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**A MULTICULTURAL STUDY OF THE EXPERIENCE OF
GRIEF FOLLOWING INVOLUNTARY JOB LOSS**

by

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DISSERTATION

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for the Degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

Counselor Education

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DEDICATION

In loving memory of my father, Carl Byrd, who instilled in me the drive to succeed and to reach for the stars, my brother, Michael Byrd, and my daughter, Kelly Lacen, who celebrated the milestones of my life and would be celebrating this one. You are my shining stars who live forever in my heart.

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My family supported me in countless ways along this path. They provided me with unconditional love and support throughout the dissertation process. Many thanks to my husband, Don, who vicariously experienced the trials and tribulations of conducting a research study and writing a dissertation. He always told me to take it “one step at a time” and he always believed that I could do it. Thank you for believing in me.

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I would be remiss if I did not add my two canine companions who also posed as therapy dogs during this process. Greddy and Frodo, my office companions, provided me with comfort and distraction when I needed it most, allowing my thoughts to take a backseat to the world at large.

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ABSTRACT

Unemployment affects many individuals and families in today's world. This qualitative multiple-case study design examined how individuals from diverse backgrounds experienced grief following involuntary job loss. A purposeful sampling consisted of nine adults who represented the multicultural diversity in New Mexico. Triangulation of methods included comparing and cross-checking data collected through initial and follow-up phenomenological interviews and a focus group. Findings from this study indicated that a job is a relationship which is influenced by culture, commitment, relationship factors, and external factors. Loss of the job relationship impacted self and work identity. The impact of the perceptions of changing identity and loss of identity as well as the loss of relationship resulted in grief manifestations. Information learned from this study may directly help those who work with grief and, more specifically, involuntary job loss and grief. It may serve to highlight relevant counseling needs. In addition, this study may serve to inform and serve the population who experienced this as a result of COVID-19.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF FIGURES	XI
LIST OF TABLES	XII
CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION.....	1
Problem Statement	4
Statement of Purpose and Research Question	4
Theoretical Framework.....	5
Research Approach.....	6
Rationale and Significance	7
Role of the Researcher.....	8
Researcher Assumptions.....	9
Definition of Key Terminology	9
CHAPTER 2 LITERATURE REVIEW	11
New Mexico—Demographics and Unemployment	12
Loss and Grief—Cultural Component.....	13
Loss and Grief—Bereavement Studies	18
Relational Theory.....	20
Career Construction Theory.....	23
Career Development Theory: Life-Span, Life-Space Theory.....	25
Loss and Grief—Unemployment Studies.....	28
The Psychology of Working Theory	30
Constructivism as Conceptual Framework.....	34
Humanism as Conceptual Framework.....	36
Individual Counseling and Job Loss	37
Group Counseling and Job Loss	38

Conclusion	39
CHAPTER 3 METHODOLOGY	41
Rationale for Qualitative Research Design.....	41
Rationale for Case Study Methodology.....	42
The Research Sample	43
Overview of Research Design.....	44
Data Collection Methods	45
Demographic Questionnaire.....	45
Interviews.....	45
Focus Group	47
Methods for Data Analysis and Synthesis	48
Ethical Considerations.....	51
Trustworthiness.....	53
Credibility	53
Dependability and Confirmability.....	54
Transferability.....	54
Limitations	55
Conclusion	55
CHAPTER 4 RESULTS	57
Sample	57
Focus Group.....	59
Case Studies	60
Case 1 Mike.....	60
Case 2 Linda.....	64
Case 3 Mark	72

Case 4 Susan.....	76
Case 5 Melody.....	80
Case 6 Paul.....	83
Case 7 Eli.....	86
Case 8 Connie.....	89
Case 9 John.....	93
Focus Group.....	95
Case Studies: Emergent Themes.....	98
Finding 1: Job as Relationship.....	98
Finding 2: Loss of Relationship.....	101
Finding 3: Loss of Relationship and Grief.....	101
Cross-Case Synthesis.....	102
Cultural Influence and Implications on Self and Work Identity.....	102
Cultural Influence and Implications on Job Loss and Grief Manifestations.....	106
The Implications of Job as Relationship.....	107
Loss of Job Relationship: Perception of Self and Grief Manifestations.....	109
Conclusion.....	111
CHAPTER 5 DISCUSSION.....	112
An Understanding of the Three Themes Exemplified in this Study.....	113
Themes in Context of Literature Review.....	115
Cultural Influence and Implications on Self and Work Identity.....	115
Cultural Influence and Implications on Job Loss and Grief Manifestations.....	121
The Implications of Job as Relationship.....	121
Loss of Relationship and Grief Manifestations.....	125
Implications for Counseling Practice.....	127

Assess for Suicidality and Substance Use.....	127
The Relationship and Factors that Impact the Relationship: Culture, Commitment, Relationship Factors, and External Factors.....	127
Insight and Ownership.....	129
Meaning and Purpose.....	129
Implications for Training.....	129
Implications for Teaching.....	130
Strengths	130
Limitations	131
Recommendations for Further Research	133
Conclusion	134
The Researcher’s Final Thoughts.....	135
REFERENCES	137
APPENDICES.....	162
APPENDIX A RECRUITMENT EMAIL TO PARTICIPANTS	163
APPENDIX B RECRUITMENT EMAIL TO BUSINESSES.....	165
APPENDIX C RECRUITMENT FLYER	166
APPENDIX D INFORMED CONSENT.....	167
APPENDIX E DEMOGRAPHIC QUESTIONNAIRE	168
APPENDIX F INTERVIEW QUESTIONS.....	169
APPENDIX G FOCUS GROUP GUIDE	170

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1. The Three Themes of the Research Study Exemplified	115
Figure 2. The Archway Model.....	119
Figure 3. The Psychology of Working Framework.....	120

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1.	The Study Participants.....	59
Table 2.	The Focus Group Participants.....	96

Chapter 1

Introduction

Grief is a phenomenon that can affect an individual at any given time. Raphael (1983) defined grief as “the emotional response to loss: the complex amalgam of painful effects including sadness, anger, helplessness, guilt [and] despair” (p. 33). Grief reactions are experienced by those placed in many situations in which something perceived of value is lost, and some researchers define grief as “a reaction to loss” (DeSpelder & Strickland, 2005, p. 268). This has been typically studied in terms of bereavement. Bereavement is understood to be the experience of having lost a loved one to death (Howarth, 2011), and a number of researchers have studied bereavement in this context (Bonanno et al., 2004; Boyraz et al., 2015; Granek, 2010; Prigerson et al., 2009; Mancini & Bonanno, 2009). While grief has been studied in the context of bereavement, there is an association of loss of another part of an individual’s identity--his or her employment. Whether a loss is a person or job, one can experience the end of a relationship and grief symptoms (Papa & Maitoza, 2013). The vast majority of the research on grieving has focused on post-bereavement reactions related to the impact of a loss of a loved one (Papa & Maitoza, 2013). A number of studies in the bereavement literature link the intensity of grief responses to levels of disruption of individuals’ day-to-day life and access to regular, rewarding and meaningful activities and interactions, reflected in loss of self-image, esteem, and or efficacy (e.g., Brown, 1996; Schultz et al., 2006). People grieve in different ways, for different durations, and with manifestations that range from depression to rage to avoidance (Howarth, 2011). Harvey and Miller (1998) have proposed that grief could result from any event that causes chronic disruption in meaningful engagement with the environment. This could include involuntary

job loss. Similarly, Murray (2001) stated that other adverse life events such as relationship breakdown and unemployment result in the experience of loss and grief. Involuntary job loss has far-reaching effects on the well-being of individuals and families and can result in loss of identity, social contacts, and self-worth (Brewington et al., 2004). Coupled with economic loss, the emotional toll can be devastating; life assumptions must be reevaluated and life stories revised (Brewington et al., 2004). Workers must adjust to changed roles as learners, family members, citizens, and leisure participants (Brewington et al., 2004). Super (1982) proposed the construct of career salience, meaning the importance of the work role relative to other life roles. He thought it was beneficial to assess how salient the work role was for a client (Savickas, 2001). Loss of the work role can be devastating; in fact, it is important to realize that grief over the loss of career may well be more acute than over the death of a loved one (Jones, 1979).

An almost constant sense of insecurity haunts American families in the first decade of the twenty-first century--this is the fear of job loss (Coontz, 2008). The threat of job loss is real--there is no job security anymore (Savickas, 2012). Individuals change jobs more frequently and work at many jobs throughout their lifetime. The digital revolution of the 21st century has brought a new social arrangement of work (Kalleberg, et al., 2000), and individuals, today, can no longer plan to work 30 years developing a career within the boundaries of one job or even one organization (Savickas, 2012). Instead, during their lifetimes they may expect to occupy at least ten jobs (Savickas, 2012). Today's workers often struggle to cope with and adapt to situations over which they have little or no control (Blustein, 2008). Yet, very few studies look at specific symptoms of grief (Papa & Maitoza, 2013), especially in terms of grief and job loss. In addition, only a few cases have relied upon

non-standardized grief assessments, such as simply asking if the participant was experiencing feelings of grief (i.e., Wittmann et al., 2010). Many of the research articles in a literature search examined grief and job loss utilizing quantitative or cross-sectional methods and focused on males (Howe et al., 2004). While each specific situation of loss has unique characteristics (Murray, 2001) and its expression varies across individuals (Howarth, 2011), there are common aspects of different situations of loss and some commonality in the manner in which people react and adjust to it (Murray, 2001).

A majority of counselors will eventually work with clients facing grief and loss (Horn et al., 2013), and yet there is evidence to suggest that not all counselors are adequately trained or completely comfortable providing grief counseling (Ober et al., 2012). Grief counseling is not required in accredited core counseling curricula (Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs [CACREP], 2016). There is no mention of involuntary job loss and grief in the CACREP standards, and this includes the section on Career Counseling.

Therefore, this study sought to provide information on grief following involuntary job loss as opposed to previous research which focused mainly on grief following the death of a person. When reviewing the literature on grief and job loss, there was more research that was quantitative and cross-sectional rather than qualitative that addressed specific symptoms of grief, and the research mainly focused on males. In addition, the topic of involuntary job loss and grief is not part of the required curricula in counseling programs. New Mexico's jobless rate has dropped, though it is still one of the highest in the nation (Baca, 2018). Therefore, this study, which took place in Albuquerque, New Mexico, sought to shed light on the experience of grief following involuntary job loss in males and females using multiple-case

studies with phenomenological interviews in order to inform those who work with this population.

Problem Statement

Research indicates that bereavement has mainly been studied in the context of an individual losing a loved one. A number of studies have examined job loss and grief utilizing cross sectional methods or quantitative methods, and they have primarily focused on males. In addition, the effects of grief on culture continue to be limited in scope and need more information (Hardy-Bougere, 2008). Therefore, I studied how both males and females from diverse cultural backgrounds experienced grief following involuntary job loss using multiple-case study design with a phenomenological approach. Job loss, in this study, meant that a person involuntarily had to depart from a job. The loss of a job also meant the loss of an occupation that involved a paycheck. Research and grief groups often address bereavement in terms of the loss of a person, but the loss of a job can be as devastating as the loss of a person.

Statement of Purpose and Research Question

The purpose of this study was to extend previous research by presenting an in-depth understanding of the experience of grief in association with involuntary job loss. I addressed the following research question:

How do individuals from diverse cultural backgrounds experience grief following involuntary job loss?

Theoretical Framework

Humanism and constructivism are two well-known paradigms. Humanistic theory focuses on the relationship between a client and a counselor. In humanistic theory, relationships are an intrinsic part of being human. Humans take seriously the idea of direct psychological contact and mutuality between two persons. Dialogue and communication are essential parts of humanness. Carl Rogers (1952) stated that when a relationship is established, exploring and experiencing of self occurs, and behavior change follows. When relationships are troubled or end, a person can experience distress. This can result in loss and grief. Cottone (2017) stated that “If people are harmed by relationships, they can be healed by relationships” (p. 469). Carl Rogers believed that counselors should display genuineness, empathy and unconditional positive regard so that an individual can experience self-understanding which can alter his or her self-concept, basic attitudes, and self-directed behavior (Rogers, 2001). When the counselor is viewing the client from his frame of reference, the client is free to explore his or her frame of reference, life, and experience new meaning and new goals (Rogers, 1948). Roger’s approach was to develop a structured relationship in which a client finds an opportunity to explore freely and without defense, his or her difficulties and emotionalized attitude. The client can gain an understanding of himself, which brings behavior to consciousness so that positive steps can be taken (Rogers 1945). Humanism has two basic end goals: self-realization and fulfillment and four basic tendencies: the need for pleasure - personal satisfaction, sex, love and ego recognition, a basic tendency to self-limiting adaptation - fitting in, belonging, and security, a need for self-expression and creative accomplishments, and attempts at integration or upholding order (Buhler, 1971).

Constructivism highlights human participation in the construction of knowledge and individuals are closed, biological entities who create meaning systems (Hansen, 2014). Individuals construct their views in reference to how they view the world and the phenomena they experience. This also applies to how they view the job relationship. Savickas (2005), who is associated with Career Construction Theory, stated that life themes can explain the why of an occupational choice as individuals choose work based on meaning and mattering (i.e., work that holds personal meaning for the individual while also “mattering” to society). Super (1990) asserted that work is the implementation of one’s self-concept. Savickas’s construct of career adaptability suggests that workers are likely to encounter multiple transitions during their work lives and will need to adapt accordingly (Glavin & Berger, 2012). The grand narrative of career is being rewritten to reflect a new world of work characterized by instability, mobility, and constant change (Savickas, 2005).

Social constructivism posits that behavior can best be understood by a social lens, not an individual one. In both constructivism and social constructivism, multiple realities are believed to exist whether they are determined individually or socially influenced. Savickas (2005) suggested that an individual’s interests that correlate to career should be viewed as subjective, socially constructed representations of reality that represent the psychosocial nature with which individuals interact with their environment. The experience of grief and loss can be constructed individually, but the social lens applies in terms of societal views about a person who loses a job.

Research Approach

After gaining IRB approval, I studied the perceptions and experiences of nine individuals who had incurred job loss. I utilized a multiple-case study design with a

phenomenological approach. Phenomenologists are interested in our “lived experience” (Van Manen, 1990, p. 9). In phenomenology, perception is regarded as the primary source of knowledge, the source that cannot be doubted (Moustakas, 1994). Phenomenology is suited for this type of study in which I examined a phenomenon - grief in the event of job loss. Case study explores a bounded system; for this study, I planned to provide a detailed description of the experience of job loss for each person or case. I utilized 60-90-minute in-depth interviews as the primary method of data collection (see Appendix F for interview questions). I conducted two interviews for each participant with potential follow-up interviews. Each interviewee was identified by a pseudonym, and I tape recorded each interview and transcribed it verbatim. I developed coding categories and refined them on an on-going basis using the conceptual and theoretical framework to guide my analysis. The information obtained from the interviews formed the basis for the overall findings of this study. Merriam (2009) states that triangulation means comparing and cross-checking data collected through interview data collected from people with different perspectives or from follow-up interviews with the same people. I also conducted a voluntary focus group with three volunteer participants from this study and used member-checking to ensure that my coding and interpretation of the data was correct.

Rationale and Significance

The rationale for this study was to provide an in-depth understanding of involuntary job loss and grief in individuals from diverse cultural backgrounds that contributes to the existing literature using qualitative research. In addition, the results of this study can be used to inform counselors who work with grief and job loss as there is minimal research relating to this area in the field of counseling or other professions (Horn et al., 2013). Grief and loss

course work is not specifically required in most counselor education programs (Breen, 2010). In addition, bereavement groups that focus mainly on the loss of a loved one can utilize results provided by this study to better understand grief associated with job loss.

Role of the Researcher

I am a PhD candidate in Counselor Education, and I bring to the inquiry process practical knowledge as a working professional in both teaching and counseling. In qualitative research, the researcher is the primary instrument for data collection and analysis (Merriam, 2009). I will work to understand the constructions or subjective realities of those who experience job loss and grief. However, it is important for researchers to position themselves in a qualitative research study (Creswell, 2013). It is important for me to think about my own values about employment and how it was valued in my household as well as in society. In my household, the value of working hard and obtaining an education was emphasized and modeled, especially by my father. My father was laid off from his job; while I was not living at home during this time, I witnessed the stress and grief this transition caused in my parents' household. My father had a vast array of papers spread across the kitchen counter at all times as he worked to obtain another job. He was constantly working on resumes and leads for jobs. My mother tried not to bother him as he worked, and she tried to make as little noise as possible so that he could concentrate. This placed a strain on the relationship as well as a strained home setting. It seemed as if the household was in turmoil until he obtained another job. The focus was on finding a job, and everything else was placed on hold.

The value of family and relationship was also considered important, and my mother chose to be home rather than to work. She did work a bit during my childhood, but it was always with the understanding that it could be temporary, and she could quit at any time. My

father did not count on her paychecks; her money was used for items such as clothing and vacations. Her role was typically to be in the home and involved cleaning, cooking, and taking care of my brother and me.

It is difficult for a researcher to separate their views on employment from one's upbringing so self-reflection by way of journaling and dialogue is essential. I also asked open-ended questions that allowed me to gain a better understanding of the scope of the topic for research, and I utilized member checking to ensure that my coding was correct. I also utilized triangulation in the study to ensure that data analysis was accurate. Bracketing personal experiences may be difficult for the researcher to implement because interpretations of the data always incorporate the assumptions that the researcher brings to the topic (Van Manen, 1990), but, perhaps, a new definition of epoche or bracketing such as suspending one's understandings in a reflective move that cultivates curiosity would be advantageous for me to incorporate (LeVasseur, 2003).

Researcher Assumptions

A job is just one relationship a person has in their life. It was my assumption that the literature and those who work with the unemployed should treat the job loss as a relationship loss. There was little research that explored this assumption. A job provides many things for us as does any other relationship and the loss of the job causes distress and grief. The coding of the data did reveal the existence of this assumption.

Definition of Key Terminology

Bereavement - the experience of having lost a loved one to death (Howarth, 2011)

Grief - “the emotional response to loss: the complex amalgam, of painful affects including sadness, anger, helplessness, guilt [and] despair” (Raphael 1984); grief is “a reaction to loss” (DeSpelder & Strickland, 2005, p. 498)

Job loss - the person involuntarily had to depart from a job; the loss of a job also means the loss of an occupation that involved a paycheck

Poverty - Poverty can be defined as living below the federal poverty line, which is \$24,000 a year for a family of four (PolicyLink & USC Program for Environmental & Regency Equity, 2018)

Working poverty - working full-time with an income below 200 percent of the poverty level or roughly \$48,000 for a family of four (PolicyLink & USC Program for Environmental & Regency Equity, 2018)

Chapter 2

Literature Review

Bereavement and the care of the bereaved have been the focus of grief and loss within the general community and the scientific literature (Murray, 2001). Typically, bereavement involves the loss of an individual, but the loss of a job can produce grief as well. Therefore, the purpose of this study was to explore the perceptions of nine participants regarding their experiences of involuntary job loss and grief by utilizing a multiple-case study method with phenomenological interviews. This study was set in Albuquerque, New Mexico; thus, the literature review will commence with an examination of this city in order to provide a context. It is important to note that the research discussed in reference to Albuquerque was conducted prior to the outbreak of the Coronavirus or COVID-19 pandemic which contributed to widespread involuntary unemployment. Next, the literature review will examine research on bereavement and involuntary unemployment in order to examine the commonality of relationship loss that exists in both cases. Attachment theory and relational theory will be discussed in reference to loss of attachment figure and job loss. The Psychology of Working research will be examined as a way to understand theory in reference to employment and job loss (Blustein, 2001, 2006, 2008, 2013). Finally, humanism and constructivism will be examined as a theoretical framework for this study in order to provide a lens through which to understand and analyze the experience of grief as relationship loss. Counseling implications for those who experience unemployment and grief will also be examined in the literature.

New Mexico—Demographics and Unemployment

While the unemployment rate is slowly decreasing in New Mexico, it is still an issue as it is higher than the national average. The unemployment rate for New Mexico remained at 4.6% in October of 2018 which was the fourth straight month it had been at that level (Albuquerque Journal News Staff, 2018). This is higher than the national average of 3.7%, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics. Unemployment comes about when an individual loses a job. McKee-Ryan (2003) viewed unemployment as a life event in which paid employment is involuntarily taken away from an individual. A similar explanation was offered by Gallie et al. (1994) in which he described the unemployed as being without work but looking for work as if jobs were available to them. They were distinguished from individuals who choose not to work if a job was offered to them.

The Great Recession (which lasted, nationally, from December 2007 until June 2009) caused comparatively modest destruction in the Albuquerque, New Mexico, metropolitan area (Muska & Gessing, 2017). Due in large part to a heavy concentration of local, state, and federal work, neither the unemployment rate nor the percentage of total jobs reached double digits. However, Albuquerque has yet to mount a significant rebound from the losses it did experience (Muska & Gessing, 2017).

The Southwest is more ethnically and linguistically diverse than the rest of the country and has among the highest levels of poverty and social deprivation in the country (Wilder et al., 2016). American Indian and Hispanic populations are among the poorest groups in the Southwest and nationwide (Wilder et al., 2016). Population in Albuquerque, New Mexico, is being driven by communities of color--as of 2015, six in ten Albuquerque residents are people of color, up from four in ten in 1980 (Knight, 2018). Forty-seven percent

of the city's residents identify as Latino or Hispanic, and the vast majority of them were born in the United States (Knight, 2018). Poverty and working poverty is on the rise in Albuquerque, and communities of color are more impacted by the lack of economic opportunity. Poverty can be defined as living below the federal poverty line, which is \$24,000 a year for a family of four. As of 2014, 19 percent of Albuquerque's population lives below the federal poverty line (PolicyLink & USC Program for Environmental & Regency Equity, 2018). Working poverty is defined as working full-time with an income below 200 percent of the poverty level or roughly \$48,000 for a family of four (PolicyLink & USC Program for Environmental & Regency Equity, 2018). Twenty-six percent of Native American women, 18 percent of Latino and Native American men, and 15 percent of Latina women are working full-time but earning less than 200 percent of the federal poverty level (Knight, 2018).

Loss and Grief—Cultural Component

Grief and bereavement are normal emotions that are very personal and are accompanied by pain and hopelessness in people across cultures (Dyer, 2001). Grief, whether experienced as a result of the loss of a loved one, divorce, cessation of or interruption in a relationship, or as a result of an important life change, is an occurrence that transcends age and ethnicity (Hardy-Bougere, 2008). It is a normal emotional response to an external loss, distinguished from a depressive disorder because it usually subsides after a reasonable time (Stegman, 2005). Grief is an emotion that is as real and life altering as love, and the effects on culture continue to be limited in scope and more information is required to understand the impact (Hardy-Bougere, 2008). Loss of the job relationship which causes an important life change can occur due to the reformed nature of work because of globalization, technology,

and diversity. Social justice can address the needs of workers as they adapt to a dynamic, ever-shifting workplace (Blustein, 2008).

Grieving can be unique to the individual, but cultures throughout history have had particular ways of mourning (Schoulte, 2011). Although grief symptoms are assumed to be universal, bereavement varies greatly across cultures and ethnicities (Rosenblatt, 2008). This can apply to job loss and grief as well. Examples of practices that could vary are appropriate emotional responses among grievers, the use of rituals, and the expected roles of family (Schoulte, 2011). Cultural factors influence how individuals understand the world (Morgan & Laugani, 2002). Just as between-group differences are important to understand, so are within-group differences in grieving (Schoulte, 2011). Within-group differences may be influenced by such factors as gender and age, family structure, religion, geographical location, degree of acculturation, and racial identity (Schoulte, 2011). Grief and loss have been studied primarily among the dominant European American population (Williams et al., 2007); yet, Latino/a Americans make up approximately 15% of the population in the United States (U.S. Census Bureau, 2007). They are the largest ethnic minority population in the United States (Ai et al., 2012). It is estimated that by 2050, 24% of the United States population will be Latino (Ai et al., 2012). In Albuquerque, the percentage of Latino/Hispanic individuals (of any race) was last calculated at 46.7% (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010). Latino/a Americans are individuals who reside in the United States but whose ancestry or origin is from Mexico, Puerto Rico, Cuba, the Dominican Republic, and most Central and South American countries. Different ethnicities within the general group have different preferences for group labels (Schoulte, 2011).

Becoming familiar with salient cultural constructs may help contextualize how Latino/a Americans mourn (Schoulte, 2011). Familismo involves deep feelings of loyalty, reciprocity, and attachment within families (Soriano, 1991). What constitutes the nuclear family of different groups varies; however, maintaining a close relationship with extended family members is expected and highly valued among Latino/as generally (Gannotti et al., 2004). Latino/a Americans often consider the needs of an individual to be a family issue and the perceived self-worth of an individual can be highly dependent upon meeting family obligations (Chachkes & Jennings, 1994; Flores, 2000). Latino/a Americans will consult with other family members before important decisions are made; issues that might cause shame or guilt may not be shared and are even more rarely expressed to individuals outside the family (Schoulte, 2011). Traditionally, there is a strict hierarchy in many Hispanic families that should be honored (Hardy-Bougere, 2008), and status is usually ordered from the older to the younger and male to female (Thompson, 1998). Some Latino/a Americans hold cultural attitudes toward relationships that could influence grief counseling. They may elect not to point out a difference with the counselor because of the importance of politeness, respect, and diplomacy in personal relationships called *simpatia* (Schoulte, 2011).

Crying is viewed as a healthy response to a loss (Hardy-Bougere, 2008). Crying openly is seen as appropriate. Family and friends will often encourage parents to outwardly express their grief. Crying to the extent where there is generalized shaking of the body is seen as a release in one's loss (Hardy-Bougere, 2008). This response is a less common expression of grief in the Hispanic culture (Thompson, 1998). Religion in the Hispanic culture is valued, and the majority of Hispanics are Catholic (Hardy-Bougere, 2008).

Understanding cultural components in terms of grief and loss can aid in understanding this phenomenon in terms of job loss. However, while the cultural differences of Hispanics may be distinguishable with individuals being proud of their cultural heritage, no distinct way of grief and loss has been noted in the Hispanic culture (Thompson, 1998).

Latino/as, however, are much less likely than non-Latino whites to use mental health services (Lorenzo-Blanco & Delva, 2010). There are many barriers to care seeking faced by ethnic minorities including socio-economic factors, access to healthcare, insurance, and English proficiency (Williams et al., 2003; Woodward et al., 1992). In addition, revealing problems outside of the family would go against the value of familism because, according to familism, all problems should be kept within the familial structure to avoid bringing shame on the family (Ramos-Sanchez & Atkinson, 2009). According to research, the individual draws on the family for support. Studies conducted in west Texas have found that more than 75% of Mexican Americans use complementary or alternative therapies to treat their illnesses and suggest that Mexicans and Mexican Americans use traditional remedies because they prefer them to allopathic healthcare and integrate traditional remedies into their daily self-care routines (Bushy, 1992; Eisenberg et al., 1998; Rivera et al., 2002). Traditional healers or curandero/as have specialties of practice; for example, yerbero/as are herbalists who specialize in botanical remedies, pateras are midwives, sobadoro/as specialize in massage, espiritualisto/as are psychic mediums, and Senor/as read tarot cards (Tafur et al., 2009). Latino/as are more likely to rely on primary care providers and less likely to seek care from a mental health specialist (Ai et al., 2012).

Indigenous Peoples of the Americas are a diverse population, with over 500 federally recognized tribes in the United States (Yellow Horse Brave Heart et al., 2011). Indigenous

Peoples have experienced pervasive and cataclysmic collective, intergenerational massive group trauma and compounding discrimination, racism, and oppression (Yellow Horse Brave Heart et al., 2011). American Indians or Native Americans are one segment of the Indigenous Peoples of the Americas (Yellow Horse Brave Heart et al., 2011); Albuquerque's census information states that Native Americans comprise 4.6% of the population (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010).

As the next largest ethnic group in the United States, African Americans account for slightly more than 13% of the population (U.S. Census Bureau, 2007). The term African Americans will refer not only to Americans of African descent but also people who emigrated from the Caribbean and the West Indies and certain people from South America (Brooks et al., 2004). With such diversity of ancestry, this group also has large within-group differences (Schoulte, 2011). However, grief and loss in the African American culture are demonstrated through the support of the nuclear and extended family (Hardy-Bougere, 2008). African Americans' cultural beliefs are steeped in cultural tradition and embrace religion and spirituality (Van & Meleis, 2003). African Americans tend to rely on their inner strength and draw from past experiences while employing coping mechanisms as a vehicle for dealing with grief and bereavement or any life-altering crisis (Hardy-Bougere, 2008). Religion and family play an integral role in the grief recovery process (Hardy-Bougere, 2008). African Americans may initially appear stoic and unaffected by loss until they interact with someone of a similar culture. There is an inherent bond between these individuals, and a trust that comes with that bond (Hardy-Bougere, 2008).

It can be useful to understand culture when addressing grief, in particular, job loss and grief. As noted in the literature, there can be cultural components related to grieving.

However, it is also important to note that the experience of grief can vary from one person to the next.

Loss and Grief—Bereavement Studies

Grief as described in the literature typically relates to death. Grief, as a universal phenomenon, refers to the experience of a person who is responding to the death of another human being whom they have loved (Granek, 2010). One definition offered by contemporary psychologists is that “bereavement refers to the loss of a loved one by death, and grief refers to the distress resulting from bereavement” (Genevro et al., 2004, p. 498). Bereavement obviously involves loss of relationship.

In order to understand grief and loss (whether it involves loss of job or individual - resulting in loss of relationship), the history of grief can be examined. Grief evolved from a psychoanalytic to a psychiatric construct. Granek (2010) wrote about how grief theory, originally conceived by Freud within a psychoanalytic framework, has evolved to the current concretization within the disease model. Freud emphasized that mourning and melancholia may look the same symptomatically, but they are distinctive because they are context-specific. While Freud believed that mourning, or grieving the loss of a loved one, who has died, was a normal and time-consuming process, it was not pathological. Melancholia, on the other hand, had the potential to become a disease because it was a reaction that occurred out of any understandable context. Freud did not see grief as pathological, but the belief that grief is intrinsically traumatic and pathogenic is prevalent among psychologists who study the matter today (Granek, 2010). Modern grief researchers claim that grief is a psychological problem necessitating extensive study and intervention by trained professionals (Granek, 2010). While loss is a universal phenomenon, people respond to it with various degrees of

grief and mourning. The experience is common, but its expression varies across individuals (Howarth, 2011). Grief can come from the loss of a relationship because of separation (Freud, 1917/1963). This can be the loss of a person or the loss of a job.

Attachment theory states that there is something unique about the loss of an attachment figure that is fundamental to the experience of grief (Papa & Maitoza, 2013). Bowlby (1980) argued that attachment working models provide a motivational system for relationship bonding and coping with major life events from the ‘cradle to the grave.’ A number of studies in the bereavement literature have linked the intensity of grief responses to levels of disruptions of individuals’ day-to-day life and access to regular, rewarding/meaningful activities and interactions, reflected in loss of self-image, esteem and/or efficacy (e.g., Brown et al., 1996; Schultz et al., 2006), further suggesting that other losses essential for a sense of stability or continuity in one’s life may contribute to the experience of grief (i.e., Carlson et al., 2000; Hobdy et al., 2007). One of these losses could be that of employment. Research on employment dissolution (Jones, 1979; Stybel, 1981) suggest that in the face of the loss of an employment relationship, many individuals go through stages of reactions parallel to the grief process associated with bereavement or abandonment, and other critical life transitions (e.g., Archer & Rhodes, 1993; Kubler, 1969). Theory and research on how individuals deal with loss or potential loss of personal relationships can inform our understanding of how employees deal with the loss or potential loss of the employment relationship (Albert et al., 2015). Nonetheless, despite its extensive potential applicability in predicting workplace relationships and individual adjustment to major organizational challenges, it remains relatively less investigated in organizational research (Harms, 2011). Like any intimate interpersonal relationship, an employment

relationship involves deep emotional ties, psychological attachment, personal investments, common identification, and a sense of common obligation (Buchanan, 1975; Mowday et al., 1982; O'Reilly & Chatman, 1986).

Attachment theory could be applied to employment in terms of addressing attachment style and application to job relationship as psychological research (Bowlby, 1980; Freud 1936) suggests that adult relationship interactions are not merely caused by the objective situation alone (Kahn & Kram, 1994; Main et al., 1985), but by the compulsive tendencies within an individual to repeat early relationship patterns. Albert et al. (2015) state that a key tenet underlying attachment theory is the idea that people develop internal modes of attachment, which determine how individuals handle a variety of life's adversities, including but not confined to relationship loss. Often when individuals experience insecurity or anxiety in their immediate situation, their attachment behaviors are triggered (Bowlby, 1980), and this activation is to be expected even in the context of organizational members' work relationships (Kahn & Kram, 1994). In other words, whether an individual was securely or insecurely attached in previous relationships, can play a part in their view of their job, job loss, and how they handle their job loss. Albert et al. (2015) state that they are not saying that an individual's past unalterably determines the future course of their behavior in work or other contexts, but that attachment-related experiences may be useful in explaining why individuals react the way they do to an employment loss.

Relational Theory

Relational perspectives do not represent a single theoretical approach but can be integrated with social cognitive theory (Lent, 2013), social constructivist and life-design approaches (Savickas et al., 2009), psychology of working theory (Duffy et al., 2016), and

psychotherapeutic approaches, such as narrative therapy (White & Epston, 1990) and relational cultural theory (Jordan, 2000; Schultheiss, 2007). Relational perspectives highlight the role of work in defining the self and one's relationships with others and the overlap between life experiences in the workplace with relationships and experiences in other life areas, including family and broader society (Kenny et al., 2018). Career development is understood as occurring within a web of relationships, with the emergence of vocational interests, choices, decisions, and opportunities to access and advance in the workplace deeply embedded in culture and relationships (Blustein, 2011; Richardson, 2012). Relational perspectives acknowledge the important role of culture and social and economic factors in shaping work and relationships and highlight the interplay between the relational and work life domains (Kenny et al., 2018). In this way, relational perspectives attempt to account for an array of cultural, social, and economic factors that are relevant for understanding the work lives of most people (Kenny et al., 2018). Kenny et al. (2018) discuss four tenets that build on the foundation of Blustein's (2006) conceptualization of work as an essential human experience that provides opportunities for survival, social connection, and self-determination. The tenets are supported by a large body of research documenting logical associations between work, relational health, and overall well-being (Blustein, 2008; Kenny, 1990; Kenny & Medvide, 2013; Paul & Moser, 2009; Reich & Hershcovis, 2011). The tenets are as follows: work is a vehicle for human connection; family and other close relationships are vital domains of life experience that interact with work in reciprocal and complex ways; relationships (both current and past) affect the career development process and trajectory; and culture (including social marginalization and economic status) exert critical roles in shaping work and relational experiences. Work as a vehicle for human connection means that

work offers a structured place in the world that provides opportunities to connect with other people in meaningful ways. Work relationships can be sources of meaning, mattering, and validation that are central in the formation of one's relational identity (Flum, 2015). Work can give meaning to one's experience that connects the individual to broader societal goals and social purpose (Blustein, 2011); it can also be a site for bullying and discrimination (Flum, 2015; Reich & Hershcovis, 2011). Experiences within the family and the workplace interact in ways that can be sources of stress and conflict or can facilitate productivity and mental and physical well-being (Whiston & Cinamon, 2015). Family members, teachers, and peers communicate expectations that shape the development of career interests, aspirations, and success levels in the pathway from school to work (Kenny & Medvide, 2013). The career development process and the meaning of work and other life experiences are not uniform but evolve through a relational cultural lens shaped by the intersectionality of gender, ethnicity, social class, religious traditions, and other cultural identities (Schultheiss, 2007). Culture not only influences how people make sense of their work and relational experiences but also influences interactions among individuals within and outside of the work context (Blustein, 2011; Flum, 2015). Collin and Young (2002) offer views of career that are embedded in a social context; one of the themes that they feel is important in the changing nature of career is that it is impossible to consider working without also attending to the relational context in which working occurs and the life roles that intersect with the work role. Blustein (2004) defines relational as an explicit attempt to contextualize a given human phenomenon by exploring and explicating the interpersonal and intrapersonal dimensions of a life domain, such as one's working life. In short, the relational perspectives generally endorse the view that many aspects of interpersonal and indeed intrapersonal struggles reflect natural human

strivings for connection, affirmation, support, and attachment (e.g., Blustein, 2001b; Flum, 2001; Hall, 1996). Thus, in moving from an individualistic to relationship perspective, one metaphorically steps out of the individual and into the space that is shared with others--a space where knowledge, understanding and multiple perspectives are created and recreated (Blustein, 2004). Incorporating social constructivism with relational theory, identity can be conceptualized as constructed and reconstructed within relationships and across multiple contexts (Collin & Young, 2000; Gergen, 1994, 1999).

Career Construction Theory

Career construction theory reconceptualizes Holland's (1997) theory of vocational personality (Glavin & Berger, 2012). Holland conceptualized vocational personality in terms of an individual's interests, which he described as stable traits that can be used to identify an individual's resemblance to one of six personality types: Realistic, investigative, artistic, social, enterprising, and conventional (Glavin & Berger, 2012). Savickas (2005) defined vocational personality as "an individual's career-related abilities, needs, values, and interests" (p. 47). The individual differences perspective focuses on the objective status of an individual's adaptive skills and styles for fitting self into the situation (Savickas, 2005). Clients choose words to constitute a self and form self-conceptions and self-constructing is a life project (Savickas, 2012).

Savickas suggested that interests should not be thought of as objective truths that reside within an individual. Instead, interests should be viewed as subjective, socially constructed representations of reality that represent the psychosocial nature with which individuals interact within their environment (Glavin & Berger, 2012). In career construction theory, identity involves how people think of themselves in social roles (Savickas, 2012).

Individuals begin to form psychosocial identities by associating the psychological self with social roles and cultural representations (Savickas, 2012). This shift in attention from the individual to the individual-in-situation coincides with contextual and multicultural perspectives on work (Savickas, 1997). Individuals then pursue purpose and values within their communities (Savickas, 2012).

Career adaptability represents people's attempts to use their vocational personality to interact with, and adapt to, their environment (Savickas, 2005). Adaptation also means the quality of being able to change, without great difficulty, to fit new or changed circumstances (Savickas, 1997). The developmental perspective highlights the functions and processes of adaptation across the life course (Savickas, 1997). Savickas (2005) suggested that this definition was necessary because the grand narrative of career is being rewritten to reflect a new world of work characterized by instability, mobility, and constant change. Workers are likely to encounter multiple transitions during their work lives and will need to adapt accordingly (Glavin & Berger, 2012).

Life themes can explain the why of an occupational choice (Savickas, 2005). Career construction theory suggests that individuals choose work based on meaning and mattering. The why of a career choice can be revealed through an individual's stories (Glavin & Berger, 2012). In fact, the phenomenological perspective centers on the subjective goals of adaptation that a self constructs and values as she or he subjectively authors a life story and strives to become more complete and more fully engaged with the world (Savickas, 1997). Savickas (2005) suggested that stories can be used to help individuals construct possible future selves. Individuals tend to tell those stories that they need to hear most at the present time (Glavin & Berger, 2012). Individuals reconstruct the past in a way that supports who

they are now and who they want to become (Glavin & Berger, 2012). A story that cannot be continued must be revised (Savickas, 2012). When this occurs, individuals feel anxious because they encounter challenging situations without the protection of an identity that holds and comforts them (Savickas, 2012). Career construction theory seeks to be comprehensive in encouraging counselors to listen for a story from the client in terms of their behavior as actor, agent, and author (Savickas, 2011).

Beginning in infancy, the self performs as a social actor (Savickas, 2011). This role is shaped to a large degree by cultural discourses (Savickas, 2011). They use the categories available to them (e.g., gender, race, class, birth order) to take their place in the family. They view the world from that vantage point and forge a social identity that others may easily recognize (Savickas, 2011). The actor as agent tries to accomplish things, and the focus takes on a subjective perspective on clients' motives and characteristic way of adapting to social expectations and developmental tasks (Savickas, 2011). Late adolescents and young adults integrate their action and agency into a unified life story and a unique identity. The story is both told and lived (Savickas, 2011). Eventually, the prevailing paradigm for career counseling in the 21st century will be rooted in social constructivism and identity (Guichard, 2009) rather than logical positivism and personality (Holland, 1997).

Career Development Theory: Life-Span, Life-Space Theory

Super's (1957) theory of career development has long been of interest to career researchers (Fouad & Arbona, 1994; Savickas, 1994; Whiston & Brecheisen, 2002). Central to Super's (1957) theory of career development is the notion of the self-concept (Betz, 1994). Self-concept is basically how individuals picture themselves (Super, 1957). It has been defined as "the constellation of self attributes considered by the individual to be vocationally

relevant” (Super, 1963, p. 20). This picture includes one’s abilities, personality traits, values, self-esteem, and self-efficacy (Giannantonio & Hurley-Hanson, 2006). These characteristics are learned and organized into self-concept systems (Herr, 1997). Super (1963) suggested that individuals attempt to implement their self-concept through occupational choice. Super (1990) suggested that self-concept theory might be better called “personal construct theory” to show the individual’s dual focus on self and situation.

Super used a Life-Career Rainbow or graphic device that portrays, at different parts of the life span, the roles that particular individuals play independently or simultaneously (Herr, 1997). These roles include child, student, leisurite, citizen, worker, homemaker, spouse, parent, and pensioner. Super used the Life-Career Rainbow device to depict the longitudinal nature of roles that most persons play across their lives; how these roles emerge, interact, and possibly conflict (Super, 1980). These roles shape decision points that occur before, and at the time of, taking on a new role, giving up an old role, and making significant changes in the nature of an existing role (Super, 1980). For Super (1980), the Life-Career Rainbow was intended to convey the notion that “The simultaneous combination of life roles constitutes the life style; their sequential combination structures the life space and constitutes the life-cycle. The total structure is the career pattern” (p. 288). Super (1990) created a new model that he called the Archway model. This incorporated the material in the Life-Career Rainbow but extended the depiction to reaffirm the dynamic interaction of the individual and society. In the Archway model, he attempted to illustrate how the status of natural resources, the economy, the family, and other environmental factors influence the development of aptitudes, interests, and values; how these are integrated at various life stages; and how, ultimately, the person, the decision maker, brings all of these personal and social forces

together and organizes them in terms of concepts of self and of roles in society (Super, 1990). Super (1990) believed that vocational development unfolds over time through a series of stages of vocational development. Each stage has developmental tasks. These stages include growth, exploration, establishment, maintenance, and disengagement. The growth stage begins with elementary and junior high. Children and pre-adolescents learn adaptive work habits and attitudes and develop the positive self-esteem that prepares them to become planful explorers and knowledgeable deciders (Super, 1980). After choosing an occupation and trying on several jobs for fit, the young adult ends years of exploration and trial, around age 25 or so, and starts to settle into a permanent job (Super, 1980). This begins about a 20-year period called the Establishment Stage during which the individual stabilizes, consolidates, and advances in an occupational position. Stabilizing in a job requires both adaptation to the organization's culture and adequate job performance. Consolidating one's position in an organization requires friendly co-worker relationships and productive work habits and attitudes. As workers grow older, they must eventually disengage from their jobs. Interactive learning brings all of these factors together in the weighing and making of career decisions (Super, 1990). Super's life-space, life-span approach has been the primary interpretation of a developmental approach to career development used in the United States, Japan, and other nations in the industrialized world (Herr, 1997).

Super did accent the need to incorporate into discussions of career behavior the interdisciplinary insights of sociologists, political scientists, and economists to complement those of psychologists in efforts to understand the complexities and the variations in career development for men and for women across socioeconomic classes and across cultures (Super, 1990). Gender and culture are important factors to consider.

Loss and Grief—Unemployment Studies

While bereavement and the care of the bereaved have been the focus of discussions concerning grief and loss within both the general community and the scientific literature, there remains an underlying recognition that loss and resultant grief are associated with other adverse life events such as relationship breakdown and unemployment (Murray, 2001). Elders (1995) argued that with each life change there is a loss and a change in the state that was; consequently, this requires external and internal adjustments. While these transitions and this process of adjustment are occurring throughout life, it is only when one is confronted with meaningful and significant transitions that the dynamic process of adjustment is observable in terms of what we define as grief. Parkes (1988) coined the term “psychosocial transitions,” which is defined as those that require people to undertake a major revision of their assumptions about the world and take place over a relatively short period, so that there is little time for preparation. This can include job loss. The rise of temporary and contract employment has contributed to an increasingly insecure workforce that is less tied to long-term employment relationships that would provide job security, health benefits, and stable social communities (Bohle et al., 2004; Burgard et al., 2012). Shift work and unpredictable schedules are often seen in cases of temporary or insecure employment (Gregson & Wendell, 2011; Tarant & Sabo, 2010). According to Standing (2011), legislative changes allow employers to dismiss workers without having to establish just cause for termination; there is a decline in union representation, and a rise to “right-to-work” and “at-will” employment laws weak protections for workers. Despite the fact that work consumes so much time and is such a major concern in people’s lives, psychological discussions of work, for the most part, have been compartmentalized or have been marginalized within the mental health discipline

(Blustein, 2008). In addition, there is little research on involuntary job loss as relationship loss.

The role of work in psychological theory, research, and practice has had a long and complex history (Barling & Griffiths, 2002; Blustein, 2006; Richardson, 1993; Zickar, 2004). From a broad view, work has been studied primarily by industrial and organizational psychologists and vocational psychologists, with additional input from rehabilitation psychologists (e.g., Neff, 1985; Riggall & Maki, 2004; Szymanski & Parker, 2003), community psychologists (e.g., Martin-Baro, 1994, Shore, 1978), and consulting psychologists (e.g., Lowman, 1993). Industrial and organizational psychologists have tended to examine aspects of working that are pertinent to employers and organizations (e.g., Barak, 2005; Hall, 1996; Spector, 2005). Papa and Maitoza (2013) examined the role of job loss in the experience of grief. They stated that loss of employment may entail multiple cascading losses such as loss of income, financial security, social status, role in the family, and access to other potential reinforcements associated with employment, such as daily social contact and maintenance of a daily routine. They conducted a study in which they surveyed individuals who recently lost their job to see how they coped with the loss. Grief symptoms were measured using the Prolonged Grief-13 scale, and the researchers found that job loss was associated with a moderately high level of mental health difficulties. Other research studies have looked at optimism in terms of job loss and life satisfaction (Duffy et al., 2013), the influence of past unemployment duration on symptoms of depression, and personality factors, history of depression, and genetic interaction in job loss (Mossakowski, 2009). Other researchers found that those who lose their jobs often struggle with mental health problems such as depression, substance abuse, and anxiety (Lucas et al., 2004; Vinokur et al., 2000).

Lucas et al. (2004) found that German workers who lost their jobs experienced an expected decline in their well-being but also failed to return to their previous levels of well-being even after they located new employment. McKee-Ryan et al. (2005) found in a meta-analysis of 104 studies that job loss was related to significant decreases across multiple indices of well-being such as loss of self-image, esteem, and/or efficacy. Two specific unemployment theories have been proposed to account for the deterioration of well-being when people are exposed to unemployment. They are the Latent Deprivation Model proposed by Jahoda (1981) and the Agency Restriction Model proposed by Fryer (1986). Jahoda (1981) proposed that latent needs are most detrimental--those needs associated with meeting psychological needs. Fryer (1986) believed manifest needs or those associated with loss of income are most detrimental.

The Psychology of Working Theory

Frank Parsons, who founded the field of vocational guidance at the turn of the 20th century (Parsons, 1909) emphasized social justice to address issues of equality, oppression, and human rights within society during a time of reformation (Zytowski, 2001). He laid the foundation for conceptualizing how individuals make and manage career decisions (Hartung & Blustein, 2002), emphasizing understanding one's self, knowing the career environment, and identifying the relationship between self and environment (Parsons, 1909). Numerous factors (globalization, technology, diversity) are again changing the nature of work, bringing counselors full circle to an era of reform where social justice can once again address the needs of workers as they adapt to a dynamic, every-shifting workplace (Blustein, 2008). To frame the plight of dislocated workers, insights from David Blustein's (2006) psychology of working perspective can be examined. This perspective can aid in conceptualizing present-

day career challenges (e.g., outsourcing, downsizing, global competition) involving modern at-risk populations (Hees et al., 2012). Blustein's (2006, 2008) psychology of working is emphasized herein because it complements Parsons's perspective related to transitional issues and addresses concerns of less privileged individuals (Hartung & Blustein, 2002; Zytowski, 2001). Parsons focused on the poor and working class (Hartung & Blustein, 2002), but the dislocated workers of today also include middle- and upper-class employees vulnerable to instability in the global economy (Hees et al., 2012).

Over the past century, the composition of the U. S. workforce has evolved with shifts in racial and ethnic diversity, the role of women, and the influence of labor unions (Blustein, 2006), although the opportunity structure remains influenced by race, class, gender, and economic challenges for many individuals (Blustein, 2006, 2008). The psychology of working perspective emerged from numerous critical perspectives as scholars expanded career theory to address the lives of women and people of color (e.g., Betz, 2005; Fouad & Bingham, 1995; Helms, 2004), feminism, (Fassinger, 1994, 2008), social construction and multiculturalism in career counseling (Richardson, 1993), and the inclusive view of the importance of work in one's life (Juntunen, 2006).

Blustein (2008) emphasized the critical importance of work in a person's life, focusing on survival, relatedness, and self-determination. The issue of survival is embodied by people's ability to earn money and support themselves, and their family economically with food, shelter, and clothing (Hees, et. al, 2012). Work itself can foster a sense of empowerment (Blustein, 2008). Relatedness is likewise significant (Blustein, 2011). Attachment and relational theories support the idea of the innate desire to connect with others (Bowlby, 1988; Josselson, 1992). Because people spend so much of their lives at work,

relational needs can be supported in the workplace (Hees et al., 2012). An unplanned plant closure disrupts the sources of relational support within a work family (Hees et al., 2012). The dislocated workers' experiences reveal the power of Blustein's (2008) three aspects of work, emphasizing concerns with finances, relationships, and self-determination.

The Psychology of Working Framework (PWF) highlighted the role that social class, privilege, and freedom of choice played in career selection and fulfillment (Blustein, 2001, 2006, 2008, 2013). The PWF proposed that sociocultural factors must be treated as primary in understanding the career decisions and work experiences of all people regardless of background, but in particular those from poor and working-class backgrounds as well as disenfranchised and marginalized populations (Duffy et al., 2016). Blustein (2013) summarized the core assumptions of the PWF:

- Work is an essential aspect of life and an essential component of mental health
- No one epistemology should be privileged over another in the explication of the psychological nature of working
- The psychological study of working should be inclusive, embracing everyone who works and who wants to work around the globe
- In many cases and situations, work and nonwork experiences are closely intertwined
- Work includes efforts within the marketplace as well as caregiving work
- Work has the potential to fulfill three fundamental human needs: survival and power, the need for social connection, and the need for self-determination

- To more fully understand the psychological nature of working, careful considerations are needed of relevant social, economic, political, and historical forces, which shape, constrain, and facilitate many aspects of contemporary working

What is unique about the PWF is placing social and economic factors at the forefront of conceptualizations and positioning securing decent work in general as the central outcome of the interplay between contextual, psychological, and economic factors (Duffy et al., 2016). The PWF has generated considerable research, theory, and program development, particularly qualitative scholarship that has unpacked the notions of culture and work (Flores, et al., 2011; Guerrero & Singh, 2013), the struggles of unemployment (Blustein et al., 2013; Duffy et al., 2013; Lyons, 2011), and relational influences of working (Kenny & Medvide, 2013). In addition, the PWF has informed a more inclusive agenda in vocational and counseling psychology, with greater attention being devoted to the plight of the unemployed (Blustein et al., 2013), working poor (Ali, 2013), and a host of others who have been marginalized in the career development discourse (Blustein, 2013). The PWF was originally developed to call for a new way of conceptualizing the work lives of those with limited privilege and volition, as opposed to presenting a unified, testable model (Blustein, 2016).

Duffy et al. (2018) state that there are no studies that address the core propositions of the PWF as they apply to an ethnically and diverse working adult population. Research has consistently demonstrated links between marginalization and economic constraints (Blustein, 2018). This is especially true for racial and ethnic minorities (Corcoran & Nichols-Casebolt, 2004; House & Williams, 2000; Rodgers, 2008). Equal access to resources and opportunities in the workplace has not been afforded across different racial and ethnic groups (Blustein,

2006; Duffy et al., 2016). Duffy et al. (2018) studied the PWF as it applied to an ethnically and diverse working adult population, and their sample population consisted of 526 racially and ethnically diverse employed adults. They investigated how economic resources and marginalization predicted decent work, and they found that there was a direct, negative relation between marginalization and decent work. They suggest that further research is needed in this area. Addressing unemployment in racial and ethnic minorities can also provide more information in terms of job loss and how it is experienced.

Constructivism as Conceptual Framework

In this study, it was hoped that the perceptions of those who experienced involuntary job loss and grief in a multicultural setting would be understood. Perceptions are created by the individual (although also influenced by the social world in which we live in as well). The way in which we construct our perceptions in reference to an event can influence our thoughts and behaviors. The perceptions that individuals have about their experience in reference to job loss and grief will allow the researcher to understand this phenomenon.

Personal constructivism, also referred to as personal construct psychology or personal construct theory, originated with the pioneering work of George Kelly (1955/1991a, 1955/1991b). Kelly proposed that people organize their experiences by developing bipolar dimensions of meaning, or personal constructs. These hierarchically interrelated constructs are used to anticipate and predict how the world and its inhabitants might behave (Rashkin, 2002). Constructivism presumes that individuals are closed, biological entities who create meaning systems (Hansen, 2004). The self is viewed as constructed, not discovered (Burr, et al., 1997; Epting & Amerikaner, 1980). By inventing dimensions of meaning that account for events, people organize psychological experience. Personal construct theory is generated by

the way a person successively construes himself or herself (Rashkin, 2002). Closely tied to the ideas of personal science and personal construing is the concept of constructive alternativism, the foundational philosophical premise of personal construct theory. Constructive alternativism postulates that there are infinite possibilities for conceptualizing events (Kelly, 1955/1991a).

Personal constructivism has been claimed by many different theoretical orientations in psychology; however, it has been argued that it is basically a humanistic theory. The theory emphasizes free choice and the creation of personal meaning (Rashkin, 2002). At the time of his death, Kelly was in the process of rewriting his theory in a more accessible form (Maher, 1969), which some believe would have revealed more humanistic underpinnings. Humanism also applies to this study because it focuses on relationships - the relationship one has with others and with the job itself.

Social constructivism means that individuals seek understanding of the world in which they live and work (Creswell, 2013). They develop subjective meanings of their experiences--meanings directed toward certain objects or things. These meanings are varied and multiple; it is important to rely as much as possible on the participants' views of the situation (Creswell, 2013). Often these subjective meanings are negotiated socially and historically and are formed through interaction with others (Creswell, 2013). Rather than starting with a theory, inquirers generate or inductively develop a theory or pattern of meaning. The constructivist worldview manifests in phenomenological studies, in which individuals describe their experiences (Moustakas, 1994).

Humanism as Conceptual Framework

Humanistic theory focuses on the relationship - the relationship between a client and a counselor. In humanistic theory, relationships are an intrinsic part of being human. Relationships can involve a real meeting of persons. Humanists take seriously the idea of direct psychological contact and mutuality between two or more persons. Dialogue and communication are essential parts of humanness. Humanistic psychotherapists, with their emphasis on the collaborative nature of the relationship with their clients, do not see effectiveness in terms of a method's ability to operate on clients and change them, but rather in terms of the kinds of conditions therapists provide which allows clients to take their pain seriously, explore their lives, and find more meaningful ways of engaging in their existence (Task Force for the Development of Practice Recommendations for the Provision of Humanistic Psychosocial Services, 2004). Carl Rogers (1961) considered empathic understanding, congruence, and unconditional regard as significant components in a relationship. By incorporating these, the client can be helped to heal. In general, forming a relationship with the client who has experienced job loss is important. The client lost a relationship - that of the job. Abraham Maslow (1954) has a theory on the hierarchy of needs that consists of physiological, safety, self-esteem, love and belonging, and self-actualization. Maslow mentions that we need to experience belonging in our lives in order to grow. Belonging can be obtained from employment.

A job relationship is just one relationship a person has in his life. If there are problems in this relationship and it ends, this can affect one greatly and can cause grief. The grief can be as detrimental as that of bereavement.

Individual Counseling and Job Loss

The human experience consists of grief and loss, and the majority of counselors will eventually work with clients facing these issues (Horn et al., 2013). Helping clients adjust to grief and loss is a critical skill for counselors that will be in more demand in the coming decades (Ober et al., 2012). There is evidence that not all counselors are adequately trained or completely comfortable providing grief counseling (Ober et al., 2012). While grief and loss is mainly discussed in terms of bereavement, this can apply to job loss as well.

Upon review of the limited body of research on employment counseling, it becomes apparent that all counselor behaviors identified as effective are behaviors directed toward clients (Noordzij et al., 2012). Simply put, this means that the client is the focus of the counseling sessions and the relationship is important. Client-centered behavior is a part of the counseling process. Yet, despite the widespread and increasing use of employment counseling for unemployed job seekers, relatively little is known about the process of employment counseling and what behaviors make employment counseling effective (Noordzij et. al, 2012).

A study completed by Noordzij (2013) concluded the following in reference to employment counseling. First, pushing clients is ineffective. Previous theoretical work on employment counseling (e.g., Aquilanti & Leroux, 1999) mainly emphasized broadly defined themes (e.g., supporting clients), paying relatively little attention to the specific behaviors involved in implementing these themes. Sanchez and Levine (2009) emphasized the importance of identifying both the broadly defined themes in a job, and the translation of these themes into day-to-day behaviors in directing and influencing employee behavior toward the accomplishment of organizational goals. The study done by Noordzij et al. (2013)

suggested that the unemployed receive multiple supports including informational support. Also, behavior toward other stakeholders such as governmental agencies is important (Noordzij et al., 2013).

Group Counseling and Job Loss

The literature on group counseling primarily yielded results in terms of bereavement - the mourning of the loss of an individual. One article on bereavement and group counseling presented qualitative interview data on the experiences of the members regarding positive aspects and negative aspects (Dyregrov et al., 2013). The positive aspects are meeting with peers, sharing thoughts and feelings, normalization, exchanging advice and information, and sharing hope. The negative aspects were unfulfilled needs or expectations, additional personal stress, and unsatisfactory structure, organization, and leadership. Participants' needs and expectations should be considered when planning and organizing groups, in order to conduct helpful groups, and increase the experience (Dyregrov et al., 2013). Bhat (2010) delivered a group counseling intervention to those experiencing job loss and grief; following is a list of the interventions: ask members what they remember with a sense of pride, ask members to explore issues of loss and grief related to their job loss, ask members to discuss the effects of job loss on self-concept and self-esteem, ask members to take a values card sort exercise, and ask members to focus on self-efficacy and self-worth. There is also a skill-building and focus on assertiveness, confidence, and verbal and non-verbal communication. These include gaining support from members in the group and providing opportunities to learn by observing and modeling the job search skills of members and leaders (Bhat, 2010). Many of the therapeutic factors of groups (Yalom, 1995) are present in this intervention and they contribute to successful outcomes for participants.

Conclusion

Grief has mainly been studied in the context of bereavement or the loss of a person (Murray, 2001). The loss of a job can be detrimental as well (Blustein, 2006; Fagin & Little, 1984; Hayes & Nutman, 1981; Hill, 1978; Lucas et al., 2004; Parkes, 1971; Vinokur et al., 2000;). Grief can come from the loss of a relationship due to separation whether it is a person or a job. Attachment theory addresses this in terms of the loss of attachment and how it can result in grief (Papa & Maitoza, 2013). Losing the job relationship is a life change that can lead to grief, although individuals exhibit various degrees of grief and mourning. Research also indicated that people who lose jobs struggle with mental health problems and a decline in well-being.

That being said, individuals organize their experiences and develop their own meaning or personal constructs (Hansen, 2004; Kelly, 1955/1991a, 1955/1991b; Rashkin, 2002). The way in which we construct our perceptions (and meanings) influences our thoughts. This would influence how individuals construe their experience of job loss. There is free choice in the creation of meaning which relates to humanism. Humanism is also about the importance of the relationship and how relationships can harm or heal. The loss of relationship, as previously examined in the bereavement research, can lead to grief.

The majority of counselors will eventually work with people who experience grief. Not all counselors are trained or comfortable providing grief counseling; yet this is a skill that will continue to be important (Ober et al., 2012). There is a lack of research on unemployment and counseling (Blustein, 2008; Noordzij et al., 2012). There is lack of research indicating grief from job loss as relationship loss. The research did indicate that it was important to support clients, to direct and influence employee behavior toward the

accomplishment of organizational goals (but not to push them), and to assess if the client has multiple support systems in place. Some interventions that were mentioned in the literature are to ask members what they remember with a sense of pride, ask members to explore issues of loss and grief related to their job loss, ask members to discuss the effects of job loss on self-concept and self-esteem, ask members to take a values card sort exercise, and ask members to focus on self-efficacy and self-worth (Bhat, 2010). There is also a skill-building and focus on assertiveness, confidence, and verbal and non-verbal communication. These include gaining support from members in the group and providing opportunities to learn by observing and modeling the job search skills of members and leaders (Bhat, 2010). There are positives and negatives associated with group counseling and unemployment. The positives are meeting with peers, sharing thoughts and feelings, normalization, exchanging advice and information, and sharing hope. The negatives are unfulfilled needs or expectations, additional personal stress, and unsatisfactory structure, organization, and leadership (Dyregrov et al., 2013).

Relationships can harm and relationships can heal (Cottone, 2017). Loss of relationship can result in grief. However, establishing a new relationship can aid in healing from grief. This can be forming relationships with others and obtaining new employment that satisfies this need.

Chapter 3

Methodology

The purpose of this multi-case study was to explore the perceptions of the experience of grief following involuntary job loss and grief in participants from diverse cultural backgrounds. A better understanding of this phenomenon would address the gap in literature that primarily addresses loss in terms of bereavement (Papa & Maitoza, 2013). The study would also provide additional information to the research that exists on job loss as well as inform those in the mental health field who work with job loss and grief. In seeking to understand this phenomenon, the study addressed the following research question: How do individuals from diverse cultural backgrounds experience grief following involuntary job loss?

This chapter describes the study's research methodology and includes discussions around the following areas: (a) rationale for research approach, (b) description of the research sample, (c) overview of research design, (d) methods of data collection, (e) analysis and synthesis of data, (f) ethical considerations, (g) issues of trustworthiness, and (h) limitations of the study. The chapter culminates with a brief concluding summary.

Rationale for Qualitative Research Design

Qualitative research is grounded in a constructivist philosophical position; qualitative researchers are interested in understanding the meaning people have constructed, that is, how people make sense of their world and the experiences they have in the world (Merriam, 2009). An underlying assumption of qualitative research is that rich data that is nested in real context can be captured only by way of the interactive process between the researcher and the research participants (Creswell, 2014; Denzin & Lincoln, 2013; Marshall & Rossman,

2015; Patton, 2014; Rossman & Rallis, 2012). The key concern is understanding the phenomenon from the participants' perspectives, not the researchers. The product of a qualitative research inquiry is richly descriptive (Merriam, 2009).

It was the researcher's contention that purely quantitative methods were unlikely to yield the rich data necessary to address the research question. The features of a qualitative stance fit well in this study. These features included understanding the meaning and processes of grief in the context of the lives of the participants. I planned to present an in-depth understanding of how each person studied experienced grief in terms of job loss. Through the interactivity of the researcher and participants, the researcher could work to understand and interpret this phenomenon while maintaining design flexibility.

Rationale for Case Study Methodology

Within the framework of a qualitative research approach, multiple case study is a good fit for the research question and study that I conducted. "How" research questions are more explanatory and likely to lead to the use of case studies as the preferred research strategy (Yin, 1994). This is because such questions deal with operational links needing to be traced over time, rather than mere frequencies or incidence (Yin, 1994). Case study begins with the identification of a specific case; this case may be a concrete entity, such as an individual, several individuals or a small group (Creswell, 2013). Merriam (2009) defined a case study as an in-depth description and analysis of a bounded system; Yin (2008) added that it is an investigation of a contemporary phenomenon within this system. Specifically, Merriam (2009) stated that the single most defining characteristic of case study research lies in delimiting the object of study, the case. As Stake (2005) and Miles and Huberman (1994) suggested that case study is less of a methodological choice than a choice of what is to be

studied. Case studies have been defined as heuristic, particularistic, and descriptive. Heuristic means that case studies illuminate the readers' understanding of the phenomenon under study, and previously unknown relationships and variables can be expected to emerge from case studies leading to a rethinking of the phenomenon being studied. Particularistic means that case studies focus on a particular situation, event, program, or phenomenon. Descriptive means that the end product of a case study is a rich, thick description of the meaning of the phenomenon under study (Merriam, 2009). Merriam (1998) presented step by step the process of designing qualitative research in a rather detailed fashion. Her discussion includes conducting a literature review, constructing a theoretical framework, identifying a research problem, crafting and sharpening research questions, and selecting the sample (purposeful sampling).

The study that I conducted fits with the above criteria because it sought to better understand the perceptions of individuals (the multiple case studies) who experienced the phenomenon of grief following involuntary job loss. I sought to look at and understand this specific phenomenon in bounded cases by providing thick, rich description.

The Research Sample

A purposeful sampling procedure was used to select nine participants for this study. Merriam (1998) suggested that "Purposive or purposeful sampling usually occurs before the data are gathered" (p. 66). To yield the most information about the phenomenon under study, purposeful sampling is a method that is typical of case study methodology (Patton, 1990; Silverman, 2011, 2013; Silverman & Marvasti, 2008) because to best generalize, the inquirer needs to select representative cases for inclusion in the qualitative study (Creswell, 2013). The researcher located the research study participants from a variety of community sites

including colleges and career service organizations who had experienced involuntary unemployment. A snowballing sampling strategy was also used, whereby participants were asked to refer other individuals whom they knew that had incurred job loss. This is referred to as network or chain sampling (Miles & Huberman, 1994; Patton, 2014).

The criteria for selection was that the individual must have experienced involuntary job loss over the past 18 months and be between the ages of 35-64. The participants were both male and female and represented the demographic diversity that exists in Albuquerque. In other words, the researcher, based on volunteer response, attempted to create a balanced representation in the research sample in terms of gender and ethnicity.

The relationships that you create with participants in your study are an essential part of your methods as you need relationships that allow you to ethically gain the information that can answer your research questions (Maxwell, 2013). The kind of rapport as well as the amount is critical (Maxwell, 2013). It is essential to maintain a working research partnership (Maxwell, 2013). It is important to understand others' perceptions by being an empathetic listener in order to validate their feelings and experience of job loss.

Overview of Research Design

Following the proposal defense, the researcher obtained approval from the IRB to proceed with the research. The IRB approval process involved outlining all procedures and processes needed to ensure adherence to standards put forth for the study of human subjects, including participants' confidentiality and informed consent. In order to obtain research participants, the researcher planned to contact counselors and career advisors from colleges (career services), counseling agencies, and businesses that focused on the workforce. The researcher sent an email letter with a flyer advertising the study with a link to a demographic

questionnaire that was used for screening. The researcher also posted flyers at colleges and businesses that work with job loss. Study participants were provided informed consent forms as well. Two semi-structured 60-90 in-depth interviews were conducted with the potential for more if needed. These interviews were audio recorded, and the interview data responses were analyzed within and between groups of participants. The researcher conducted a 60-90-minute focus group with the nine study participants on a voluntary basis. It was audio-recorded.

Data Collection Methods

Demographic Questionnaire

The demographic questionnaire included the participant's name, birth date, gender, ethnicity, education, marital status, number of children, and professional or employment status. The inclusion criteria were as follows: participants were between 35-64 years old and had incurred involuntary job loss for no longer than 18 months (See Appendix E for the demographic questionnaire).

Interviews

The phenomenological interview was selected as the primary method for data collection in this research as the interview is a fundamental tool in qualitative research (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015; Seidman, 2012). The phenomenological interview attempts to uncover the essence of an individual's experience as it "focuses on the deep, lived meanings that events have for individuals" (Marshall & Rossman, 2005, p. 105). Brinkmann and Kvale (2015) stated that the interview is an "attempt to understand the world from the subject's point of view (p. 1). Similarly, Patton (1990) claimed that "qualitative interviewing begins with the assumption that the perspective of others is meaningful, knowable, and able to be

made explicit” (p. 278). Each participant was to be interviewed twice, with the potential for more interviews, if needed. The purpose of the first interview was to develop rapport with the participant and to obtain more information in reference to demographic and background information providing a context for the individual and his or her life. If there was time, some of the questions about job loss could be asked. The next interview focused on the participant’s experience with job loss. More interviews were to be scheduled, if needed. The questions for the interviews were semi-structured (see Appendix F) which means that there was a mixture of structured and unstructured questions (Creswell, 2013). Specific information was desired from the respondents, in which case there was a more structured section to the interview. The largest part of the interview was guided by a list of questions or issues to be explored, but the researcher planned to respond to the situation at hand, to the emerging worldview of the respondent, and to new ideas on the topic (Creswell, 2013).

Kumar (2005) viewed the interview as the most suitable approach for studying complex and sensitive areas as the interviewer has the opportunity to prepare a participant before asking sensitive questions and to explain complex ones to them in person. The interview allows the interviewer to clarify and to probe for additional information. It is important for the interviewer to realize the difficulty that participants might experience in sharing their experience of job loss. Carl Rogers (1957) wrote that unconditional positive regard, empathy, and congruence are important in a relationship. Providing these conditions in therapy can aid the client to change and to heal. These conditions are also important when interviewing and developing a relationship with others in a research study situation.

Although interviews have certain strengths, there are various limitations with interviewing. First, not all people are equally cooperative, articulate, and perceptive. Second,

interviews require researcher skill. Third, interviews are not neutral tools of data gathering; they are the result of the interaction between the interviewer and the interviewee and the context in which they take place (Fontana & Frey, 2003; Rubin & Rubin, 2012; Seidman, 2012).

Focus Group

As a method of qualitative research data collection, a focus group is an interview on a topic with a group of people who have knowledge of the topic (Krueger, 2008; Stewart et al., 2006). Since the data is constructed within the interaction of the group, a constructivist perspective underlies this data collection procedure. Patton (2002) explains:

Unlike a series of one-on-one interviews, in a focus group, participants get to hear each other's responses and to make additional comments beyond their own original response as they hear what other people have to say. However, participants need not agree with each other or reach any kind of consensus. Nor is it necessary for people to disagree. The object is to get high-quality data in a social context where people can consider their own views in the context of the views of others (p. 386).

Purposeful sampling should be used to include people who know the most about the topic; there should be between six and ten participants, preferably people who are strangers to each other (Merriam, 2009).

The questions for the focus group were semi-structured (See Appendix G for the Focus Group Guide). As in the individual interviews, the focus group was guided by a list of questions or issues to be explored, but the researcher planned to respond to the situation at hand, to the emerging worldview of the respondents, and to new ideas on the topic (Creswell, 2013).

Methods for Data Analysis and Synthesis

Qualitative research is conducted when we want to empower individuals to share their stories, hear the voices, and to minimize the power relationships that often exist between a researcher and the participants in a study (Creswell, 2013). A qualitative phenomenological study describes the common meaning for several individuals of their lived experiences of a concept or phenomenon (Creswell, 2013) and attends to ferreting out the essence of this phenomenon (Merriam, 2009). The phenomenon in this study was the experience of grief following involuntary job loss.

According to Smith et al. (2009), as a qualitative tradition, interpretative phenomenological analysis came into its own “with the publication of Jonathan Smith’s (1996) paper in *Psychology and Health* which argued for an approach to psychology which was able to capture the experiential and qualitative, and which could still dialogue with mainstream psychology (p. 4). As a qualitative approach, IPA started as a psychological-oriented approach (Alase, 2017). IPA started in health psychology; since then, it has been particularly strong in clinical and counseling psychology (Smith, 2009). Smith et al. (2009) also emphasized that IPA’s core interest group as people concerned with the human predicament (p. 5). As a qualitative research approach, IPA allows for multiple individuals (participants) who experience similar events to tell their stories without any distortions (Alase, 2017), and Creswell (2012) stated that “a phenomenological study describes the common meaning for several individuals of their lived experiences of a concept or phenomenon” (p. 76).

Phenomenology is both a twentieth century school of philosophy associated with Husserl (1970) and a type of qualitative research (Merriam, 2009). From the philosophy of

phenomenology comes a focus on the experience itself and how experiencing something is transformed into consciousness (Merriam, 2009). Phenomenologists are interested in our lived experience (Van Manen, 1990). Phenomenological analysis discovers the essence or basic structure of a phenomenon. Husserl proposed a phenomenological attitude which involves methodical steps in a process of phenomenological reduction. Reduction in this context signifies a “leading back” or redirection from its unreflective and unexamined immersion in experience of the world to the way in which the world manifests itself to us (Thompson & Zahavi, 2007, pg. 69). A phenomenological approach is well suited to studying affective, emotional, and often intense human experiences (Merriam, 2009). IPA is also influenced by the phenomenological perspectives of Heidegger, Merleau-Ponty, and Sartre, which consider the person as embodied and embedded in the world, in a particular historical, social, and cultural context (Shinebourne, 2011). The phenomenological interview is the primary method of data collection (Merriam, 2009).

Prior to interviewing, the researcher usually explores his or her own experiences, in part to examine dimensions of the experience and in part to become aware of personal prejudices, viewpoints, and assumptions (Merriam, 2009). This process is called *epoche*, a Greek word meaning to refrain from judgment. . . In the *Epoche*, the everyday understandings, judgments, and knowings are set aside, and the phenomena are revisited (Moustakas, 1994, p. 33). These prejudices and assumptions are then bracketed or temporarily set aside so that we can examine consciousness itself. Of course, the extent to which any person can bracket his or her biases and assumptions is open to debate (Merriam, 2009). For this study, the researcher planned to keep memos in order to recognize and understand assumptions and bias.

Horizontalization is the process of laying out all the data for examination and treating the data as having equal weight; that is, all pieces of data have equal value at the initial data analysis stage (Merriam, 2009). These data are then organized into clusters or themes (Merriam, 2009). Moustakas (1994, p. 96) explains that in horizontalization, “there is an interweaving of person, conscious experiences, and phenomenon. In the process of explicating the phenomenon, qualities are recognized and described; every perception is granted equal value, nonrepetitive constituents of experience are linked thematically, and a full description is derived.” Imaginative variation involves viewing the data from various perspectives, as if one were walking around a modern sculpture, seeing different things from different angles (Merriam, 2009). The product of a phenomenological study is a “composite description that presents the ‘essence’ of the phenomenon, called the essential, invariant structure (or essence)” (Creswell, 2007, p. 62). The reader should come away with the feeling, “I understand better what it is for someone to experience that” (Polkinghorn, 1989, p. 46)” (Creswell, 2007, p. 62).

To begin the more intensive phase of data analysis in a case study, all the information about the case is brought together; for example, interview logs or transcripts, field notes, reports, records, the investigator’s own documents, and reflective memos (Merriam, 2009). The interviews were transcribed, and I read each transcript. I aimed to remain open and unbiased through this process. For this study, each individual was the comprehensive case yielding an understanding of the phenomenon or the lived experience of job loss. I assigned open codes to the data obtained from each interview. After assigning open codes to the data, I went back over each source to group comments and notes that were related. According to Corbin and Strauss (2007), the process of grouping open codes together is called axial

coding. It is “coding that comes from interpretation and reflection on meaning” (Richards, 2005, p. 94). Assigning codes to pieces of data is the way you begin to construct categories (Merriam, 2009). I kept a running list of these attached to the transcript or on a separate piece of paper. There were nine cases.

Once the analysis of each case was completed, cross-case analysis began. A qualitative, inductive, multi-case study builds abstractions across cases. I used open coding in order to generate patterns, categories, and themes of meaning both in the within case analysis and in the cross-case analysis. First, I examined threads and patterns within categories. Next, I compared connecting threads and patterns across categories. I used comparative case analysis to find similarities and differences across the nine cases. The coding process fragments the interview into separate categories, forcing one to look at each detail, whereas synthesis involves piecing these fragments together to reconstruct a holistic and integrated explanation.

The goal was to provide an in-depth, rich description of the experience of job loss and grief as the nine participants perceived it.

Ethical Considerations

A research proposal was submitted to the researcher’s supervisor and to the IRB. After obtaining ethical approval, the research study commenced. In any research study, ethical issues relating to protection of the participants are of vital concern (Marshall & Rossman, 2015; Merriam, 1998, 2009; Pring, 2000; Schram, 2003). Kumar (2005) acknowledged that it is unethical to accumulate information without the knowledge of participants, and their expressed willingness and informed consent. Therefore, the researcher made it clear to all participants that their participation was voluntary, and that they were free

to withdraw from the study at any time. The researcher obtained informed consent from the participants. The participants were advised that they were under no obligation to answer any questions they did not feel comfortable with. Participants were given advance notice prior to the interview as well as an indication of the type of information that the participant would be asked. In addition, each participant was told how the information will be used. The participants were told about the length of the interview and sufficient time was allowed before and after every interview for the participants to ask any questions related to the research topic. Each interview was coded using a pseudonym. The names and/or other significant identity characteristics of the sample organizations were kept confidential. Cautionary measures were taken to secure the storage of research-related records and data, and nobody other than the researcher had access to this material. Research information was stored in a locked cabinet in my office. Information that was stored on the computer was encrypted and only the researcher was able to obtain access. The focus group was kept as confidential as possible and was held in private locations in Albuquerque.

Unemployment can be a difficult subject for participants to talk about. The researcher was sensitive to this in reference to the questions asked and the vulnerability of the participants involved. Individuals may vary in terms of how they experience unemployment, and the experience could have been or is traumatic. The researcher provided a safe space for the participants to talk about their experience with job loss incorporating Rogerian conditions that are necessary to promote relationships: empathy, unconditional positive regard, and genuineness. The researcher displayed a nonjudgmental, accepting attitude toward the participant knowing that the experience of grief in job loss could be traumatic. The

researcher planned to provide referrals for counseling if the need arose and the participant wished to obtain services.

Trustworthiness

Lincoln and Guba (2000) use the terms credibility, dependability, confirmability, and transferability when they argue about trustworthiness in qualitative research. In addition, researchers in qualitative research must be careful to control for bias.

Credibility

Credibility or internal validity addresses whether the findings are accurate and credible. Are investigators measuring what they think they are measuring? Validity has to be assessed in relationship to the purposes and circumstances of the research, rather than being a context-independent property of methods or conclusions (Maxwell, 2005). The research design components -the study's purpose, the research questions, the conceptual framework, and methods must fit together and there should be a relationship that exists between each of these. In qualitative research, it is important to understand the perspectives of those involved in the phenomenon of interest, to uncover the complexity of human behavior in a contextual framework, and to present a holistic interpretation of what is happening. The primary instrument is the researcher, and it is the researcher's responsibility to be as accurate as possible in the interpretation of data. The researcher can triangulate the methods to enhance the methodological validity.

In order to triangulate the data, I used multiple interviews and conducted a focus group. I wrote memos in order to process what is going on in the study. I utilized member checks throughout the course of the study to ensure that my interpretation of the data was accurate. Member checks are also called respondent validation, and this means that the

researcher solicits feedback on the emerging findings from the people that were interviewed (Merriam, 2009). Maxwell (2005) stated that “this is the single most important way of ruling out the possibility of misinterpreting the meaning of what participants say and do and the perspective they have on what is going on, as well as being an important way of identifying bias and misunderstandings” (p. 111). The process involved in member checks is to take the preliminary analysis back to the participants and ask whether your interpretation rings true (Merriam, 2009).

Dependability and Confirmability

Reliability refers to the extent to which the research findings can be duplicated. Reliability in a research design is based on the assumption that there is a single reality and that studying it repeatedly will yield the same results (Merriam, 2009). Replication of a qualitative phenomenological study will not yield the same results--there can be numerous interpretations of the same data (Merriam, 2009). Rather than trying to replicate the study, the more important question in qualitative research, as argued by Lincoln and Guba (2000), becomes one of whether the findings are consistent and dependable. Not only did I conduct member checking in this study, but I kept memos that reflect the content and analysis of the study which is called the audit trail (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). As suggested by Lincoln and Guba (1985), the memos will consist of my reflections, questions and the decisions I make with regard to problems, issues, or ideas that I encountered in collecting data.

Transferability

To enhance the possibility of the results transferring to another setting, several strategies can be employed. The most commonly mentioned is the use of rich, thick description (Merriam, 2008). As Lincoln and Guba (1985) stated, the best way to ensure the

possibility of transferability is to create a “thick description of the sending context so that someone in a potential receiving context may assess the similarity between them in the study” (p. 125).

Limitations

There were strategies implemented in this study to establish trustworthiness and credibility, but there were also limiting conditions. The findings of this study were not intended to be generalizable to all individuals who have experienced job loss and grief. In addition, the findings are not meant to be inclusive of all members of a certain culture. This study provides a glimpse of a certain phenomenon at a moment in time through the eyes of nine participants.

In addition, I recognize the profound and necessary influence of my subjectivity due to my background in Counselor Education. Though I engaged in reflexive thought around this possible limitation, I also acknowledge that it might be a strength and contribute to the rich understanding of the results of the data which then negates the quest for objectivity.

Other limitations were the size of the focus group which consisted of three of the original nine participants. The sample of the nine participants did not represent the African American ethnicity, although this ethnic group is not highly represented in Albuquerque. Two participants were not interviewed for a second time. Only some of the participants were willing to go over the interview transcripts and themes for member checking. There was a lack of literature on jobs as a relationship which was one of the key findings of this study.

Conclusion

This chapter provided a detailed description of the study’s methodology by including the (a) rationale for research approach, (b) description of the research sample, (c) overview of

research design, (d) methods of data collection, (e) analysis and synthesis of data, (f) ethical considerations, (g) issues of trustworthiness, and (h) limitations of the study.

Chapter 4

Results

The purpose of this study was to extend previous research by presenting an in-depth understanding of how individuals experience grief following involuntary job loss. This chapter contains the results of the phenomenological case study conducted to answer the following research question: How do individuals from diverse cultural backgrounds experience grief following involuntary job loss? The researcher believed that a better understanding of this phenomenon would allow counselors who work with this population to proceed with a more informed perspective.

This chapter provides an individual construct of the demographics and culture of each case followed by a discussion of the key themes. Next, the focus group is discussed in reference to these key themes. The core themes are then described across cases.

Sample

Nine cases were purposefully selected and interviewed for this study. All participants were given pseudonyms. Five participants were male and four were female between the ages of 39 to 62 with a standard deviation of 9.41. Representing the diversity of Albuquerque, New Mexico, four participants self-identified as Hispanic or Latino. One participant self-identified as Hispanic or Latino and Native American. Another participant self-identified as Native American or American Indian. Three participants self-identified as White.

Case #1, Mike, was a Hispanic or Latino 50-year-old male who had an associate's degree in culinary arts and worked in the restaurant business. He was divorced with two children. He experienced multiple job losses. He had been at his last job for three months when he was let go. Linda or Case #2 was a Hispanic or Latino 39-year-old female who had

a master's degree and worked as a teacher at one school for about 12 to 13 years. She was married with two children. Mark, Case #3, was a Navajo 39-year-old male who had been working in home renovation which was not his usual line of work. Prior to his recent job loss, he lost his job working with the federal government. He also worked building water lines or constructing sanitation facilities. He was also attending a local community college. He had four children and was separated from their mother. Susan, Case #4, was a Hispanic or Latino 42-year-old female who worked in Human Resources for approximately five years. She had some college credits. Susan did not speak about other job losses. She was married and had no children. Melody, Case #5, was a Hispanic or Latino 57-year-old female who worked in the medical field in radiation therapy and had a bachelor's degree. She lost her job after having been employed there for two years. Melody was not married and had one child. Case #6 or Paul was a Hispanic or Latino 62-year-old male who worked in accounting and payroll for a school for many years. Paul had earned some college credits. He was single and had no children. Eli, Case #7, was a White 40-year-old male who worked in the hotel business but he identified as an anthropologist and writer. He has worked at different jobs and in different fields. He stated that he was a "semester away" from a bachelor's degree, but he had earned an associate's degree. He was divorced and had no children. Connie, Case # 8, was a White 57-year-old female who had a bachelor's degree and worked in accounting for approximately 25 years. She had no prior experience with job loss. She was married and had no children. Case # 9 or John was a White 58-year-old male with a bachelor's degree who worked as a paramedic. He was employed ten years at one job, but he quit that job to find a better one. The last job he had he loved, but he was terminated from it. He was divorced and had no children (see Table 1).

Table 1*The Study Participants*

Name	Gender	Age	Ethnicity	Occupation
Mike	Male	50	Hispanic/Latino	Culinary Arts
Linda	Female	39	Hispanice/Latino	Teacher
Mark	Male	39	Native American	Home Renovation
Susan	Female	42	Hispanic/Latino	Human Resources
Melody	Female	57	Hispanic/Latino	Radiation Therapy
Paul	Male	62	Hispanic/Latino/ Native American	Accounting/pay-roll
Eli	Male	40	White	Hotel business
Connie	Female	57	White	Accounting
John	Male	58	White	Paramedic

Note. This table represents the demographics of the study participants.

Focus Group

The focus group was one session and consisted of three of the participants who were volunteers from the original sample as described above. The focus group participants were assured that all of their comments would be held in strict confidence and that each would be identified by a pseudonym. Prior to the session, the researcher contacted the participants individually to schedule a convenient time and place to hold the session. Before the session began, the participants were told that the session would be audio recorded and subsequently transcribed by the researcher. The duration of time for the focus group was one hour. The

focus group represented the diversity of Albuquerque, New Mexico, with the three participants being Linda, Paul, and Connie. Linda was a Hispanic or Latino female, Paul was a Hispanic male who also identified as Native American, and Connie was a White female. The age range was 39 to 62.

Case Studies

The discussion of each case that follows will provide more information on the participant's demographics in relation to job loss and grief. The key findings will be presented for each case study, and these are the topics that the individuals spoke about frequently and in great detail. They are as follows: culture and job relationship, commitment and relationship, relationship factors, external factors and relationship, loss of relationship, and grieving and loss. The focus group will be explained in more detail after the case studies.

Case 1 Mike

Culture and job relationship. Mike had an associate's degree in Culinary Arts and worked in the restaurant business where he experienced multiple job losses. He stated that he has "started going back to school for his degree in Business Administration." Self-identifying as Hispanic or Latino, Mike was divorced with two adult children, and was aged 50.

He spoke mainly about his family in terms of their stereotypical views about males being in the culinary arts business. He said that being Hispanic, here in Albuquerque, he is part of five generations from New Mexico and that a lot of New Mexican males will work for the city or in politics. He said that he has an ego and used to want to be a professional basketball player. Mike said that the culture of his family affects him with their derogatory comments that cooking is for women. He felt degraded with their gender stereotypes in

reference to appropriate work for males. He felt like that affected his self-esteem. He provided the following example: “I was celebrating a birthday with somebody and I had bought an ice cream cake... “So, I cut the cake and put the candles in and sang happy birthday and one of my family members mentioned to me: ‘Did you cook this cake?’ I said, no, I didn’t. I felt just because I work on cars doesn’t mean I am going to make a car.” Mike said he felt like the family member was trying to belittle him. Mike also said that if he mentioned he had a culinary arts degree while working in his jobs, “they would remark this isn’t the culinary arts.” There was a cook from Mexico who thought it was silly that Mike would actually go to school in this field. Mike said this was a “cultural aspect that affected me.” He said that he started feeling the lack of his success and it was getting to him emotionally.

Commitment and relationship. Mike did not display strong commitment to the job relationship. He stated that he worked in fast food in high school and just stuck with culinary arts. He believed his strong side was management. However, he seemed to be uncertain as to what exactly he wished to do for his occupation. Mike repeatedly stated that the culinary arts were not his passion. However, he stated that he managed to obtain many jobs in the “cooking aspect.” He said there was a lot of competition in Santa Fe and Albuquerque as far as chefs were concerned. Mike stated that many chefs come in from other parts of the country and many of them have four-year degrees. He complained about the work schedule and how the jobs in the restaurant business were very challenging. He experienced multiple involuntary job losses in this field for various reasons such as “lack of enthusiasm and lack of interest” as well as a conflict with the manager and salary disputes. Mike said that mostly he was let go because “he might be late, have an attitude, or his personal life was going bad. He

then said my work - my life at work is affected.” When he was fired, he said that he simply just looked for another job. However, he did state that job loss affected him in various ways which will be discussed further.

Relationship factors. Since there was a lack of commitment in reference to Mike and the jobs in the restaurant business that he held and then involuntarily lost, there was no sense of communication breakdown. In other words, Mike did not feel a lack of communication from his management when he was dismissed. He was not blindsided and did not feel betrayed by management when he lost jobs. He said: “Wow, I can’t hold a job longer than a year and I am tired of it and I am not enthusiastic about it and I went through two years of school to realize that I didn’t have the passion for it and I was getting fired. It wasn’t as glamorous as I thought it would be and a lot of the kitchens were really terrible - really hot in the summer and not ventilated very well.” He did say that he worked pretty well with people and was a team player when it came to working with them in a work environment. He said that he experienced a bit of sexual harassment at work. However, Mike was not vested in the job relationships. He didn’t want to lose jobs, but they weren’t his passion.

External factors and relationship. Currently, Mike has a girlfriend, but he stated that his previous marriage troubles affected his job performance. He said that he might have been a candidate for an executive chef, but due to his “personal life not going good, his marriage going downhill, it affected his work and he thinks somehow he was let go.” He felt pressured to get another job right away and he felt bad for losing the current job. He said: “I would tell my wife that I was going to work but I wouldn’t. I would go two-three weeks without working so it was difficult because I didn’t want her to think that I couldn’t hold a

job. It kind of affected my marriage in a lot of ways because I couldn't keep a job, you know. I ended up getting a divorce."

Mike is in a new relationship and stated: "I want to make good money. I need to handle any kind of situation and just do it. . . even if my kids are grown, I want to be able to provide a good quality of life for me and my significant other. I am in a pretty good relationship, and we are starting to think long term even though we have only been together six months. It's like where we would like to be in a year, two years." He also said: "My lady says that I haven't gone out with someone so poor before and that affects me." Mike said that job loss affects his relationships. These relationships, in turn, affect the job relationship.

Loss of relationship. When experiencing loss of the job, Mike stated that he felt that emotionally he wasn't doing well in his field. He wasn't making the money he wanted to be making. He said he would get sad and angry. Mike said that being without a job is terrible. He stated, "I owe money and can't pay it back right away. I want to enjoy my life but I don't have the income. You see other people going to work, and you think, man, if I am at the bank, and someone is cashing a check, what great money they have, what do they do?" He said the worst thing about losing a job is the financial aspect and the second worst thing is the quality of life or life-style. Mike also said that there is a lack of fulfilling things to do during the day. He said that he is looking at the possibility of doing something different. He said: "I have different abilities. . . different things I could do besides just the culinary arts thing." Mike said that all of this makes him feel pretty low on an emotional level. He said that on a scale from 1-5, 5 being happy emotionally, being unemployed would be rated as a 2. He said: "I am not happy at all." Mike said that he "just wants to feel good about himself." He said that

going through a divorce and multiple job losses caused him to feel depressed. Mike stated: “I am experiencing a loss of myself.”

Grieving and loss. Mike felt sad and angry and he felt that he wasn’t doing well emotionally in his field. He said that he dealt with this by eating. He stated: “I started gaining weight, I stopped caring about my health, I got up to 350 pounds, my self-esteem went down, and it kind of affected my marriage in a lot of ways.” Mike experienced grief in reference to the loss of his first marriage as well as the grief from multiple job losses. He said that “he would ask the cooks to watch his station while he went into the bathroom and cried.” He said that he just wanted to feel good about himself, but that he got depressed. He said that losing the jobs was the biggest part of his depression. Mike said that even the thought of losing a job caused him distress.

Mike was also grieving for the lack of entry into the business aspect in culinary arts. He said: “There was definitely grief. Grief that some of the jobs were pretty simple for me and I got bored with them. Why can’t I get a management job?” Mike settled for the culinary arts jobs; yet, he really wished to go into the business side of things. Mike said “he was overqualified for the jobs in culinary arts.”

Case 2 Linda

Culture and job relationship. Linda was a high school educator for about 13 years at one school, had a masters’ degree, and experienced involuntary job loss within the past six months. She self-identified as Hispanic or Latino, was married with two children, and was in her late 30s. She was raised in the south valley in Albuquerque with one sister and four brothers. Her sister passed away when Linda was nine. Linda discussed the culture of being

Hispanic and she spoke about the messages she received from her family in reference to work.

She began by describing her perception of being Hispanic and the value of work: “There are those stereotypes out there that you hear like ‘just go take a siesta under a tree.’ However, Linda stated that she was very hard-working and productive. Linda did not want to adhere to stereotypical views of the Hispanic or Latino, and she emphasized that she was hard working. She further stated that: “I am not all these things just because you are looking at me and assuming something.” She said: “It’s funny saying that because I always kind of felt that. I am Hispanic, not Mexican. I am not from Mexico. The distinction between being Hispanic versus the other stereotypes. . . It’s hard, when, you know, everybody looks the same and people just make these assumptions. It’s hard.” She said that there are ideas out there and that you don’t want them tied to you because you happen to look a certain way or have a certain last name. She said: “It’s almost like a desperation not wanting to be associated with these stereotypes.” She further stated: “I mean nobody wants to be considered lazy or mooching off the system. We are very proud; we don’t ask for help and that is another thing. I don’t need help, I don’t ask for help, and so I end up taking on so much and then that happens too. I hadn’t thought to put that in words. Your work reflects who you are--it is a pretty big thing in the Hispanic culture.” She said that she was settler Hispanic and not necessarily Mexican American. She said that in the area where she grew up, you did not take things for granted. She wondered whether this was isolated to her family, but she said “this was definitely a thing.” Despite the stereotypes that exist, Linda seemed to get her work values from her family.

She discussed her family in this regard as she stated: “We had that pride in work and giving your best. It puts a lot of pressure on you. I was always pushed to do well in school. The first quarter I brought home a B+ for World History, and my parents were ready to kill me. I don’t know if this exists in other Hispanic families, but certainly in my family this existed. You go to college; you get a good job. It’s hard, you know.” Her parents valued hard work and they taught this value to their children. Her mother said to her that the idea of a job not being worth its pay is kind of like a privileged idea. She said you should be grateful for your job. She said that her family was competitive and that you always wanted to do your best and be the best. Linda did feel pressure in trying to live up to her family’s expectations. Linda said: “You wear yourself down to nubs, basically. You don’t leave anything out and I feel old and I feel tired.” Linda said that her house was a nightmare and the kids-she said that she didn’t make sure her daughter had all her homework done. She said that when she can’t keep up with things, it is hard. She even said that after her sister died, family members coped through their work. She said that maybe if they would have stopped, they could have grieved. But she also stated that even before her sister’s death, there was that “pride in work and giving your best.”

Commitment and relationship. Linda stated that she loved the school where she taught. She took time off for maternity leave and stated that when she came back the teaching style had changed significantly. They were pushing a new curriculum and the attitudes of her colleagues had changed. Linda won a teacher of the year award and she stated that she was a high performing teacher in the past.

Linda spoke about her degree of commitment in reference to her job. Her commitment to the relationship was strong as she stated:

It was where I always wanted to work. That was where I went to high school--I love the school. I have a very strong belief in what its message is and what it wants to accomplish and so I was very excited to get hired on there. It's such a nurturing place where I had wonderful teachers...that really kind of cultivated that love of learning...when I came back to teach there, I wanted to do the same thing for my kids...I taught to the best of my ability with the best of my intentions.

Her commitment and love of the job was evident throughout the interview. In reference to the job loss, she said: "This is where I wanted to be. It's been hard. It's been very hard." She said that "I want to make it clear that I never wanted to leave. . . and even now I still don't want to be gone...when I think of the school, I get very sad about it...I want to be there. I want to be a part of that and it breaks my heart."

Relationship factors. She talked about what happened in terms of the involuntary job loss and how she felt a lack of trust and communication and betrayal from her coworkers and administration. She said that she went on maternity leave, and when she returned, there was a new curriculum. She said that she "would try to adapt it, but that they didn't like how she was trying to adapt it." Linda said that the teaching style had changed significantly and that they were pushing a new curriculum through. The attitudes of her colleagues had changed as well she said. Linda said she would go to the department head because members of her department posted her notes on a shared document and they were critiquing it. She said to him: "I don't like this - can you say something"? "And he would be like they are just being helpful and to be open to feedback." She later noted, "But there are better ways to be doing things so I tried to work through the proper channels." She felt like she was being bullied within her department for not just jumping on the road with this new curriculum and for

having questions. They were very much like “it has to be this and no, you are doing it wrong.” She said the administration was getting frustrated. She stated that when she was out of the classroom and had a sub, the administration went in and polled her students. They asked the students what they liked and disliked about her class. She said:

He (assistant principal) “kind of had to egg them on, from what I heard from other students talking with me about it later. He was like put things; it doesn’t have to be bad things but ways I could improve, really just nagging them to put stuff in that little delta column, you know, and I was pretty upset when I heard this. I didn’t know what was going on and what they were doing...whatever...and then one day, um, shortly after that they called me in and they sit me down and they were telling me there are all these complaints against me which I have not received. I had to do all this extra stuff which felt like harassment.

She said that “it felt like harassment really, because it just didn’t stop...you have to have the lesson plans, we have to be watching you, you have to do this, you have to do that.” She said they told her that she can’t have kids hanging out in her classroom during their lunch period. When she told them that other teachers were doing that, they said, well, we aren’t talking about them, we are talking about you. She said it was all very negative. Linda stated that the administration said she was codependent with the students and that they had all of these emails which were complaints from parents. Linda said that “I didn’t know if anything was wrong, and all of a sudden I get called in and everything blows up. . . . Nobody has your back anymore and this place that you loved and have given so much of yourself to...it doesn’t matter...it doesn’t matter to them...they just don’t care.” She said she was put on a growth plan which was embarrassing.

Linda stated that she does not “like to do the racial card thing but sometimes she wondered if because she was the only Hispanic there for a very long time that she was always the one to lose her room and to get shuffled around.” She said that she “taught in every room in that building and could never keep her room.” She said that she “put up with it because she thought that administration had her back even if her department was totally dysfunctional.”

Linda decided to leave before they could have a chance to fire her. However, she felt forced out as she did not really want to leave. She felt blindsided when she was called in to meet with administration. She felt like the administration was making up lies. She stated the following:

I don't know what I did to piss them all off but clearly something's happened and they don't like me anymore. And it's time to get out of here because they are going to fire me or I said they probably won't renew my contract. The entire department knows about my problems because not only is the department head involved with it but the incoming department head knows all about this, and they are all a little clique, them and some of the other teachers in there. So, I put up with a lot and it was too much...but I want to make it clear that I never wanted to leave...and even now I still don't want to be gone. When I think of the school, I get very sad about it...I want to be there...I want to be a part of that and it breaks my heart when I think especially of the kids I have left.

Linda felt a lack of trust and communication in her job. She felt harassed, betrayed and blindsided. Linda stated: “The whole relationship thing - you feel like you have nobody. I couldn't relate to my colleagues.”

External factors and relationship. Linda stated that she had external factors that entered into the job relationship such as trying to deal with two young children. One of them was just starting kindergarten and Linda stated that: “it was just...it was a lot...and so I did feel frazzled. I felt like I wasn’t necessarily doing my best job really in any place--either at school or at home.” She said:

You know, I was just flying by the seat of my pants making copies right beforehand and sometimes asking, hey can you watch my class while I make some copies...well you know, we have all been there, have problems. . .and I have been more than happy to step up to help my colleagues...and I kind of hoped they would do the same.

But then she went on to state: “I was doing my best and the thing is, you know, I had won teacher of the year before.” Linda said that she had “lots of outside constraints.” “I know that a lot of it was me...I wasn’t managing my time...my husband and I were having our own stuff. I was trying to balance all this. My other teachers knew about this. I thought we were friends at some point and I confided in them because I thought I could trust them and then all of this stuff started happening.” Linda inferred that the external factors played a part in how she performed her job.

Loss of relationship. Linda felt like the administration was not going to renew her contract so she decided to leave the job. She said that “she felt like she was a shell of who she used to be as a teacher.” Leaving the job was not a choice she wanted to make, however, and she described the loss of the job:

I wanted to be one of the lifer teachers and you know just have been there forever and part of the community...and that’s what I wanted so badly. . . I didn’t want to leave...but the thing that really did it was, um, the principal started making up lies

about me. I didn't want to wait around for them to fire me...I think that would have destroyed me...I really do...

Linda stated that "it was incredibly hard-it has not done well on me...let's put it that way. It's been a very rough summer and I was kind of hoping that maybe I could rest and regroup and try to get myself back in gear again and it just wasn't happening." She said that she "wouldn't mind going back but right now, I can't, it is what it is, and I think about it...I think about the school, the kids, and I think about getting ready, but I can't. I can't...that's not my home anymore. I want it to be my home but it's not. And it hurts."

Linda was sad about the job loss and even called this place of employment a home. She said that "even to this day she keeps thinking back to this school. I keep thinking there. That's not home--not your school anymore. It really feels like that...blah...." Just like in a relationship, one partner or both may have to leave their home. Linda feels she has done just that. Even when she was offered and accepted a new position at another high school, she said that she mourned for the old relationship.

She expressed self-doubt due to what happened with the job loss. She was questioning herself. She said that "you throw everything into the job and you believe in the mission." Now this is gone. She said that "just knowing that it was going to end made her feel very much like a failure because she thought she could have done more."

Grieving and loss. Linda said that after she lost the job that she was "pretty devastated." She said, "I think I just cried the rest of the day." She said she still feels the loss: "It just hits me. Some days are just awful." She said when she left that people were trying to wish her well, but she was "thinking, no, this is not a good thing. I don't want to leave. I just don't have a choice anymore." She said she thought, "Nothing is OK. Yes, I am alive." She

said that there are some days where she “just cries, lays down, and can’t do anything.” She said she “feels so beat up over it.” Linda spoke about how she wanted to get things done, but she just didn’t seem to have the energy to accomplish what she wanted. She felt drained physically and emotionally. She said she wanted to get her health back in shape because she felt like she couldn’t even breathe due to her weight. But, once again, she said that she couldn’t get motivated to fix it. She coped by eating, sleeping, and crying. She said that she wasn’t able to talk to her husband about it because “he has his own problems and he is very jaded about things and very negative. He just does all the worse possible things with it.”

Case 3 Mark

Culture and job relationship. Mark’s current occupation and recent experience with job loss was in home renovation although he stated that this was not his usual scope of work. Prior to this job, Mark worked as a maintenance technician. He stated that he “built water lines and constructed sanitation facilities.” Mark had also worked for the federal government and for the Navajo Nation. He earned some college credit as well as a certificate of completion in a medical billing program. Mark self-identified as Native American, separated with four children, aged 39. Mark was living on the Navajo Nation in Shiprock, San Juan County, New Mexico, prior to moving to Albuquerque. At the time of the interview, Mark was living at a shelter in Albuquerque. He stated that he decided to move to Albuquerque because he had family here and it might be easier to obtain employment. He did, however, state that he does not get along with them. Mark also said that he left the reservation to get away from a crowd that did drugs. He said that “he will drink here in Albuquerque, but he is not on the same drugs that he was on back home. In Albuquerque, you can get them on any corner, but I stay clean because if I were to be drug tested.”

Mark stated that his work ethic was instilled by his father; that he started working at 14 helping his father in the garage detailing vehicles. His father is deceased now, but Mark said that when he doesn't have work, he feels he lets his dad down because his dad "taught him the only way to survive was to get up every morning and do it." Mark said: "I started work at 14; I helped my dad in the garage detailing vehicles. I learned behavior that was instilled." Mark stated: "I don't want to be like those people on the streets. I have never seen my dad on the streets." Mark said that his mother works as well and she models a strong work ethic as she never takes annual leave unless she is forced to. He said that his family members have turned their back on him as he got in trouble with the law and they think he is violent. His father-in-law, Mark stated, "He knows he is the old way." Mark said that there is the perception that all Native Americans get money from the government every month, but that is not the case for his tribe. He said he looks at the other tribes and thinks "what a sell-out. Your tribe sold out. You sold your land to the government, you guys get that, I am like, wow. Here I have to work and go find a job."

Commitment and relationship. Mark lost his job renovating homes and he said: "The work itself, I miss it and I don't miss it. Well, I miss it because it was good money and it was honest work. I don't miss it because that's not something I went to school for. What I went to school for was to get away from actual construction work. I went to school to sit behind a computer and be in an air-conditioned building." He said that he was drinking and that he was introduced to drugs by his friends. His supervisor warned him to stop coming to work under the influence, but Mark stated that he had problems in his family life so he continued drinking and doing drugs. Mark said that "he learned from his mistakes."

However, he further stated: “I guess I am contradicting myself. I keep saying I learned from them which I actually didn’t because I keep making them.”

Relationship factors. Mark did not appear to feel a lack of communication or trust in his job relationship with his supervisors. Mark said that he was “trying to go to work. He was trying to be a functioning alcoholic and part-time druggie.” He said that his boss pulled him aside and said he was going to give him a chance to straighten himself out. Mark said he was warned, but he continued with the behaviors, and so his boss had to let him go. Mark stated: “I was disappointed with myself. I knew it was my fault. He said he was having problems with his kids’ mother and that what he “had been hearing and what he had been taught lately was that it was his fault.” So, he said that when he received his last three paychecks, he drank more and did drugs and that affected other people he was with; especially, family members.

External factors and relationship. Mark spoke frequently about the problems he was having in his family life that entered into the job relationship. His nuclear family did not want anything to do with him, and his relationship with his children’s mother was problematic. Mark didn’t go into detail, but he said: “Why are you (the children’s mother) coming back into my life? You should have left me alone. I was giving you money.” He said he lost his job due to family issues and how he was coping with the family issues. He said: “What was going on at home, I was bringing to work and it wasn’t productive and it didn’t help.” Mark’s drinking and drug use impacted the job relationship. Mark did take responsibility for the job loss as he said: “I was disappointed with myself. I knew it was my fault.” He said that he thought about what family members and friends might be saying behind his back--that he is a loser. He said “not even just hearing it, but thinking that about myself.”

Loss of relationship. Mark stated that the loss of the job relationship did impact him in many ways. Mark said that “I had everything and now I have nothing.” He said it was hard to deal with the reality that he was unable to provide for his kids. He “couldn’t take them to the store to buy them something” and he said it “made me feel bad as a father.” He said when he was working, he gave the children’s mother half. Mark said he viewed himself as a loser and that he believed other people did as well. He stated: “When I was actually looking for work, when I had to travel into town and see the folks sitting behind a desk when I had to request to use the computers to do a job search, the looks you get sometimes. . . they may be young, they may be older, but either way, I can read faces. I could see it on their faces--what a loser, he’s how old, he doesn’t have a job, he’s probably living off the state.” Mark said: “I don’t want to be a nobody. I don’t want to be like these people I see on the streets. I don’t want to be standing at a stoplight over there.” He said that he had everything and now he has nothing. Mark said: “I don’t care to meet or have a relationship with anybody, females or whatever. I don’t feel worthy.” He said that a female would question why they would want to be with him when he does nothing. Mark said his self-esteem was low and that this plays a part in relationships too. He said that if he had to inform others about how it feels to lose a job, he would say: “How does it feel to be a nobody. You want to be a nobody”?

Grieving and loss. Mark said: “I lean more towards grieving toward myself. It’s my own fault, like I say.” Mark was coping with his family issues and job loss by drinking and taking drugs. He said he was “self-medicating.” He said that he felt he learned from his losses and has accepted them. Then, he stated that he was contradicting himself because he keeps doing the behaviors that led to the losses. He said: “I am going to be 40 years old and finding a job is taking forever. That’s why I continue to drink--it is taking forever.

Frustrating is a keyword in this.” I have felt lower and lower but suicide would be a total cop-out. I think living makes more sense than trying to kill myself.” He said work helps you forget your problems. That’s why he likes working, otherwise, problems from the past, when he was a kid, also haunt him.

Case 4 Susan

Culture and job relationship. Susan worked in Human Resources when she experienced involuntary job loss. She worked for a company in 2015, she quit working for this company in 2016, and then decided to go back to work for this company in 2018. Susan stated that she had earned some college credits, identified as Hispanic or Latino, was married with no children, and was 42 years old. Susan’s mother lived with her and her husband. Her father was deceased. She stated that both of her parents were hard workers. She stated: “As far as our culture, being a Hispanic family, I think being in Albuquerque, we could pretty much bounce back. It’s kind of like a small town--who you know, maybe. Here it’s a little more relaxed and casual and we have family and friends and people that we know. So, it’s that kind of culture.” She said that family celebrations were large and even included the third cousins. Susan stated: “That’s the first thing when I mentioned to one of my cousins that I lost my job. My cousin said: Oh, you should come and work for Social Security.” But she also stated that because Albuquerque is a small community, there would be embarrassment and shame. She said she would be judged based upon that. On the other hand, Susan stated that she thought about contacting an employment attorney; but, because Albuquerque is a small city and they would know about the company who fired her, it was a conflict of interest. In other words, Susan stated that the company she worked for had “deep pockets.”

Susan said that her husband has a really good work ethic and that his family is employed in the field of education. She wondered what their perception of her would be when they learned that she lost her job. At the time of the interview, she had not told her husband's family.

Commitment and relationship. Susan stated that originally back in 2015, she had a really good position at a company and "enjoyed it tremendously." She voluntarily resigned in 2016 due to a conflict between the father and son of the company. Susan said that she missed the work environment and she had made many good friends there so she decided to go back to this job in October of 2018. Susan also felt like she had "unfinished business" there. She was later terminated from the job. Susan said that she gave her heart and soul to the people she trained for the company. She said she is trying to move forward from it and not be so bitter.

Relationship factors. Susan applied for a job in Human Resources. When she first went back, she said that "things were great." Susan said that the personnel fluctuated and she was "advised to change her demeanor within the new environment because she worked with project managers and electrician technicians so she needed to have thick skin and be construction oriented." She said that meant a personality change for her. She said she didn't like to say curse words - so she was teased and mocked about it.

Susan spoke about the situation that occurred that led to her being fired. She said that she was looking up the billing address for a customer so she emailed the customer to verify the address. The customer called back and said that his address changed three years ago and asked her why no one had addressed this to correct it in the system. Susan said that the customer called her manager, and her manager confronted her as follows: "Why are we

asking our customer about an address? We are looking stupid to the customer.” He said that Susan needed to take care of this internally. Susan admitted that she got sarcastic with her manager and said: “I should be asking other employees instead of the direct customer”? So, Susan said she asked her manager; he said that he didn’t know it off the top of his head. Susan said: “Well, this is bullshit.” She did say that she raised her voice at him. The manager left and Susan called the operations manager who supervised her manager. He appeared with a Human Resources employee. She was advised to go to lunch and take a breather, and she assumed that she would be written up. Susan took the lunch and when she came back as she passed staff who said “hi” to her, she was asked to go to the conference room. The Human Resource individual told Linda that they were going to have to end their relationship today. Susan was told this was due to insubordination, the use of profanity, and the raising of her voice to her manager. She said that profanity and the raising of one’s voice were believed to be acceptable in this work environment. Susan said that there was no warning, no counsel, nothing. They said: “We are done.”

Susan felt like communication and trust were not evident in this job relationship. She said: “How can they (her employer) say we are all about family”? She felt like she received mixed messages about how to act in this work environment and was blindsided when she was asked to leave. She thought she should have received a write up, perhaps, but not an end to the job relationship. Susan had built relationships with coworkers as well as she stated: “I thought I would always have that relationship and build that bond, whether it was going after work for a beer or a family barbeque.” She said: “I feel kind of ashamed to admit that I wonder if they are thinking about me and do they care.” They weren’t friends she was close to, but she felt she could trust them. She thought she should have at least been given a

warning. She said that she knew she “goofed up.” Susan said that she now understood how others felt when she had to terminate them.

External factors and relationship. Susan did not appear to have external factors that impacted the job relationship. Susan did work for the company in the past so she did have a kind of history with it. She said there was a father and son in the company and they were being pulled in different directions. She liked her job, but she could not handle the conflict between father and son. So, when she applied and got hired there again, she compared her new job there with her old job. Her rosy perception from the previous job colored her expectations for the new one.

Loss of relationship. Susan said that she felt blindsided and questioned why the loss of relationship occurred. She said that, at first, she felt frustrated and then she felt livid. She stated: “Why was I terminated when it was acceptable by men within my department to curse and then the one time I use general curse words out of frustration, I am eliminated.” She said that made her even more bitter. She said she had two stellar employer reviews in her personnel file; so, this really shocked and frustrated her. Susan also wondered “what else was behind it.” She said it was comical as well because the Human Resource individual had “no clue” what she was doing. “We were ending our relationship because that’s all she knows.” Susan said that being in Human Resources and then having to go to new interviews because she lost her job makes her feel “this big.” Susan said: “This sucks. It’s not a great word, but yeah...” Susan said that she is realizing the job loss is “a huge life event.”

Grieving and loss. Susan utilized functional and dysfunctional coping strategies in dealing with the loss and grief. Right after the job loss occurred, Susan and her husband and her mother went to a brewery. Susan said she was just full of tears and emotion. She said she

felt embarrassed and ashamed. She said she was drinking too much and that “her mother called her out on it.”

Susan also relied on her faith to get her through this experience. She said she was trying to keep busy and was cleaning her house and walking her dog. She also stated that “when one door closes. . . another door opens. . . this is meant to be, I guess.”

Case 5 Melody

Culture and job relationship. Melody worked as a mammographer when she experienced involuntary job loss. She had a Bachelor’s Degree, self-identified as Hispanic or Latino, was single with one child, and was 57 years old. She was a caregiver for her mother. She mentioned culture only in the context of job loss and living in Albuquerque; she said that when one loses a job in this city, “everybody knows your business. She further stated: “Albuquerque’s really not a very big town so once you got in my field too--everybody knows. Once you get fired, it’s like no one else will hire you. They don’t even listen to you--they just go by what other people say.” She said that she experienced age discrimination when she applied for new jobs. Melody said that others had negative perceptions of her because she was on Medicaid. Melody stated: “It’s not like I had to get on Medicaid my whole life. I think I have earned this now.”

Commitment and relationship. Melody was working in the field in which she was trained. She said that her employer was supportive and then changed for no reason. Melody believes it is because another employee did not like her, and this employee influenced the employer. Melody said that she was in the middle of working and she was called into her supervisor’s office and she was told that she was fired. She said she was shocked and had no clue. Melody said: “But, I didn’t care. I had my mother to focus on and other things that were

more important.” Melody stated: “I knew that I was going to be a financial mess, but I couldn’t focus on that. There were multiple issues with family. It was really hard. I have been through a lot.” Melody was committed to the job relationship, but she had so many other things going on that she was not able to concentrate solely on this relationship

Relationship factors. Melody said that her employer was supportive at first. She said that the job loss was unexpected and she was not aware she was going to be fired. She inferred that communication was lacking, and she stated: “Of course they didn’t tell me. I was in the middle of working when I was called in and let go.” She said: “My supervisor had me go clean up my locker and give my keys back. I got my certificates back. At that time, I forgot my credentials and everything. I was so out of it.” Melody said that she has since tried to contact her supervisor, but she wouldn't respond. Melody had to go through Human Resources to get her credentials because her supervisor wouldn't give them to her. She said: “She won’t speak to me. Not one word.” She said her supervisor just made up some reason, but Melody said that she was in such a “survival mode that she doesn’t remember a lot of things because so much was going on.” Melody felt betrayed in this relationship by the coworker and by the supervisor.

External factors and relationship. For Melody, there were many factors that influenced the job relationship. She was a single mother and a caregiver for her own mother. She said that she was supposed to be a part-time employee but that she was working full-time - so she was “working a lot.” Melody stated: “I would have to get up at 4:00 in the morning to get my mom fed, dressed, toileted, everything, and take her to a place they could watch her. I would then go to work - but sometimes she was sick, and I would have to leave early.”

Melody's mother was "her rock and her support," and she was dying. She said that the rest of her family was no help in reference to her mother. Melody was also diagnosed with cancer.

Loss of relationship. This participant experienced multiple losses in terms of relationship. After being terminated from her job, Melody said that she left in tears and went straight to the nursing home where her mother was. She said her mother never knew about the cancer or job loss as she was declining fast and that would have devastated her. Melody stated that "her supervisor knew what she was going through and that she was heartless and cruel to do that to her." Melody said she had to go into survival mode and just keep pushing and keep functioning. She said that involved doing what she needed to do to help her mother and daughter. She said: "I was in such survival mode that I don't remember a lot of things. I couldn't process things or function. My brain just shut down." Melody's mother passed away, and Melody said it was like losing her best friend, sister, confidante, and everything in one person. Melody said her death was traumatic, and being terminated from the job was traumatic too. She said "she didn't do anything wrong--she was just working so hard trying to do it all and to do good for the company." After her mother died, she found out she had cancer and as Melody said, "She has had so much loss...her job, her mother, her health, her family." She said that her daughter is now 21 and that she has changed. She hardly knows her anymore. Melody said that she was seeing a therapist who was excellent, but she has a new therapist now who is not very good.

The loss of the job relationship caused Melody to have to cash out her retirement in order to survive. She said that she obtained unemployment, but that it was not enough to pay all the bills. She also said that when you work with people every day you connect with them,

and you are with them more than your own family sometimes. According to Melody, job loss is a huge loss--it's like losing a family member.

Grieving and loss. Only one interview was conducted with this participant. She did not wish to do another one. This participant had experienced much loss and grief. She stated that the death of her mother and the loss of the job were both traumatic. Melody stated that she was depressed and, at first, angry, but she is not so angry anymore.

She stated that she needed surgery and questioned as to why she was alive. She said: "It was just this horrible depression; my mom was gone and I have no job." Melody said: "Should I be worried about my job? No, I am worried about my life." She said that she would just stay in bed in a funk. She said: "There were days my phone told me I had 49 steps that day. I would get up to go to the bathroom and to the kitchen – that was it." Melody said she had an interview with the medical examiner and that she saw these bodies and she thought to herself that she didn't want to kill herself." Therapy and her support group helped her during this time. She would also walk her dogs.

Melody ended the interview by stating the following: "What do you do? I am not the only one in the world with issues like this. Everybody keeps going or you kill yourself. This doesn't go with my beliefs. I am trying to not be a victim and come out of it. I don't want to just survive. I want to thrive."

Case 6 Paul

Culture and job relationship. Paul worked for nine years as an accountant at a local high school. He stated that he had earned some college credit, but he did not obtain his degree. Paul self-identified as Hispanic or Latino, but he stated that he was also part Native American. He said he was raised Hispanic; but in Taos, they all shared the same culture. He

said the foods were Hispanic, for example, tacos and posole. The foods were Native American as well. He was single with no children and was 62 years old.

Paul said that his family was from Taos and the surrounding areas, and he comes from a Spanish American family culture which in Taos is Spanish, Anglo, and Native American. Paul's grandfather, on his father's side, was born at the Tesuque Pueblo. He was Native American. He said there is Native American on his mother's side, but he doesn't know exactly where. Paul's father went to the university in Albuquerque and earned a business degree in accounting. Paul stated that his father was his model for Paul's work ethic. He worked in his father's office when he was young. Paul said that he and his siblings all decided to pursue the field of business. He said: "We followed our father's footsteps." Paul's parents divorced in 1962, and Paul was then predominantly raised by his mother and grandmother. He said that his mother didn't work until the divorce and that she became a meat packer who worked very, very hard. He said: "She kept the house clean for us and our clothes clean. She had food on the table." He said he learned to take care of himself and he worked hard.

Commitment and relationship. Paul stated that he was very happy to be working at the high school and was devastated when he was let go from this job. He said he was committed to the job as he stated: "I have done a lot. I would start early, I would stay late, I would go in on Saturday's, and sometimes on Sunday mornings." He said he was a team player and if any employee needed his help, he would stop what he was doing to help them. He said: "I had my regulars who would come to visit me. I miss the school atmosphere. The high school was kind fun because they have their activities going on...like Hawaii day." Paul also helped with the sporting events and was doing the scoreboard for football, basketball,

and volleyball. Because he was so committed to the job and planned to be there for many more years, the job loss affected him greatly.

Relationship factors. Paul felt that communication was lacking in the job with his coworkers and administration. He also felt betrayed by what happened in reference to the involuntary job loss. He said that the job was going well until the hiring of a new business manager. He said that the new business manager and her husband were very good to him at first, and they helped him sell his first home. Paul said that he even bought a house with them for an investment. He said that he was helping to train the new business manager and that she said to him: "You are not my boss and don't tell me what to do." Paul stated, in turn: "I am not telling you what to do. I was just letting you know how this school does this certain duty." He said she was also giving him her work and that he did not have time to do his and her work. At any rate, there was a business function and Paul thought that someone heard him talking about the new business manager and how she "had all this mail stacked up," and somehow this information got back to the business manager. He said that they wrote him up at work and that it was all lies. He said he was very angry and when he was called in to the principal's office, he was prevented from talking. Paul said he was just trying to tell the truth; since he was prevented from speaking, he started laughing. Paul said: "I didn't understand at all. I still don't understand what happened." He said: "They wanted me out." Paul said that there were other school years when the principal didn't talk to him: "She would pass him in the hallway and not even look at him." Additionally, he said he could have stayed at other jobs he had in the past if he would have just had respect.

External factors and relationship. Paul stated that he is a depressed person and is on medication. His experience with job loss exacerbated the depression. After he lost his job, Paul was placed on Family Medical Leave by his physician.

Loss of relationship. Paul stated that, after reading the write-up he was given, he felt like “he was slapped in the face and thrown under the bus.” He said that it was a hard situation because the business manager was a friend of his and all of a sudden, she changed. Paul said: “I was deeply hurt. Like a loved one type of hurt. . . really deep.”

He said that after he lost the job, “he felt like a loser and it was very, very degrading.” He said one of the challenges he experienced was financial. He ended up selling both of his houses and he planned to relocate to an apartment. He also missed the people he worked with. Paul said that he should have been 66 when he retired. He said: “It wasn’t OK. It was horrible. I went through a lot. Depression.”

Grieving and loss. Paul was grieving the loss of the job relationship. He said that it was a grief that made him try to commit suicide. He did seek help and he received inpatient care. His doctor put him on a 60-day medical leave and changed his medication. He said that just made him meaner so they had to put him back on his previous medication. Paul said that it was hard and he would have good days and bad days. Paul said that he is dreaming about work. He felt betrayed, angry, and sad. He did say, however, that, at this point he needs to let it go. Yet, he also said that if there is a lord, they are going to get paid for whatever they did bad. He said: “Karma.” Paul said that “they will have their day coming as well.”

Case 7 Eli

Culture and job relationship. Eli worked a variety of jobs; however, he stated his occupation as being a production technician before he experienced the involuntary job loss.

His job loss occurred in Colorado; but he relocated to Albuquerque and was experiencing difficulty finding a job. He worked part-time as a cabinet builder, but he was actively trying to find other places for employment. Eli had an associate's degree, and he self-identified as a White divorced male with no children. He was 40 years old.

Eli stated that he couldn't find a job - yet he is a white male, aged 25-45, with blue eyes and blond hair. He said: "I am a Beta male in my prime." He thought that some of the things that happened in Colorado followed him to Albuquerque as he said: "It's one of those things in the United States--no matter where you go, you still have the same name and social security number. It's the same system." He was in some legal trouble that stemmed from a divorce. He said he had been in Albuquerque for about six months, and that he thought "he would come to the desert to find himself and didn't realize how hot it was." He said that he "hates the heat, but is looking forward to winter." He said: "He was told that Albuquerque was full of gangs, but he said he was not having any problems." Eli said that "obtaining work was a different story, however."

He said that he has been homeless before and that "he was one shower away from it now." He said that "it's a real eye opener to see how many people out here are the downtrodden. It ain't just the Hispanics or the Indians. There are as many Caucasians as anybody else."

Eli felt that his culture influenced his perceptions of working. He said that the acculturated belief is that the man is head of the household. He pays the bills. Eli said that there are psychological ramifications of not working or being able to find a job. He said: "You feel less like a man when you don't have a job and that is emasculating and humiliating."

Commitment and relationship. Eli worked a variety of jobs and experienced multiple job loss. He worked ten years as a production technician prior to the last involuntary job loss; but, he said, “He couldn’t stand the job.” Contradictorily, he said that the last time he lost a job he felt bad about it. He considered himself an anthropologist and stated that he was a semester away from earning a degree in this discipline. Eli also considered himself a writer and illustrator and had a website devoted to this. He said he does miss working as he said it provided him with stability and a steady income.

Relationship factors. Eli felt that his past job relationships influenced his ability to begin a new job relationship. In other words, one’s past experiences and documentation follow you to your new destinations. Eli did believe that a job is a relationship as he stated: “A job is a relationship. It is like golden handcuffs.” An employee is trapped due to benefits received.

External factors and relationship. Eli had external factors that entered into the job relationship such as the impact of his divorce and legal difficulties. He stated that he also deals with depression, PTSD, and COPD. He said: “Everyone has problems. That’s the world we live in. It’s a broken world. It’s hard to grow roots when you are starting below the ground.” He said that he gets a knock on the apartment door each month for the rent. Eli said: “It’s my situation.”

Loss of relationship. Eli stated that the loss of job impacted him in terms of stability and income. He said: “You’ve got to be able to pay the rent. You’ve got to be able to feed yourself, your kids . . . you know what I’m sayin’?” He also stated:” My gas has been riding on ‘E’ for the past six months and thank god that car is forgiving.” Eli said that he missed the freedom of being able to do things: “You have to have the money, you know.” “A man

doesn't eat if he doesn't work and the good book says that." He said that he has had voluntary job loss; but when it is involuntary, "it's a whole different can of worms. Take the top and shove it." He said that it is really depressing when it is involuntary. Eli said: "You feel alive when you are working." He said that he is always empathetic to others but now he thinks: "I'm not worried about you. I'm worried about me."

Grieving and loss. When I asked this participant if job loss felt like grief he responded: "Yeah, yeah, it does. Every time I lost or quit a job, that first day I just wanted to get drunk. So, yeah, you do grieve. As far as being depressed, it is hard to get out of the hole." He said: "I do a lot of sleeping too. When you are dealing with depression, man, you don't want to do anything. I do a lot of praying now. I always believed in god, but I talk to him a lot more now than I used to." Eli said that he tried to stay positive, but Eli "missed the freedom to be able to do things." He said: "You have to have the money, you know."

Unfortunately, this participant was only available for one interview. He texted and stated that he had left the state and due to job loss, he was living in his car. He was "one shower" away from being homeless.

Case 8 Connie

Culture and job relationship. Connie worked as an accountant and chief financial officer for a company in Albuquerque for 14 years. She earned a bachelor's degree. Connie self-identified as a 57 year old White female who was married with two children.

This participant stated that she grew up in Albuquerque, and her father retired from the police department. She said that she remembered his strong work ethic and she spoke about a time when people were picketing and her father stated that he was still going to work because "it was the right thing to do." Connie said that he would cross that picket line and do

what he needed to do. She said that he did want to work and take care of his family. She said her mother worked outside of the home for only about six months. Connie stated that her mother believed that you don't need an education--you just need to find a husband. Connie said that she did want to get married and have children, but she did state: "I don't think that's it. That can't be just it. That's not it." She said that she got her education, had children, and then entered her career path of accountant. She said: "I just knew that's what I wanted to do."

Commitment and relationship. Connie had a strong commitment to the job relationship and to the field of accounting. She said that when she was in high school that she took a class in accounting and she knew "that was my calling." However, Connie was laid off from her last job as an accountant. . . She stated that they brought in a new company president and the "transition was not what everybody thought it was going to be." Connie was second in charge - she said she stuck it out for a couple of months and then went to the new president and said, "I don't think I am your person." Connie said she told her boss that she would take a lower position if there was something available. She said she was honest with her boss; she even told her boss to put her on the lay-off list or give her the lower position. She was surprised that she was laid off; she said: "I still feel like I need to contribute. I want to do something more." Connie said: "Once I make a commitment, that's it." She said: "I can't imagine doing anything else but accounting."

Relationship factors. Connie felt that she was being honest in her communication with her boss when she asked her for a lower position in the company. She was not happy about the new upper management and did not want to be second in line. She felt like she and her boss had honest communication, and her boss would talk to upper management about Connie's request. Connie, however, stated that her boss was not truthful with her. Connie

said that she had a few weeks of vacation in the works; so, she asked her boss to just let her know. Connie said that she received no communication from her boss; in fact, she discovered that her internet access to the company was not working. She said: "I knew what that meant." Connie said she called the corporate office and left messages with them and no one called her back. She finally emailed the corporate office and they emailed her back stating that "her layoff package would be overnighted and she would get it the next day." Connie received the package and it was Fedexed from the local office. Connie said she was thinking: "Why didn't you just call me?" She said: "I just didn't know if I was fired, if I was laid off--it was unclear to me as to what actually happened." Connie said she was thinking: "Why did you handle it this way? I mean they avoided it. It was a lack of respect." She said she was trying to process why she was treated that way. Connie felt that factors that are essential in a relationship were lacking.

External factors and relationship. Connie stated that she experienced much loss: her parents and the loss of the job.

She also mentioned that two months prior to the job loss, her ex-husband's father passed away. Since she was previously married for 30 years, this was a big loss for her. Connie experienced bereavement in terms of her ex-husband's father and then her mother-in-law passed away six months after Connie's job loss. Connie did not speak much about her previous marriage as she has been remarried for three years. However, she did experience the marriage and divorce while she was at the accounting job that she last held. She said: "All those big life changing events do change you."

Loss of relationship. Even though Connie asked to be placed on a lay-off list or be demoted to a lower position, she still felt blindsided. She experienced loss of relationship

with family members; now she was experiencing loss of relationship with her coworkers. She stated: "I know they weren't my friends, but we did things together. We went to lunch; we went to see baseball games. I mean, they were a family and now all of a sudden to be cut off. Now I am cut off from that family. So, it's another loss." She said that she felt the company was going to take care of her.

Connie said that there is a stigma associated with job loss. Connie said she agonizes as to what to say in job interviews about the job loss. She said: "Do I want somebody to know I got laid off"? She further elaborated: "What is it saying about me or what will they think if I got laid off instead of quitting? The whole meaning to what is wrong with me." She said she thought that she had resolved this; but then she thinks: "Can I handle a new job? Am I good enough"? She said that she "second guesses herself." She said that she knows that she is good at accounting, but now keeps doubting herself. The job loss affected her view of herself; she said "it has changed who I am."

Grieving and loss. Connie said that she is a crier and after the job loss, she "did a lot of that." She said: "I am a crier so I get emotional." She also said that for the first couple of months she probably slept more than she ever had. She said: "There was just a lot of grief altogether. My in-laws who passed. . . It just sort of intertwined." Connie stated that she did see a counselor "just to get it out and to reassure herself that her thought process was healthy." She also went to the gym, traveled, and spent time with family. She said that she spends a lot of time by herself which she has always enjoyed. She said: "That's why I like accounting. I am a private person." Connie said that sometimes she feels like she is going backwards and "everything creeps back in her thoughts again." She said that she then goes forward. She said: "I still think I am glad I did it. I wish it wouldn't have happened that way,

but I'm glad I did it. I am glad I'm not there." She said that any experience changes who you are and it is up to you to learn from it or to change for the worse. On the other hand, she feels that she never received closure and she doesn't think she ever will.

Case 9 John

Culture and job relationship. John worked as a paramedic for about five weeks when he experienced involuntary job loss. He had worked at other places before, but the job prior to this recent one was a "bad situation," he said. John who was 58 years old earned his bachelor's degree and self-identified as a White male, divorced with no children.

He spoke about family values and stated that his father never pushed John into a career, never put down his chosen field, and never pushed him to make a lot of money. John stated: "Aaah.... but the modeling. He ran a drug store for 38 years, often working six days a week." He further stated that "unemployment was inconceivable, and, of course, leisure time was sacrificed. John said he thought that "Anglo culture aspires to self-reliance, and income and status are very important." John said that he did not tell his father about the job loss for two weeks. He said that his father is Depression-era, but he did not cast verbal judgment when he found out about the job loss. John also said that it's harder for men; one of his female friends told him to hurry and get work because women don't like to date unemployed men. He said that it didn't seem to impact his dating life. He said: "I found out that just about everyone has had a job disaster."

John further stated that he felt there is a great deal of age discrimination. He said there is dissonance between employers offering sign on bonuses; yet, on the other hand, "these jerks won't hire anybody my age. So, it's terrifying."

Commitment and relationship. John became a paramedic at the age of 50. He worked for one employer for ten years before the current job position where he incurred the involuntary job loss. When referring to the current job, he stated: “Things were great. The pay was better. Everything was better.” He said that is why it was so devastating. John stated: “It’s like this is great. Um, and then gone.” He showed a lot of emotion when he stated in the interview that he liked everything about the job.

Relationship factors. John said that he thought everything was going well with the job; then without warning and discussion, he said he was told to be out of there. He said that he had never lost a job before so this was completely new. He said: “This is absolutely shocking to me.” John said that he believes they had no good reason to dismiss him from the job as his license was unimpeded--there was nothing in effect against it. He said that he had no idea this was coming. There had been no write-ups, no discussions, nothing. He asked them to comment, and they said nothing. He said their allegation against him was inadequate patient care; however, John said he wrote to the doctors and they did not believe he did anything that would require that kind of discipline. In addition to the lack of warning, discussion, and overall communication, John said he felt it was hard to trust again. He feels that in new positions he will get fired again. He said: “It’s the human tendency, you know, when you walk up a canyon and a bear chases you. The next time you walk up a canyon you’re like wait a minute I better watch out for this canyon because a bear is after me.”

External factors and relationship. John stated that he felt shame in reference to the job loss. He said that he needed to give a context for this: “I know that you are not doing this kind of study, but contextually, I suffered a lot of child abuse that produced shame. This job loss echoed that.” He said that because of his difficult background, the job loss was

amplified. He also said that he was divorced and that “his wife dumped him out of nowhere.” He said there were things “that were changing and he should have picked up on them.” However, there were no signs like this to indicate impending job loss.

Loss of relationship. John felt blindsided when the job relationship ended. He said that his initial reaction was one of shock, and he is still shocked and cannot explain why. He expounded on this and said it is because he cannot explain what happened. He said: “The job loss is surreal. I cannot explain it. Till the day I die, I cannot explain what happened.” John felt a considerable loss of self-worth and shame and confusion. He was mourning for the things he loved about the job. He said he lost his sense of self. John said: “I am a paramedic. I rescue. I help. And then suddenly I am not doing it and the thing I didn’t realize also was the loss of social contact.” He said that you have nowhere to go and it is socially devastating. Even though these people aren’t your near and dear friends, he said it is still a social contact and social support. John said he told his friends: “You know what? Losing my job was worse than my divorce.”

Grieving and loss. John said he was shocked about the job loss and that it felt surreal. He said he was sad, angry, confused, and shameful. He said that when he came home from being fired, he drank. He said he drank the next day too. He said: “I can’t believe what a gutter I got into” It made him realize “it is a slippery slope.” He said he has gone to counseling and to support groups.

Focus Group

The nine participants in the study were invited to participate in a one-hour focus group to further explore the experience of grief following job loss in diverse cultures. Three participants volunteered to take part in the focus group (see Table 2 below). More

information on each of these participants can be found in the previous section on the case studies. This is a small sample for the focus group; it may not be trustworthy and credible.

Table 2

The Focus Group Participants

Name	Ethnicity	Gender	Age	Occupation
Paul	Hispanic or Latino	Male	62	Accountant/Payroll
Linda	Hispanic or Latino	Female	39	Teacher
Connie	White	Female	57	Accountant

Note. This table represents the demographics of the focus group

The focus group members were encouraged to share their story of involuntary job loss while discussing the themes as presented from the single case studies. The same themes from the case studies were frequently brought up in the focus group and the group members reiterated the idea of job as relationship. As in any relationship, the following components were indicated by the focus group participants as influences and determinants of behavior: culture, commitment, relationship factors, and extraneous factors. The loss of relationship and grief components were exhibited by the group in reference to the involuntary job loss.

Members brought up culture when they spoke about job loss. Linda stated: “At least in my family experience, which is Hispanic, you work until you die-type of thing and you rest when you’re dead. God helps those who help themselves. I don’t know.... it’s something that’s kind of ingrained in me, I guess.” She said she didn’t know if that was cultural in terms of being in Albuquerque or being in a religious setting or being Hispanic in a religious setting, but there’s the idea that you don’t complain and you work and work and work. Paul

concurred; he said that he worked and worked and gave it his all. Linda said that there is the religious idea that you are saved by work or “by the fruits of the labor you put out and through this suffering you kind of get redeemed. Paul said: “Yeah, you’ll get redeemed in the end.” The participants agreed that culture and job relationship were related.

Commitment to the job was strongly evident in two of the participants. Connie was definitely committed to the field of accounting, but did not want to work in the position she had. Linda said of the teaching position that she lost: “It was home. I was told I wasn’t welcome at home anymore. I mean, in my case, I was a student there and then I taught there so I mean I have been entrenched in this. It was my community and my place. When you are told you are not welcome at home anymore, that’s very hard.” The job was a home to her and the relationship was over. When you are committed to a relationship and it ends, it is hard.

The participants just naturally started speaking about what it means to be in a relationship and what it means to lose one. All of the participants felt blindsided by the job loss as well as betrayed. Paul said that he got too close to his manager and talked to her confidentially and then “she threw it to my face, when she wrote me up on things that I told her. The main thing I regret is having her as my friend.” Linda said that she thought she was friends with one of her coworkers and she said “she thought we had each other’s backs and all of a sudden she just stabbed me in it.” After the researcher stated that you got close to somebody and then it was like you were betrayed, Connie said: “Well, absolutely. It is a relationship.” Paul said that if he ever went to work again, he wouldn’t trust anybody. He said he would go to work, do his job, and go home. Connie agreed and said she would do the same. They all said that they received no closure when they were inadvertently let go and that there was no communication and that it was hard to trust again. Connie said: “Well, like

any relationship where there is trust you feel secure.” Paul said that it was like: “I love you, love you, love you, and all of a sudden.... boom.” The participants all thought that communication and closure (if one is let go) were important in a job. Linda mentioned that the external factor that she thought affected her new position was that she was still missing and mourning the old one. She wanted the old relationship back.

The participants talked about the loss of relationship in terms of the lack of trust they have now; but they also were questioning themselves. Connie said: “Am I going to be able to learn this? Am I going to know it? Am I going to fit in? Loss of relationship impacted how they saw themselves. Paul said that he started “second guessing and wondered if he was doing it wrong.” The participants spoke about grieving; Linda stated: “For me, it really did hit very personally and I am talking about depression and stuff. . . that is very real.” Paul said: “They got me sick enough to want to commit suicide.” Linda said that she “felt like a walking zombie.”

Case Studies: Emergent Themes

Finding 1: Job as Relationship

Participants indicated that a job is a relationship and there are components that affect one’s perception of this relationship and the behaviors that occur. These components were culture, commitment, relationship factors, and external factors or what we bring into the relationship with us. The participants indicated directly and indirectly that this relationship is like any other relationship we have. The perception of the relationship affected their views on job loss and grief and the resultant behaviors they used to grieve. Connie said: “Absolutely. A job is a relationship.” Linda said the job she lost was “home--it was her community where she knew people.”

Sub-finding 1: Culture and job relationship. Participants indicated that culture impacted their views on the nature and meaning of work, the job relationship, and loss of the relationship. Culture in this case involved ethnicity, the family, and society. Linda stated that “your work reflects who you are in the Hispanic culture.” She wasn’t sure if this was isolated to her family, but she said “it was definitely very much a thing.” She said “nobody wants to be considered lazy or mooching off the system. We are very proud and we don’t ask for help.” Mark, who is Native American, said that there is the perception that all reservations receive money from the government, but his tribe does not. He said that “when he doesn’t have work, he lets his dad down because he taught me the only way to survive was to get up every morning and do it.” Mark said that he “learned behavior that was instilled.”

Sub-finding 2: Commitment and job relationship. The participants spoke about their perceptions of job loss and their levels of commitment or noncommitment with the job relationship and how this impacted grief. Commitment in the job relationship was as important as commitment in any relationship. Linda loved the school where she taught and said she “missed the community.” She graduated from this school and it was where she wanted to work. Paul said that he was “happy to be working at the school” and he planned to retire from there. He tried to commit suicide when he was dismissed.

The degree of commitment in this study did not predict the degree of grief. All of the participants exhibited grief whether or not there was a strong commitment to the job. The financial impact was a detriment regardless of commitment. Commitment did relate to the level of satisfaction in the job and vice versa. Mike stated that he “got into culinary arts because he had done this in high school and so he went ahead and stuck with it.” He said that “it is not his passion.” He said that he really wants to go into the business side of culinary

arts. Despite the lack of commitment, he felt grief. He did, however, start looking for new jobs immediately after his job loss. Mark was not committed to his jobs, but he did say: “If I were to find good paying, meaningful work, I want to give it another shot.”

Sub-finding 3: Relationship factors. The core conditions necessary for sufficient change in a therapeutic setting according to Carl Rogers were also important to the participants in the job relationship. These conditions were communication, honesty, and trust. Participants spoke about how this impacted their view of the relationship and resultant grief. Susan said that she used profanity and raised her voice to her manager; but she said: “It was always acceptable in this work environment.” She said, in the interview, she thought: “You are letting me go just for this. No warning, no verbal, no counsel, nothing. And they said: We are done.” She felt like there was no communication. Susan said: “We were ending our relationship because that’s all she knows.” Paul said that he trusted his new boss and became her friend. She then changed and wrote him up incorporating a barrage of lies. He was called into the administrator’s office, but he said that “she didn’t let him talk.” Paul said that “everything they wrote was a lie and I was trying to tell the truth.”

Sub-finding 4: External factors and relationship. Participants spoke about extraneous factors that affected their relationship with their jobs. These were marriage, multiple grief issues and events, and dysfunctional behaviors. They stated that they brought these things into the job relationship. In other words, what they brought into relationship with them affected the relationship. Mike said that “his marriage wasn’t going all that great so it started affecting his work a little bit.” Linda said that “I know a lot of it was me. I wasn’t managing my time. . . my husband and I were having our own stuff. I was trying to balance all this.” Mark was drinking and doing drugs. He was warned to change his behavior by his

supervisor, but he did not. He said: “I would have a hangover or whatever and then when I got reprimanded for it, I really thought about it. I should kick back on Saturday; I should get sober on Sunday, and get ready for work on Monday. I always think that to myself but I never do it. I am that kind of person.”

Finding 2: Loss of Relationship

Participants spoke about job loss of relationship. This loss of job relationship impacted them and was synonymous with losing any relationship. Resultant grief ensued from the job loss and manifested in various ways. Mike said that job loss affected him personally, but “financially is the biggest thing.” He said: Being without a job is terrible because, you know, I owe money and can’t pay back right away and sometimes I want to enjoy my life but I don’t have the income.” Mark said: “I don’t want to be a nobody. I couldn’t respect myself.” He also said: “I had everything and now I have nothing.” Mark said that not having a job affects his relationships with others because “he doesn’t feel worthy.” He said that if he can’t support himself, how can he support others? Mark said that his self-esteem was low and Susan said that “she is not confident.” Eli said that “you feel down on yourself and it’s hard to get out of the hole.”

Finding 3: Loss of Relationship and Grief

When relationships end, there can be grief. Participants shared their perceptions of job loss and grief and functional and dysfunctional coping strategies. Job loss was relationship loss. Participants exhibited various coping mechanisms in terms of grief. Some were functional and some were dysfunctional, but all participants did exhibit grief in reference to the job loss. Mike said that it affected him emotionally and he started gaining weight and stopped caring about his health. He said: “It kind of affected my marriage in a lot

of ways because I couldn't keep a job, you know." Linda said she was devastated and she cried the rest of the day after learning she was being let go. She said she also slept a lot. Linda said: "My health has been in the toilet. It's just that stress. I am crushing under my weight. I can't even breathe half the time." She said she can't get motivated and she is tired.

Cross-Case Synthesis

The previous sections offered stand-alone examinations of each case study; whereas this section serves to provide a synthesis and holistic understanding of the phenomenon of involuntary job and grief experienced by diverse cultures. Therefore, open codes were generated into axial codes as the researcher attempted to build a general explanation that fits the individual cases (Yin, 2008). The findings of this study demonstrated the following three themes: (a) Cultural Influence and Implications on Self and Work Identity; (b) Cultural Influence and Implications on Job Loss and Grief Manifestations; (c) The Implications of Job as Relationship.

Cultural Influence and Implications on Self and Work Identity

The participants spoke about culture being an influence on self and work identity. Mike, who worked in culinary arts, stated that "he had a stepdad who would mention to him that culinary arts were for women." This viewpoint, indicative of gender norms and gender stereotypes, appeared to influence Mike especially in terms of his work identity. Mike was bothered by this remark and gender stereotypes. Mike said:

Being Hispanic, here in Albuquerque, I have five generations from New Mexico. A lot of New Mexicans will work for the city or in politics. I wasn't involved like that. It affected me culturally because, you know, I have an ego and I used to want to be a professional basketball player. My family doesn't see the success aspect of what I

have chosen to do. My family are New Mexicans and they will make derogatory comments to me.

Mike spoke about this in terms of what it was expected in the Hispanic culture and how he wanted to work in a male oriented career when he was younger. Mike said the “cultural aspect affected him” - yet he denied this as well:

Family members of mine sometimes like to go on that old school and try to play that card. I don't know of many women chefs. I have seen some big, healthy men be chefs and I wouldn't consider that derogatory opinion towards them. I don't have to work on a car to be a man. It doesn't affect my self-esteem.

It appeared that Mike was bothered by the derogatory remarks based on gender norms and gender stereotypes, but he stated that this didn't bother him. In other words, denial of the impact of stereotypes was exemplified by Mike. He said that what bothered him was “not being satisfied with the aspects of the job he would choose-the cooking aspects. He said he would get bored with it.” This did seem to bother Mike as he wished he was working in business and not culinary arts. Mike did seem to be bothered by the influence of the gender norms and stereotypes that were evident in his family; he was also bothered by his job choice as he preferred to work in business.

Linda, who worked as a teacher, was influenced and affected by ethnic stereotypes and the strong work ethic of her family. The stereotype that her family tried to dispel was that Hispanics are lazy and are simply prone to taking siestas. She stated the following:

Your work reflects who you are. It is a pretty big thing in the Hispanic culture.

When I say, Hispanic, settler Hispanic, not necessarily Mexican American.

In the area where I lived and grew up, this was very much a thing. You

work hard and you don't take things for granted.

Linda said that this was a belief - a value that was instilled in her. She said you "wear yourself down to nubs, basically. You don't leave anything out. I feel old and I feel tired. I can't keep up." It appeared that Linda worked hard in order to live up to her family's expectations. It seemed her family wanted to dispel the stereotypes that exist in reference to Hispanic and Latinos. She said:

I am not all these things just because you are looking at me and assuming something. I am Hispanic, not Mexican. It's almost like a desperation not wanting to be associated with those stereotypes. We are very proud. I don't need help, I don't ask for help, and so I end up taking on so much."

It appeared that Linda introjected her family's messages and beliefs to the point of being exhausted in her life and career. She said: "That identity—that part of me—is that I should have done more."

Mark, who worked in various occupations, the last being in home renovation, spoke of his family as influencing him. This was especially evident in his work identity. He said that his parents were hard working, and he felt that he would be disappointing his father with his involuntary job loss situation. He was also influenced by societal beliefs and expectations. Mark stated that it is the public's perception that all Native American tribes receive financial assistance from the government. It appeared that he was bothered by this assumption toward Native Americans. Mark said that his tribe did not receive financial assistance, and he was expected to work. Mark stated that "he didn't want to be a nobody. He would rather find work and support himself." Unfortunately, due to job loss, Mark was living

in a shelter and also experienced the culture of homelessness that also consisted of substance use.

Paul, who worked in accounting, was influenced by his family as both mother and father were hard-working and this influenced his own perception in terms of work. He said he “got his work ethic from his father as well as his mother who worked very, very hard.” This influenced his perception in terms of identity and that a person should work very hard. His identity was also influenced by his ethnicity, and he was very proud of his Hispanic and Native American roots and spoke about growing up in Taos, New Mexico. He said that “everyone shared the same culture.”

Eli, who worked in various occupations, spoke about his perceived identity, and he seemed to identify more in the area of intellectual ability and pursuit. He really “liked anthropology a lot and was dreaming about getting back in school.” He spoke less about culture as influencing identity. Eli did state that he didn’t understand why he couldn’t get a job as a he was a white male “with blond hair and blue eyes.” This exemplified the views found in culture at large. He was also influenced by gender stereotypes as he stated that he “felt less like a man when not working.”

Susan, who worked in Human Resources, and Connie, who worked in Human Resources, both spoke about the culture of their family as an influence in their identity. Susan stated that “she was raised by hard-working, Hispanic parents. Connie spoke about her father influencing her in terms of work – her mother believed in more rigid gender roles. In other words, her mother believed that she should get married and have children and that would be her world of work. Connie did not wish to follow this gender stereotype. Melody, who worked in radiation therapy or as a mammographer, did not talk much about culture.

She did seem to be impacted by what she believed were society's perceptions of her. This impacted her identity. She felt discriminated against because she was on Medicaid and "they judge you if you are on Medicaid."

John, a paramedic, stated that "Anglo culture aspires to self-reliance, and income and status are very important." However, he did state that "my father never pushed me to a career, never put down my chosen field, never pushed me to make piles of money. Ah, but the modeling, he ran a drug store for 38 years, often working six days a week. So, unemployment was inconceivable." John was influenced by his father and valued the world of work. He was also influenced by what he learned from society at large.

In conclusion, the influence and effect of culture was one major finding in the study. Culture appeared to impact one's perception of self and work identity. The culture of the family, whether through the imparting of belief system or modeling, was an influence. Gender roles, norms, and stereotypes played a role in perception of self and self in work.

Cultural Influence and Implications on Job Loss and Grief Manifestations

The study participants were influenced by family and society's beliefs and values. It appears that these beliefs and values played a part in the participant's perception of job loss. Linda received strong messages from her family about the value of education and hard work. She stated that she neglected self-care because she worked so hard. Linda said: "That's always the first thing to go and that's why I am kind of exhausted and overweight and haven't had a shower in a couple of days and I don't have time to wash my hair." She also believed in giving of herself to others and "pushing herself aside." Losing her job devastated Linda. She also perceived the job as a "home where she was not welcome anymore." She gave so much of herself to her job and now it was over. The high value of work played a part

when the job was lost. There were other participants who received strong messages about the value of work. Mark, Paul, and John spoke about their parents and how they modeled the value of hard work. It is possible that because this is the value the participants learned; the job loss was even harder for them.

The participants were influenced by societal beliefs and stereotypes that exist in reference to the unemployed. These appeared to influence their perception of job loss. John stated: “Unemployment happens to auto workers and construction workers, not to educated people. I never thought I would be unemployed because I have a degree and advanced medical training.” Eli stated that he was an “Alpha male in his prime, with blond hair and blue eyes;” therefore, he should be able to obtain work. The negative beliefs and labeling of the unemployed affected Mark as he said that being unemployed “makes you a nobody.” He said that “he could see it on people’s faces that he was a loser, he’s old, and he is probably living off the state.” However, John said that “no one rejected me for being out of work. As I told my story to friends, I found out that just about everyone has had a job disaster, so that reduced the shame some.” Melody stated that she felt judged because she was on Medicaid. She felt she was looked down upon due to this.

The perception of work that is learned through the culture of the family and society can affect the way job loss is viewed and how one reacts to job loss.

The Implications of Job as Relationship

This was a common theme among the cases whether it was inferred or stated directly. The components that influence relationships were evident in involuntary job loss. These components, exemplified in the above case studies, were: culture, commitment, relationship factors such as communication, trust, and honesty, and external factors that affect

relationships such as issues with other relationships in one's life. The participants spoke about losing the job relationship and the grief that ensued due to this loss. When the researcher asked the participants in the focus group to check the theme of job as a relationship that emanated from the research, Connie stated: "Absolutely. A job is a relationship."

Linda said:

You know it's funny. There was a song on the radio that used to always annoy me and it's about this guy who had gotten his heart broken and then he got a new relationship, a new love, and she loves him and he gets all that but he is still affected by the first one and I used to hate that song. I am like you are so stupid.... you've got somebody who loves you. I am kind of living through all of this. I get it. I gave my heart, soul, everything to this.

Linda was stating that she had a new job "relationship" now, but that she wanted the old relationship back just like the song indicates. She wanted her "home" back.

When John was asked if he thought a job could be called a relationship, he said (laughing): "Yes, because I am a single man. People don't understand this, but I would tell them that looking for a job is very much like dating. It really is! You don't complain about your ex, you talk up, you dress up." He further stated: "People don't want to believe it, but it is." John also said that trust and stability are important in a relationship and that in a relationship "you are both trying to seek a mutually beneficial.... I am going to give you this, you are going to give me this. It's not totally mercenary, but it is in that way a relationship." He said that "we are looking for a mutually beneficial mutually supportive stable relationship and that applies to jobs as well."

Other participants did not have a strong job relationship. This left them wanting something more. As in any relationship if there is lack of commitment and passion, there is the desire for change. Melody said: “Losing a job is a big loss. It’s like losing a family member.”

Loss of Job Relationship: Perception of Self and Grief Manifestations

All participants experienced involuntary job loss that influenced perception of self and resultant grief. Mike stated that due to the job loss, he was “experiencing loss of himself.” He said that his emotional state was affecting his health. He said that he was depressed and was putting on weight. He said he wanted to feel good about himself but he couldn’t due to his divorce and job loss. Linda said: “There are days when I cry, just lay down, and can’t do anything. I just feel so beat up about it.” She added that her weight is increasing, but she can’t get motivated to fix it. Linda said that “job loss diminishes self-worth.” Mark said that “he felt like a loser.” He coped by drinking and drug use. Paul said that he “felt like a loser” and tried to commit suicide. Paul stated that he had depression and “bad thoughts.” He was grieving and he mentioned the concept of Karma; those who fired him would eventually get what they deserve.

It was interesting to note that some of the participants who were dismissed from their jobs stated reasons as to why this occurred, but they failed to see these reasons. They felt like they were blindsided by the job loss and communication was lacking when they were dismissed. For example, Linda admitted that she was experiencing difficulty balancing all of the components in her life. She said “she wasn’t managing her time” and “she and her husband were having their own stuff.” She confided in her peers and she felt that her peers did not support her – in fact they turned on her. It appears that her peers and eventually the administration noticed that Linda was having a hard time. She also stated: “I was flying by

the seat of my pants making copies beforehand and sometimes asking other teachers to watch my class.” Despite this information being stated in the interview, Linda appeared surprised that she was to be on a growth plan and, most likely, would be eventually dismissed.

Similarly, Paul said that he was completely caught off-guard when he was dismissed from the job; however, he also said that he went to a party and spoke ill of his manager. Paul said that “he jokes around a lot and he said that his manager has all of this mail stacked up.” He feels that this information got back to her. This was a party comprised of other employees who worked at the school. He was “shocked” when he returned on Monday, and his boss was cold to him. He feels that the administration, including his manager, made up lies to get rid of him. While Paul admitted that he believes this is what happened, he did not seem to make a strong connection in reference to his behavior at the party. Susan stated that she “got sarcastic” with her boss when he questioned her about a customer. She did not know a customer’s address and asked the customer. The boss became angry about this and stated that she should have asked the question internally. Susan then said: “Well, then who am I supposed to ask, you? And he said, yes, ask me. And I said, OK, what’s the address? He said he didn’t know it off the top of his head.” Susan said that “this was bullshit and she ended up cursing.” Susan said that this was acceptable in her particular work environment; that being in the construction end of human resources. She was shocked that “she was fired for insubordination.” Connie let her boss know that she did not want to work in the position she held in upper management; for her boss to either demote her or put her on the lay-off list. Perhaps, Connie thought that her boss would not lay her off and simply demote her, but Connie was laid off. Then, Connie could not understand why she lost her job. Melody had so many other things she had to focus on in her life; specifically, her cancer and her mother. She

was unaware that this might be affecting her job performance. Participants gave reasons they were terminated in the interviews, but they were unaware of these reasons and were shocked they were fired.

In addition, as noted above, participants experienced a change in self due to job loss whether it was a loss of self, self-esteem, or self-worth. Others questioned whether they would measure up in a new position. In other words, participants started questioning themselves. They also talked about the way a new relationship would occur and how they would keep to themselves as they felt they could not trust again. It was safer to keep to oneself rather than to venture out and try to make new relationships.

Conclusion

Chapter 4 presented an in-depth, rich description of nine case summaries of individuals who have experienced involuntary job loss in a multicultural setting. The findings from the case studies were then presented to the focus group for verification. The findings from the cross-case analysis identified three themes: (a) Cultural Influence and Implications on Self and Work Identity; (b) Cultural Influence and Implications on Job Loss and Grief Manifestations; (c) The Implications of Job as Relationship. The following chapter presents the summary, conclusion and the implications of this research study. This chapter will conclude the findings of this study and provide an overview of how the three themes relate to the literature review. The chapter will conclude with the limitations of the findings and recommendations for future research.

Chapter 5

Discussion

The purpose of this qualitative multi-case phenomenological study was to explore the experience of grief following involuntary job loss with participants from diverse cultural backgrounds. As previously stated, the vast majority of research focuses on relationship loss and grieving in reference to a loved one (Papa & Maitoza, 2013); yet, Murray (2001) stated that grief is associated with other adverse events such as relationship breakdown and unemployment. Thus, the purpose of this study, set in Albuquerque, New Mexico, addressed the following research question: How do individuals from diverse cultural backgrounds experience grief following involuntary job loss?

This study explored the research question through the understanding of nine case studies and addressed the following themes that emerged: culture and job relationship, commitment and relationship, relationship factors, external factors and relationship, loss of relationship, and grieving and loss. Triangulation of data was provided through member checking and the focus group. The findings of this study utilizing cross-case analysis were the following three themes: (a) Cultural Influence and Implications on Self and Work Identity; (b) Cultural Influence and Implications on Job Loss and Grief Manifestations; (c) The Implications of Job as Relationship. The essence of the study was to explore and to provide an understanding of the phenomenon of job loss and grief. Chapter 5 will discuss the three themes that emerged from this study, integrate the themes in the context of the literature review, present implications for counselors and others who work with grief, address strengths and limitations of the study, and conclude with areas for future research.

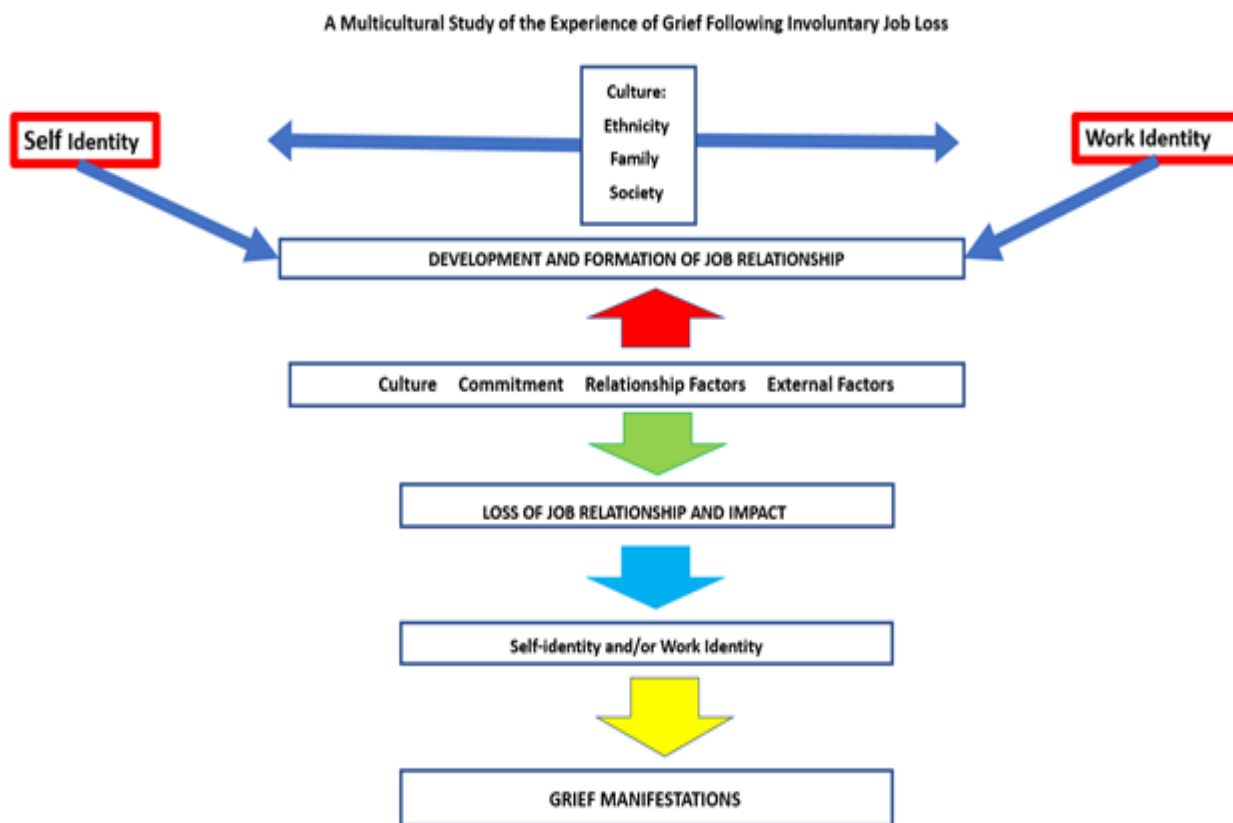
An Understanding of the Three Themes Exemplified in this Study

The influence of one's culture, which consisted of ethnicity, family, and society, played a role in the development of self-identity and work-identity. In other words, culture influenced perceptions of self and perceptions of work. Self-identity and work-identity were both factors in the development and formation of the job relationship. As seen in the last chapter, participants saw the job as a relationship which included culture, commitment, relationship factors, and external factors. They discussed the impact of culture on this relationship as they discussed how ethnicity, family, and society all played a part. The participants related what they were taught by their families in terms of the world of work and the values that were imparted. They spoke about the impact of their ethnicity and the stereotypes that exist. This included gender stereotypes that exist in reference to certain occupations. Participants spoke about their commitment to the job and how this played a part in how they viewed themselves and their job loss. Some participants were more committed than others, but all participants felt grief in reference to their job loss. For example, Linda, a teacher, expressed strong commitment to the job she lost; she said: "It was where I always wanted to work." She said that she "loves the school." She said that when she thinks about the school, she "gets very sad about it and wants to be there." Paul who worked in accounting was also strongly committed to his previous job; he said: "I was very happy to be working there." He expressed that he was "a team player and whatever anyone wanted at the job, he was going to help them." Paul said that he would even go in on weekends to work. Similarly, John, a paramedic, expressed strong commitment to his previous job and he said: "I loved the crew. We had good equipment. It seemed like a really good situation for me." On the other hand, Mike, who worked in culinary arts, repeatedly stated that he wished he could work in

the business aspect rather than the cooking aspect in this field. He was less committed to his previous job. Mark, who self-identified as a maintenance technician and was working in home renovation, had incurred multiple job losses, and was not committed to his previous job because he stated many times that he was schooled in medical coding and billing and that was what he really wanted to do. Melody, who worked in radiology, was committed to her job, but she had many external factors that affected the job and they impeded on the job relationship. Melody cared for her mother and then experienced the death of her mother. In addition, Melody had cancer. Eli had a variety of jobs but he did not seem committed to them because he thought of himself as a writer and anthropologist--this was his passion. Susan stated that her previous occupation was Human Resources, but she was actually working in a different environment--construction service. She said she “gave her heart and soul to those she trained;” but, as she stated, she identified with working in Human Resources and “was not as vested in construction service.” Connie, who worked in accounting, was committed to the job, but due to new management, wished to work in a different capacity for the company. Relationship factors, such as trust, honesty, and respect were mentioned as important to the participants. They felt these factors were crucial in a job relationship. External factors, such as having problems at home, impacted the job relationship. Involuntary job loss meant the end of a relationship impacting one’s self-identity and work-identity. Loss of relationship resulted in grief which manifested in functional and dysfunctional ways. Grief resulted from factors such as job loss and self-identity, job loss and work-identity, and job loss as relationship loss (see Figure 1).

Figure 1

The Three Themes of the Research Study Exemplified



Note. This is a visual representation of the three themes of the study as previously described.

Themes in Context of Literature Review

Cultural Influence and Implications on Self and Work Identity

Mark Savickas and Career Construction Theory. Savickas (2012) stated that clients choose words to constitute a self and forming self-conceptions and self-constructing is a life project. Savickas added that individuals begin to form psychosocial identities by associating the psychological self with social roles and cultural representations. In career construction theory, identity involves how people think of themselves in social roles (Savickas, 2012). One is shaped by cultural discourse (Savickas, 2011). This shift in attention

from the individual to the individual-in-situation coincides with contextual and multicultural perspectives on work (Savickas, 1997). The role of multiculturalism in the world of work, perception of self, perspective of self and work, and perception of self and work and society, was evident in this study. The study participants' self and work identity was shaped by social roles and cultural representations. These cultural representations also existed through stereotypes. Since Lippman's coinage of the term, stereotypes have been commonly regarded as socially shaped representations about social groups (Lyons & Kashima, 2001). Any representation that is shared and is believed to be shared by a group of people constitutes at least part of that group's culture. Stereotypes are cultural phenomena, and communication plays a role in their transmission (Lyons & Kashima, 2001). The participants learned about cultural stereotypes through family as exemplified, for example, through Linda and Paul's stories. Society is as an influence as well. Gender stereotypes are generalizations about the attributes of men and women (Heilman, 2012). These widely shared beliefs about men and women can affect perceptions of what is "acceptable" for males and females in job occupations Mike was considered by his family to be doing a female's work, and Connie was expected to get married and produce children. Research has provided evidence that there is a perceived lack of fit between the demands of high-level organizational positions and characterization of women (Heilman, 2012). Cultural discourse and stereotypes are part of a person's story as Savickas (2011) stated: If clients want to engage in meaning making and identity shaping, then counselors should listen for the story authored by self and use techniques of biographical reasoning and narrative counseling to advance the story that they are already living.

While life themes may explain an occupational choice, according to Savickas (2005), not all the participants in the study chose work on meaning and mattering. They had to earn a living. The issue of survival is embodied by people's ability to earn money and support themselves and their family economically with food, shelter and clothing (Hees et al., 2012). However, they did reflect on the meaning of various occupations and what they really wanted to do other than simply earning a paycheck. Even if they only worked in order to obtain a paycheck, they still pondered what the job meant to them and what type of work they would most want to obtain. Participants, in other words, still reflected on what a job actually meant to them, but they were not, in all cases, able to choose jobs based on their identity. In addition to Savickas, Super (1963) suggested that individuals attempt to implement their self-concept through occupational choice.

Donald Super and the Archway Model. Super's (1990) approach is a synthesis of several theories derived from various psychology disciplines (e.g., developmental psychology and personality theory) woven together by self-concept and learning theory. What resulted was Super's life-span, life-space approach depicted in his life-career rainbow, a developmental approach that explores how one's life roles develop across the life span. Two key components of Super's approach are self-concept and learning theory. Self-concept refers to how individuals see themselves and their situations. Learning theory is based on one's interaction with the environment (Strong, as cited in Super, 1990). Participants in this study exemplified self-concept as being developed and learned through cultural influences. Self-concept influenced perception of the individual's work identity.

Super wrote about the self-concept and how individuals picture themselves (1957). In the Archway model, Super illustrated how the complexities of individuals' lived experiences,

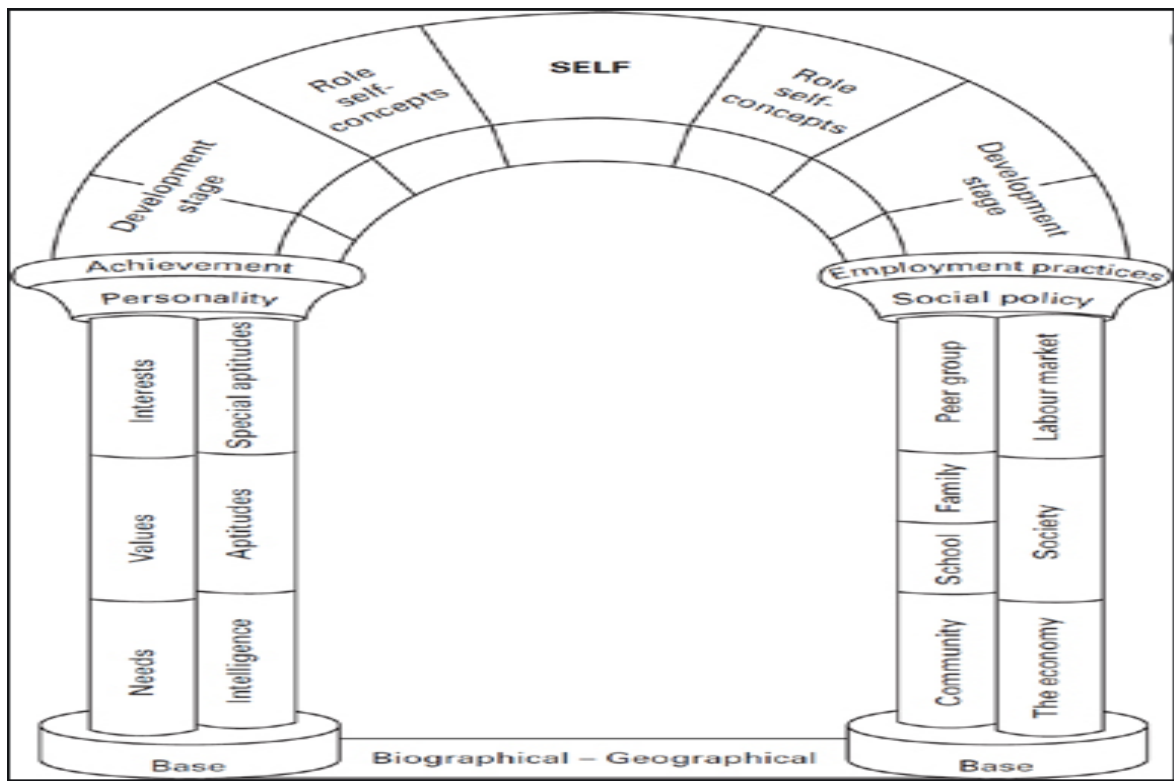
achievements, and organizational employment practices are all connected by the cement of social learning (see Figure 2). The Archway model is constructed of two bases, a doorstep and two pillars that are supported by the bases and are connected via a rainbow arch with the center of the arch being a capstone. The biographical and geographical foundation of human development context of the individual and phenomenon form the doorstep of the archway, establishing the foundation for the psychological characteristics of the person (left pillar) and the society that acts on the individual (right pillar). The left pillar illustrates how needs, intelligence, values, aptitudes, interests, special aptitudes, and personality support a person's achievement. The right pillar illustrates how the economy, school, family, society, peer groups, labor market, and social policy support employment practices (Salters, 2013). In the Archway model, Super attempted to illustrate how the family and other environmental factors influence the development of interests and values; ultimately, the person, the decision maker, brings all of these personal and social forces together and organizes them in terms of concepts of self and roles in society (Super, 1997). The influence of the family and environment, including personal and social forces, did play a role in the development of the self and role in society in my study. The Archway model "is designed to bring out the segmented but unified and developmental nature of career development, to highlight the segments, and to make their origin clear" (Super, 1990, p. 201).

Self-concepts "such as self-efficacy, self-esteem, and role self-concepts, being combinations of traits ascribed to oneself" (Super, 1990, p. 202) do not completely address the self-concept of marginalized and/or oppressed individuals. The self-concept of marginalized and/or oppressed individuals is self-efficacy, self-esteem, traits ascribed to

oneself expanded by their awareness of how others view them (DuBois, 1995; Freire, 1970; Sheared, 1999; Young, 1990).

Figure 2

The Archway Model



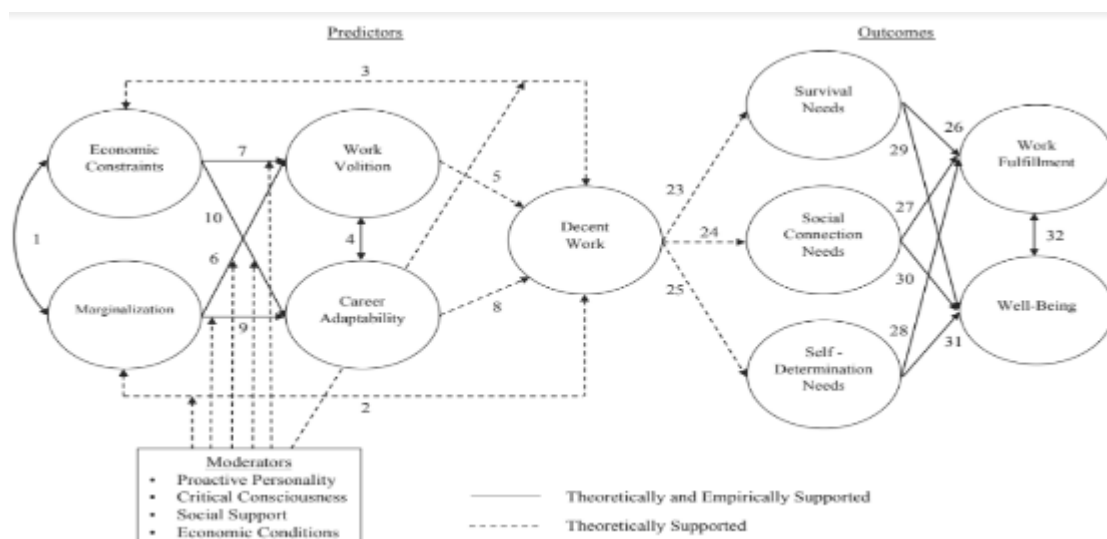
Note. This is a visual representation of the Archway Model (Super, 1990). Super's theory is a combination of stage development and social role theory.

The Psychology of Working Framework. The Psychology of Working Framework is a framework aimed to capture the work experiences of the population at large but especially individuals who are more likely to experience economic constraints and marginalization (Duffy et al., 2018). Race and ethnicity, and their intersections with other contextual factors, shape the power and privilege individuals have in society (Cole, 2009).

Research has consistently demonstrated links between marginalization and economic constraints (Duffy et al., 2018). This is especially true for racial and ethnic minorities (Corcoran & Nichols-Casebolt, 2004; House & Williams, 2000; Rodgers, 2008). Some of the stereotypes that were stated by the participants in this study served to oppress minorities. Some of the participants spoke of marginalization and economic constraints. The Psychology of Working Framework proposed that sociocultural factors must be treated as primary in understanding the career decisions and work experiences of all people regardless of background, but in particular those from poor and working-class backgrounds as well as disenfranchised and marginalized populations (Duffy et al., 2016). The results of this study showed that sociocultural factors must be treated as primary as this influenced and affected self and work identity. This study showed the connectedness of culture and work.

Figure 3

The Psychology of Working Framework



Note. This is the theoretical model. This model shows the paths from economic constraints and marginalization to work volition, career adaptability and decent work (Blustein, 2001, 2006, 2008, 2013).

Cultural Influence and Implications on Job Loss and Grief Manifestations

Grief, whether experienced as a result of the loss of a loved one, divorce, cessation of or interruption in a relationship, transcends age and ethnicity (Hardy-Bougere, 2008).

Although the literature stated that cultures throughout history have had particular ways of mourning (Schoulte, 2011), the participants in this study did not show a particular way of mourning unique to a culture. Within-group differences may be influenced by such factors as gender and age, family structure, religion, geographical location, degree of acculturation, and racial identity (Schoulte, 2011). The participants were influenced by cultural beliefs and values in reference to how they viewed work; these beliefs and values appeared to play a part in their perception of job loss. The participants also spoke of other factors that were important such as commitment, relationship factors, and external factors as influencing the job relationship and relationship loss. Some of the grief manifestations that were common among the participants were alcohol and substance use and abuse, suicidal ideation and attempt, and overeating.

The Implications of Job as Relationship

Grief has mainly been studied in the context of bereavement (Papa & Maitoza, 2013). Attachment theory states that there is something unique about the loss of an attachment figure that is fundamental to the experience of grief (Papa & Maitoza, 2013). While conducting the literature review, there was a paucity of research on the job as a relationship and it was dated. Research has not considered the extent to which the loss of an employment relationship is similar to the loss of an intimate personal relationship and how this seemingly disparate body of literature may inform our understanding of the dissolution of employment relationships (Albert et al., 2015). Employees tend to perceive themselves as being in a

relationship with their organization, and perceive their organization as a personalized entity with human-like traits (i.e., Lawler, 1992; Shore & Tetrick, 1994). The participants in this study spoke about how a job is a relationship albeit it was a matter of degree based on factors such as one's perception of this relationship and commitment factors. When their organization cares for them and values their contributions, they experience higher levels of trust and commitment towards the organization (i.e., Rhoades et al., 2001). In contrast, if their employing organization violates such expectations, they feel angry, betrayed, and tend to experience withdrawal cognitions, similar to an interpersonal relationship (Allen et al., 2003; Maertz & Griffeth, 2004; Morrison & Robinson, 1997; Shackelford & Buss, 1996). In other words, a strong employment relationship provides the employee a safe haven for friendships, social support, security, achievement and recognition (Hochschild, 1997). In this study, loss of relationship resulted in grief for the participants. They lost an attachment figure; while this was not the loss of an individual, it was detrimental and caused distress. Past levels of attachment in relationships as well as previous levels of attachment in the job relationship influence perception and grief manifestations. The loss of an employment relationship is one of the most traumatic and stressful events in an individual's life (Holmes & Rahe, 1967; McKee-Ryan et al., 2005; Paul & Mosser, 2009), and many individuals go through stages of reactions parallel to the grief process associated with bereavement or abandonment (i.e., Archer & Rhodes, 1993; Kubler, 1969). Some participants thought job loss was worse than the loss of a human relationship; while others thought that the loss of a human relationship (including divorce) was worse.

In addition to the participants speaking about the job as a relationship itself, because people spend so much time at work, relational needs can be supported in the workplace (Hees

et al., 2012). Hees et al. (2010) stated that job loss disrupts the relational support within a work family. Some of the participants spoke about this; for example, Linda thought that the work environment was a community and was home. Susan spoke about the bond she built with coworkers and that she doesn't see them anymore because she thought it wouldn't be healthy. Melody said that losing a job was like losing a relationship - the relationship with the work and the connection to people.

Relational Theory. This study supported the relational perspective as highlighting the role of work in defining the self and one's relationships with others and the overlap between life experiences in the workplace with relationships and experiences in other life areas, including family and broader society (Kenny et al., 2018). Participants spoke about loss of identity when they lost the job. There was overlap between life experiences in the workplace with relationships and experiences in other life areas which I called external factors in this study. In addition, the study supported the important role of culture and social and economic factors in shaping work and relationships and highlighted the interplay between the relational and work life domains as discussed in the research presented by Kenny et al. (2018). Work was a vehicle for connection, the influence of family and other close relationships was evident, and relationships (both current and past) did affect the career process and trajectory.

Constructivism as conceptual framework. Constructivism presumes that individuals are closed, biological entities who create meaning systems (Hansen, 2004). Our self-identity and work-identity is constructed based on what we perceive and believe and this is influenced by culture. The participants held a view of who they were and when they lost the job this affected their identity- the identity influenced by self-perception and culture. One

participant stated that his self-esteem went down and he experienced a loss of self (Mike, July 2019). Other participants were worried about how they would perform in a new job, and they did not feel a sense of stability. They were worried they would be fired when they obtained work again. They questioned who they were and what they might have done wrong. Personal construct theory is generated by the way a person successively construes himself or herself (Rashkin, 2002). This self-identity and work-identity is constructed and is brought into the relationship one has with one's job. How we construct our reality in reference to our work also influences how we perceive the job loss. In career construction theory, identity involves how people think of themselves in social roles (Savickas, 2012). Constructive alternativism postulates that there are many possibilities for interpretation (Kelly, 1955/1991a). Social constructivism means that individuals seek understanding of the world in which they live and work (Creswell, 2013). The participants in the study sought to understand the phenomenon of involuntary job loss and grief looking at it through a cultural lens. They discussed their commitment to the job and perception of the job, the relationship factors they deemed important, and the external factors that affected their job satisfaction and performance. Who we think we are and who we think we are in a work environment affects our thoughts and actions. As Rogers (1980) stated:

The only reality I can possibly know is the world as I perceive and experience it at this moment. The only reality you can possibly know is the world as you perceive and experience it at this moment. And the only certainty is that those perceived realities are different. (p. 102)

Guichard (2009) stated that eventually the prevailing paradigm for career counseling in the 21st century will be rooted in social constructivism and identity. It is important to keep in

mind that even though we construct our reality, there are external factors such as prejudice and injustice that affect who we are and our well-being.

Humanism as conceptual framework. Carl Rogers (1961) considered empathic understanding, congruence, and unconditional positive regard as significant components in a relationship. Humanism stresses the relationship. Many of the participants spoke about how they wished the components that are healing in humanistic counseling were evident in the job relationship. The study participants spoke about how they wanted to be understood and they wanted honest communication from their coworkers and bosses. Many of the study participants felt they were blindsided when they were fired; they were not given a warning or a remediation plan. They were not given a chance to change or improve. Some of the participants felt that it was not clear as to why they were being fired. There was no closure. They spoke about how they felt betrayed by coworkers and/or their bosses. They wanted to be treated with respect. One of the participants felt that he was treated this way, but he stated that he did not heed the advice given by his boss. The participants in the study wanted a good relationship with their job and coworkers and bosses; this involved the necessary and sufficient conditions that Carl Rogers postulated. Relationships benefit, according to the study participants, when these components are demonstrated. This study demonstrated and verified literature that advocates the importance of humanistic components in a relationship, in general, the importance of the relationship itself.

Loss of Relationship and Grief Manifestations

When one loses a job, one loses a relationship. A number of studies in the bereavement literature discussed loss of self-image, esteem and/or efficacy (e.g., Brown et al., 1996; Schultz et al., 2006). This study supported this as job loss impacted participants'

self-image, esteem, and efficacy. A participant asked, “What is wrong with me”? Some of them questioned what they did wrong and were worried they might not succeed in a new job. They questioned their identity and work identity that was impacted by the job loss. A few of the participants stated that, when they obtained new employment, they would isolate themselves as a protective mechanism.

Grief was evident in all of the participants and manifested in various ways. There was no distinct way of grief and loss in the Hispanic culture as stated in the research (Thompson, 1998). In fact, this study did not show a distinct way of grieving in terms of culture. There are common aspects of different situations of loss and some commonality in the manner in which people react and adjust to it (Murray, 2001). Just as between group-differences are important to understand, so are within-group differences in grieving (Schoulte, 2011). Some participants turned to substance use and some participants used food as a method of coping. Emotions varied from sadness to clinical depression and attempted suicide. Some of the participants were frustrated and angry. Participants cried and became unmotivated to do anything. Some spoke of Karma and those who hurt them in reference to the job loss would eventually pay. Grief and bereavement are normal emotions that are very personal and are accompanied by pain and hopelessness in people across cultures (Dyer, 2001) and it transcends ethnicity (Hardy-Bougere, 2008). While loss is a universal phenomenon, people respond to it with various degrees of grief and mourning (Howarth, 2011). Some participants experienced grief to a lesser degree; especially those who were not happy in their job or perceived that they should obtain another line of work. With each life change there is a loss and a change in the state that was; consequently, this requires external and internal adjustments (Elders, 1995).

Implications for Counseling Practice

The majority of counselors will work with grief and loss (Horn et al., 2013). As previously stated, there is evidence that not all counselors are adequately trained or completely comfortable providing grief counseling (Ober et al., 2012). This study's purpose was to add to the existing research on involuntary job loss and grief and to provide an account of this phenomenon across diverse participants. Following are recommendations for counselors based on the results of this study.

Assess for Suicidality and Substance Use

It is important that the counselor assess for suicidality and substance use in the first session with the client. One of the participants attempted suicide due to anxiety, depression and job loss. Other participants were depressed and had incurred various traumas such as death of a loved one or cancer. Many of the participants in this study turned to alcohol and drugs in order to cope with the job loss and grief. Teaching functional coping strategies is also recommended.

The Relationship and Factors that Impact the Relationship: Culture, Commitment, Relationship Factors, and External Factors

The participants expressed the theme that job loss is relationship loss. Establishing a relationship with the therapist must exist (Rogers, 1957), especially in the context of a relationship loss. The establishment of a working alliance with the counselor may be the first step in providing connection and support to offset the losses experienced through unemployment (Kenny et al., 2018). The client has lost a relationship and it is beneficial that the counselor client relationship be healthy. It might be helpful for the client to define and discuss what constitutes a good relationship. What does a good job relationship look like?

What do they want in a job relationship? How might the employer and client make that happen?

Relationship was discussed as complex, and the participants spoke of the impact of culture, commitment, and external factors. It is recommended that the counselor have the client explore their family and cultural background as this has an impact on self and work identity. What are the belief systems that exist in the family in reference to work? Are there gender or ethnic stereotypes that exist and how do these impact the client? How committed was the client to the job they lost? Was this the job they wanted? What kind of job would they want? Some of the study participants stated that they wished they would have received direct and honest communication from their bosses, and that they would have been treated with respect. It is imperative that the counselor understand extraneous factors that are affecting the job relationship. What was the client bringing into the job relationship and what was the impact of this? Treating job loss as relationship loss and understanding the influence and effect of culture, commitment, relationship factors, and external factors can be beneficial in understanding the client's experience of this phenomenon. It can also be beneficial in formulating a treatment plan by treating the loss of relationship holistically in all its complexity. The person-centered approach or the development of relationship is strongly supported in research. In fact, a number of 21st-century research studies have provided strong support for this approach as an effective treatment for culturally diverse populations (Quinn, 2012). Yet, the effective person-centered therapist must also possess multicultural knowledge (Quinn, 2012).

Insight and Ownership

Participants told the researcher the reasons as to why they lost their jobs; yet they did not seem to take ownership of the job loss. While the reasons were evident to the researcher, the reasons were not evident to these participants. This can be true of any relationship loss – a person denies the reasons for it ending and avoids taking responsibility. Participants expressed shock and disbelief over the fact that they lost their jobs. The counselor should work with the client in reference to this and help the client develop insight and ownership in reference to their part in the job loss.

Meaning and Purpose

Given the role of work as a source of self-determination and identity in the world, the counselor may also need to work with the client to identify new sources of meaning and purpose that may help to mitigate self-denigration. The counselor needs to be cognizant of the potential intersection of the impact of work loss with the client's gender role and cultural socialization and the extent to which being a financial provider or having a successful or powerful career role is a central part of one's identity. Helping those who have been marginalized may be critical (Kenny et al., 2018). Conveying an understanding of how employment struggles relate to contextual factors may help clients to avert self-blame and reject internalized oppressions (Fickling et al., 2016).

Implications for Training

It is recommended that future counselors and counselor educators be instructed and trained in the areas of grief and loss. Ober et al. (2012) found that training and experience were significant predictors of counselors' knowledge, comfort, and skill levels relating to working with grieving clients. Counselors would benefit from professional development in

grief topics, including theories of grief counseling, terms and definitions, crisis intervention for grief, community-based psychoeducational grief programming, methods for working on interdisciplinary teams to reduce grief, counselor peer support, and identification of client's effective and ineffective coping skills (Ober et al., 2012). It may be important for grief counseling training to incorporate reflection and understanding of personal experiences of grief (O'Halloran & Linton, 2000). It is especially important for students who are preparing to specialize as career counselors to demonstrate the professional knowledge and skills necessary to help clients who have lost jobs and are experiencing grief. CACREP, the Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs (CACREP, 2016) which sets profession-based curricular standards for accredited counselor education programs, does not require or address course work specifically related to grief and loss.

Implications for Teaching

The CACREP standards should include the topic of job loss and grief. Courses should be offered in counseling programs that address this topic as well. Including multiculturalism with job loss and grief is recommended.

As seen in this study, the job relationship, like other relationships, is multifaceted. Addressing culture, commitment, relationship factors, and extraneous factors that affect relationship is recommended in order to understand the complexity of this connection. Theory and application to clients with grief should be included in courses of study.

Strengths

Strengths of the study included the variation of the sample that included five males and four females that comprised a stratified sample of the cultural diversity that exists in Albuquerque, New Mexico. White, Native American, and Hispanic/Latino cultures were

represented in the sample of participants. Participants ranged in age from 39-62 and included both single and married participants with and without children. The participants represented a diversity of occupations, and they had experienced job loss within the past 18 months. Nine participants who participated in 16 interviews provided a rich description about involuntary job loss and grief. Triangulation involved member checking and checking of themes with the focus group. The stories of the participants allowed the researcher a phenomenological stance--a glimpse into the world of those who lose jobs involuntarily and how this impacted them.

Limitations

Anchored in real-life situations, the case study results in a rich and holistic account of a phenomenon (Merriam, 2009). However, the findings from this study are the essence of the phenomenon from the point of view from nine participants at a moment in time and may not be generalizable to all individuals who experience involuntary job loss. In addition, the researcher sought to be aware of biases that can affect the final product; but this could be a limitation due to the researcher's personal experiences and professional training. However, Peshkin (1988, p. 18) goes so far as to make the case that one's subjectivities "can be seen as virtuous, for it is the basis of researchers making a distinctive contribution, one that results from the unique configuration of their personal qualities joined to the data they have collected."

The focus group consisted of only three participants from the original nine who were willing to participate. The random sample consisted of one female who identified as White, one female who identified as Hispanic/Latino, and one male who identified as Hispanic/Latino. Although the members of the focus group provided much discussion and

insight about job loss and grief and emerging themes from the study results, the researcher would have liked to have had more participation from the sample group at large. In addition, as in any group setting, participants may be reticent to self-disclose and may present a false front in order to avoid judgment from others. Other participants may aim for sympathy from others. Four participants agreed to member checking of interview transcripts. In addition, two of the participants were not interviewed for the second time. As previously stated, one of the participants, Eli, let the researcher know that he moved to Colorado and was living in his car due to his loss of income. Melody did not want to do a second interview. She was grieving for her mother's death and her own cancer diagnosis in addition to the job loss.

The ethnic groups in the study represented the diversity of Albuquerque, New Mexico. However, only two of the participants self-identified as Native American, and one of these participants said he was part Native American. The study did not have participants who identified as African American. However, the study participants represented the majority of the ethnic groups who comprise the Albuquerque area.

The concept of involuntary job loss and grief was difficult to conceptualize as participants have their unique experience of this. There was also a scarcity of research on the job as a relationship. The views of the nine participants in the study who represented the ethnic diversity of Albuquerque may not represent the views of all members of a certain ethnic group and are not meant to be generalizable in this regard. These are the views of three individuals who identified as White, five individuals who identified as Hispanic/Latino (with one also part Native American), and one individual who identified as Native American who experienced involuntary job loss and grief. While the views may represent others in a

particular culture, it cannot be construed that all individuals in this culture have this experience.

Recommendations for Further Research

Much of the research in a literature examines grief and job loss utilizing quantitative or cross-sectional methods and focuses on males (Howe et al., 2004). More research that is qualitative and focuses on involuntary job loss is recommended. Studies should address this phenomenon in reference to females as well. The effects of grief on culture continue to be limited in scope and need more information (Hardy-Bougere, 2008). Future research is also recommended in reference to the impact of stereotypes on self and work identity. Duffy et al. (2018) stated that there are no studies that address the core propositions of the Psychology of Working Framework as they apply to an ethnically and diverse working adult population. Future research is needed in reference to how economic resources and marginalization predict decent work (Duffy et al., 2018). There was a paucity of research that discussed the job itself as a relationship. The finding of a job as a relationship that is influenced by culture, commitment factors, communication, and external factors can be researched further to lend credibility to this study.

This study took place before the pandemic of COVID-19. However, the researcher was finishing the writing of the study when this pandemic occurred. The COVID-19 pandemic has posed an extreme threat to global health and become a leading cause of death worldwide (Zhai & Du, 2020). Failure to address the pressing needs of those experiencing loss and grief may result in poor mental and physical health (Kang et al., 2020). Loss of relationship, whether through separation due to social distancing or bereavement is occurring. Moreover, over 16 million U. S. residents filed for unemployment within three

weeks in March 2020 during the pandemic (DOL, 2020). Increasing knowledge of the idiosyncratic nature of loss and grief is essential to inform the development of tailored strategies to help grievers adapt to loss in this challenging time (Zhai & Du, 2020).

Additional research that studies loss and grief and COVID-19 is essential. In addition, this research should also focus on involuntary job loss and grief during COVID-19. Additional research is needed for more pronounced recovery from this job loss. It is my hope that this study serves to provide some insight in reference to job loss and grief, but job loss and grief during COVID-19 is a new area of study.

Conclusion

The key findings in this study are: The Influence and Implications of Culture, The Influence and Implications of Culture and Job Loss, and the Implications of Job as Relationship. Participants defined a job as relationship. Loss of a relationship, whether an individual or a job, is a catalyst for the manifestation of grief. One's culture affects one's self and work identity which then influences the job relationship. The job relationship is complicated by degree of commitment, by relationship factors such as communication and trust, and by external factors. Loss of job relationship impacts perceptions of self and self at work resulting in functional and dysfunctional ways of coping with grief.

The significance of this study was its contribution to the understanding of grief as counselors must have the knowledge and skills if they are to practice with clients who present with this. No one could practice without this knowledge and skill base. With the outbreak of COVID-19, this is even more crucial. There is critical need for knowledge in reference to job loss and grief to fill the gap that exists. To that end, it is hoped that this dissertation contributes to a better understanding of this phenomenon.

The Researcher's Final Thoughts

This study grew from my research interests of trauma, loss, and grief. These research areas, coupled with my father's job loss, led me on the path to examine involuntary job loss and grief. The cultural piece naturally emanated due to the study being conducted in a multicultural diverse area. The experience of bereavement can be very difficult. The loss of relationship can be one of the hardest things to bear. I wondered if a job could be looked at as a relationship.

Being a counselor, I believe developing a relationship with the client is paramount. Entering the world of the client allows the counselor to understand how the client is experiencing their world. I wanted to see how my participants experienced the phenomenon of job loss and grief. I found that the participants did indeed believe that the job is a relationship. This relationship is complicated. Participants spoke about culture as an influence and how some of them were particularly influenced by stereotypes, whether they were gender, racial, ethnic, or societal in reference to the world of work. I felt that this was an interesting finding. Some of the participants were bothered by the stereotypes but denied they were bothered. Others worked to dispel them. This influenced their self and work identity. I found that the participants were influenced by the beliefs and values imparted to them by their family in terms of self and work identity. The job relationship was further complicated by commitment factors, relationship factors, and external factors. These factors influence all relationships we have. Treating job loss as relationship loss can provide a deeper level of understanding of this phenomenon.

After reading the transcripts, it occurred to me that some of the participants actually stated the reasons for the job loss. However, they were unable to understand why they were

terminated from the job. I thought this was interesting in terms of repression and/or denial. Perhaps, they were “blocking” this knowledge or not taking responsibility for it. It is painful to have to come to terms with your part in job loss. This was an unanticipated finding. In fact, one of the participants was also in denial that he was impacted by gender stereotypes imparted by family. He denied that he was bothered by this, but he actually was. As a counselor, I think it is important to work through the denial and help the client gain insight.

All in all, my participants taught me many things. They suffered greatly due to loss of relationship. Relationships provide connection and it is through this connection that we are truly human. When we lose a relationship, we lose a part of ourselves. It is my hope that this study will shed some light on this difficult situation.

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Appendices

Appendix A. Recruitment Email to Participants

Appendix B. Recruitment Email to Businesses

Appendix C. Recruitment Flyer

Appendix D. Informed Consent

Appendix E. Demographic Questionnaire

Appendix F. Interview Questions

Appendix G. Focus Group Guide

Appendix A

Recruitment Email to Participants

Spring, 2019

To: Potential Research Participants

From: Diane Lacen
Doctoral Dissertation Project
joblossstudy2019@gmail.com
505-259-6963

Greetings,

I am in the process of completing my work toward a PhD in Counselor Education from the University of New Mexico. I am currently conducting a study for my dissertation about involuntary job loss. I am looking for participants who would like to take part in this study who have experienced involuntary job loss in the past eighteen months. Each participant will be asked to give two interviews, which will be 60-90 minutes long, with the potential for more interviews, if needed. Each interview will be taped and entirely confidential. The topic and purpose of these interviews will be to better understand the experience of involuntary job loss. There is a scarcity of research in this area. Interviews will be scheduled at your convenience, and we can discuss locations that will work for you. You will also be provided the opportunity to attend a 60-90-minute voluntary focus group if you should so desire.

In other words, we will be talking about involuntary job loss and your experience of this. You will be able to process how you think and feel about this experience as well as any challenges you have encountered and how you have coped with them. This study will provide you with an opportunity to discuss this experience with an empathetic, nonjudgmental interviewer.

You will be filling out a demographic questionnaire in reference to your age, ethnicity, information about your job loss, etc. You will also need to sign a consent form. Both of these forms are attached. Please fill out the questionnaire to bring to the first interview, and you will fill out the informed consent at the first interview. A gift card in the amount of \$25.00 will be provided for your participation in each interview. You will also be compensated with a \$25.00 gift card for the focus group.

You may choose to drop out of this study at any time with no questions asked.

Your information will add to the existing literature on job loss as well as help those who work with individuals who have experienced involuntary job loss. You will be making a contribution to the literature that exists in this area. You will also be helping others who have experienced involuntary job loss as the information obtained in this study can inform counselors and educators who work in this area.

When you contact me by phone, we can go over the questionnaire and arrange a time and place for the interviews. I thank you, in advance, for considering participation in this study.

Sincerely,

Diane Lacen -PhD Candidate; Licensed Mental Health Counselor

Appendix B

Recruitment Email to Businesses

To Whom It May Concern:

My name is Diane Lacen, and I am a PhD candidate in Counselor Education. I am conducting a study entitled “A Multicultural Study of the Experience of Grief Following Involuntary Job Loss.” The purpose of this study is to understand the experience of grief following involuntary job loss. This will be a qualitative study with interviews and a voluntary focus group. Participants will be compensated in the amount of a \$25.00 gift card for each interview and \$25.00 for participation in the focus group.

I am reaching out to you in the hope that you can help me in recruiting participants for this study. Participants will be able to share their experience of involuntary job loss and help others who have experienced this through their contribution to the research in this field. In addition, they will help professionals who work with this population.

Attached you will find a letter to the potential participants that explains in more detail the study’s purpose and requirements. If you know of any individuals who would be good candidates for this study and are interested, can you forward them the letter? I will provide them with a questionnaire and an informed consent form at the first interview.

Your assistance is highly appreciated! If you have any questions, please feel free to e-mail me at joblossstudy2019@gmail.com or call me at 505-259-6963.

Sincerely,

Diane Lacen

PhD Candidate in Counselor Education

Licensed Mental Health Counselor

Appendix D

Informed Consent



A Multicultural Study of the Experience of Grief Following Job Loss
Informed Consent for Interviews and Focus Group
 Spring/Summer 2019/Fall 2019

My name is Diane Lacen, and I am from the department of Counselor Education. I am conducting a research study on involuntary job loss. I am interested in your experience if you have lost a job in the past eighteen months.

I will be asking you to be interviewed twice for 60-90 minutes. If more interviews are needed, I will ask you if you would be willing to do this. You will be asked questions about yourself such as: tell me about yourself, your thoughts about losing your job, how you coped with it, and what were your challenges. I will also ask you if you would participate in a group focusing on job loss. The group will be about 60-90 minutes long. Your remarks in the interviews and focus group will be audio recorded.

Your participation in this research is voluntary. You do not have to answer any questions that you are not comfortable answering. There are no known risks in this study, but you might experience some discomfort talking about job loss that was not your choice. This study is confidential. The information may be used for future research without your additional informed consent, and your name will not be used.

You will receive a \$25.00 gift card for your participation in each interview and for the focus group.

If you have any questions, please feel free to call Diane Lacen at 505-259-6963. You can also call the UNM Office of the IRB (OIRB) at 505-277-2644 or irb.unm.edu.

When you sign this form, you will be agreeing to participate in this study.

Name of Adult Participant	Signature of Adult Participant	Date
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Name of Research Team Member	Signature of Research Team Member	Date
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Appendix E

Demographic Questionnaire

Demographic Questionnaire

Participant Name: _____

Age: _____

Gender: _____

Answer the following questions by circling the most appropriate answer.

1. **Ethnicity**

- White
- Hispanic or Latino
- Black or African American
- Native American or American Indian
- Asian/Pacific Islander
- Other

2. **Education:** Circle the highest level you obtained.

- Some high school, no diploma
- High school graduate (diploma or the equivalent: GED)
- Some college credit, no degree
- Associate Degree
- Bachelor's Degree
- Master's Degree
- Professional Degree
- Doctorate Degree

3. **Marital Status:** What is your marital status?

- Single, never married
- Married or domestic partnership
- Widowed
- Divorced
- Separated

4. **Children:** Number of children in the home

- None
- One
- Two
- Three
- Four
- More than four

5. **How long have you been unemployed (or were unemployed in the past):**

6. **What was your occupation before you experienced the job loss**

7. **Are you currently looking for work?**

Appendix F

Interview Questions

Interview Questions

Job Loss and Grief: A Phenomenological Study

1. Please tell me about yourself.
2. What is your experience with job loss? What is your story? What were you thinking/feeling?
3. How did you cope with it (or not)?
4. What challenges did you experience in terms of job loss?
5. What does a typical day look like now that you are not working?
7. Have your professional/occupational titles changed over time due to job loss?
8. What changes did you experience over time?
9. How did you view yourself when you lost your job?
10. How do you view yourself now?

Appendix G

Focus Group Guide

Job Loss and Grief: A Phenomenological Study

Please note that this is a semi-structured guide. The questions do not have to be asked in the exact wording and order. It is important that conversations flow, and that there is follow-up on each topic the participants want to talk about as it relates to the topic.

First, I will thank the participants for coming. Next, I will state: We are going to talk about your experience of involuntary job loss (moderator introduces self). You are all here because you have experienced involuntary job loss over the past 18 months. This may not be an easy subject to talk about, but it can be helpful to talk about this experience with others who have gone through this as well. You will have a chance to introduce yourself and tell us about your personal story with job loss. We will talk about what this means to you and your challenges and ways you have coped with it. We can also share your ideas about resources that exist in the community. Because we are talking about your experiences, there are no “right” or “wrong” answers. I also want everyone to keep the content of the conversation confidential. That means that we do not talk about what other people said, and we do not mention their names or personal details about them to other people that did not participate today. I want everyone to feel comfortable to talk and share their experiences. Also, if anything here makes you feel uncomfortable or you are concerned about something, please let me know. We are going to record the conversation today, but this will be confidential. Before we begin, do you have any questions or concerns?

Questions

1. Please tell us about yourself.
2. Please tell us about your experience with involuntary job loss.
3. What challenges have you had? Explain.
4. How have you coped with it? What has helped you? What has not?
5. What would you like others to know about the experience of losing a job?
6. Are there resources that you can share than can help others with job loss?
7. Is there anything else you would like to add/discuss about this topic?