were encouraged to work as a team, to learn about the stock, and to sell accessories in addition to pet food. Susan believed in teamwork, but management protestations to the contrary, acting on that belief led to her being fired. The management's duplicity became known when she was training a new person.

> One of the girls was brand new. I was trying to teach her about how to approach people, and help them, and encourage them to buy in accord with the money they seemed to want to spend. I gave her sales. It wasn't terribly surprising to me that her sales were higher than mine for those two days. When I was working with her, I gave her most of my sales because I was trying to think of what was better for the department overall.

Susan went from being a successful engineer, with a good job, and secure income to an unemployed, sick, and broke person on welfare. At one point, she recalled an interviewer her asking, "What are your career plans?" Susan thought, "What career plans? I'm on welfare!" While in a job readiness program offered

through welfare, Susan found that she did not understand the culture of poverty. She knew how to negotiate government bureaucracy, which many of the others in the job readiness class seemed unable to do. For example, Susan sorted out a problem with her health insurance very quickly by speaking with the Deputy Minister's secretary. On the other hand, she found the welfare forms confusing. She applied for welfare because she needed glasses and medications, and was broke. The form asked if she had a medical emergency. To Susan, a medical emergency meant that you were haemorrhaging uncontrollably or could not breathe. The facilitator in the job readiness program noticed she was unwell, discovered that her medication had run out, and told her how to fill out the forms to get the help she needed.

Susan lost her identity as a civil servant, her identity as an engineer was threatened, and she railed against assuming the identity of a poor welfare recipient. She perceived a loss of status because she became poor and needed access to social services. Susan was frustrated with bureaucrats who treated her like "an idiot." As Susan put it, "There's money and then there's intelligence, and they're not the same thing." She countered that attitude by assuming the bureaucrats did not understand her needs, not that they were out to get her. Dealing with issues, such as getting funding for glasses or medication, would drain Susan's energy for several days. Susan asked for and questioned information, and thus, forced the bureaucrats to deal with her as the intelligent woman she is.

Susan wanted others to recognize her as a knowledgeable, intelligent person, but feared she might be thought unworthy if she was not working. Susan wished that

she could work, but knew that she could not. That opinion was confirmed shortly after our initial two interviews when Susan received word that she had been granted a permanent disability pension. She showed me her physician's assessment forms attributing her condition to narcolepsy. Acknowledging her disability was difficult, but having a secure income was a relief. She expected to need assisted living at sometime in the near future, and had received at least one brochure describing such a residence.

Susan realized that she had very little memory of events from 1996 to the present. She kept detailed notes on events in her files. She discovered recently that her files were well maintained from 1986 to 1996, and then blank. She has tried to piece things together by reorganizing whatever papers she has. When she reviewed the pre-1996 files, she cried for what she had lost, and has an admonition for others.

> Be grateful for your lives, your minds, your loved ones, and even your enemies. Without all of these, you really become, maybe not absent, not invisible, but certainly only a fragment, a glimmer of a shadow, of what you are.

Through it all, Susan remained respectful of the people she worked with. One former colleague was bitter about her job loss for several years until she finally got a good job in a different occupation. She took the downsizing personally, and blamed individual managers for what happened.

> She perceived that the executive director of our section was responsible for this, that, and the other, but I was on management and she wasn't. I'm able to talk to both sides, and people generally told me the truth. I haven't really been

> a black and white kind of person anyway. People aren't one hundred percent evil and others are not a hundred percent good. We all have good and bad. Everybody I talked to was doing the best that they could with what they had to work with. That still doesn't mean it wasn't awful and hard on the people that were underneath.

When I asked Susan if the meaning of her experiences would become clear to her, she stated that,

> I suspect I will always be able to have a different understanding of things. I've learned from it, because as you continue to grow your perspective changes a bit. I actually feel pretty clear about what the job loss did to me but it wasn't just the job loss, it was that in combination with some other things.
>
> If you've got some kind of a chronic long-term medical condition make sure that everybody understands and is watching for it, no matter what else is going on. And don't underestimate what the stress can do to you. If you've never been broke in your life, really broke, this is a whole new experience.

Susan's words resonated with me possibly more than she anticipated. While working on this research, I was coping with a debilitating, treatable health problem that negatively impacted my work. Susan's admonition encouraged me to discuss it fully with my employers and get the assistance I needed.

Susan's hope for the future, now that her income was secure, was to settle in her apartment, and make a good home for her dogs and herself.

The dogs are not ever going anywhere else. This house is run for the comfort, convenience of the dogs. Cause they've kept me alive! There were days when I wouldn't have gotten out of bed if I didn't need to let them outside. I wouldn't have talked to people outside the house if I didn't need to get them food. One of the bad products of the stomach operation I had is that I very seldom get hungry. If I don't remember to eat, I get a headache or something. I mean, I can get by with almost next to nothing, but I need to make sure I get dog food.

Chapter 6:

Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

This qualitative research has presented the stories of three women who lost their jobs at mid-career. In the introduction, I discussed my orientation to this research; focusing, in part, on my near miss of job loss. The second chapter discusses the methods used in the research. The case studies of the three women's experiences, written and interpreted by me in collaboration with the women, are presented as stories in the third, fourth, and fifth chapters. This chapter discusses and summarizes the understandings about their job loss experiences made through the processes of telling, writing, revising, and interpreting the women's stories.

It's a truism that the answers depend on the questions asked. What is not as readily recognized is that research can take surprising turns and produce unanticipated knowledge. The research questions from the first chapter are restated here.

What were three women's experiences of job loss?

How did their job losses occur?

How did it affect them and their relationships to others and to their work?

What meanings can be derived from this job loss experiences?

How does gender inform these meanings?

Much of what each woman said related to her job loss experiences and the impact of those experiences on her life. What I did not foresee was the importance of weaving the narratives, that is to say, the benefit of the process itself. I have presented

the women's experiences of job loss as stories. Stories are a culturally familiar, cohesive, and comprehensible way to discuss personal experiences (Bruner, 1991; Gergen & Gergen, 1988). Diane, Rebecca, and Susan told me that they made sense of their job loss experiences through our discussions, and revising my drafts of their stories. Each stated that she had discussed the job loss experiences in a different way with me than she had with others. Specifically, that she had been able to focus on the experiences themselves, express them, and to consider what they meant. All three women had been highly committed to jobs within particular organizations, but as a result of losing their jobs they changed their relationships to work, other people, and themselves.

Diane's, Rebecca's, and Susan's stories address three of the research questions stated in the initial chapter, and restated in this one: What happened? That is to say, what events took place in their job loss experiences; what were those experiences like; and how did they think and feel about them? Further, how did those experiences affect them and their relationships to others and to their work?

In this chapter, I address the last two research questions drawing on the data from the stories. Specifically, I discuss the process and importance of telling stories to make sense of job loss experiences, the insights generated from those experiences, and how gender informed them. In my analysis of the narrative content, I examined job loss experiences as a transition with characteristics similar to the processes of grief and mourning. An important function of the mourning period is to make sense of the loss and derive some meaning from the experience. For these women, that sense

included the reasons for their job loss, the impacts of unemployment, how gender informed their experiences, their new understanding of their relationships to work, and how each found the hope she needed to carry on. Finally, I make recommendations for further research, and also for those who lose their jobs, their employers, friends and family, and counsellors.

Writing Stories of Job loss

Diane's, Rebecca's, and Susan's stories are about fragments of women's lives in which each woman developed a new understanding about her job loss experiences. Their stories are public expressions of their private experiences shaped by and within Canadian society, and our relationships with each other (Gergen & Gergen, 1988). Some parts of their stories would have been repeated and rehearsed in other contexts (Coffey & Atkinson, 1996). On the other hand, their responses to my question about when the meaning of their experiences would become clear were previously not contemplated. We four knew that the purpose of telling the stories was to make them public through my thesis, albeit with names and details disguised so that the women and their organizations would not be identified. Each woman told her story in such a way that she emphasized the connections between us (Sands, 1996). She attempted to connect her experiences to what she knew about me, and her understandings of my research expectations. The women knew that I was a counsellor and thus would be interested in thoughts and feelings they might not express to non-counsellors. Each story was, thus, written and interpreted within our individual and mutual contexts.

Stories told in public are both subject to public evaluation, and moulded by it

(Gergen & Gergen, 1988). Each woman who took part in this research has told her story emphasizing the changes in the organization's values, and the discrepancy with her own. That is to say that, consistent with attribution theory, the women attributed the loss of their jobs to the situation, not to themselves (De Cremer, 2000; Howard & Hollander, 2000). Each of them revealed how the organizational climate changed prior to their job losses, and how their personal values became less consistent with the organization. Diane stressed her effectiveness as a social work administrator who cared about clients and staff, and thus highlighted the diminished emphasis on caring in her department. Rebecca emphasized the teamwork and collaborative decision making of the college that became subverted to competition between individuals and departments. Susan discussed working in a collaborative environment, and the difficulty of maintaining personal and professional ethics in the face of huge cuts to departmental budgets and staff. Each of them told a story of being caught up in organizational restructuring.

Narrative Structure

It was tempting to describe the women's stories of job loss in terms of recognizable narrative forms, for example, tragic, heroic, or epic tales. Examined from that perspective, Diane's job loss could be seen as a tragedy (Gergen & Gergen, 1988). Her life course was set, she planned to retire in a few years, and do things for which she had previously neither the time nor money. Her job loss unravelled that dream just a few years before she could achieve it. Rebecca's story, on the other hand, had a heroic quality (Gergen & Gergen, 1988). When she lost her job, she gathered her

personal resources, and took collaborative action to make decision makers accountable. As a consequence of Rebecca's actions, in collaboration with others, the college reversed its previous decision, and kept one counselling position. Susan's story was like an epic tale that related a series of events that were connected only by having happened to her (Gergen & Gergen, 1988).

The difficulty with characterizing the three narratives with specific narrative structures was that they described fragments of women's lives (Gergen, 1997), and were not full-life stories. The women's stories of job loss were episodes in continuing life stories that began with their births and will end with their deaths. Put simply, these stories of job loss were incomplete (Gergen, 1997). Susan summed that up when I asked her when the meaning of her job loss would become clear. She said, "I suspect I will always be able to have a different understanding of things I've learned from it, because as you continue to grow your perspective changes a bit." Rather than force the stories into a recognizable literary form, it seemed more accurate to recognize them as structured by a direction or an overarching theme such as, "How I survived the loss of my job" (Gergen & Gergen, 1988; Gergen, 1997).

The women's stories fulfilled the essential characteristics of good narratives. There was a breach, or sharp change in direction, in their life stories, that is to say, the loss of a job, or feeling forced to leave a job (Bruner, 1991; Crossley, 2000). Gergen and Gergen (1998) name five characteristics that are essential to good self-narratives. First, there is a point or purpose to the story; second, events are selected in relation to that theme; third, the events are ordered in some fashion; fourth, causal links are

established; and finally, the beginning and end of the story is demarcated.

Diane, Rebecca, and Susan each told a story of surviving her job loss. That was the point or purpose of their stories (Gergen & Gergen, 1988). I asked them to tell me about their job loss, and each of them responded by telling me a story about what had happened. I asked questions so that they could discuss how job loss affected them within their context (Appendix B). Each of them told me about the impact of their job loss on their relationships to work, others, and themselves.

The events in the stories could be ordered by importance, theme, or time (Gergen & Gergen, 1988). Temporal ordering is one of the most familiar ways of organizing self-narratives and was the primary ordering of these stories. As I wrote the first draft of the stories, I attempted to establish causal links through the events' temporal relationships (Gergen & Gergen, 1988), and the women corrected any of my errors in facts or order. Finally, Gergen and Gergen noted that there would be demarcation signs showing that you entered a tale; for example, Diane told me her story as we sat in my dining room. We judge the veracity of a narrative both by weighing the facts, and by the extent to which the narrative fulfils the requirements that Gergen and Gergen suggest are essential to a good story. These are stories of three women at mid-career, who were successful, and committed to their professional jobs. Their job loss constituted a breach in their narrative of successful employment. They told me what happened to them when they lost their jobs, how they survived, and what those experiences meant to them.

Transitions, Grief, and Mourning

The job loss experiences of the three women were told as stories of survival, in particular, stories of surviving a loss. Bridges (1980) and Pulley (1997) have applied theories and research on grief and loss to job loss. The former focused on describing the transition process stressing that every transition begins with an ending. For example, beginning a new job implies losing or leaving an old one with its attendant routines and interpersonal relationships (Bridges, 1980). Bridges stressed that all endings, even happy ones, imply loss, grief, and mourning. Further, that with an increasingly volatile labour market, and insecure employment, individuals, and career counsellors, must learn to adapt to the new employment realities by developing a new relationship to work, and by learning to handle job transitions effectively (Bridges, 1994).

When a job ends, people may react with feelings of shock or betrayal, or in some cases, with relief (Pulley, 1997). In this study, each woman perceived, before she lost her job, that her organization had changed, and that the organizational climate had become uncomfortable. The women's observations fit with those of the nursing executives who lost their jobs (Carroll et al., 1995). Consistent with Bridges (1980) and Pulley, Diane expressed a sense of betrayal at her job loss. She had worked hard and expected her hard work to be rewarded with a job until she decided to retire. Susan also felt betrayed when it became apparent that her department's re-engineering process was a sham. She had been working hard on the re-engineering process when decisions were in reality made by a few senior managers. On the other hand,

consistent with Pulley's findings, Rebecca felt relief when her job was eliminated because the impulsive decision to cut counselling made the dysfunctional organizational culture observable. It validated her suspicions, and brought the organizational negativity into the open so that she could begin to take action.

Diane, Rebecca, and Susan each went through what Bridges (1980, 1994) called a neutral zone or what Pulley (1997) called a dark time after their job loss. During that time they had to grasp the personal losses and meanings brought about by their dismissals. Diane was angry with the department for taking away her social services management job. That job connected her to the wider community through personally and socially meaningful work. It took her two and a half years to find another job with similar characteristics. During that time, she lost relationships with some departmental survivors and friends. She believed that the departmental survivors feared for their own jobs, and felt guilty about her job loss (Carroll et al., 1995; Leckie & Rogers, 1995), and that her friends did not understand her emotional turmoil (Bridges, 1980; Pulley, 1997). Rebecca mourned the loss of what she described as an ideal, collaborative work environment. She was angry at the impulsive decision-making that took her's and other's jobs away. She used her anger to demand accountability. Rebecca got a job in another college and community immediately, but that job proved unsatisfactory. The two experiences left her feeling sad for what she had lost, and guilty for leaving the second job so soon. Susan was angry about the duplicity of management in fostering a collaborative re-engineering process while the real decisions were made behind the scenes. Similarly, in her subsequent minimum

wage sales job, management stressed teamwork, but rewarded competition. She gave her sales to a trainee to promote the overall departmental performance, and was fired for her poor sales performance. Each of the women experienced a dark time filled with negative feelings as she made the transition from job loss to a new situation, employed or unemployed.

Bridges' (1980) theory about transitions resonated with the theory and research on grief and mourning (Neimeyer, 1999, 2000; Rando, 1984, 1995). Bridges' (1980) first two stages, endings and the neutral zone, fitted with Rando's (1984) descriptions of grief and mourning, respectively. Rando (1984, 1995) differentiated grief, the psychological, social, and somatic response to the perception of loss, from mourning, an active process of adaptation to changed circumstances (Rando, 1995). Grief can be seen as the beginning phase of mourning that can last months, years, or forever. Grief can involve feelings of loss, betrayal, or as Pulley (1996) found, relief. Further, losses can be physical and tangible, or psychosocial and symbolic (Rando, 1995). The death of a loved one would be an example of a tangible loss; job loss would be an example of a psychosocial or symbolic loss. Rando (1995) acknowledged that tangible losses were socially recognized with culturally determined patterns of grief and mourning. She also recognized the lack of social recognition of grief and mourning for psychosocial or symbolic losses, and consequently the lack of support for such mourners.

Rando (1995) understood that the grief response expressed one or more of the following four elements. First, the mourner expressed feelings about the loss and

deprivation, for example, sorrow or guilt. Diane, Rebecca, and Susan all expressed sorrow about the development of dysfunctional environments in what had previously been enjoyable workplaces. Second, the mourner protested, and wished to undo what had happened. Diane expressed her anger about her job loss, and the lack of rationale for it. She did not get the amount of support that she expected from former colleagues and friends. Her hunch was that they ceased calling her because they could not handle her anger. Rebecca was also angry at the loss of her job. Unlike, Diane, whose dismissal was immediate, Rebecca had several months to take action before she left the college. She used her anger to give her energy. Rebecca was thus able to make the senior management accountable for a decision that impacted people's lives and the effectiveness of the college. Third, the mourner experienced confusion or physical symptoms. Diane suffered grave difficulty with high blood pressure and muscle spasms in her jaw, the latter taking a few years to diminish. Susan failed to notice her worsening narcolepsy because she was no longer had a schedule imposed by work. Fourth, the mourner reacted to the previous three elements of the grief response possibly by social withdrawal or increased use of substances. Diane withdrew socially from many friends, colleagues, and social situations when others failed to understand her pain. Susan reacted initially to the loss of her job and her worsening health by drinking excessively. Unlike to the other two, Rebecca used her anger to make the decision makers accountable. Each of the women responded to her job loss differently, but with at least one of the elements Rando (1995) predicted.

Narrative approaches stress that grief is constructed within a social context and

that it does not follow prescribed patterns (Neimeyer, 1999, 2000). Neimeyer stressed that grief is highly variable from one person to another depending upon a whole host of factors. Given that basic contextual and individual framework, however, Neimeyer stated that grievers tend to challenge taken-for-granted constructions about life and reconstruct meanings unique to the person and contexts. Similarly, Rando (1995) stated that psychosocial or symbolic losses have an impact on the individual's assumptive world.

> The assumptive world is a schema containing everything a person assumes to be true about the world and the self on the basis of previous experience. It consists of all the individual's assumptions (including expectations and beliefs), most of which translate into virtually automatic habits of cognition and behavior. (p. 217)

Diane, Rebecca, and Susan faced challenges to their assumption that hard work and loyalty would be rewarded with job security. That belief was prevalent in Canadian society, and was the belief that Bridges (1994) and Pulley (1997) saw as needing revision. They described a transformation in the nature of employment such that individuals could anticipate many losses of employment throughout their careers. Further, that "good jobs" with continuing contracts, opportunities to move within organizations, appropriate salaries, and benefits will become increasingly rare (Lowe, 2000a; 2000b; Quality of Life Commission, 1996), and that temporary contracts and self-employment will become more common (Bridges, 1994; Hughes, 1999; Lowe, 2000a).

Grief was a reaction to loss, but individuals could choose how to respond to it (Neimeyer, 1999). Some individuals would choose to focus on loss, some on restoration of their lives, some on re-engagement with their occupational and social worlds. Diane and Rebecca both focussed on, and were successful in restoring their careers. Susan tried to focus on her career, but her health worsened, and restoring her health took precedence. Neimeyer also noted that grief is private but it is linked to the responses of others. Diane was disappointed that she did not get the support she anticipated from many of her friends and professional colleagues, and thus withdrew from some relationships. Rebecca successfully initiated conversations with colleagues who seemed unwilling to initiate them with her. Susan continued to get support from friends, family, and former colleagues. All three of the women focused on getting support from friends and colleagues consistent with research that found those strategies were more central to women's job search and coping strategies than men's (Leana & Feldman, 1991; Malen & Shroh, 1998).

Neimeyer (2000) explained that narrative strategies focusing on making sense, and deriving meaning, from experiences would be particularly valuable in grief work. Those who could explain their loss and find some purpose or meaning for it suffered less distress than those who could not. Diane, Rebecca, and Susan made sense of their experiences, and found meaning, by telling their stories. Of particular importance to counsellors, is that it is making sense and finding meaning that is important, not the content. That idea fits with observations that those who survived concentration camps had something to live for (Frankl, 1963/1992). What they had to live for could be

idealistic, loving, or mundane. Frankl, like Neimeyer, stressed that the specifics were unimportant. What mattered was that survivors found something to give their lives meaning so that they could do what was needed to survive.

Making Sense of Job Loss

Diane, Rebecca, and Susan have been able to make sense of their job loss experiences. Each woman lost or left her job even though she had worked hard, was loyal to her employer, and liked her work. Each of the women noticed changes within her organization that demonstrated an unwelcome shift in organizational values and goals toward ones that were inconsistent with her own. Diane's department became less caring with clients and staff. Diane, therefore, lost her job because caring for clients and staff remained her emphasis. Rebecca's college became competitive in contrast to the collaborative environment that she had enjoyed when first at the college. Rebecca took action collaboratively with the Chair and students, and they were successful in keeping one counselling position. Susan's department engaged in a collaborative organizational re-engineering that obscured the real decision making by a small group of senior officials. In addition, her job description had been changed to eliminate some core functions, for example, reviewing plans to see if they complied with regulations. Susan left the department when she realized that departmental changes were making it difficult for her to maintain her personal and professional ethics. Each of the women made sense of her job loss by describing a changed organizational culture that was at odds with the culture she valued.

Effects of Unemployment

Social psychological studies of unemployment found that although the material circumstances of life in Europe were better in the 1980s than the 1930s, the main psychological effects remained the same (Jahoda, 1982). Along with psychological effects, and consistent with previous research, each of the women was affected by the loss of income (Cleary, 1995; Goldenberg & Kline, 1997). Diane had managed her financial affairs so that she could retire within a few years. Her job loss ended that dream when she had to use some of her retirement savings to live while she sought another job. Diane was embarrassed that with little income she could not take part in many social activities, visit her family, or contribute financially to organizations she formerly supported. Incomes from both Rebecca and her husband were necessary to maintain their family and dream home. Rebecca found a job immediately, at slightly lower pay, and thus concerns about lack of money were alleviated. Later, however, she became the primary wage earner, and noted an internal shift to feeling greater responsibility for her family's security. Susan suffered greatly financially. The severance package from her employment, plus money from contract work, kept her going at first. As she became more ill, she became unable to attend to her financial affairs, and ended up broke and on welfare. She stressed that being truly broke is not the same as running out of money before payday. She felt humiliated by her situation.

Jahoda (1982) emphasized that discussions about work are usually about employment and unemployment. She observed that employment is intended to provide goods and services, but as an unintended consequence it provides workers with certain

categories of psychological experiences. Jahoda listed five categories of experiences that become obvious when workers are unemployed, and recent research has supported the existence of those categories (Gilberto, 1997). First, unemployed workers had an altered experience of time; they had time on their hands. Second, workers experienced a reduction in social contacts outside of what Jahoda (1982) calls the emotionally charged context of the family. Third, the workers missed participating in a collective purpose, or goal, that their employment provided. Fourth, the unemployed workers lost a visible and understandable status, and that loss had consequences for their personal identity. Fifth, they experienced a lack of regular, predictable activity.

Diane, Rebecca, and Susan have experienced in varying degrees the psychological effects that Jahoda (1982) described. First, each of them needed to take action to structure their time after the loss of their job. Diane engaged immediately in job search, and found it was more demanding than employment; Rebecca started another job immediately; and Susan started her own business. Second, each of them dealt with the loss of her professional relationships. Diane suffered isolation and was able to maintain contact with a disappointingly small group of her professional contacts. In no small part, her precipitous departure from work militated against taking action to bring closure or redefine continuing relationships with former colleagues. Rebecca saw the potential to lose important relationships, but she unlike Diane had several months' notice during which she renegotiated the relationships that mattered to her. Susan also had time before she left the department to ensure the continuation of

important relationships. Susan found later, when she was dismissed from temporary, minimum wage jobs, that her relationships with those staff members ended as abruptly as had Diane's with her colleagues.

Third, all three women identified strongly with the goals of their former employers and suffered from the loss of a collective purpose. Diane and Rebecca each found another collective purpose after their job loss, but Susan has been unable to do so. Diane initially made job search her focus. That sole purpose was draining because it was hard work and resulted in short-term jobs that left her more disillusioned with employers. She had, however, meaningful volunteer work to fill her need for a collective purpose. Rebecca had no difficulty investing in the educational goals of the new college, but eventually she left because of the uncomfortable working conditions. Susan's poor health has prevented her from making a long-term commitment to a collective goal through employment, but has rather focused on seeking improved health. At first, after she left the engineering department, she had engaging and successful short-term jobs as a consultant and conference organizer. On the other hand, she tried unsuccessfully to establish her own business, but her deteriorating health militated against success. When she was once again well enough to work, she had short-term minimum wage jobs that further eroded her trust in employers. Unlike Diane and Rebecca, Susan has been unable to sustain employment, volunteer, or contract work, and feels lost without it.

Finally, each woman changed her status and redefined her identity to some extent. Multiple job losses and frustration with social work administration led Diane to

find satisfying work in a related occupation. Moving to a new job and community, and finding the new job unsatisfactory, helped Rebecca to take a risk. She described that as reconnecting with the risk-taking part of her personality that she had foregone in favour of marriage and childrearing. While Diane and Rebecca had to change their daily routines to accommodate new jobs, Susan suffered greatly from the lack of both routine and employment status. She attributed failing to notice her deteriorating health to that lack of routine, and the lack of regular contact with others. She did not notice, and there was no one else to draw that to her attention, that she slept excessively. Loss of status, and self-esteem, affected Diane until she found another job, and continues to be problematic for Susan. Susan has been granted a pension on the basis of a permanent disability. It is a relief to have a steady income, but having a disability pension is evidence that her unemployment is permanent. She is still mourning for the loss of her career as an engineer.

Gender Analysis

I asked each of the women to discuss how her experiences of job loss affected her as a woman. The answer to that question most often came not through their direct responses, but through their stories. Rebecca put it well when she said, "I don't know what is woman and not woman. To me everything is woman. Not being a man, it's difficult for me to see whether these issues are different." That statement begs the question of what, if anything, about the women's stories is particularly womanly?

Diane and Susan talked about the sexism they encountered in their work environments. Diane told me that being a woman affected her because she had worked

harder to advance than the men in her department. Susan talked about the quantity and quality of sexism, foul language, and unwanted sexual advances, she contended with when working in an engineering department. The women were affected by those experiences because of their gender.

These three women had worked to support themselves financially throughout their working lives. Their self-esteem rested in part on professional accomplishments (Phillips & Imhoff, 1997), that is to say, doing work that is valued financially by society (Waring, 1999), and earning a good salary that allowed them to do a number of things. A good salary meant that they could support the household they wanted, contribute financially to community organizations, socialize with friends, and help family members. Their stories are marked by a concern for both their employment and their familial and other social connections. It is that dual concern that makes their stories typical of the "woman stories" described by Mary Gergen (1997).

Each of the women has sought social support from friends and family as she made the transition from job loss to employment, or continuing unemployment, and thus their behaviour resonates with previous research (Carroll et al., 1995; Leana & Feldman, 1991; Malen & Shroh, 1998). Diane relied for support on friends, family, and former colleagues even though she was disappointed that some distanced themselves. The three people who also lost their jobs when she did proved to be her greatest source of moral and practical support. Rebecca and Susan initiated open communications and got support from valued colleagues, friends, and family. Rebecca opened conversations with valued colleagues even as they tried to escape her notice.

She also made extensive use of e-mail to inform staff about counselling issues, and finally, to say her farewells. Susan's respect for former colleagues was demonstrated by the value she placed on the signed rock given her when she left one job in the department. She has continued to contact friends and former colleagues by phone and e-mail even when she is not well enough to leave her home.

Diane experienced a transition in her role within her family that fits well with Bridges' (1980) discussion of a transition. As the only daughter of a blended family, she had assumed a care-giving role both within her family and within her social work career (Gilligan, 1982; Miller & Stiver, 1997). That care-giving role was an important part of her identity but was severely limited by her job loss. "Interpersonal and familial domains appear to be uniquely central to the development of identity for women" (Phillips & Imhoff, 1997, p. 33). Diane felt angry that she no longer had the control over her time that many women find necessary to maintain their family responsibilities. In Diane's case, lack of control over her time was one factor that interfered with her ability to visit her family. She could not help her aging stepfather as much as she used to, but gradually learned to accept that other family members could assume that responsibility. She continued to mourn for a role that had been central to her identity, but has been lost.

Rebecca experienced a shift in the kind of responsibility she felt for her family when she lost her job. When she began the job in another college, she relinquished some of the day-to-day care for her child which is typical of women in most families to her newly retired husband (Hartmann, 1987; Phillips & Imhoff, 1997; Statistics

Canada, 2000). She also earned more than her husband, and thus assumed the greater financial responsibility that is more typical of men (Statistics Canada, 2000). She said that the family power structure had not changed, and that as a family, they could work through any changes together. Her statement, however, implies that there was a transition in their relationships and that there were some adjustments to be made.

Rebecca's discussion of the change fits well with Bridges' (1980) discussion about transitions. First, there is an ending. When Rebecca returned to her former home on weekends, she noted and eventually accepted her husband's and son's ways of doing things that differed from her own. She was no longer the one who arranged their daily routines. Second, she went through a period of uncertainty living on her own in a new community, getting started in a new job that she found increasingly unsatisfactory. That was her dark time of uncertainty, and she credits the time alone as giving her time to think (Pulley, 1997). Finally, she reasserted her love of travel, and took the risk of moving abroad with her family to another job.

Susan continued to struggle with her transition from being a professional woman with a good public service job, to a woman who was too ill to work (Bridges, 1980). She stated that she was an engineer before she was a woman, and thus emphasized how devastated she was by the loss of her professional identity. Her professional identity signified that she was intelligent and worthy of respect, and in that she mirrors research that stresses the centrality of work to women's identities, and self-respect (Phillips & Imhoff, 1997; Price, 2000). She has struggled to be acknowledged as a worthwhile woman who happened to be poor and unemployed.

Given the likelihood that Susan will not work again, she faced a struggle similar to that of women who have retired. Research on women in retirement found that the loss of professional identity is difficult for women in that they face the double discrimination by sex and age (Price, 2000). Dealing with bureaucrats with respect to health insurance and a disability pension, allowed Susan to assert herself as someone knowledgeable about bureaucracy. Receiving a disability pension provided proof that her unemployment could be attributed to poor health, rather than unwillingness to work, or inability to hold a job. Susan is in the midst of her transition from work to premature retirement, and is still finding ways to assert herself as an intelligent worthwhile woman who is unemployed.

Metaphors

The metaphors people use in making their narratives reveal a great deal about culture and the individual's understanding of herself within that culture (Gergen, 1997; Scholnick, 2000). Each of the three women in this research used metaphors to discuss her job loss experiences that revealed how she wove her identity from her experiences and within her contexts. Diane's and Susan's metaphors are grounded in management and engineering, respectively. Rebecca's metaphors relate to power. All three seem to use what Scholnick called androcentric metaphors of argument and building. Such a conclusion would, however, ignore the other aspect to their metaphors, and that is the emphasis on connecting or caring for other people, that is to say, women's metaphors of conversation and friendship (Scholnick, 2000).

Consistent with her job in social work administration, Diane's metaphors

around her termination were about the loss of her ability to control or manage her life and her efforts to regain it. Diane talked about "having" to apply for her own job, and being "hauled in" to the interview, making it clear that she was pulled unwillingly into both activities. When she was told that she had not been successful in getting one of the jobs, she noted that the interviewers had their comments "scripted" on a piece of paper, and like the script of a play, the event would be played out as written. Her observations about the scripting of her termination interview is similar to those of the nursing executives who lost their jobs (Carroll et al., 1995). The careful control of that interview illustrated that she could not change its outcome, but she could manage how the interview ended. She took action to manage the interview's termination when she recognized her desire to "flee" the room to cancel some meetings. She did not want to leave her colleagues wondering what had happened to her. She ended the interview by saying "I'm leaving this room now." She, thus, reasserted control over the situation in one of the few ways open to her.

Rebecca's metaphors around her termination are related to positive and negative energy and power. She talks about job "cuts" at the college, the thus compares job losses to wounds. She also talks about having her emotions "triggered" by the impulsive elimination of jobs, or "not triggered" by remaining staff members who tried to avoid her. Her metaphors imply weapons, knives or guns, which are used to inflict wounds. Rebecca, however, did not react in kind to what she perceived as the abusive use of power. Rebecca described her emotions as first centred in her abdomen, and then rising into her arms so that she could take action. Once connected with that

power, she felt she could "soar." That feeling was so strong that she used "soaring" as the password for her e-mail. The actions she chose were to work openly, collaboratively, and thus with integrity, to make the college management accountable for its decisions, and to maintain the relationships she valued.

Susan's metaphors, consistent with being an engineer, related to structures and physical integrity. She spoke about departmental downsizing over a period of 10 years that eliminated "all of the slack," thus she compared the department to a guy wire that had been tightened. One of her great learning experiences from one job assignment was that she would be a "bridge between two cultures." The idea referred to First Nations' society in relation to the dominant white society. That idea resonated with Susan's experiences of being a bridge between men and women, engineers and non-engineers. She also spoke about a former colleague who remained bitter about her job loss, and blamed it on negative personal characteristics of particular senior managers. Susan did not see the job losses in that way. She extended her bridge metaphor to the discussion of interpersonal relationships, and described herself as able to speak with, and understand, both "sides," workers and management. Nonetheless, she saw the job losses as very difficult for those who were "underneath." The other metaphor that was common to Susan's story was that of physical integrity. She spoke about one boss as liking little "power grabs." Further, that the changes in the department "violated" her personal and professional ethics. Those metaphors underline the sexism that was prevalent within the engineering department. The way that Susan used both structural and physical integrity metaphors emphasized that changes within the department

threatened her personal and professional integrity to such an extent she felt that she had to leave her engineering job.

Creating Knowledge about Job Loss

It is important for women to create knowledge about their experiences because so much previous knowledge in psychology has been made by and for men (Marecek, 1995). Furthermore, women are in the best position to understand their own experiences (Longino, 1994; Stanley, 1997; Stanley & Wise, 1990). This discussion of gender in relation to job loss resonates with the idea that women create knowledge out of their experiences of caring for others, particularly, mothering (Belenky et al., 1986). Because Diane and Susan, unlike Rebecca, had no children and were not in committed relationships, it might seem that the theory would not fit them. Each of them, however, expressed care giving as a central aspect of her life. For Diane, that care giving was expressed both in her career choice, social work, and in her care-giving role with her stepfather, siblings, and pet cat. For Susan, that care giving was expressed through her relationships with friends, family, and pet dogs, as well as in her role as a bridge between women and men, non-engineers and engineers.

Belenky et al. (1986) found that women make new knowledge from five epistemological perspectives, or ways of knowing. Those ways of knowing are silence (know what they think but yield to external authority rather than voice their own ideas); received knowledge (receive and reproduce knowledge from external authorities, but do not create their own knowledge); subjective knowledge (knows from her own experience but keeps that knowledge to herself); procedural knowledge

(learns and applies objective procedures for making and communicating knowledge), and constructed knowledge (views all knowledge as contextual, and values objective and subjective strategies for knowing). Each of the women in this research noticed various organizational changes or symptoms of dysfunction. The women were not silent about that growing awareness, contrary to Belenky et al., but rather discussed their observations with many people within and without their organizations. Each woman understood, and operated on, received knowledge applicable to her employment, especially the dominant Canadian assumption that in return for hard work and loyalty employers would provide continuing employment. The women accepted that assumption as an implicit employment contract. On the other hand, each of them was aware that she no longer fit comfortably into her organization, anticipated job insecurity if not job loss, and made other plans. Diane, with others who lost their jobs in her department, found a lawyer to help with their financial settlements and set up a consulting firm. Rebecca and her husband began to conduct workshops through their consulting firm. Susan set up a direct sales company. The assumption that hard work and loyalty would yield continuing employment was, however, called into question by each woman's subjective experiences (Belenky et al., 1986).

Diane and Rebecca both implied there was no reason for them to lose their jobs because they were, in effect, hard working and loyal employees. They inferred, thereby, that the only justifiable reasons for job loss would be poor performance or disloyalty. Susan, on the other hand, found that under reorganization she was no longer allowed to do core aspects of her job. Her employers, therefore, interfered with

her ability to do her work adequately. In subsequent, minimum wage jobs, employers were duplicitous about their expectations and also prevented good work. For all three women, the implicit contract was broken, and thus, all three lost trust in employers.

The women's awareness and understandings of their experiences developed as this research progressed. Diane's story demonstrated an adherence to the implicit employment contract, in spite of her perceived betrayal by the department, by describing her hard work in job search and new jobs. Rebecca recognized an imbalance in the employment relationship, so that as an employee she gave more to her employer than was good for her or her family. Her new relationship to employment is more tentative, similar to the understanding that she believes is held by employers. Susan came to mistrust employers because of managers' duplicity in both the departmental re-engineering process, and part-time minimum wage jobs. Her declining health and eventual permanent disability deepened her questioning further. She questioned not only the assumption about hard work and loyalty, but also the assumption that employment is the hallmark of a worthwhile person. Each of the women developed new understandings about employment and employers from her experiences and through her work in constructing narratives.

Hope

Each of the three women found hope, a purpose for living, that helped her weather the transition after her job loss. Each woman found support in her most trusted relationships, and a reason to recover from adversity. The specific content of that hope varied according to the circumstances of each woman, but in all three cases

rested on caring for others. Diane's loss of income militated against continuing to fulfil the chief caregiver role within her family. She could, however, continue to care for her ill and aged cat. Rebecca found hope in arranging a move abroad that allowed her to find employment, and take a risk, while caring for her family. Susan lived on her own and suffered ill health, including depression, for a few years. Through it all, she continued to care for her two dogs. She credits them with giving her a reason to live. All three women found hope for the future and a purpose for living in caring for those they loved and lived with, whether family or pets.

Conclusions

This research has considered the job loss experiences of three professional women who lost their jobs at mid-career. Through discussing their job losses, and revising my written drafts of their stories, we generated understandings about the social and psychological experiences of job losses from the women's perspectives. The women's stories tell of their transitions from job losses to new situations. Those transitions have the characteristics of grief and mourning (Bridges, 1980; Pulley, 1997; Rando, 1995). An important part of mourning is making sense of the loss, and deriving some meaning from it (Neimeyer, 2000). These women made sense of their job loss experiences by telling their stories, and considering what their loss meant to their relationships with work and others. They also examined how the experiences changed their identity, and what gave them a purpose in life, and the hope to continue. The knowledge created is based on three case studies, that is to say, that it is partial situated knowledge about three Canadian women's experiences of job loss during the

public sector restructuring of the 1990s. We cannot assume, therefore, that the understandings can be applied in all women, or men, in all situations.

Through their job loss experiences, Diane, Rebecca and Susan have changed their relationships to work. Each woman discussed her growing awareness of changes in organizational values and culture, and her sense that she no longer fit with the organization. That awareness developed from observed organizational changes and rumours long before she lost or left her job. When the job cuts came, each reacted differently, but none was surprised.

All three women accepted the common Canadian assumption that hard work and loyalty would be rewarded by job security. Their job loss caused them to question that assumption, and eroded their trust in employers.

Job loss has many of the characteristics of grief and mourning (Bridges, 1980; Pulley, 1997). It is a symbolic, rather than tangible, loss that may be unacknowledged as a loss by others (Rando, 1995). The women experienced some threat to their professional, friendly, and familial relationships. Through their job loss experience, all three women relied on those they trusted absolutely, friends, family, and pets, for support while mourning the loss of their jobs. Rebecca and Susan, who had the most notice of their job loss, were able to renegotiate continuing relationships with colleagues, friends, and family most effectively. Diane apprehended her job loss, but did not have any formal notice. She lost relationships with some colleagues, in part, because she had no time to renegotiate them. Furthermore, many friends failed to recognize or deal with her emotional swings as expressions of mourning. Equally

troubling to her was the loss of her caregiver role within her family. Diane thought that she became a lesser woman because of the loss of that role. Rebecca no longer managed the day-to-day care of her husband and son, but began to carry the responsibility of being the primary wage earner in the family. Susan's changed relationships were as much a result of her health problems as of job losses. She spent most of her time at home, but stayed in touch with friends and family through the telephone and e-mail. She missed the day-to-day contact with professional colleagues as well as the work itself.

Each of the women felt her job loss as an assault on her identity. As Diane stated, "It changed the face of me to me." Each woman's identity rested to some extent on her professional competence, and for Diane and Susan, it was a major factor in their self-concept, and the centre around which their lives were organized. Rebecca's life was focused on both her family, and her professional identity (Phillips & Imhoff, 1997). Along with her social service administration job, Diane lost the income and vacation time that allowed her to be the main caregiver in her family, and to contribute time and money to her church and other community activities. She felt embarrassed by her lack of money, by being out of work, and by discussing it with acquaintances. Diane's job loss meant that she lost self-esteem that was only partially recovered once she found other full-time, permanent employment.

Rebecca's identity and self-esteem were eventually enhanced through her job loss experiences. She was able to connect for the first time with her feelings of anger and to use those feelings to take action. It was important to her to maintain important

relationships with colleagues in the college at the same time as she worked to make the administration accountable. By accomplishing that, she redefined her relationship to work and freed a risk-taking aspect of her personality.

Susan's job loss meant both coming to terms with her health issues, and the loss of her status as an employed professional woman. The loss of her professional role left Susan feeling less worthy, a feeling that has been reinforced by other's reactions to her as a poor woman on welfare. She continued to assert herself as an intelligent, competent woman who is worthy irrespective of her unemployment and poverty. In particular, she insisted through self-advocacy that bureaucrats pay attention to her, and take her needs seriously.

The women were all able to make sense of their experiences. Each of them became aware, long before the job losses, of changes in the organization. Each of them felt less comfortable with the evolving organizational values, and attributed her job loss in part to a poor fit between her own values and those of the organization. None of them could justify her job loss on the basis of poor work performance. They were hard working, loyal employees whose employment was expected to continue. When they lost their jobs, they saw it as a violation of that implicit contract and a personal betrayal.

Each woman has moved into other situations, employed or unemployed, since her job loss. Diane found another satisfying professional job in another town. Of the three women, Diane was the only one to use an outplacement agency. She valued that agency's help with her job search, and wished similar support had been available after

she lost her temporary jobs. Rebecca has moved abroad to work in a job that she is enjoying. Susan, due to her worsening health, has been unable to do so, and is still suffering from her loss of employment. Each woman was able to keep going after her job loss because she found hope for the future and a purpose for living. Their hope rested on their relationships with others, particularly those they lived with, trusted, and cared for directly. For Rebecca, it was caring for her family, and for Diane and Susan, it was caring for their pets.

These women's stories of job loss are stories of transition and survival. As I worked with the women, I felt privileged to discuss their experiences and feelings. They spent many hours in interviews with me, and reviewing drafts of their stories. These stories make it clear that there is no one way to lose a job, or to react to that loss. Each woman's job loss story has unique characteristics, but each woman gained insight into her experiences by telling her story as part of this research project.

These women's stories raise concerns about the future of work in climate of continuing organizational restructuring and downsizing. Through their job loss experiences, all three women lost trust in employers and employment. If there is a generalized loss of trust, and reduced loyalty to employers, it could threaten the health of public and private sector organizations that rely on highly trained and experienced employees. The loss of good jobs also threatens democracy because it requires a population with sufficient leisure to become informed, consider policy alternatives, and contribute to the democratic process.

Jahoda (1982) pointed out that most of us are speaking of employment when

we discuss work. Employment in good jobs with predictable pay and benefits provides employees with the income to provide for themselves and their families. It also gives them the leisure to spend time with their families, to continue their education, or contribute to their community's life in some way. Through employment, people enjoy the psychological benefits that Jahoda identified. Our work structures our time, gives us something meaningful to do, assigns us a status, allows us to engage with people outside of our families, and pursue collective goals. The loss of jobs with good pay and benefits threatens to leave many of us psychologically wanting.

Recommendations

This research on women's experiences of job loss focused on three women's stories of job loss, and the sense derived from telling them. Research usually ends with a recommendation for further research on the subject, and this research will not be an exception. The recommendations are consistent with previous research on job loss, transitions, and narrative therapy. Special note is made of instances where this research seems to be at odds with previous findings. Each reader is in the best position to judge the extent to which this research relates to a particular situation, and the extent to which these recommendations can guide behaviour.

For further research:

- Further qualitative research on job loss experiences is necessary. The findings in this research apply to these women and may not apply, or apply only in part, to other women, men, industries, or jurisdictions. Research with differing populations would help those who lose their jobs, their supporters, employers, and counsellors to

approach job loss transitions more knowledgeably and effectively.

For those who lose their jobs:

- Tell the story of your experience to trusted others who are willing to listen while you make sense of your job loss. You might tell your story to friends, family members, outplacement counsellors, and professional associates, anyone who wants to help you understand your experiences within the context of your life. Give them a brief outline of your expectations for your discussion. You could use the research questions in Appendix B as a guide.
- Be sure to state clearly to others whether you want their advice.
- Reach out to those who matter to you. Just as Diane and Rebecca found, other people may be guilty or fearful survivors who do not know what to say or do. You can help them to connect with you by letting them know that you value your work together or their friendship. You can then discuss with them how your relationship is to continue, at least during the current transition.

For friends and family of those who lose their jobs:

- Listen to what those who lose their jobs have to say. Most of all, listen. Diane, Rebecca, and Susan stressed that having the opportunity to focus on what it was like to lose their jobs, and to make sense of and gain meaning from it was very important to them.
- Take the job loser's lead by asking the questions she wants to address. Together you may find the questions in Appendix B a helpful guide.
- Do not give advice unless the individual concerned asks for it.

For employers:

- Employees realize that there are changes in the wind (Bridges, 1991, 1994). It is important to inform staff about the plans as thoroughly as possible, to explain the rationale for changes, and to commit the organization to fair treatment of all concerned. As Bridges says, the truth may be difficult, but rumours destroy trust. Diane, Rebecca, and Susan all sensed that organizational changes were coming long before they lost their jobs.
- Give as much notice as possible to ease the transition for those who are leaving. The two women in this research who had the time to say farewell, and to initiate contact with important others, fared better after they lost or left their jobs. That recommendation seems contrary to the admonition that employers make changes quickly so the organizations can begin to recover (Bridges, 1991). It seems likely that there may be tension between employee and employer needs, and employers must balance the good of the organization with that of individuals. It is important to recognize, however, that employees will suffer less from job loss with time to say farewell. I urge employers to give trusted employees as much notice as possible.
- Hire outplacement and counselling services to help both those who lose their jobs and survivors cope with the change. Change and loss of the old structures are difficult for everyone (Bridges, 1994).

For counsellors:

- Encourage those who lose their jobs to tell their stories. Encourage them to use words, or other media, if that's more comfortable. The process of telling the story,

making sense and finding meaning, will help clients through the transition from job loss to the next stage in their lives (Bridges, 1980; Neimeyer, 1999).

- Counsellors need to be sensitive to age and gender issues (Straussner and Phillips, 1999). Those authors found that women lose hope more quickly than men and are more likely to accept any job that's offered. Help those you counsel to identify what gives them hope, to be flexible in their responses to unemployment, and remind them that unemployment is temporary.
- Group counselling may be particularly effective because some research has shown that the most helpful support is from someone else who has lost a job (Carroll et al., 1995).
- A narrative process can be used effectively in conjunction with other career planning exercises and inventories to help clients make a plan that is uniquely suited to their abilities, preferences, and situations (Cochran, 1997). Integrating narrative into career counselling has the potential to improve the job loss transition. Cochran's central idea is "emplotment; that is, how a person can be cast as the main character in a career narrative that is meaningful, productive, and fulfilling" (p. x). He states that through their life stories individuals implicitly or explicitly describe their ideal life course. As they try out options, read about them, and talk with others, they will accept or reject them according to how they fit into their evolving story. The best choices would not only allow a person to continue their ideal course, but would allow them the agency to continue shaping their life story.

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Appendix A:

Informed Consent

Project Title: An Investigation of Women's Job Loss Experiences

Researcher: Arlene M.C. Young, B.A., Dip.Ed. (Educational Psychology), M.Ed. (Counselling Psychology)

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The purpose of this study is to find out what it is like for women to lose their jobs involuntarily. How did it happen? What effect has it had on you and your relationships to others? What has the experience meant to you? By listening to women who have lost their jobs involuntarily, the researcher hopes to understand the experience and its significance for the individual and society.

1. I will meet the researcher at least once for approximately two hours to talk about my experience at a time and place suitable to me.
2. I may give the researcher personal documents and artistic expressions relating to my experience.
3. My conversations with the researcher will be audio and video recorded and then typed out (transcribed).
4. I may read and comment on interview summaries and interpretations.

5. The researcher understands that I may not wish to speak about some aspects of my experience. I can refuse to answer any question, I can ask that some materials be excluded from the study, and I can drop out of the study at any time without explanation. If I drop out, my interviews will not be used in the study.
6. No one will be able to match my name to what I say. My name will not be used in reports of the study, and all personal information, tapes and transcripts will be kept locked by the researcher. This consent form with my name on it will be kept in a place separate from the other material.
7. I will not gain anything directly from this study.
8. Discussing my experience of job loss may heighten or change my awareness of this experience.
9. This research study, including what I say, will be published in a dissertation and in other publications.
10. What I say may be used in a different study, provided the study is approved by an ethics committee.
11. I may ask the researcher any question before agreeing to be in this study. If I have more questions I can call the researcher or her supervisor at the telephone numbers on this form.

_____ _____

Date Signature of Participant

Appendix B:

Interview Prompts

Stem	Probe
What happened?	How did you find out? Who? How?
What was that like for you?	
How did you experience it	Were there feelings and changes in your body? Describe. Thoughts? Mood? Self-esteem?
Is there a time that was particularly meaningful to you?	How does that relate to the meaning of job loss?
When you started working at _____ what was your expectation for that job?	Did that expectation change over the years? What is it now?
Have your ideas about work changed?	How?
How did that affect the people who are important to you?	Your husband or partner? What about your children? Other family members? Close friends? Other friends and neighbours?
How did job loss affect you	Financially? Socially?
How did it change your prospects for the future?	Debt repayment? Retirement? Further employment?
Have you learned anything from this experience?	What? Is that worth learning?
What does this experience mean to you?	Has your idea about that changed over

	time? How?
What would you like to tell others job losers about the experience of job loss?	Employers? Helping professionals? Families? Friends? Who else?
What would you like to tell policy makers?	Company executives or deputy ministers? Government?
Can you anticipate a time that the whole meaning will become clear?	How will that be?
Is there something I should have asked and didn't?	
Would you like to add some comments?	
If participants have provided documents of any kind, I will ask them about the meaning of it with respect to organizational restructuring?	

Demographic information:

Age		Education
Sole support	Joint wage earner	Number of Children
Years with former employer		Years work experience elsewhere

Appendix C:

Second Order Themes

Appendix C1: Diane

Relationships

- All but core relationships have changed. Acknowledges that she needed to maintain core relationships—35

Family

- Support from family through frequent phone and email contact—44, 45, 70
- Protects stepfather by reassuring him that she'll survive—67
- Dismissal devastates and frightens one family member who decides to start his own business to avoid the same fate—24

Professional

Positive	Negative
Felt supported by the three others who were dismissed who could share feelings; shared similar values, vision, and strong social work administration; their social meetings included discussions about social work —71, 122, 87	Disappointment in co-workers who showed lack of support after dismissal and did not call about work prospects—17, 75
Feels proud to be relied on by some former staff members; help with scholarship applications—69	Astonishment and disappointment that professional relationships dropped off once she was out of the workplace—29, 77
Maintains contact with some former co-workers; loyal to some people; regrets not having a party for them for too long—42, 59	Distancing from boss who is no longer respected—78
Commitment to co-workers is evidenced by her desire to contact them to cancel scheduled appointments—8	Develops a rationale for who has not kept in touch; most are too busy surviving the system to have energy to handle her, they don't call; cannot handle her anger and fear job loss—76, 85, 96
Feels confident in ability to handle subsequent job loss. Felt supported by reference group who could share feelings—87	Angry, terse response to someone from the department asking after welfare. Now distances self from those from the department—20

Friends

Positive	Negative
Followed a friend's advice on using outplacement service to access courses—46	Distancing from people who bring up the topic of her job loss; those from department; church members—57, 20, 82
Support from small circle of close long-time friends is very important.—45, 71	Develops a rationale for not calling people who couldn't stand her anger; Stopped calling some people because she could not express anger or discuss what was bothering her—95
Friends have called with work prospects--75	

Feelings at termination meeting

- You don't feel much but a sense of numbness—15
- Experiences shock and disbelief at termination; initially questioned why it would happen to someone who worked hard, for no reason, then some anger which became stronger later—11, 9
- The day's darkness reflects her own dark feelings of betrayal and disbelief at termination. Repressed her anger so she could cope—13
- Anger at being turned over to someone else; would have preferred getting a business card and dealing with her later; Felt too angry to speak with outplacement person but left the door open by asking for her card—14, 6
- Concerned about lack of termination with staff and vice versa—127
- Sense of urgency to meet with friends, gather forces and move on—12
- Anger gave energy and motivated her to move on—21

Rationale for dismissal

- Her caring social work perspective is a poor fit with new corporate culture and is seen as reason for dismissal—5
- Develops a rationale for dismissal that includes being hand selected for job loss; to reduce the number of management positions, specifically social work managers —121, 124
- Develops rationale for losing job: It's the best workers who lose their jobs and are gone because they are expensive or whatever—119
- Perceives four who lost their jobs as sharing similar values, vision, and strong social work administration; their social meetings included discussions about social work—122
- Rationalizes her lower performance rating as possible justification for dismissal—4
- Perceives those who were kept by department as being the boss's favourites and not as competent managers as those who lost their jobs—118
- Perceives that if she was the only one to lose her job, it would have implied poor performance—133
- Feels alienated from decision to eliminate job. Feels comfortable in some places. Feelings of job incumbent are disregarded in involuntary job loss—74

Employment

- Resentment; reapplying for own job—1
- Perceives permanent loss of opportunities due to job loss in 50s; anticipates continuing underemployment except in teaching—110
- Is more cynical about changing workplace because of her experience. Questions how she can trust the work place—90
- Subsequent jobs have been poorer quality with shifts, a lot of driving, low pay, and working two jobs; Constant worry evoked by changing job circumstances and low pay Work is not high stress; shift work is exhausting—53, 62
- Fatigue results in lack of commitment to work; current work is reactive, nor planned—65
- Committed to clients not job—66
  Increased understanding of the difficulties many people face in working two or three unchallenging jobs with poor benefits while raising a family—116

Unemployment

- Terrible to be unemployed for five months. Desperation for work led her to take an unsuitable job. Myers Briggs confirmed her suitability for the type of work with the department—25
- Worried less once on UI, permitted greater selectivity in jobs—79
- Effects of initial job loss continue into the present—107
- Multi job losses mean continuing to live with consequences of first one: Blames department for subsequent loss of stability, income, and benefits such as sick leave and vacation—55
- Steeled to job loss after multi job losses; less invested so job loss is less meaningful—134
- Feels confident in ability to handle subsequent job loss. Felt supported by reference group who could share feelings—87
- Fear of taking another job where she maybe last hired, first fired—26
- Frustration with management jobs; no longer interested in management—41

Job search

- Applied for jobs with people she used to work with—30
- Disappointment in efficacy of continuing education in assisting her to find a job. Disillusionment with the value of her certificates—18
- Recognizes there are risks in new jobs and moving. Moving costs a lot and you have to start over; lose support and stability for self and cat; staying probably means less income —83, 128
- Expresses concern for those who don't get outplacement help; Questions what help is available for those who don't get outplacement now that there are no career centres—47
- Experiences terrible barrier to employment; some previous employers would not give references; baffled as to how to explain that—31, 123
- Anger at profession and not-for-profits for not hiring for political reasons rather than competence; They assumed I was paid too much and they're angry because the department has reduced their funding—54

Meaning of the experience

- Feels whole life disrupted by job loss; lack of money for social life and clothes; Priority is on keeping car running—97
- Whole experience is like living through a nightmare where she was covered in crap; beginning to see the end of the nightmare—112
- Defines career as future oriented, allows a choice of challenges within a big system; subsequent systems are not that big—115
- Definition of career includes opportunity to do a variety of things, advance, and do activities outside of work; planned for retirement with department's help and encouragement; worked on secondment with most recent boss as a colleague in the department head 's office; most recent boss changed when she got a management position—113
- Tentative meaning of work in the department rested on the value of the work itself within the community, hiring staff, and doing a variety to tasks. Work also gave money to run a household—117
- Defines work as a job with no opportunities that you can walk away from; the jobs since leaving the department—114
- Perceives permanent loss of opportunities due to job loss in 50s; anticipates continuing underemployment except in teaching—110
- Cat, house, friends and music keep her going. Music calms her when upset—93
- The work place is depersonalizing—101

- Theorizes only job losers can do outplacement work; Theoretical understanding derived from releasing and helping, but not understanding what job loss feels like to job loser—102
- Anticipates using job loss experience more as she approaches retirement; Useful now in pointing out our resilience when it's needed; Able to use job loss experience in working with abused women —103, 111
- Health problem (high blood pressure) results from job loss—27
- Feels beaten up financially by job loss. Income is less than half of what it was; necessitates postponement of retirement plans—52, 91

Control/Management

- Loss of control over her life—22
- Stable employment permits planning and managing your life and doing unpaid, volunteer work; Loss of job with department led to loss of ability to manage life—105
- [Loss of income means] unable to plan expenses or vacations; postponement of retirement plans; cannot predict income Frustration at being unable to plan future—86, 91, 37
- Anger from lack of control in life. Blames those terrible people for robbing her of her plans—34
- Determination to arrange her pension fund and income to protect herself—51
- Feels alienated from decision to eliminate job. Feelings of job incumbent are disregarded in involuntary job loss—74
- Took control of the interview by stating that she was leaving—7
- Feels more in control of the situation if she can tell staff of her leaving in her own way—81
- Seeks to control with whom she speaks; chooses funerals over going away parties to avoid certain people; maintains contact with some former co-workers. Feels able to choose when to talk with people she sees often —56, 59, 72
- Poor working conditions, driving and shift work, interfere with activities outside of work, e.g. taking courses or doing volunteer work—104
- Fatigue results in lack of commitment to work; current work is reactive, not planned—65

Safety/Security

- Precautionary group action taken (hire a lawyer)—2
- Caution; preliminary sense of insecurity reflected in a revised investment strategy and unwillingness to take risks—3
- Feels unsafe to express herself politically—36
- Felt confused about the particulars of purchasing additional pension—89
- Determination to arrange her pension fund and income to protect herself—51

Identity

Positive	Negative
• Identity now includes ability to survive adversity—109 • Feels acknowledgement of skills when given volunteer award. Self-esteem boosted by this recognition—40 • Proud that clients recognize a strength--fair and equitable treatment of others—68 • Proud that my recommendation on hiring a	• Feels she doesn't fit in—84 • Self image has changed. Loss of sense of identity—38 • Identity confusion; aware of skills but unable to use—64 • Feels undervalued in professional community, unsuccessful except in volunteer work;—63

replacement was accepted—49 • Anticipates using job loss experience more as she approaches retirement; Useful now in pointing out our resilience when it's needed—111 • Has worked too hard to get another job; Others comment that they could not endure what she has. She has derived a sense of strength from surviving. Uses that experience to help abused women a different perspective based on her experience—39	

Caring for others

- Role in family changed from the successful one who sustained the rest to not doing that—98
- Feels blessed that mother went when she had security and vacation to care for her; When you're a caregiver, you have to know that everything else is in place; job search means staying put —131, 132
- Role conflict between job search and family care giver; Role loss from employed to unemployed; need to develop a routine of being unemployed—125
- Job losses effect on mood; derives a sense of purpose and meaning from cat who needs her; felt a sense of panic when cat disappeared for a while—28
- Her caring social work perspective is a poor fit with new corporate culture and is seen as reason for dismissal—5
- Despite termination, her main concern is for others. Commitment to co-workers is evidenced by her desire to contact them to cancel scheduled appointments—8
- Concerned for others who sense organizational change. Advises them to plan ahead to ease emotional impact—80
- Expresses concern for those who don't get outplacement help; Questions what help is available for those who don't get outplacement now that there are no career centres—47
- Concern expressed about lack of professional support for job losers especially career counselling and employment readiness help for professionals and women—92
- Fear and anger at continuing downsizing and mergers, empathizes with others who must go through termination. Questions the rationale for such goings on—60
- Dislikes what's happening in workplace; Empathizes with and fears for what people will experience in reorganizations—100
- Wishes there was a how-to manual for dealing with job loss without depression; Expresses concern that younger generation will experience more job loss and need to plan to protect themselves financially—73
- Expresses concern for others by advising minister of her decision to stay away for awhile—82

As a woman

- Perceives job loss as harder on women over 50; closer to retirement age; have far more to lose—135
- Fought to get into management; important to be at that level in the organization; hard for women to get to that level. The man who lost his job hasn't had to fight for things because he chose to retire—136

Role displacement

- Role in family changed from the successful one who sustained the rest to not doing that—98
- Experience of role dissonance, employment vs. unemployment, is common to men and women who want to work—99
- Role conflict between job search and family care giver; Role loss from employed to unemployed; need to develop a routine of being unemployed—125
- Perceives role dissonance with respect to the church, went from someone who was stable and a good supporter to someone who was unemployed; went from someone who has done well to someone who can't give money or volunteer—108
- Death and divorce are common experiences you go through with your family The role displacement of job loss is difficult because you are alone—106

Mourning

- It's like a funeral. Mourns the death of her career —16
- Work had become unsatisfactory. Didn't mourn for her job but rather for loss of options and opportunities—23
- Emotional response to dismissal, disappointed and sad—43
- Seeks to control with whom she speaks; chooses funerals over going away parties to avoid certain people—56
- Awful to lose job at Christmas; Heightened dislike for Christmas as a result of being unemployed and father's death at Christmas, awareness of what Christmas should be like versus what she's experienced. Good times have been replaced with worry, difficulties about money, legal matters, etc—48

Hurt/Humiliated

- Felt she deserved better, a dismissal with notice, especially from a social work department —33
- Hurt that department did not plan a farewell party; too painful to attend party planned by a few staff members—126
- Humiliation at dismissal in a public setting. Feels that was inappropriate—32

Timing of job loss

Positive	Negative
• Feels blessed that mother went when she had security and vacation to care for her; When you're a caregiver, you have to know that everything else is in place—132 • Perceives losing job when her mother was alive would have meant less time with mother; no vacations and job search mean she has to stay put; be devastating; would have killed mother—130, 131 • Feels fortunate to not have the worry of a mortgage—88	• Awful to lose job at Christmas; Heightened dislike for Christmas as a result of being unemployed and father's death at Christmas, awareness of what Christmas should be like versus what she's experienced. Good times have been replaced with worry, difficulties about money, legal matters, etc—48 • Perceives summer as an easier time to lose job because everyone is outside gardening, easier to visit—129

Appendix C2: Rebecca

Family

- Perceived necessity of removing husband from a poisonous environment. He expressed betrayal more than Rebecca; Sheamus was annoyed she didn't express it; Rebecca felt sort of dumped from work.—A35
- Feels that her job loss was a big and unfortunate learning experience for a young boy.—A52
- Whole family felt disruption in their lives; Luke felt it most because his whole life was in that community.—A 53
- Fortuitous outcome of moving was that Luke and Sheamus reconnected while they were alone.—A54
- Felt irritated that father an son developed unique routines in her absence; amused at their way of doing things; recognized time alone solidified relationship in crucial pre-teens.—A55
- Recognition that because of a healthy relationship you can work through a crisis together; shared vision and values are the glue that can bring positive results; proud that Luke seems to have learned that.—A66
- Everything that happens to her happens to a woman, not a man. Effect on family and roles as mother and spouse is easier to determine.—A72

Disillusionment about management/organization

- Recognized that the poor decision was consistent with others over previous 3-5 years.—A7
- Job losses confirmed view of how the college was operating; anger at the lack of rationale.—A8
- Perceived lack of integrity and moral leadership, rather environment was competitive and self interest in the fore.—A18
- Environment rewarded departmental promotion but did not hold them accountable for what they did.—A19
- Individuals' short-term interests determined organizational goals, rather than the long-term interests of the college.—A20
- Felt relief at the cut because dysfunctional institutional climate sabotaged honest dialogue and trust; Feelings of relief seem bizarre or sick; Recognizes previous attempts at healthier problem solving were naïve.—A21
- Confirmed when decision brought into the open, concretized the destructive environment.—A36
- Important to make management accountable; recognized discomfort of colleagues; felt treated like a leper, but accepted as situational not personal; helped colleagues to get past that and to deal with each other as humans.—A73
- Increasing awareness of assembly line, heavy workload, and working conditions where being caught up is the benchmark of a good job; Felt that being on top of messages and admin took precedence over counselling—B19

Relationship to organization/employment

- A positive step in negative college environment was to start a consulting firm; Aware that she relied too much on intuition, but it sustains her; Began to work differently with students once she recognized her limitations and blind spots, facilitate and supported them in their problem solving.—B8
- Felt need to compromise and redefine highly valued sense of integrity; chose to emphasize integrity in her relationships with students.—A25

- Believes maturing affected her approach to her work and wonders how students perceived that. Cut other involvement with the college because it seemed unwanted.—A26
- Increasing awareness that the college had become dysfunctional; began to separate from college while husband still immersed; sorted out boundary issues to set limits on what she could do to maintain a healthy environment.—A59
- Realization that organizational dysfunctionalism could pull her into it; husband perceived that later.—A60
- Increased awareness of personal boundaries; wants to continue to identify with organization she works for, but will be more judicious in providing extraordinary support.—A68
- Changed relationship with paid employment; thoughtful, reflective approach responding to what's needed and personal needs and wants.—A70
- Initiated conversations and accepted the awkwardness of survivors; their fears and tension symptomatic of the dysfunctional environment; sought closure.—A75

Financial implications

- Concerned about effect of financial risk on son; Developed deeper appreciation of husband's concern once she became the chief breadwinner.—A31
- Dream home symbolized commitment to the community, a good place to raise a child; Financial challenges from job loss were exacerbated by building the house.—A33
- After job loss, dream house felt like a financial albatross. Recognized that private practice was not financially viable.—A34
- Experienced a shift in the importance of her decisions; Felt more conscientious because her decisions impacted others; Sobering recognition that is greater than former cognitive understanding of some men's concern for family's security.—B12

Meaning

- Decision confirmed her assessment of the lack of leadership that led to such an outcome.—A13
- Meaning is in clarifying personal role in institution; personal knowledge of how destructive a work environment can be; valued personally and as counsellor; aware that some have been abused and blame themselves, feel shame because they haven't had the context or have not been able to validate themselves.—A78
- Facilitated risk-taking

Self awareness

- Felt relief at the cut because dysfunctional institutional climate sabotaged honest dialogue and trust; Feelings of relief seem bizarre or sick; Recognizes previous attempts at healthier problem solving were naïve.—A21
- Believes maturing affected her approach to her work and wonders how students perceived that. Cut other involvement with the college because it seemed unwanted.—A26
- Felt irritated that father and son developed unique routines in her absence; amused at their way of doing things; recognized time alone solidified relationship in crucial pre-teens.—A55
- Values time alone to reflect and reconnect with own values; freed from college dysfunction; recognizes the benefits from disruption.—A56
- Positive outcome of the crisis was an integration of cognitive and behaviour change which she had been seeking over the previous decade.—A67
- Increased awareness of personal boundaries; wants to continue to identify with organization she

works for, but will be more judicious in providing extraordinary support.—A68

- Growing awareness of limitations; acceptance of limitations, recognition of institutional responsibility, diminishing energy with ageing, willingness and ability to hold up the institution.—A69
- Guarded about committing herself to projects. Uses tension she feels to alert herself to the important issues. learned to stay with the tension longer and use that to choose how to react, not always rushing in to go the extra mile.—A71
- Everything that happens to her happens to a woman, not a man. Effect on family and roles as mother and spouse is easier to determine..—A72
- Forties brought an acceptance of what is without qualification; developed a mantra: I can only do what I can do.—B7
- Experienced a shift in the importance of her decisions; Felt more conscientious because her decisions impacted others; Sobering recognition that is greater than former cognitive understanding of some men's concern for family's security.—B12

Emotions

Positive	Negative
• Supported • Counsellors and Chair felt supported by the shock and outrage of other departments at the cut: Especially gratified by another department's offer to sacrifice instead one of their programs instead—A10 • Felt supported by expressions of shock across the college and program—A12 • Felt supported by student researchers who challenged the administration's lies about availability of community mental health resources—A46 • Felt supported by student's protest; Felt empowered that making administration accountable led to keeping one counselling position—48 •	• Amazement/disbelief • Amazed that college morale continued deteriorating when it seemed it had reached bottom; Recommitment to community symbolized by building a dream home—A32 • Caught off guard by manager's emotional response to her decision to leave the current college—B14 • Expresses disbelief & discomfort at the overwhelming positive feedback from current manager—B15
Power/Assertive • "Soaring" best described feelings about the cuts. Chair felt fragile and shock because he had not perceived the pattern as clearly as she.—A23 • Felt powerful—soaring—in making the administration accountable. Amusing, fun, demonstrating they didn't have a leg to stand on.—A24 • Father heard resignation rather than lack of surprise; tried to instil fight--to empower her to raise hell—A41 • Father's comments cemented her resolve. He died a few days later and she dropped everything to attend the funeral—A42	***Misunderstood*** • Sheamus felt shock, outrage, and betrayal; he was in so much pain that he could not understand Rebecca's different reaction—A58 • Perceived necessity of removing husband from a poisonous environment. He expressed betrayal more than Rebecca; Sheamus was annoyed she didn't express it; Rebecca felt sort of dumped.—A35 Father heard resignation but it was not that rather it was lack of surprise; tried to instil fight—to empower her to raise hell—A41

- Felt pleasure in communicating with all staff on counselling issues and in disconcerting the administration; made sure to educate support and maintenance staff on counselling issues: Developed a strategy to confront administration about false information they were disseminating on purported elimination of counselling at another college.—A43 & A44
- Connected to thoughts and feelings of disgust; proud that she could express them directly and not withdraw.—A51
- Deeply touched by disruption to relationships Perceives own gentleness but does not waste it on those who wish counselling and her harm. Understood discomfort and thankfulness of those who remained; wants to maintain communications with them.—A74
- Initiated conversations and accepted the awkwardness of survivors; their fears and tension symptomatic of the dysfunctional environment; sought closure—A75
- Enabled by present job to seek adventure; Confidence increased by stepping into and handling a job in a new situation; Integrity threatened in college, repaired by current manager's unconditional acceptance and regard.—B17

Relief

- Relief at not having to work at an increasingly toxic relationship; Groundedness allowed her to acknowledge sense of relief; unhappy about how job loss was accomplished; but happy she could walk away.—B6

Connection

- Deeply touched by disruption to relationships Perceives own gentleness but does not waste it on those who wish counselling and her harm. Understood discomfort and thankfulness of those who remained; wants to maintain communications with them.—A74

Anger

- Husband's anger was so great that he did not support her need for closure; she used an all staff e-mail to tell everyone how much the relationships at the college had meant to her; gratified that it struck a chord and some people commented on how much it meant to them.—A76
- Felt anger at effect on herself and students; Husband and she recognized dysfunctional organization, but decided to remain at college.—A29
- Dying father validated anger and encouraged her to make administration accountable.—A39
- Felt relief, anger, and an assertive desire to make executives accountable for their decisions to college and community.A22
- Job losses confirmed view of how the college was operating; anger at the lack of rationale.—A8

Sadness

- Felt sad at the loss of a fantastic job she held for the first 8-10 years at the college; Interaction between administration, faculty, and students had been wonderful at that time; Looked forward to Mondays during that period—A75

Disgust/Disappointed

- Connected to thoughts and feelings of disgust; proud that she could express them directly and not withdraw.—A51
- Disgust that administration claimed to study community resources by leafing through the Yellow Pages. Amazed at management that is so incompetent to base job losses on such poor information; Embarrassed that they are so unconscious about their insensitive words and actions.—A47
- Disgusted that the vice president's explanation and rationale was so flimsy; Department was sacrificed and served up on a platter.—A50

Pride

- Proud that their communications were open and could be refuted. Gratified that students did not buy the arguments and held a protest rally.—A45
- Proud that the protests brought a small change in budget plans, for the first time in college history; recognizes that saving the department was unrealistic..—A49
- Proud that her son was able to express his negative feelings about the college in the Board member's presence while respecting the people who work there.—A63
- Proud that Luke could speak his mind and emotions in the moment like his father. Proud that husband bespoke the effect on family as well as college and individual in spite of Board member's attempt to gloss over the job loss.—A64
- Proud that Sheamus expressed resentment about valuing computers over staff; poor management, and effect on his family, especially Luke. Resentful that Luke became aware negativity of parental work environment at too early an age; Regret over commitment to college that led to discussions of frustrations at home.--A65

Appendix C3: Susan

Meaning

- Understanding of job loss changes with perspectives over time—B13
- Harder to lose minimum wage job than professional job—B17
- Everyone suffered in government downsizing; evidence in health problems and survivor guilt—B3
- Downsizing can be done humanely as it was for 10 years before big cuts—B5
- Took three years to understand role of illness in leaving government job—B17
- Dogs given her a reason to get out of bed; owes them her life so runs household for them—A38
- TV character states meaning, "Sometimes you just have to hang on until the scenery changes"—A28
- Happiness is internal; you can decide to be as happy as you want to be—A28
- Relief/ glad/ happy to leave government job—A18, B3, B17
- Worry about income siphons energy—B7
- Drank to cope with work and anger—A26
- Astonished at behaviour when drinking—A26

Health

- Relief from symptoms of narcolepsy came with correct diagnosis and treatment—A14
- Lack of routine when she was not working made her unaware of her increased need for sleep and onset of depression—A22
- Isolated from friends by depression, not jobs loss—A35
- Understands from own experience with poor health that many problems are hidden—B2
- Realized extent of illness faster because she lived alone than with someone else to take care of things—B9
- Lost ability to read like she used to because she falls asleep—B10
- Learned how important it is to inform others of health problems so they can watch and help—B13
- Stressful to become poor and not know how to do stuff—B14

Ethics

- Increasing ethical concerns about environment and conservation of a diminishing resource, and safe mining practices—A2
- Boss used Susan to blindside senior staff handling negotiations—A5
- Boss lied to when he said there were problems with her performance in negotiations; Angered by boss's statement that she was not sufficiently deferential to men when she went over his head.—A7
- Relief to leave government job; Became impossible to maintain ethical standards of reviewing plans, establishing standards, and following legislative guidelines—A18
- Concern for others safety meant that she slept at office before driving home—A23
- Astonished at unethical and illegal behaviour of minimum wage employers; Reported behaviour to authorities—B12
- Employers in minimum wage job encouraged competition not cooperation and that conflicted with Susan's work ethic—B18
- Loved being an engineer; elated to leave a department that disallowed ethical practice; weird to pack and take home stuff that is usually turned over to department; Work was her life especially because narcolepsy allowed her only 8-10 good hours per day—A19

Identity

- Engineering is about how you solve problems; does that pretty much like other engineers—A11
- Engineering and obsession go together well; Worries about being obsessive compulsive—A11
- Engineering is competitive; home was competitive; first–born over achiever—A12
- Susan bridges cultures: engineers-non-engineers, men-women, young-old—A13
- Loved being an engineer; elated to leave a department that disallowed ethical practice; weird to pack and take home stuff that is usually turned over to department; Work was her life especially because narcolepsy allowed her only 8-10 good hours per day—A19
- I lost part of my identity and my friends; colleagues discussed their lives with me because I dragged it out of them—A20
- Those who didn't know her took her to be a secretary rather than the engineer; recognizes that happens to all women in senior positions—A9
- Loved being an engineer; identity as engineer more important than as a woman; dealing with loss now that small business plan has failed—A21
- Ambivalent feelings about father who was demanding and cold; raised kids to be independent thinkers; Father proud that daughter is an engineer—A24
- Downsizing can be humane as it was for 10 years before big cuts; Values sense of humour which helps to keep things in perspective; Sees bosses as personally supportive—B5
- Fears being seen as unworthy; not intelligent or knowledgeable; loss of engineering identity is hard to bear; those she used to work with have difficulty understanding how low she is—B8
- Lost ability to read like she used to because she falls asleep; Wants to get taped books from library; Perceives new task to educate them about her needs—B10
- Belittled by bureaucrats; Fought to be recognized by bureaucrats as intelligent; Questions how those with less knowledge manage—B15
- Money and intelligence are different; cultures were baffling; knew how to be a civil servant, not poor person—B16
- Father intended her to be tough and quick thinking; Devastated her self esteem—A33
- Concern for others safety meant that she slept at office before driving home; Absurd to be expected to find work with low self esteem and poor health—A23
- Pride in transportation department that has been eliminated. Strongly invested in work until she was prevented from doing it anymore—A36
- Values sense of humour which helps to keep things in perspective—B5
- Felt shame at diagnosis of Pickwickian narcolepsy; relief from symptoms of narcolepsy came with correct diagnosis and surgery—A14
- Felt stupid taking part in re-engineering plans and writing job descriptions for jobs that didn't exist; Refused to take part in re-engineering when she realized it was a sham—A15
- Wants people to know what happened without going into long diatribes; Forced to apply for own job; discouraged could not carry on; defiantly called journalist who later wrote story on department—A29
- Fears being seen as unworthy; not intelligent or knowledgeable; loss of engineering identity is hard to bear; those she used to work with have difficulty understanding how low she is—B8
- Hates saying that she cannot work; worry about income takes energy siphons energy—B7

Culture change

- Different cultures were baffling—knew how to be a civil servant, not poor person —B16, B14
- Feels isolation of living alone—B9
- Knows time of day by television program—B9
- Perceives necessity of educating the library about illness to get taped books which are for blind

only—B10
- Bridges cultures: engineers-non-engineers, men-women, young-old—A13

Friends/coworkers

- Moved by gift of rock with signatures of those in branch; moved that staff took the time to find and unusual large flat rock and to get all of the signatures on it—A4
- The audit crew was a large, dysfunctional family. The relationships ebbed and flowed over time—A10
- I lost part of my identity and my friends; colleagues discussed their lives with me because I dragged it out of them—A20
- Isolated from friends by depression, not job loss; one friend stated she would call the police if Susan did not return call—A35
- Sees bosses as personally supportive—B5

Abuse/Sexism

- Father intended her to be tough and quick thinking; Devastated her self esteem—A33
- Ambivalent feelings about father who was demanding and cold; raised kids to be independent thinkers; Father proud that daughter is an engineer—A24
- Angered by boss's statement that she was not sufficiently deferential to men when she went over his head—A7
- Sexual harassment was the norm, efforts to stop it were to avoid law suits, not because it was right; Racism was common too—A9, A10

Assertiveness

- Refused to take part in re-engineering when she realized it was a sham—A15
- Felt glad to leave government job; Felt deceived by employers in minimum wage jobs—said they wanted one thing but actually wanted another; Outraged at disrespectful treatment and duplicity—B11
- Boss lied to about performance in negotiations; Angered by boss's statement that she was not sufficiently deferential to men when she went over his head—A7
- Drank to cope with work and anger; Astonished at extraordinary behaviour when drunk—A26
- Wants people to know what happened without going into long diatribes; Forced to apply for own job; discouraged could not carry on; defiantly called journalist who later wrote story on department—A29

Family

- During mother's illness, Susan became the contact for her family; held family together; assumed responsibility for raising her niece. Father bullied her because there was no one else to push around after mother was ill—A25
- Role in family was to defend downtrodden; Understanding that many problems are hidden is greater due to experience looking after niece; Day care rules for picking up child made a concrete change in her life—B2

Emotions

Shame/embarrassment/self esteem/duped

- Felt shame at diagnosis of Pickwickian narcolepsy; relief from symptoms of narcolepsy came with correct diagnosis and surgery—A14
- Father intended her to be tough and quick thinking; Devastated her self esteem—A33
- Felt stupid taking part in re-engineering plans and writing job descriptions for jobs that didn't exist; Refused to take part in re-engineering when she realized it was a sham—A15
- Wants people to know what happened without going into long diatribes; Forced to apply for own job; discouraged could not carry on; defiantly called journalist who later wrote story on department—A29
- Fears being seen as unworthy; not intelligent or knowledgeable; loss of engineering identity is hard to bear; those she used to work with have difficulty understanding how low she is—B8
- Hates saying that she cannot work; worry about income takes energy siphons energy—B7
- Belittled by bureaucrats; Fought to be recognized by bureaucrats as intelligent; Questions how those with less knowledge manage—B15

Disenchantment, Deceit & Betrayal

- Felt betrayal when execs decided what jobs would remains without looking at collaborative re-engineering plans—A16
- Some of the office work did not make sense—A3
- Felt stupid/ deceived/ tricked taking part in re-engineering plans and writing job descriptions for jobs that didn't exist—A15, A16
- Felt those who left government were better treated than competent staff who remained—A17
- Deceived by minimum wage employers who said they wanted one thing, but actually wanted another—B11
- Boss lied to about performance in negotiations—A7
- Boss used Susan to blindside senior staff who were handling negotiations; she was able to build on honest relationship from previous job—A5
- Leavings were so common there was a cake no longer a party—A17

Despair/Losses

- Lost part of identity and some friends; colleagues discussed their lives with Susan because she dragged it out of them—A20
- Fears being seen as unworthy; not intelligent or knowledgeable; loss of engineering identity is hard to bear; those she used to work with have difficulty understanding how low she is—B8
- Many losses; must stop because you cannot lose everything—A37

Relief

- Relief to leave government job; Became impossible to maintain ethical standards of reviewing plans, establishing standards, and following legislative guidelines—A18

Shock/dismay

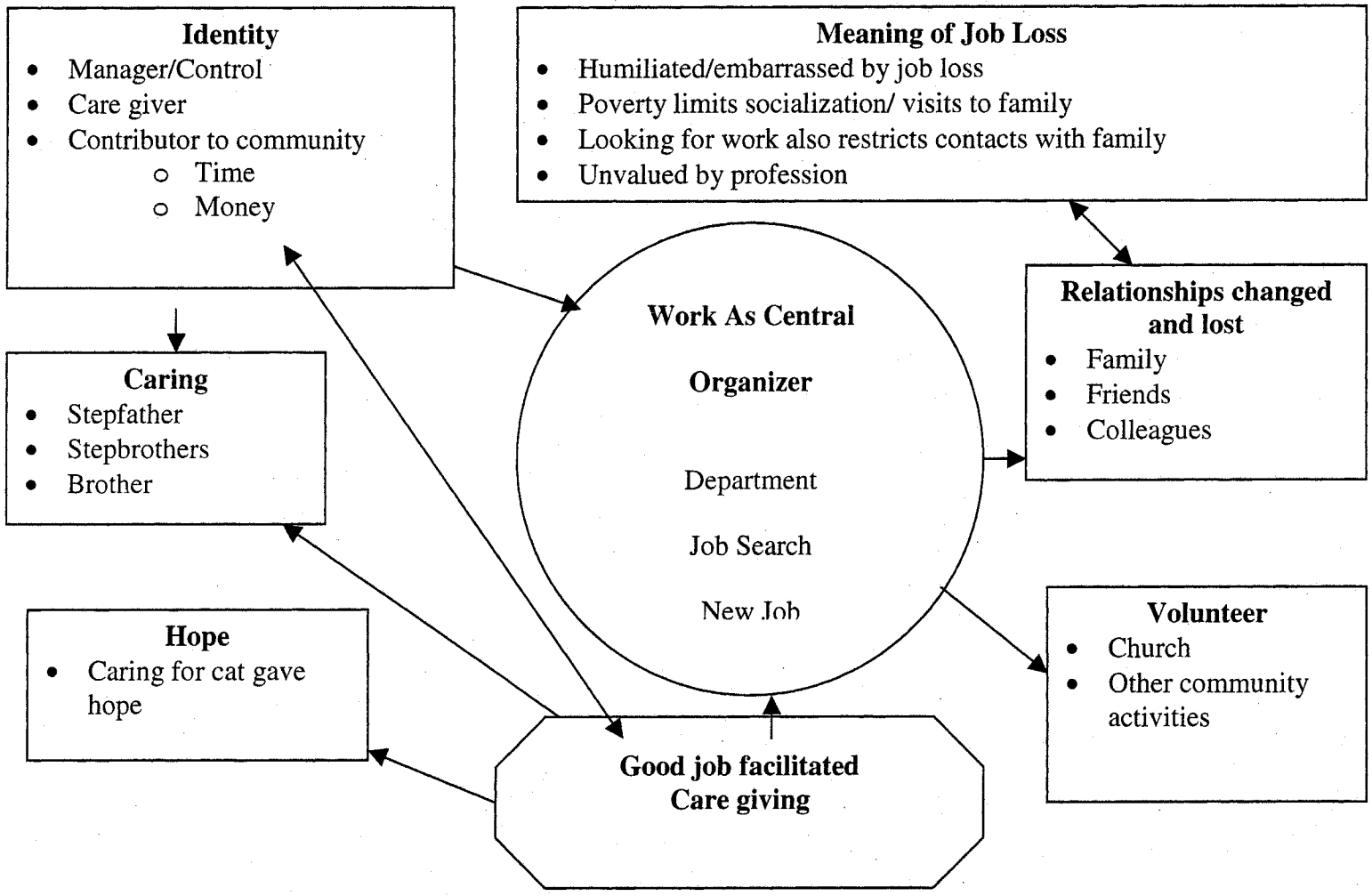
- Shocked that hairdresser noticed the difficulties with her job in what she said; precipitating event to taking buy out—A27

Appendix D:

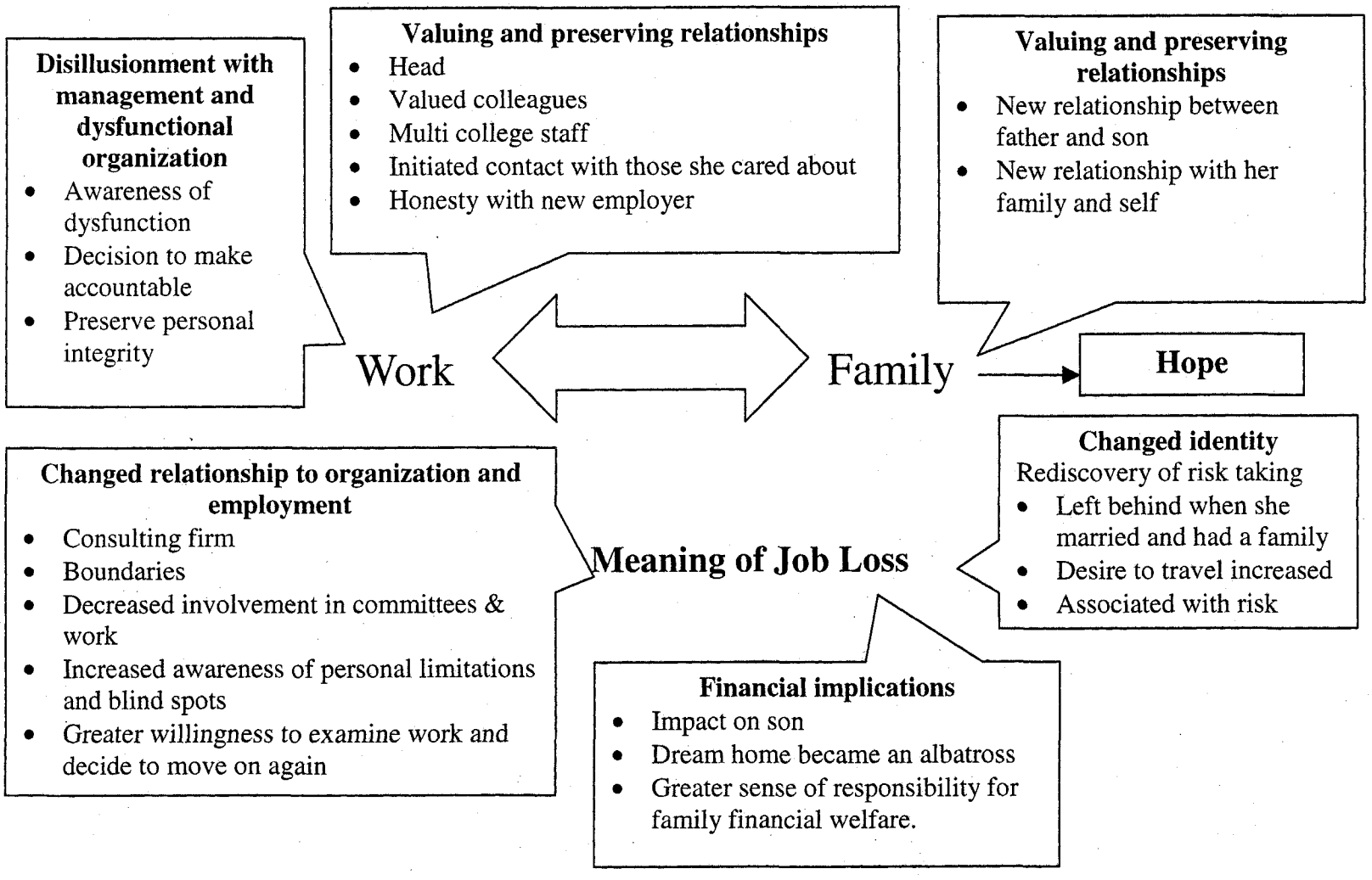
Relationships Between Second Order Themes

Appendix D1: Diane

Assumption=Hard work and good management yields success, entitlement to a job as long as you want it, and a pension



Appendix D2: Rebecca



Appendix D3: Susan