THE LIVED EXPERIENCE OF LONG-TERM UNEMPLOYMENT AMONG MIDDLE-AGED MANAGERIAL-LEVEL U.S. MALES: A PHENOMENOLOGICAL STUDY

A clinical research project submitted

by

DANIEL S. SZUHAY

to

PACIFICA GRADUATE INSTITUTE

in partial fulfillment of
the requirements for the
degree of

DOCTOR OF PSYCHOLOGY

in

CLINICAL PSYCHOLOGY

with emphasis in

DEPTH PSYCHOLOGY

This clinical research project has been
accepted for the faculty of
Pacifica Graduate Institute by:

Oksana Yakushko, PhD, Chair

Robert Kalter, MD, Reader

Murray Stein, PhD, External Reader

ProQuest LLC.
789 East Eisenhower Parkway
P.O. Box 1346
Ann Arbor, MI 48106 - 1346

NOVEMBER 22, 2013

ABSTRACT

The Lived Experience of Long-Term Unemployment among
Middle-aged Managerial-Level U.S. Males:
A Phenomenological Study

by

Daniel S. Szuhay

Unemployment has been shown to have detrimental effects on the physical, psychological, and emotional health of unemployed men and women living in the United States. The purpose of this study was study the impact of long-term unemployment on a specific population of unemployed individuals, namely middle-aged, managerial-level U.S. males who had been involuntarily terminated from their employment.

This study found four main themes and subthemes related to the phenomenon. First, it was uncovered that the men had a shared Premonition of their eventual job loss. The second theme, Effects of Separation, detailed shared emotional, psychological, and physical effects the experience of being involuntarily separated and living through long-term unemployment had on the men. The symptoms presented in this study were categorized in subthemes of Initial Distress, Long-Term Distress, Duration of Distress, the Impact of Loss of Structure/Routine, Identity Changes, and at times some of the participants Switched to a Second-Person Narration.

The third theme, Coping with Unemployment, discussed shared strategies the men utilized to cope with their long-term unemployment experience including Retrospective Coping, Talking about the Experience Helps, Helping Others, Building Hope, and Understanding the Context of Unemployment: Age Discrimination, a subtheme that includes some participants' fears of age discrimination in their job search. The fourth and

final main theme, Not Ready to Retire, noted how each of these men felt that he was not ready to retire—all five participants wanted an opportunity to work again for a variety of different reasons beyond just earning an income.

Additionally, this study explores how midlife can present itself as an opportunity for one to become more generative in the world. Unemployment can signify the beginning of a midlife crisis that ultimately may result in a re-imagining of self and re-orientation in the world. Finally, the study details ways in which this research was a result of an inspiration: an imaginal figure, Pirate, who introduced this area of research and continued to guide and inform the work throughout its completion.

Keywords: Unemployment; long-term unemployment; involuntary employment separation; middle age; U.S. males; managerial-level; management; midlife crisis

Dedication

I dedicate this work to my parents, John William Szuhay, a World War II veteran, and his wife, Greta Lee Anderson Szuhay. Both have passed during my doctorate studies. May they both rest in peace.

I also dedicate this work to Clay Sadler, Patricia Pint, and Art Flores, three astounding individuals who enrich my life on a daily basis. Thank you.

Finally, I dedicate this work to Dr. Carl G. Jung, the visionary whose work originally drew me to study at Pacifica Graduate Institute, and to my teacher Pirate, who has taught me so much about growth and transformation.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter 1
Introduction

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this phenomenological study is to present personal, firsthand accounts of the lived experience of unemployment among middle-aged managerial-level U.S. males who were jobless for at least 27 weeks. This study offers an opportunity for men to share their thoughts, feelings, and insights regarding their long-term unemployment experience at midlife. Volunteer participants who had held managerial-level positions during their professional careers, who are male, U.S. citizens, between the ages of 40 to 60 years old, involuntarily separated from their last employment position, unemployed for at least 27 weeks, and who continued to remain unemployed were interviewed. These interviews were transcribed and analyzed from a phenomenological approach in an attempt to better understand the meanings of the lived experience of long-term unemployment at midlife. In addition to the phenomenological methodology that was utilized for this study, this work has also been informed and guided by an alchemical hermeneutic process consisting of a series of imaginal transference dialogues between the researcher and an imaginal figure, Pirate who inspired this research.

Brief Overview of the Topic

According to the U.S. Census Bureau (2011), a growing number of men were reaching middle age in the U.S. at the time of the 2010 census. Thus, in 2010, there were 40 million men between the ages of 45 to 64 years old, an increase of almost 10 million men in that age group category since the last U.S. census was conducted in 2000 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2011). Moreover, in 2010, after one of the worst economic recessions in U.S. history, more individuals, both men and women, were experiencing long-term

unemployment than in recent history (Allegretto & Lynch, 2010; Ilg & Theodossiou, 2012; Krueger & Mueller, 2011). The Great Recession, as it has been referred to by various authors (e.g., Allegretto & Lynch, 2010; Elsby, Hobijn, & Sahin, 2010; Morin & Kochhar, 2010), officially started in December 2007 and ended in June 2009 (Ilg & Theodossiou, 2012). There was an overall rise in rates of unemployment for all workers beginning in December 2007, but men were hit particularly hard (Allegretto & Lynch, 2010; Elsby et al., 2010; Sahin, Song, & Hobijn, 2010). Furthermore, since the Great Recession started, older workers were overly represented among all age group categories experiencing long-term unemployment (Morin & Kochhar, 2010).

Unemployment had been quantitatively shown to have detrimental effects on the physical and psychological health of unemployed individuals (Kessler, Mickelson, Walters, Zhao, & Hamilton, 2004; Mandal & Roe, 2008; McKee-Ryan, Song, Wanberg, & Kinicki, 2005; Morin & Kochhar, 2010; Newman & Newman, 2011; Paul & Moser, 2009). One dramatic finding regarding the toll of unemployment was that it can have long-term physical impact on the health of men: a single incident of job loss increased male rates of morbidity and mortality up to 20 years after the experience of becoming unemployed (Janicki-Deverts, Cohen, Matthews, & Cullen, 2008; Sullivan & van Wachter, 2009).

In addition to mental health challenges of unemployment, other personal characteristics influenced the experiences of those who had lost their jobs. Managerial-level U.S. males who held positions in management and leadership within an organization traditionally had characteristics associated with traditional Western notions of "masculinity" (Collinson & Hearn, 1996; Eagly & Karau, 2002; Kyriakidou, 2011).

Eagly and Karau (2002) referred to this predominant masculine-based style of management as having "agentic" characteristics, including being determined, self-reliant, insistent, and independent. The impact of unemployment on those who had been previously encouraged and rewarded in their execution of this masculine style of management could be potentially devastating.

Research Problem

Having an experience of unemployment can elicit any number of negative thoughts and feelings regarding self, one's relationship with others, and one's place and sense of agency or efficacy in the world. Unemployment detrimentally impacts an unemployed individual's physical and psychological health and well-being. Given the predominant assumptions and expectations of those who have a history of holding positions in management and leadership in organizations, unemployment could be a particularly difficult experience.

How do middle-aged managerial-level men from the U.S. cope with long-term unemployment? What is the impact unemployment had on their psyche and what kinds of meanings do they attribute to this lived experience? Of course, middle-aged managerial-level men from the U.S. were not the only population of individuals impacted since the start of the Great Recession. They have been, however, of particular interest to me, and as I will discuss below, I believe that unconscious forces have guided me to give a sampling of these men an opportunity to share their stories and be heard.

Research Question

Overall, are there any common themes or meanings in the lived experience of long-term unemployment within a sampling of middle-aged managerial-level U.S. males

who were unemployed for at least 27 weeks? In addition, are there any similarities in the ways in which this sampling of men dealt with the day-to-day experience of being unemployed, and are there any similar ways in which these men learned to maintain a sense of self-respect and efficacy in the world during their period of unemployment?

Description of Personal Interest in Topic

When I received my BA in Applied Mathematics in 1991, it was my intent to pursue a career working in the pension field, which I ended up doing for 17 years. Ultimately, however, I found that career path unfulfilling and decided to further my education with graduate work in the hope of embarking on a new career direction during midlife. After being employed by a stable and supportive company for nine years, in April 2009 I decided to leave my job and concentrate solely on school. Up until that time, throughout my life, I never had a problem finding work, and even though the United States was experiencing the worst economic collapse since the Great Depression, I assumed that once I received an MA I would be able to find a paid part-time position to help sustain me while doing doctoral-level graduate work. Although I had never achieved managerial-level status in my professional career, my work had been valued and well regarded, and I felt self-assured and self-confident in what I did and in my abilities. These “masculine” or “agentic-like” qualities that I felt I possessed were similar to the qualities that many in management positions were purported to have, as mentioned above and further discussed later in this paper.

My inability to find consistent paid part-time employment while working towards my doctorate troubled me immensely. I was overwhelmed many times with a feeling of being adrift and unable able to find a safe harbor in which to anchor my sense of agency

and vitality in the world as a productive worker. Unemployment, at that time, contributed to my overall sense that I was in the midst of a midlife crisis. This was a period of time that turned out to be both a blessing and a curse, as this experience presented itself as a challenging opportunity for me to constantly re-evaluate and attempt to re-orient myself in this world. As such, the guiding spirit that has influenced this paper represents the turmoil and sense of dis-connect that can result from becoming unemployed at midlife, as if one had been cast out to sea searching, and finding it difficult to acquire a new, safe place to land and re-establish oneself. I have deep empathy for those who have experienced long-term unemployment, particularly middle-aged men who had achieved some degree of professional success in their careers.

Relevance to Clinical Psychology

The detrimental effects on the physical and psychological health of individuals who have experienced unemployment have been well documented. Many studies I found examining the impact of unemployment on the physical and psychological health of the unemployed were done utilizing data gathered prior to the start of the Great Recession. I found some quantitative-based studies (e.g., Krueger & Mueller, 2011; Morin and Kochhar, 2010) that investigated the effects of this recent recession on the physical and psychological health of the unemployed. In addition, I found several qualitative studies exploring the lived experience of unemployment among professional workers (e.g., Gabriel, Gray, & Goregaokar, 2010; Mendenhall, Kalil, Spindel, & Hart, 2008; Sharone, 2007).

Given that this most recent economic downturn was one of the worst in modern U.S. history, this qualitative study, which investigates the deeper, more personal impact

of long-term unemployment, will add to the field of clinical psychology. Specifically, clinicians will gain a greater perspective into the meaning and the context of men's lived experience in order to inform their clinical work. In addition, this study can be used to aid in the assessment of men who have experienced unemployment. Lastly, this study can be used to help in the creation of groups, workshops, and other types of supportive services that could be offered to men who have experienced unemployment.

Chapter 2
Literature Review

Introduction

The following is a brief overview of current literature found on topics associated with the overarching theme of this research study: the lived experience of long-term unemployment among middle-aged managerial-level U.S. males. Thus, this literature review begins by defining the ages associated with being "middle aged" in the U.S., including recent U.S. census information detailing current figures on the population of middle-aged men and women. This review is followed by a brief discussion of the predominant characteristics of individuals in positions of management. Next, the literature review focuses on published research associated with unemployment in general, and more specifically, on unemployment since the start of the most recent U.S. recession, which began in December 2007. This review includes a discussion regarding the impact the recession has had on particular groups of individuals who have experienced job loss since its beginning. Additionally, I provide a review of the literature concerning the impact unemployment can have on the physical and psychological health of the unemployed. A discussion calling for the need for further qualitative-based research studies, such as this one, is put forth. Definitions of key terms associated with the unemployment experience are also provided. The literature review concludes with a review of the phenomenon of the midlife crisis, including arguments that middle age represents a period in an individual's life for re-orientation and how middle-aged adults can develop a psychological need to engage in activities that feel generative such that they feel as if they are contributing to the well-being of future generations.

A deliberate and concerted effort has been made in this literature review to include only recent publications from research on unemployment based in the United States. While surveying the literature in mid-2012, I found that much had been written about the phenomenon of unemployment in Europe, Asia, and Australia. Because of potential societal and cultural differences, unemployment in the U.S. may be a different experience and, therefore, I focused on the scholarly writings regarding the experience of unemployment being produced by U.S.-based scholars.

Middle Aged in the U.S.

Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary (1979) defined middle age as "the period of life from about 40 to about 60" (p. 722). Lachman (2004) noted that there was no clearly defined starting point or ending point associated with being middle aged. However, she acknowledged that middle age was most commonly seen as beginning at age 40 and ending at age 60 with "a 10-year range on either end" (p. 311). In fact, according to Lachman, with increases in longevity of life and health, "the upper end of midlife may be stretched further. Middle age does not necessarily signal the middle of the lifespan" (p. 11). Applying Lachman's understanding of middle age, the most recent 2010 population figures from the U.S. Census Bureau (2011) for the category of individuals aged between 45 to 64 years old would be a justifiable representation of the total "middle-aged" population currently living in the U.S.

According to the U.S. Census Bureau (2011), in 2010 there were roughly 81.5 million individuals living in the U.S. aged between 45 to 64 years old, representing 26.4% of the total U.S. population. The report also stated that as of 2000 there had been approximately 62 million individuals aged between 45 to 64 years old, representing 22%

of the total U.S. population at that time. This change in population numbers for individuals aged between 45 to 64 years old between 2000 and 2010 represented an increase of approximately 19.5 million people, or a 31.5% growth in this segment of the population (U.S. Census Bureau, 2011). This growth in numbers represented the largest increase of any 20-year age group category in the U. S during those 10 years.

Moreover, the U.S. Census Bureau (2011) noted that in 2010 there were almost 40 million men aged between 45 to 64 years old. In 2000, there had been just over 30 million men in the same age category, an increase of almost 10 million men between 2000 and 2010. The report also provided population figures for segments of the population divided into 5-year age group categories. Within these smaller age groupings, the number of men aged 60 to 64 years old, and the number of men aged 55 to 59 years old increased 57.3% and 46.3% respectively between 2000 and 2010, representing the largest and fourth largest percentage increases of all individuals, men and women, of all ages, within all five-year age group categories (U.S. Census Bureau, 2011).

Therefore, the number of middle-aged individuals in general and of men specifically who were middle aged represented a substantial number of the U.S. population. According to scholars, middle-aged adults may share such characteristics as experiencing a strong commitment for the betterment of future generations (An & Cooney, 2006; Newman & Newman, 2011) and having to manage multiple roles (Lachman 2004; Newman & Newman, 2011) where the function of career and work was paramount (Eaton, Visser, Krosnick, & Anand, 2009; Lachman, 2004; Mroczek, 2004; Newman & Newman, 2011). In addition, Eaton et al. (2009) found that middle-aged adults tend to be more resolute and resistant to persuasion. Eaton et al. and Newman and

Newman (2011) discussed how positions of power and influence in the work place were primarily concentrated in middle-aged adults who held positions of management and leadership. Eaton et al. wrote that "midlife adults in the United States do indeed outnumber younger and older adults in positions of power; this is true in the workplace, where middle aged adults disproportionately occupy supervisory roles and serve in official managerial positions" (p. 1656). Lachman (2004) stressed the importance of work and how employment helped shape the identity of middle-aged adults.

According to the U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics (2012) among employed men aged between 45 to 64 years old, 16.7%, or 4.879 million middle-aged men held positions of management. More specifically, approximately 1 in 9 employed men aged between 45 to 54, and 1 in 6 employed men aged between 55 to 64, held management positions (U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2012). This represented a substantial segment of the entire population of employed middle-aged men. What, if any, specific characteristics can be found in a male manager will be next reviewed.

Management Characteristics

Broadridge and Hearn (2008) offered an analysis of work published since the 1960s exploring the subject of gender and management and wrote that "management and managing are characteristically gendered in many respects" (p. S38). However, they also noted that most of the "mainstream" commentary investigating organizations and management over the last 40 years had either no gender analysis or offered unsophisticated considerations of gender and management. Regardless, Broadridge and Hearn, among other authors (e.g., Collinson & Hearn, 1996; Eagly & Karau, 2002;

Kyriakidou, 2011; Powell & Butterfield, 2003), argued that organizations and management have been predominantly influenced by male-based heterosexual norms that "perpetuated hegemonic masculinity…suppressed subordinate masculinity and reproduced a pecking order among men" (p. S44) for some time in U.S. history.

Collinson and Hearn (1996) as well as Eagly and Karau (2002) detailed the "masculine" characteristics found among managers and leadership in organizations. Collinson and Hearn discussed the predominant "masculine" style of management, highlighting the idea that it focused on control of self and others. Eagly and Karau defined "masculinity" found in those individuals in positions of management in terms of "agentic" characteristics—characteristics that were more generally attributed to men and having "primarily an assertive, controlling, and confident tendency—for example, aggressive, ambitious, dominant, forceful, independent, self-sufficient, self-confident, and prone to act as a leader" (p. 574). In addition, middle-aged adults who had been placed in positions of management and power had been found to be less likely to change their thoughts and opinions and were less likely to be open to hearing others' suggestions and advice (Eaton, Visser, Krosnick, & Anand, 2009).

In her work, Kyriakidou (2011) noted that these aspects of "masculinity" found in managers, as defined above, continued to dominate in organizations, whether executed by a male-gendered manager or a female-gendered manager. Accordingly, these attributes associated with masculinity in management style were both assumed and unquestioned and were continually being reproduced and reinforced within most organizations (Kyriakidou, 2011). Associations between masculine (i.e., agentic) characteristics and top management positions were even observed in individuals not yet employed as managers

(Powell & Butterfield, 2003). In their work, Powell and Butterfield found that undergraduate and graduate level business students who most identified with these masculine qualities were also those same individuals who most aspired to future top management positions. These characteristics related to traditional masculinity may leave men especially vulnerable at a time of losing their managerial position. The recent recession resulted in dramatic increase of incidents of such unemployment among men who held managerial positions.

The Recent Recession and Unemployment

The most recent U.S. economic recession officially started during December 2007 and ended during June 2009, as determined by the National Bureau of Economic Research (Ilg & Theodossiou, 2012). This recession has been referred to as the "Great Recession" (Allegretto & Lynch, 2010; Elsby et al., 2010; Morin & Kochhar, 2010). Luo, Florence, Quispe-Agnoli, Ouyang, and Crosby (2011) defined an economic recession as a period "characterized by rising unemployment and falling gross domestic product" (p. 1139). During this recent Great Recession, the rate of unemployment in the U.S. rose from a prerecession low of 4.4% to a peak of 10.1%, a percentage increase of 5.7%, larger than any other increase in the rate of unemployment since the Great Depression (Elsby et al., 2010). In addition, during the latter part of 2009 when the U.S. started to emerge from the Great Recession, marked differences were found between the nature of this recent recovery to the recoveries of past deep U.S. recessions (Allegretto & Lynch, 2010; Elsby et al., 2010). For these authors, these differences were both troubling and portended future potential difficulties for the overall health of the U.S. job market.

Elsby et al. (2010) provided a calculation for determining the rate of unemployment in which the total number of employed individuals was divided by the total number of potential workers with the resulting decimal number subtracted from one (1) thus providing a rate, or percentage, of those current unemployed at any given point in time. The term "job loss" will be defined as an involuntarily termination of paid employment (McKee-Ryan et al., 2005). Individuals viewed as being involuntarily "retired" are those who experienced a job loss, are over the age of 50, and who "believed they would not work again at a full-time 'real' job commensurate with their education and training" (Godofsky, van Horn, & Zukin, 2010, p. 17).

The term *long-term unemployment* refers to those individuals who have been unemployed for at least six months (Morin & Kochhar, 2010). Others have noted that being considered long-term unemployed begins after an individual has been out of work for at least 27 weeks, a few weeks longer than six months (Allegretto & Lynch, 2010; Ilg & Theodossiou, 2012). "Discouraged" workers are defined as unemployed individuals who have searched for work for at least some period of time during the previous 12 months but who have stopped looking for work within the last four weeks because they felt that there were no jobs available for them, that they did not have the necessary qualifications to find employment, or because they believed that they had experienced some form of discrimination by potential employers during their job search (Aldric & Callanan, 2011; Ilg & Theodossiou, 2012).

Although the Great Recession officially ended in June 2009, as noted above, by October 2009, the rate of unemployment in the U.S. reached a peak of 10.1% (Elsby et al., 2010; Sahin et al., 2010), a level not seen since the recession of 1981-1982 (Sahin et

al., 2010). Scholars have noted certain distinct characteristics associated with unemployment and those most impacted during this recent recession (e.g., Aldric & Callanan, 2011; Allegretto & Lynch, 2010; Butterworth, Leach, Pirkis, & Kelaher, 2012; Elsby, et al., 2010; Godofsky et al., 2010; Ilg & Theodossiou, 2012; Krueger & Mueller, 2011; Morin & Kochhar, 2010; Sahin et al., 2010).

One key feature of the unemployment experience since the Great Recession began was that men have higher rates of unemployment than women (Allegretto & Lynch, 2010; Elsby et al., 2010; Sahin et al., 2010). This rate had been attributed to the high number of job losses in the goods-producing, manufacturing, and construction industries (Allegretto & Lynch, 2010; Sahin et al., 2010). Another key feature of the experience of being unemployed since the start of the Great Recession was that individuals are looking for work longer than they had before (Ilg & Theodossiou, 2012; Krueger & Mueller, 2011).

Ilg and Theodossiou (2012) found that "the length of time the jobless spent searching for work before finding a job increased from 5.2 to 10.4 weeks between 2007 and 2010, edging down to 10.0 in 2011" (p. 41). In fact, during 2011, individuals spent more time unemployed and looking for work then even during the "official" period of the Great Recession from 2007-2009 (Ilg & Theodossiou, 2010). According to Allegretto and Lynch (2010),

> of all people in the labor force, approximately 1 in 25 was long-term unemployed in September 2010. With regard to the labor market, the downturn that began in 2007 is by all indications much worse than those of recent history and can even be considered one of the worst ever. (p. 6)

Additionally, groups that have the highest long-term unemployment share, or LTU share, defined by Allegretto and Lynch (2010) to be "the *share* [italics added] of unemployment

accounted for by long-term unemployment" (p. 3), included individuals 55 and older, and "workers in management, business and financial occupations; and workers in the financial activities industry" (Allegretto & Lynch, 2010, p. 7). Echoing these findings, Morin and Kochhar (2010) noted that workers aged 50 and older, men, and individuals previously employed in the construction, maintenance, production, and transportation industries represented some of the groups of individuals who are experiencing higher than average long-term unemployment. In fact, "only one group—workers 50 and older— truly stood out as being overly represented among the long-term unemployed; workers 50 and older were 22.5% of all unemployed but 28.4% of long-term unemployed" (Morin & Kochhar, 2010, p. 8).

After a period of time, unemployed individuals stop looking for work and become "discouraged workers," as defined earlier (Aldric & Callanan, 2011; Ilg & Theodossiou, 2012). Aldric and Callanan (2011) found that since the start of the Great Recession, there were more men than women who became discouraged workers. They also found that individuals in the age group category of 25-54 years old were more likely to become discouraged workers than those in any other age group category. Ilg and Theodossiou (2012) noted that the length of time discouraged workers sought employment had increased substantially since the start of the Great Recession and that men looked slightly longer than women before stopping their job search.

Undoubtedly, any experience of unemployment has an impact on social and psychological functioning of individuals. In addition, long-term unemployment may have further implications for individuals' lives. Although economic and social outcomes of

unemployment are significant, it is the psychological effects that may be among the most detrimental for those who deal with unemployment.

Psychological Effects of Unemployment

Unemployment has been shown to have a detrimental impact on an unemployed individual's general state of physical and mental health, including overall psychological and physical well-being among men and women (Mandal & Roe, 2008; McKee-Ryan et al., 2005; Morin & Kochhar, 2010; Paul & Moser, 2009). Unemployment also resulted in increased rates of mortality among male workers (Janicki-Deverts et al., 2008; Sullivan & van Wachter, 2009). Men and women who have been unemployed reported increased feelings of distress (Paul & Moser, 2009), increased sense of powerlessness (Godofsky et al., 2010), increased symptoms of depression (Brand, Levy, & Gallo, 2008; Burgard, Brand, & House, 2007; Kessler, Mickelson, Walters, Zhao, & Hamilton, 2004; Krueger & Mueller, 2011; Libby, Ghushchyan, McQueen, & Campbell, 2010; Mandal, Ayyagari, & Gallo, 2010; Newman & Newman, 2011), increased rates of domestic violence (Cunradi, Todd, Duke, & Ames, 2009), and increased rates of suicides (Coleman, Kaplan, & Casey, 2011; Ceccherini-Nelli & Priebe, 2011; Luo et al., 2011; Phillips, Robin, Nugent, & Idler, 2010). In addition, men reported increased feelings of anger (Wooten & Valenti, 2008). Notably, studies examining the detrimental impact unemployment has on the unemployed were conducted prior to the recent recession: only the studies by Krueger and Mueller (2011) and Morin and Kochhar (2010) specifically examined individuals who experienced job loss since the start of the Great Recession.

Having experienced an episode of unemployment increased future rates of premature morbidity and mortality among men not only at the time of job loss, the time

of the most dramatic increase in risk, but also up to 20 years after the actual job loss (Janicki-Deverts et al, 2008; Sullivan & van Wachter, 2009). Paul and Moser's (2009) meta-analysis found that both youth and persons older than 50 suffered more distress from unemployment than other age groups. Brand, Levy, and Gallo (2008) found that men experienced significant increases in depression as a result of a job loss due to feelings of incompetence, particularly among those identified as being "late-career" job losers.

Cunradi, Todd, Duke, and Ames (2009) examined the impact of job loss on domestic violence and found increased rates of male-against-female partner domestic violence when the male partner first experienced job loss but no further increase in male-against-female partner domestic violence as the male partner continued to be unemployed. However, they did find increased rates of female-against-male partner domestic violence as the male partner continued to be unemployed. According to Phillips et al. (2010), the rate of suicide in the U.S. among men aged 50-59 years old rose between 1999 and 2005. Coleman et al. (2011) noted that across the globe "death by suicide was a strikingly male phenomenon" (p. 240) and that "in the United States, men were more than four times as likely as women to complete suicide" (pp. 240-241). In addition, overall, it has been quantitatively shown that the risk for suicide increased when an individual experienced unemployment, and during economic downturns (Coleman et al., 2011; Ceccherini-Nelli & Priebe, 2011; Luo et al., 2011).

In addition to quantitative research reviewed above, three recent studies utilized a qualitative-based research methodology exploring the experience of unemployment of managerial, professional, or "white-collar" workers (Gabriel et al., 2010; Mendenhall et

al., 2008; Sharone, 2007). The study by Gabriel et al. (2010) examined the experiences of manager and professional level older adults in their 50s. Similar to the finds of Mendenhall et al. (2008), Gabriel and colleagues found that seasoned professionals with years of experience and expertise believed that they were in a paradoxical situation where their employment background was their greatest strength, while at the same time it deterred potential employers who wanted new hires with less experience and expertise. This phenomenon was labeled by Gabriel et al. the "experience/expertise conundrum."

Furthermore, Mendenhall et al. (2008) examined the lived experience of unemployment among long-term high-level managerial and professional workers who were predominantly white middle-aged males from the Chicago area between the years 2003-2006. They found that when terminated from employment, these middle-aged professions struggled with "identity issues related to positions of privilege and social locations" (p. 195) and assumed their job loss was associated with a lack of employer loyalty. Additionally, although these professionals felt that their skills and experience made them attractive new hires, their middle-age status was a deficit and they would not provide specific dates or lengths of service to potential new employers that could reveal their true age. Mendenhall et al. noted that these professionals perceived many new risks associated with the economy in which they were trying to find a job and felt that they had to develop new strategies in their job search. Lastly, Sharone (2007) utilized observation and interviews of unemployed male and female white-collar workers and found that while seeking employment, these former employees experienced a loss of self-esteem and developed a sense of self-blame for their inability to find a job.

As illustrated above, the ripple effects of unemployment, particularly long-term unemployment, has had a detrimental impact on an unemployed individual's overall physical and psychological health. To date, however, only few quantitative studies have looked at the impact of unemployment on physical and psychological health since December 2007, the start of the Great Recession. It was shown above that long-term unemployment had significantly influenced individuals 50 years of age or older, particularly since the start of the Great Recession. Men, as a group, have also been shown to have experienced increased rates of unemployment since 2007. Men also appeared to have experienced increased rates of premature morbidity and mortality due to becoming unemployed. Because male managers were acculturated to be "aggressive, ambitious, dominant, forceful, independent, self-sufficient, self-confident" (Eagly & Karau, 2002), the long-term unemployment experience on recently unemployed middle-aged managerial-level men from the United States may have had particularly detrimental impact on their physical and psychological health.

However, the literature has shown a dearth of qualitative-based analysis of the overall unemployment experience of managerial and professional unemployed individuals, and only one of those specifically focused on unemployed men. Given the strong growth in the numbers of middle-aged men currently living in the U.S. and that this gender and age group represented such a large percentage of the total U.S. population, investigations about the lived experiences that long-term unemployed middle-aged managerial-level men from the U.S. were having appeared to be important. Specifically, research regarding men's own understanding of their experience will aid clinical approaches to working with men as well as creation of psychologically sound

assessments and educational materials that can aid middle-aged unemployed men who held managerial positions.

Finally, given that I have included Romanyshyn's (2007) alchemical hermeneutic research approach as an adjunct perspective to the overall phenomenological attitude guiding this research, a brief review of selected literature is provided exploring the concept of the midlife crisis and how the journey through midlife can represent a period of crisis and potential renewal. To begin, I examine the concept of generativity and its importance for an adult's psychological development. To close, I provide an examination of the concept of the midlife crisis from a depth psychological perspective and review recent research exploring this phenomenon among U.S. adults.

Generativity at Midlife

It has been found that middle-aged adults are concerned about such issues as generativity and contributing to the well-being of future generations (An & Cooney, 2006; Newman & Newman, 2011; Lachman, 2004). Erikson (1963), in a chapter entitled "Eight Ages of Man" from *Childhood and Society,* theorized that humans developed psychologically through successive stages and labeled the development conflict associated with middle age as "generativity versus stagnation." McAdams (2000) wrote that

> Erikson conceived of the human life course as a sequence of eight stages, with each stage defined by a central psychosocial issue. After moving through…the sixth (young adult) stage of *intimacy versus isolation*, the adult confronted *generativity versus stagnation*—the key issue of Erikson's seventh stage, associated with the long period of the middle adult years. (pp. 459-460)

In fact, Erikson noted that had his book not placed its emphasis on the childhood developmental stages, that this seventh stage, generativity versus stagnation, would have

been, by necessity, the primary focus of his work. Erikson wrote that he believed the term *generativity* "encompassed the evolutionary development which has made man the teaching and instituting as well as the learning animal" (p. 266). Erikson also noted that it was not only the child who needed the adult, but also the adult and older generations who needed the younger generations as "mature man needs to be needed" (pp. 266-267).

Newman and Newman (2011) wrote that "through generativity, adults may change the world by introducing new things, ideas, being, or bonds of relationships—all of which had not existed before…. the concept of generativity suggested a commitment to social involvement and community engagement" (p. 513). McAdams (2000) detailed that adults could "express generativity through parenting, teaching, mentoring, and generating products and outcomes that aim to benefit youth and foster the development and well-being of individuals and social systems that will outlive the self" (p. 459). Additionally, McAdams noted that research conducted during the 1980s found that "generativity appeared to be positively correlated with assessments of life satisfaction, happiness, self-esteem, and sense of coherence in life" (pp. 461-462).

On the opposite spectrum of generativity lay stagnation. According to Erikson (1963), when an individual did not achieve generativity during adulthood, then "regression to an obsessive need for pseudo-intimacy took place, often with a pervading sense of stagnation and personal impoverishment" (p. 267). McAdams (2000) envisioned stagnation as "self-preoccupation, wherein the adult focused attention mainly on the care and maintenance of the self rather than others" (p. 460). Newman and Newman (2011) noted that "stagnation had been operationalized as an absence of investment in the growth of self or others and a rejection of ideas and values that differ from one's own" (p.

515). Newman and Newman also drew parallels between stagnation and the personality characteristics of neuroticism and narcissism writing that stagnation could be evidenced by "difficulties in social relationships, problems achieving a sense of social acceptance, and being highly controlled" (p. 515).

Midlife as a Transitional Period

As detailed earlier, unemployment during middle age can be emotionally, psychologically, and physically devastating. As painful as job loss could be, particularly as a middle-aged U.S. adult male, there were those who have suggested (e.g., Hollis, 1993; Jung, 1930/1960; Robinson, 1997; Stein & Stein, 1994; Stein, 1983) that midlife represented an opportunity for transition, re-orientation, and psychological growth and development; a gateway period through which an adult could experience a psychic shift from how he was in the world. In fact, if not already achieved, unemployment at midlife may represent an opening for an adult to resolve the conflict of generativity versus stagnation. Regardless of this possibility for renewal, these same authors have noted that midlife can be a tumultuous period dominated by crisis, upheaval, and conflict.

In the United States, the term *midlife crisis* is a popular and well-known term (Wethington, 2000; Wethington, Kessler, & Pixley, 2004) that, according to Wethington et al. (2004), a vast majority of adults defined similarly as had been defined by psychological and psychoanalytic theories. Wethington (2004) and Wethington et al. (2004) noted that research has shown a wide discrepancy in the number of U.S. adults who have reported experiencing a midlife crisis, with some studies showing the figure to be as low as 10% and other studies showing the figure to be as high as 26% of all U.S. adults. Most individuals who have reported experiencing a midlife crisis noted that it

came about due to “major life events that posed a severe threat and challange“ that “were major negative life events that caused a searching reassessment of life“ (Wethington et al., p. 597).

Unemployment can just be one of those “major negative life events” that afford a middle-aged male the opportunity to engage in a “searching reassessment of life.” In fact, it may be that becoming unemployed is the necessary jolt to help an adult male re-orient himself in the world for his own psychological development and for the betterment of society as a whole; if he so has the insight and temperament to do so. Jung saw the potential for a midlife crisis, and the ensuing anguish that it can bring, as being inevitable (1917/1953). Hollis (1993) noted that not all who are called to this endeavor during their middle years heed the summons. Stein and Stein (1994) argued that midlife was meant to be a transitional period and that “the psychological purpose of this transition seems to be the transformation of consciousness” (p. 289).

What Hollis (1993), Jung (1930/1960), Robinson (1997), Stein and Stein (1994), and Stein (1983) have argued is that there is a natural, deep, and unconscious calling within each of us to enter into the transitional, transformational phase of midlife as if it were a journey, or passageway. Through this journey, guiding images or figures may appear and accompany an adult, offering potential guidance, as it were (Stein, 1983). This image can represent the turmoil associated with the experience of a midlife crisis and also provide insight into how to proceed. As discussed both previously and in the next chapter, there had been a guiding image that inspired me to do this research and accompanied me as I continued on in my own midlife journey. It has been my experience, as noted by Stein and Stein, that midlife, and the long-term unemployment I

experienced, formed an essential transitional journey punctuated by internal upheaval, stress, anxiety, and uncertainty, as I looked to my guide to help me find my way to a new purpose and home.

Chapter 3
Methods

Research Approach

The research approach of this study was guided by Moustakas's (1994) description, construction, and application of transcendental phenomenology, a humanistic approach to the investigation of the human condition. This research approach drew from the earlier work of the philosopher Husserl on phenomenology that was considered "transcendental," as it asserted that the only thing known for certain was our own subjective experience of that which appeared before us in our consciousness, and that experience was enough to guarantee its objectivity (Moustakas, 1994). According to Creswell (2007), transcendental phenomenology was a study of the appearance of things, phenomena, just as they are seen and as they appear in our consciousness.

Generally, the goal of phenomenologically grounded research was to uncover and better understand meanings of a lived experience and to summarize those meanings (Dukes, 1984; Moustakas, 1994; Romanyshyn, 2007). The challenge was to describe the phenomena as they were, to understand meanings and essences in the light of intuition and self-reflection (Moustakas, 1994). In phenomenological research, the researcher also had a personal interest in the phenomena under examination. An essential feature of the phenomenological research process was for the researcher to set aside prejudgments or presuppositions at the beginning of, and during, the research project.

This research study, grounded in phenomenological understanding, sought to describe "what was there" and let the phenomena of long-term unemployment experienced by these men "speak for itself" (Moustakas, 1994). Dukes (1984), Moustakas (1994), and Romanyshyn (2007) offered an appreciation of the interwoven nature

between that which was experienced, the nature of the individuals experiencing it, and how those individuals experiencing a phenomenon made sense of what they are experiencing. Romanyshyn (2007) described phenomenologically grounded research as a joining of the experience that one had of "subjectivism and objectivism" (p. 88). Each individual experienced a phenomenon differently: through his or her own subjective perspective as the result of his or her particular historical, cultural, and personal background, and these subjective experiences were objective facts in and of themselves. Transcendental phenomenology offered a way to investigate the world around us as we saw it and as it appeared to us in our consciousness (Moustakas, 1994).

Research Methodology

Research ground in a transcendental phenomenological sensibility utilized methods of epoche, phenomenological reduction, imaginative variation, and synthesis (Moustakas, 1994). According to Moustakas, epoche was a process of setting aside suppositions and prejudgments and opening up each research interview with an unbiased, receptive presence as those lived experiential meanings could not be known or felt in advance by the researcher. Next, through phenomenological reduction, what was "seen" externally and perceived internally, and the relationship between the experience under observation and the research was described. The next stage of transcendental methodology was associated with imaginative variation and involved the use of intuition to derive meanings and themes from the reported lived experience of long-term unemployment of the participants. The final stage, synthesis, involved developing a description of the essence of this collectively lived experience.

Romanyshyn (2007) described a complementary research methodology, alchemical hermeneutics, in which a dialectical relationship emerged between the researcher and aspects of the unconscious that were calling for the work to be done. Romanyshyn argued that a researcher oriented towards an alchemical hermeneutic understanding was a "wounded researcher" and that the "wounded researcher was a complex witness who, by attending not only to the conscious but also the unconscious subjective factors in his or her research, sought to transform a wound into a work. The work came through the wounding" (p. 111).

The methodology associated with alchemical hermeneutics started by my creating a "Space of Reverie," followed by a process of engagement, called the transference dialogues, between me, as the researcher, and that part of the unconscious associated with the subject being researched. Throughout the process of the creation of this study, I have adopted an alchemical hermeneutic attitude and continually engaged in a process of transference dialogues, as outlined by Romanyshyn (2007).

The alchemical hermeneutic process for this research project "began" when an image of "Pirate" came to me early in 2011, in the middle of my doctoral work. Since 2011, images of and references to Pirate frequently came to me in many different guises and forms. Pirate has been my guiding spirit. Additionally, it was Pirate, he who journeys across great stretches of the seemingly endless oceans of the world, searching for treasure, unsure where he will find it, who also informed and guided this work. Not only have I had a personal draw towards this lived experience, but additionally, Pirate, in his coming to me repeatedly indicated to me that this was work I was destined to explore.

Participants

I solicited volunteer participants from the southern and northern areas of California who were living in the United States both during their last employment and subsequent unemployment, were male, aged 40-60 years old, had been unemployed for 27 weeks or longer since December 2007, were involuntarily separated from their last employment, who were currently unemployed, and had been employed in a managerial-level position during their professional careers. In addition to being currently unemployed, all of my volunteer participants were still seeking employment at the time of their interview. Pre-screening questions were asked as a self-reported validation method for meeting criteria specifications. As volunteers, participants in this study were unpaid.

Volunteer participants were solicited utilizing print and online advertisements for this study. I posted on various sections of the Internet website Craigslist as well as posting on my personal Internet social media website Facebook home page. I spoke with various individuals I met through my day-to-day activities, asking them if they knew of anyone who fit the requirements of this research study and who may be interested in participating. I asked the volunteers who participated in this study if they knew of anyone who may be interested in volunteering for this study. I posted flyers at Southern California community college campuses, coffee shops, libraries, and other local establishments that allowed for such print advertisements. I emailed facilitators of support groups in the Los Angeles, California urban area whose group members focused on dealing with unemployment to inquire if any of those members would participate in this study. I advertised through an email distribution listserv for the Los Angeles County

Psychologists Association (LACPA). Additionally, I posted an online advertisement for this study on five other Internet websites. The research was based on the assumption that those who responded to this study request were who they said they were and that they were comfortable answering open-ended questions regarding their long-term unemployment experience.

Interviews were conducted between May 3, 2013 and September 7, 2013. Four of the five volunteers lived in the Los Angeles, California urban area, and one participant lived in the San Francisco Bay, California urban area. Three of the five volunteers had heard of this study through word-of-mouth and were friends of acquaintances of the researcher. One person was referred by his psychologist, who had seen an advertisement for this study posted through an email distribution listserv for LACPA. The fifth volunteer answered an advertisement posted on the Internet website Craigslist.

The five participants who volunteered for this study were between the ages of 43 to 60 at the time of their interview. One man was 43, two men were in their late 50s and two men were 60 years old when interviewed. At the time that they were involuntarily terminated from their last employer, the men were between the ages of 42 to 59.

Overall, career spanning managerial experience among the participants was varied. The men collectively had held anywhere between one to eight different managerial positions throughout their careers. The length of time throughout their careers the volunteers held management positions spanned 14 years and greater; two of the participants had over 30 years of varied management experiences. In addition, the number of co-workers these men managed throughout their careers ranged between one and 12 individuals. Overall, the men had a history of working for both small employers

and large multinational firms. At the time the participants were terminated from employment, two had been working for small employers and three had been working for large employers. Four of the men had been working at for-profit companies, and one had been working for a nonprofit company.

At the time of the interview, the volunteers had been unemployed between eight months and five years with two unemployed less than one year, one participant unemployed for just over one year and two men who were unemployed for more than four years. Although all of the participants were involuntarily separated from their last employer, their reason for employment termination varied. Three of the men were fired because their employer was experiencing financial difficulties. Of these three participants, one of the participants was also dealing with serious personal health issues for two years prior to being terminated from employment and at the time of his interview was receiving Social Security Disability Income (SSDI), but considered himself able bodied enough to work and was looking for full-time employment.

Of the other two volunteers whose employment termination was not due to company financial issues, one participant had been abusing substances and had missed too many days of work and was ultimately fired due to poor attendance. The other participant had injured himself while working and became verbally abusive towards others in the vicinity right after his on-the-job accident. This behavior became the ultimate cause for his termination from employment. All of the men in the study were unemployed and searching for employment at the time of the interview.

Procedures for Data Collection

I conducted five interviews, each one lasting approximately one hour long. Each interview was audio recorded and transcribed verbatim. Four of the interviews were conducted and audio recorded in person. One interview was conducted and audio recorded over the phone.

Procedures for Data Analysis

As outlined by Moustakas (1994), before I began transcribing and analyzing the data, I first engaged in a process during which I set aside my views and perceptions of what long-term unemployment meant and how it was experienced. The intention of this process was to help me, as the researcher, focus on what the participants were saying in their own words and with their own interpretations of their lived experiences; an essential step Moustakas called "epoche."

After transcribing the interviews, I began a process that Moustakas referred to as "horizonalization." Horizonalization was a process of highlighting significant statements that conveyed information from each participant about their experience of long-term unemployment. From this, I developed "clusters of meanings," also called "meaning units or themes" from the clusters of significant statements, phrases, or sentences uncovered from the horizonalization process. I repeated developing clusters of meanings with each participant's transcript. Themes, termed "textural descriptions" and "structural descriptions" were then synthesized. Textural descriptions were descriptions based on the significant statements and themes of what the participants experienced. Structural descriptions were descriptions of the content or setting that influenced how the participants experienced the phenomenon. Themes and subthemes that I found, discussed

in the next chapter, are represented by a salient quote from the interview highlighting that theme or subtheme. From the structural and textural descriptions, I wrote a composite portrait describing the *essence* of the experience with all of the common themes and subthemes articulated in this portrait.

In addition to work on the participant's transcripts detailed above, I also continued to engage in a process of alchemical hermeneutics as detailed by Romanyshyn (2007). This process began by my creating a ritual space of reverie, inviting Pirate to visit, adopting an attitude of hospitality setting a stage for further transference dialogues to occur between me and Pirate. In this process, as Pirate emerged, I acknowledged his presence, offered my appreciation for his guidance, and honored what he had to share with me as I sought to make sense and understand what it was that he had to share with me. I attempted to do my best to incorporate what it was that I think he had to share with me into this work.

The entire study has been summarized and reflections on the relevance of what was discovered and its possible impact on the field of clinical and depth psychology is offered later in this work under Chapter 5 entitled "Discussion." Also in Chapter 5 I have provided suggestions for future research on this topic.

Statement of Reflexivity

As mentioned above, this research topic resonated deeply with me, and I experienced what I considered to be unconscious manifestations that guided me to this work. Heppner and Heppner (2004) discussed possible difficulties a researcher could encounter when conducting research on a topic that was close to his or her own personal life experience. However close this topic felt to me or however personally drawn towards

it I felt, I believe that it had not been too overwhelming for me to hear these men's stories and conduct research on their lived experience of long-term unemployment.

While interviewing the men for this work and then transcribing and analyzing the transcriptions, I noted whatever transference issues were coming up for me and expressed them through journaling. I did not find this work emotionally or psychologically challenging or difficult to tolerate. As such, I did not find it necessary to utilize others in my life for emotional support while working on this study. I maintained and actively cultivated an open invitation for Pirate to continue to engage in transference dialogues with me throughout this research project. There were times when Pirate's appearance was more pronounced and I would encounter multiple images of him. During those periods I remained open to the insight I expected would come. At other times his presence was more subtle, but I did feel as if he had always been there guiding me throughout the completion of this work.

Ethical Considerations

Efforts were made to ensure confidentiality of each participant and to avoid harm. As noted by Scott-Jones (2005), researchers have an ethical responsibility to assure proper recruitment protocols are followed. Each participant was given a confidentiality policy regarding his rights. The confidentiality policy included ways in which the participant could contact the researcher, the researcher's research committee, and the researcher's school. Recordings of each participant interview, and any other participant generated materials, were kept private and stored in a safe location in the researcher's home office. Each participant was informed that he had the option to withdraw from the

study at any time. None of the participants in this study have been specifically identified, and the participants' experiences are discussed in a general way.

Each participant was informed of possible benefits derived from participating in the study. The primary benefit of this study was to help others who may be affected by unemployment, whether directly or indirectly, better understand this experience. More broadly, others impacted by unemployment who read this study may benefit from knowing that they are not alone and that others have struggled in similar ways.

On an individual level, by volunteering for this study and having their stories heard and valued, three of the participants spontaneously noted at the end of their interview that they felt better, which will be further detailed in the next chapter. Additionally, each participant was informed that the researcher would provide referrals for psychotherapy if requested during the interview. One of the participants expressed interest in pursuing individual psychotherapy during his interview, and the researcher provided that participant with referrals to mental health counseling agencies in his area at the end of his interview.

Chapter 4
Results

Introduction

Main themes and subthemes uncovered through the analysis of the transcribed interviews informed by Moustakas's (1994) transcendental phenomenology methodology are outlined and detailed in the following chapter. Additionally, included below is a section noting some of the challenges and difficulties the researcher experienced in attempting to find participants. The chapter closes with a description of the process that ultimately drew the researcher to engage in this study and has guided him throughout this research project—an experiencing of Pirate, an imaginal figure that sparked this research idea and continued to influence the process as it unfolded.

Themes

There are four main, overarching themes and a variety of subthemes the researcher gleaned from the data. The themes and subthemes detailed below are presented in chronological order, including initial thoughts and feelings the volunteers had before they were involuntarily fired to final thoughts and reflections the participants had on the state of their lives at the time of their interview.

The first main theme, Premonition of Job Loss, details a shared premonition by the participants that they knew that their employer was going to terminate their employment on the day they were fired before they were actually told of the news. The second found theme, Effects of Separation, explores the various emotional and psychological effects the phenomenon of being involuntarily separated, and then living through long-term unemployment, had on the men right from the moment they were fired up through the time of their interview with the researcher. This second theme is

organized into six subthemes: Initial Distress, Long-Term Distress, Duration of Distress, the Impact of Loss of Structure/Routine, Identity Changes, and Switched to a Second Person Narration (the last refers to an action taken at times by some of the participants when discussing their experience).

A third found theme, Coping with Unemployment, explores various strategies the participants have utilized, and continued to utilize, to cope with the phenomenon of being fired and living through long-term unemployment. This theme is organized into five subthemes: Retrospective Coping, Talking about the Experience Helps, Helping Others, Building Hope, and Understanding the Context of Unemployment: Age Discrimination, a subtheme that includes some of the participants' fears that their inability to find full time employment was due to age discrimination by potential employers.

The fourth and final main theme, Not Ready to Retire, explores how each of these men stated that they do not feel like they are ready to retire. All five participants were actively seeking gainful employment at the time of their interview and wanted the opportunity to continue to work for a variety of different reasons beyond just earning an income.

The process of finding and successfully recruiting participants for this study is also detailed below, as this part of the process is informative to the overall object of this research which was to better understand the lived experience of long-term unemployment of a certain group of U.S. males.

Finally, the chapter concludes with an accounting of the alchemical hermeneutic process that was both the original inspiration for this topic and that also guided the

researcher throughout the study. This section is comprised of a description of the researcher's experiencing of the image of Pirate.

Premonition of job loss. Although all of the participants of this study were involuntarily separated from their last employer, the reasons for their termination of employment were varied. However, each man knew that he was going to be fired before it actually happened. In two of the instances, employment termination was due to work-related performance issues, and although these two participants felt that their behaviors could lead to their employment termination, they were unsure what their employer was ultimately going to do until the day they were terminated. On that day, prior to being let go, they "just knew," as one of the men stated, that they were going to be fired later that day.

Two other participants started to notice unusual actions by co-workers and bosses that were outside of normal behavior by those individuals. Based on these unusual occurrences they started to become concerned about their employment status. Neither of them reported having work-related performance issues. Both of the men intuitively knew on the day that they were fired that they were going to lose their job later that day. One participant reported remembering atypical behavior from his subordinates for weeks leading up to his firing. However, the day that he was terminated from employment, he noted that "before I went into the interview, before they called me in, I knew it was going to happen. I knew it was happening," referring to his being eventually fired. The other participant stated that on the day he was fired "I knew it was coming."

The final volunteer started to suspect his position was to be eliminated due to a loss of funding at the nonprofit company where he was working. He stated, in relation to

his loss of employment, “I think it was something I was expecting” and ultimately knew he was going to be let go before he was actually fired.

Effects of separation. The participants experienced a multitude of adverse effects after being fired, both immediately and over time. These effects continued to have a negative impact on them throughout the length of their unemployment. The Initial Distress subtheme includes their reactions immediately following being fired and what they experienced emotionally and psychologically over the initial days and weeks. The Long-Term Distress subtheme explores the emotional, psychological, and in one participant’s case, physical effects the phenomenon of long-term unemployment had on these men. Three out of the five participants found some sense of relief from their distress during their course of unemployment, and the length of time that it took for these participants to feel better will be provided under the subtheme entitled Duration of Distress. Under the Impact of Loss of Structure/Routine subtheme, there will be a discussion detailing the difficulty four out of the five participants faced after losing the structure associated with having a full-time job. All five participants experienced changes in the way they perceived and felt about themselves due to their shared experience of being fired and living through long-term unemployment which will be discussed under the Identity Changes subtheme. Throughout all five interviews, the participants generally used first person narration when discussing what had happened to them and the impact it had on them. The last subtheme details how three of the five volunteers switched from a first person to second person narration while discussing different aspects of their experience.

Initial distress. Each participant had adverse psychological, emotional, and physiological reactions at the moment he learned that he was being involuntarily separated from his place of employment. After being fired, over the next few weeks, the initial distress continued, some symptoms increased, other adverse effects dissipated, and for some, new reactions to the experience were felt. This subtheme will detail the initial experience at the moment of being fired and then explore various thoughts and feelings that the participants had over the course of the following few weeks.

When the participants were in the process of being terminated from employment, they reported having challenging and difficult psychological and emotional reactions and several experienced extraordinary and uncomfortable physical reactions. At the moment of being fired, the range of emotions that the participants experienced included feeling lost, humiliated, embarrassed, ashamed, fearful, shocked, surprised, panicked, anxious, angry, sad, empty, and confused, as well as a feeling of wanting to flee. One of the participants stated that he had vengeful fantasies in which he could see that "I was going to get even." In that moment of losing their jobs, one of the participants shared: "I just felt lost" and "it felt a little humiliating." Another participant noted that the experience "was very terrifying…probably the scariest thing I've dealt with in my adult life." The youngest participant, who was in his 40s, stated, "I just thought I would never get another job….nobody's going to want to hire me."

Although everyone reported experiencing difficult emotions during the process of being fired, there was one participant whose experience was somewhat different. At first, he immediately felt anxious about having to find new work but then he felt a sense of relief and was grateful that he would no longer be working at that particular place of

employment. He stated that he felt “grateful that I wasn’t going to have to deal with the office politics of where I was at any more.” His reaction was unique among the five participants.

The most common reaction among the five participants while being terminated was confusion and fear about what to do next. One participant noted this confusion when he stated that while being fired he felt “that weird moment where I've got nothing in my card file of previous actions to help me, help guide me through this.” He asked himself, “What do I need to do?” Another participant also discussed his feelings of confusion, reporting that “in the moment...it still feels very odd...’cause...nobody wants to hear....your job is over...and you’re thinking uh-oh now what am I going to do?"

In addition to the adverse emotional responses experienced by the participants while being fired, four of the five participants also had strong somatic reactions. These included becoming overly sweaty, having an out of body experience, feeling numb, shaking, having a racing heart, being punched in the gut, and one participant found himself unable to talk. One participant stated, “I just felt kind of shaky and I felt really sweaty. I remember sweating a lot.” Another respondent stated that it felt like an “out of body experience” and that the experience “almost felt unreal.” The same participant also reported that “my body just felt kind of numb” and that “it feels like you are getting punched in the gut.” The participant who quickly came to be grateful for being fired reported that he had no adverse physical reactions while he was told that he would be losing his job.

After experiencing the initial feelings of distress and adverse physical reactions, during the following next few weeks each participant then started to have his own unique

set of reactions to finding himself unemployed. The participant who had been terminated because of attendance issues associated with substance abuse immediately relapsed and abused substances for the next two weeks. Over the next few months, this participant would struggle with sobriety, which ultimately led to his becoming homeless and living in his car. Another participant withdrew into his home and started to isolate from others. He reported that over the next several years he hardly left his home. One of the participants started gaining weight and sleeping less, became increasing more depressed, and developed acid reflex. Although over time these symptoms ebbed and flowed for this participant, they persisted up to the time of his interview. Moreover, another participant stated that his "feelings of self-worth dropped" and that he started to experience a lack of confidence in his abilities, which he had never felt about himself before.

After being fired, one of the participants was asked to stay on for two weeks to help with the transition of his position. The participant noted that "the first couple of days were really, really bad," but after receiving positive feedback from his boss for the work he was doing during the transition, his experience at work dramatically improved and he and his replacement "got along pretty well for the next two weeks." When asked by the researcher why he stayed on for two weeks, he stated that he did not take his firing personally and that he has been in past situations where co-workers made the lives miserable for those around them, and that he "didn't want to be that kind of guy."

Long-term distress. As noted above, the participants shared many similar reactions while they were losing their jobs but then found themselves starting to have their own unique response to being unemployed during the following next few weeks after being fired. Thereafter, each man continued to have his own distinctive arc of

experience as his length of being unemployed increased. Over time, for many of the men, the challenging feelings that were present at the beginning subsided. For one of the participants, the adverse reactions to being fired and then living through long-term unemployment continued and were present at the time of his interview.

One participant noted that for months after being terminated from his job, he felt angry at being fired and angry at himself for engaging in activities that led to his employment termination. He also stated that he felt embarrassed. Over time, this participant came to see his loss of his previous job as a blessing but still missed his co-workers, whom he had considered to be part of his family.

Another participant recognized that his experience of being fired was "not a punishment…just one of those challenges in life that comes up." But even with this cognitive understanding, he could not stop blaming himself, and he felt as if this whole experience was a reflection on who he was as a person. This same participant stated that for months after losing his job, he felt fear and was really hard on and judgmental toward himself. However, for this man, over time, those thoughts and feelings dissipated.

For two participants the experience of long-term unemployment exacerbated already underlying mental health issues. For one of these respondents, after losing his job he experienced symptoms associated with having another major depressive episode, and his anxiety increased. He stated that he also became agoraphobic and seldom left his home. He stated that he would spend his days "watching television, going out of the house if I absolutely had to…having minimal contact with friends….never honest about what was going on" with the people in his life. The participant noted that this went on for years, until eventually he attempted suicide and was hospitalized. After his suicide

attempt, the participant moved to the Los Angeles urban area and applied for and received SSDI, and his life started to improve, which will be further discussed below.

The other participant whose underlying mental health issues increased experienced an uptick in symptoms of depression. He became less socially active, could not get out of bed, found it hard to get motivated, had low self-esteem, became pessimistic and frustrated, and lost interest in activities that he used to enjoy. This participant became very anxious about not having money, and for a period of time had become homeless and lived out of his car. He also complained that during unemployment he developed high blood pressure, developed an enlarged prostate, and suffered a small stroke that ultimately did not leave permanent damage or impact his mobility. This man experienced passive suicidal ideation and eventually sought help from a psychiatrist, who prescribed psychotropic medications. At the time of the interview, this participant's mood had somewhat improved, but he noted that he was still experiencing many of the same emotional difficulties that he had been having throughout his unemployment.

All of the participants reported feelings of ongoing fear of possibly never finding another job as their unemployment continued. For three participants that feeling eventually dissipated. One participant, who had no savings or reliable source of income, continued to be fearful that he would not find steady work at the time of his interview. The fifth participant noted that when he became unemployed "originally I wasn't overly concerned because I'd never gone more than…six or seven weeks between jobs in my career." He "just assumed that it was probably going to take a little bit longer" due to his position level and age. But at the time of the interview, his job prospects "don't feel closer to anything now than a year ago" and he noted that one year into his long-term

unemployment, “I am starting to get more anxiety” and “nervous about what’s going to happen next.”

Although in many ways, each man had his own unique reaction to living through long-term unemployment, there were two similarities of experiences among some of the participants. Both of these similarities were mentioned above and will be reiterated here. First, although for different reasons, two participants ultimately found themselves homeless and living in their cars for a period of time while being unemployed. Two of the participants who had become homeless also experienced suicidal ideation. Of these two participants, one of them ultimately attempted to take his own life, which led to his being hospitalized.

Duration of distress. Three of the five participants stated that their feelings of distress started to subside after a period of time. How quickly these symptoms dissipated will be detailed below. For the other two participants, their experience was different. For one of these participants, who initially believed he would be able to work within a couple months, his feelings of anxiety increased as his length of unemployment continued. The other man continued to struggle with symptoms of depression and felt that his overall mood had not substantially improved over the course of his unemployment.

Of the other three men who were feeling better at the time of their interview, one participant noted that his initial symptoms of distress started to diminish after about “four or five months” and stated that his symptom reduction was directly related to his beginning to pursue working in another career. Another participant reported that his initial sense of distress began to subside after about “10 or 11 months.” This participant spoke about taking the time while being unemployed to re-evaluate his work ethic and

what he wanted from his job. The last participant who experienced a reduction of symptoms of distress stated that it had taken him "over three years." He reported that his mood dramatically elevated after leaving the city in which he had lost his job and had been living in and moved to the Los Angeles urban area, where he became more active and engaged with his life.

Impact of loss of structure/routine. Four of the five participants discussed the adverse effects and fears they experienced after becoming unemployed due to the loss of structure that they had when they worked full-time. One participant noted, "I had a set routine. I would go to the gym, I would go to work, come back home and…do it all over again, so when you don't have that routine….you're kinda lost." Another participant echoed similar thoughts and feelings when he stated, "I've always been a person who is really structured and I'm a scheduler….to not have that is terrifying to me." During the interview, another man realized that he had not been as depressed while he was employed and attributed that to having more structure in his life. Reflecting on that insight, this same participant then stated that he now believed that some of his current symptoms of depression had been due to the loss of that structure.

The fourth participant noted in retrospect how the loss of structure impacted his sense of well-being and how ultimately creating structure in his life by engaging in regular, scheduled daily activities helped alleviate symptoms of depression and feelings of worthlessness. This participant noted during his interview that it had only been when he began to put together a more structured life many years into his lengthy period of unemployment that it started to improve.

Identity changes. All five participants discussed how losing their jobs impacted their sense of self, self-esteem, and who they thought they were in the world. For two of the participants, losing their employment was like losing a part of their identity. One participant noted that "when you worked for a company for so long...and that's all you know...that was my identity...or a part of my identity...like that part of my identity was ripped away." This same participant later stated, "I didn't think I could do anything else. I could only do that job." Another man stated, "I've always sort of used my job as a big part of who I am."

Four of the participants talked about how losing their jobs impacted their sense of self-esteem. One participant noted, "I had so much of my self-worth vested in this occupation." Another man stated, "when you lose your job you do lose your confidence no matter...how much friends say it wasn't your fault." This same participant reported that "it feels like a blemish" and "your confidence level does drop." A third respondent spoke generally about losing his sense of self-esteem from not having gainful employment. A fourth participant repeated talked about how losing his job and experiencing long-term unemployment caused ongoing symptoms of depression noting that "I think I felt better as a manager....I still felt like I had some control."

Switched to a second person narration. As seen throughout the quotes provided in this chapter, participants frequently switched from first to second person narration, sometimes in the same sentence or in subsequent sentences. Three participants switched from first person to second persona narration during distinct periods of their interviews.

One participant switched from saying "I" to "you" when he was asked if he had any somatic reactions when he was told that he was being involuntarily separated from

his job. He answered by stating that “you get this um, it’s this loud internal screaming and all of a sudden you just, you feel this utter shock and their continuing to talk to you in this very sort of professional manner and inside you’re screaming.” Later he noted that “you have to go back to your desk and do the, you know, the cleanup.”

Another participant switched to second person when he started discussing what it was like to tell other people that he was unemployed. When asked, this participant stated “it bothers me a bit because you don’t feel nearly as good about yourself when you say I’m not working than when you are working. It’s true for everybody.” This same participant also switched to second person when talking about being unemployed longer than he thought it would take to find another job. Here he state, “you're worried that you’re becoming less relevant and that it’s going to be harder to find a job.” A third participant switched his point of perspective while talking about having lost friends during his long period of unemployment. He stated “sometimes you lost a bunch of friends; you know the ones that stuck by. You kind of knew that they stuck by because they care about you. They don’t really care about you know.”

Coping with unemployment. Over time the participants began to find ways to cope with their experience of being terminated from employment and living through long-term unemployment. Even though all five had felt fearful of never finding work again during their unemployment, each one of them also developed a sense of hope. For some this happened more quickly. One participant continued to struggle with this entire experience, but still reflected on ways in which he was able to keep going and, although had symptoms of depression, still maintained hope that he would eventually find full-time employment again.

The first subtheme, Retrospective Coping, examines unique ways in which the participants realized during their interview how they had been coping with this overall experience. The second subtheme, Talking about the Experience Helps, details the sense of relief that these men felt when talking about their unemployment experiences. The next subtheme, Helping Others, illustrates how being of service aids these men in feeling better about themselves and provided them with an ongoing sense of hope and purposefulness. Building Hope is a subtheme detailing how these men have come to feel hopeful for their future and move beyond their involuntary termination of employment and ongoing experience of long-term unemployment. Finally, this overall theme will end with a discussion of how these men make sense of their long-term unemployment experience, specifically that four of the participants believe that their inability to find a new employment is because of their age. This final subtheme is entitled Understanding the Context of Unemployment: Age Discrimination.

Retrospective coping. At the time of each interview, all of the participants reflected on how they had coped with their experience of being involuntarily separated from their employer and then living through long-term unemployment. A few of the shared coping skills are discussed in subsequent subthemes below. In this subtheme, various unique ways participants have learned to cope will be listed.

For three participants, their spiritual beliefs helped them through this period. One participant noted that even at the time he was fired, “I knew I was going to be taken care of no matter what….my higher power was going to take care of me and I would be okay.” Another participant noted that he was a devout Catholic, and explained, “I haven’t lost my faith because of the fact…that I haven’t found a job.”

One participant with financial means got more active doing various hobbies while unemployed. He also was using this free time to become introspective, asking himself "why do I work myself up to that position where I am stressed out constantly?" The insight he gained while unemployed helped him to begin to re-imagine how he would entire the work force again. Two participants sought psychiatric help and were prescribed psychotropic medications. One of these respondents also attended group therapy. This same participant discussed the importance of exercising every day to help maintain his positive mood.

Only one of the participants was married, and he discussed how supportive his wife was. He also noted that this was the first time that they were spending most of their days together and that they have adjusted to his not working and "now I am around all the time and we've…adjusted nicely to it so there's been some good things too" about the experience of being unemployed.

The participant who has struggled with symptoms of depression the most through his long-term unemployment talked about how important it was for him to be friendly and kind to other people. He felt that through his experience he had become more compassionate. He noted, "if I see somebody, maybe I have a couple dollars, I said here I'll buy you a taco." This participant reflected that "I don't look down on anybody" and that he felt he had become less prejudice as a result of his long-term unemployment experience.

Talking about the experience helps. All five participants noted that talking about their experience of being involuntarily separated from their jobs and then dealing with long-term unemployment with supportive individuals helped them. Some of the

participants talked with other people immediately after being fired. Others did not. Some of the participants continued to discuss their thoughts and feelings and received support and encouragement from others throughout their long-term unemployment. One participant noted, "I've run into about five people now who were, we were all the same…middle managers, doing well in their company, company downsizes and says bye-bye." He then went on to state that they supported one another and that that he will "stop and talk to each of them, see what we are doing, see what was going on." He also mentioned that "friends are the things that get you through" partly because he could not stop blaming himself for getting fired and friends told him that it was not his fault for getting fired and his friends words of encouragement reassured him that he was good enough.

Another participant stated, "it is always nice to have…very supportive friends. I did have that" and explained that people had gone out of their way to refer him to other people for potential job leads. This participant noted that "it was nice to get those kind of…positive reinforcements from people." A third participant talked about how friends had agreed with him that he should not have been fired. He stated, "I think it kind of helped me out because they believed in me." The youngest participant who started pursuing a new career during his unemployment talked about meeting someone three months after being fired who believed in his talents and encouraged him. The participant stated, "I think it took him believing in me for me to believe in myself."

Additionally, three of the five participants found the process of giving their interview for this study and talking with the researcher helpful. At the end of the interview, one participant spontaneously noted that being part of this research project had

"helped me." Another respondent reported that the experience of giving this interview was "cathartic." All three of these participants spontaneously noted that the interview had been a positive experience as part of their closing thoughts without being prompted.

Helping others. Every one of the participants talked about how helping others during this period of their lives elevated their overall mood and increased their sense of self-esteem. After being fired, one of the participants agreed to stay on an extra two weeks to help the company adjust to his leaving. At first, this participant was anxious about having agreed to this arrangement. But after completing a project during that two week period that was verbally appreciated by his employer, this participant stated that "suddenly I felt kind of a weight lifted off of me" and realized that by doing "a really good job of simplifying my transition plan….was to make myself feel better."

The participant who struggled with a drug addiction found participating in 12-step based recovery meetings and being of service through those recovery programs helped him feel better about himself. This theme was echoed by another participant who participated in different 12-step programs, dealing with both relationship and financial issues. He also found relief and a sense of purpose when helping others at his meetings. Another participant found that by volunteering he was both helping himself feel better and also it gave him an opportunity to explore new potential career options. Through volunteering, he was able to experience what it was like to work as a consultant as opposed to a salaried employee in a structured corporate job like he had in the past. Volunteering during unemployment also helped him better understand how driven he had been in past jobs and he noted that he had begun to acknowledge limitations to his

physical stamina and energy levels due to his age and was learning to become comfortable with these limitations.

Building hope. Each participant found his own particular way to build a sense of hope for himself and for his future during his long period of unemployment. Two of the five participants ultimately found being fired as a "blessing," as they eventually discovered that their passions lay elsewhere than the work they used to do. As mentioned above, one participant was pursuing a new career while unemployed and stated that he felt a greater sense of freedom and no longer had to live a "double-life." The other participant was grateful that he finally had left the corporate "rat race."

Although another participant experienced ongoing symptoms of depression throughout his unemployment up through the interview, he also seemed to have never given up. He continued to look for work and other moneymaking opportunities. The participant who was unemployed the longest became much more hopeful after moving to the Los Angeles urban area. Since moving, he had become much more engaged living and spending time with other people and, at the time of his interview, had two potential job possibilities that he was excited about. Another respondent stated, "I have to assume that it's okay…I'll find something, there will be a place for me" at a new employer where he will be appreciated for the maturity and experience he has to offer.

Two of the participants also discussed revamping their job searching strategies as a way to cope with their long-term unemployment. One participant stated that that he was always "trying to figure out is there ways to improve on" the ways in which he was going about looking for work "that would get better results." He explicitly noted that re-evaluating and changing his job searching techniques was "how I've been kind of

coping." The other participant spent months aggressively looking for work constantly wondering if he could do things differently to increase his odds of finding a new job. This participant eventually realized that the amount of time and energy he was putting into his job search was causing him too much stress which led him to re-assess what he wanted from his future employment.

Understanding the context of unemployment: Age discrimination. All of the participants had extensive careers with years of experience and knowledge to share with future employers. All five participants discussed their current job hunt, results of their looking for work, and four participants shared why they believed they continued to be unemployed. Most participants believed that they were not being hired because they were too old and possibly would cost too much to hire, which is detailed below.

During their lengthy unemployment, four of the five participants stated that they felt they were not being hired because they were experiencing age discrimination by prospective employers. One participant spoke both generally and more personally about this when he stated

> We have all this experience and we have this knowledge and there's a lot I can do....but for some reason I don't seem to be a viable commodity these days....I can only point to my age as the reason for it. Everybody wants someone younger....younger people are cheaper....I think it's all about cheap labor.

This quote was provided at the end of the interview when the researcher asked the participant if there was anything else he wanted to add. The researcher did not specifically ask whether participants thought they were experiencing age discrimination during their current job search and each participant who spoke about age discrimination did so unprompted.

Another participant bluntly stated, “I really do feel I'm getting some age discrimination at 60,” which negatively impacted his being considered for positions to which he was applying. This man also noted that he felt that as his period of unemployment progressed, he was “becoming less relevant and that it’s going to be harder to find a job.” A third participant echoed these thoughts when he noted that “there could be some age discrimination going on....you know I believe it is.” A fourth participant was also blunt in his assessment when he stated, “it was hard to get to the work place at my age.” The only participant who did not comment on experiencing any age discrimination was both the youngest unemployed participant in this study and was also pursing work in a new, more independent, less corporate focused career.

Not ready to retire. The researcher did not specifically ask the participants what their future plans or goals were. Every participant spontaneously noted that they were not ready to retire and wanted to continue to work. Three participants needed to find a job for financial reasons. The other two men had enough financial means to never have to work again to earn a living. All five participants discussed benefits to continuing to work above and beyond financial compensation, which motivated them to continue to look for work.

The youngest participant had gone back to school while working, and since becoming unemployed had begun to pursue a new career that he was more passionate about and felt would bring him a greater sense of joy in what he did to make a living. Another participant with financial means who now considered himself to be semi-retired stated, “I want to do something with my life that isn’t the rat race of working in corporate America.” This same man stated, “I wanted to live a life that I’m happy with and that I’m comfortable with and hopefully work, do work that will supply that for me.... My job is

not going to be what I am as a person." For this participant, unemployment turned into an opportunity to re-evaluate and re-imagine future career goals.

One participant who was receiving SSDI stated, "I'd rather be working, given a choice. I'm not ready to retire." This individual also noted that he wanted to make money to be able to travel, see new places, and have more choices. Although another participant needed paid employment for financial reasons, he also stated that "you feel so different when you are feeling like you're doing something valuable….and you're helping…add value to some company." He also noted that when working, "I feel better about myself." Similarly, one of the participants who needed to work as a means to have income also noted, "if I had a job, maybe I wouldn't be depressed," and "while I was working as a manager I didn't feel a lot of these feelings," referring to the increase in his symptoms of depression and loss of self-esteem.

Contextual Observations

The researcher started looking for participants in the spring of 2013. The first two participants were referred to the research by individuals whom the researcher knew, and both were interviewed within days of one another. One of these initial participants provided the name and contact information for another individual who met the research criteria and would have potentially been interested in participating in this study. The other initial participant told the researcher that he would talk with a friend who met the criteria for the study. After discussions, both of these secondary referrals decided not to participate in the study. After the initial two interviews were completed, the researcher found it difficult to find additional participants.

A total of five other men who could potentially participate in this study were contacted by the researcher and ultimately did not participate in the study. Of these possible participants, one individual told the researcher that he was uncomfortable talking about his experience of being terminated from employment and living through long-term unemployment. Another man stated something similar to another party that was then relayed to the researcher. Two other men agreed to participate in the study, and interviews were scheduled, but then the researcher never heard back from these men. The fifth potential participant responded to a website advertisement for this study, and a follow-up email was sent, but the researcher never heard from that potential participant again.

As discussed in the previous chapter, the researcher posted advertisements for this study at a number of locations and through multiple online websites, which proved mostly fruitless. Although the researcher worked extensively for over four months to solicit participants through a number of different channels, three of the five participants in this study were found through word of mouth with four of the interviews completed within five weeks of one another. There was a time lag of almost three months between the fourth and fifth interview, even though the research aggressively advertised for this study and long-term unemployment continued to be a subject of U.S. national concern. The process to find participants took longer and involved more outreach than the researcher originally thought it would take.

Alchemical Hermeneutics: Experiencing Pirate

As noted above, the researcher felt drawn to this research topic. The researcher experienced multiple encounters with whom he believed guided him to this subject

material and supported him while working on this study. That inspiring image was of Pirate. Since first seeing this image, the researcher developed a deep connection with him. Pirate visited the researcher on his own accord and when he came new insight followed. A description of the researcher's experiencing of Pirate is further detailed below.

Pirate first came to the researcher on a cold night on a beach in Southern California in January 2011. The researcher had been deeply drawn to the feeling of loneliness earlier that month and while on the beach that night closed his eyes and asked aloud to the cold winter night who loneliness was. When the researcher's eyes were closed, an image of a Pirate came to him. Pirate was standing within inches of the researcher, he was the researcher's height, and he was staring at the researcher. He was quiet and intently gazing at the researcher. The researcher then had an image of swimming through a kelp forest in the cold Pacific Ocean on a dark night.

Ever since then, images of Pirate appeared to the researcher on many occasions, and the researcher had many insights right after Pirate's visitations. The following year after first encountering Pirate, the researcher was having difficulty deciding on a doctorate research topic. This study's topic spontaneously came to the researcher while he was sitting in a class. The experience was so sudden and powerful that the researcher could not help but blurt this research topic out during the middle of the class. At that moment, the researcher knew that this was his dissertation topic and that it had been Pirate who had inspired the idea.

While working on the dissertation project, the researcher continued to be inspired with new insights with every Pirate appearance. Pirate taught the researcher about

loneliness and what it was like to wander and to search. Pirate also reminded the researcher of the importance of having patience. Usually when Pirate appeared, the researcher would end up experiencing personal turmoil in his life, which then would always lead to growth and new understandings. Pirate encounters would always foretell of impending change, which at times made the researcher apprehensive about his appearances.

Although Pirate's visitations were followed by some form of upheaval in the researcher's personal life, the researcher came to understand that these visitations were neither good nor bad, they just were. Pirate was not responsible for the difficulties that followed him, and the researcher always was offered the opportunity to re-evaluate his thinking and see life in new ways after a Pirate visitation. Even though the dissertation process was arduous and, as detailed in the last section, challenging at times, Pirate never abandoned the researcher. He also was always there to guide the researcher through the process. His silent strength and ability to navigate through unknown waters inspired and supported the researcher through his work.

Chapter 5
Discussion

Introduction

This chapter will begin by further discussing and amplifying found main themes and subthemes uncovered through the analysis of the transcribed interviews. This will include a summary of the lived experience of long-term unemployment among middle-aged, managerial-level U.S. males. Next, an integration of the research methodology alchemical hermeneutics with the participant's lived experience will be provided. This will be followed by two sections, one exploring clinical implications of this study, and the second offering more broad policy implications. Sections discussing the limitations of this study and then possible future research will also be detailed. The personal meaning of this study will close this chapter.

Themes

Various themes and subthemes were gleaned from the interviews of the five participants of this study, which were detailed in the last chapter. These found themes and subthemes will be further amplified below. This discussion will follow the presentation of themes and subthemes outlined in the last chapter, beginning with an examination of the shared experience that each participant had a Premonition of Job Loss. This process is followed by an analysis of the broad theme, Effects of Separation, associated with the adverse effects job loss and long-term unemployment had on these men. This theme is comprised of the subthemes Initial and Long-Term Distress, Duration of Distress, Impact of Loss of Structure/Routine, Identity Changes, and Switched to a Second Person Narration.

The next broad theme to be discussed, Coping with Unemployment, is related to how the participants dealt with their long-term unemployment experience, with detailed discussions of the subthemes Retrospective Coping, Talking about the Experience Helps, Helping Others, Building Hope, and Understanding the Context of Unemployment: Age Discrimination. This discussion section ends with an examination of the final theme, Not Ready to Retire: none of the participants were ready to retire at the time of their interview.

Premonition of job loss. It was notable that most of the participants had a suspicion that they were going to be involuntarily terminated from their employer before they were actually fired. As noted earlier in this study, Eagly and Karau (2002) found that men in management and leadership positions had certain "agentic" characteristics such as being "aggressive, ambitious, dominant, forceful, independent, self-sufficient, self-confident, and prone to act as leaders" (p. 574). It may be that the men in this study who were used to managing subordinates and being in positions of leadership could intuitively sense that the attitude of those around them had shifted and that co-workers were now questioning their position within the company. This could have led the participants to form suspicions that something unusual was happening, which they then interpreted to mean that their position in the company was being threatened.

Effects of separation. As noted above, the participants suffered psychologically and emotionally due to their forced termination of employment and long-term unemployment experience. Some of the men also had negative physical effects as well. The ways in which these men faced their unemployment experiences are similar to what has been found in past research on the effects of unemployment, as outlined early in this

paper. Some of the adverse reactions the participants had were also partially a result of the ways in which they perceived themselves, given that they were managers. Finally, the distress and upheaval associated with the shared experience of long-term unemployment are comparable to the difficulties and turmoil associated with having a midlife crisis. All of these points will be further elaborated upon below.

Initial and long-term distress. Research has found that unemployment has detrimental psychological and physical effects on the unemployed (Mandal & Roe, 2008; McKee-Ryan et al., 2005; Morin & Kochhar, 2010; Paul & Moser, 2009), which was also true for the five participants of this research study. While being terminated by their former employers and during their long-term unemployment experiences, all five men who participated in this study had various negative responses ranging from increased feelings of distress, an increased sense of powerlessness, and increased symptoms of depression to anger, among other adverse psychological reactions. Research (Paul & Moser, 2009) has also shown that symptoms of depression can be greater for men over 50 who experience unemployment and two of the participants, both over 50, experienced symptoms of depression for years, which they both attributed to their long-term unemployment.

Additionally, previous research has shown that unemployment is linked to increased rates of suicide (Coleman, Kaplan, & Casey, 2011; Ceccherini-Nelli & Priebe, 2011; Luo et al., 2011; Phillips, Robin, Nugent, & Idler, 2010). In this study, two of the participants who suffered the most severe symptoms of depression for the longest period of time also experienced suicidal ideation while they were unemployed, with one participant attempting to take his own life.

According to the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention website, which published Facts and Figures (n.d.), as of 2012 the highest rate of suicide in the U.S. was among men between the ages of 45 and 64 with 19.1 out of 100,000 men successfully killing themselves that year. Although there is no precise research into the rate of unsuccessful suicide attempts, it is thought that the ratio of suicide attempts to suicide death is between 25:1 to 4:1 depending on age (Facts and Figures). Although this study is not intended to verify this data, it is notable that two of the participants indeed had suicidal ideations and attempts.

Research has shown that unemployment can lead to premature death among men (Janicki-Deverts et al., 2008; Sullivan & van Wachter, 2009). Only one of the participants complained of having health issues associated with his being fired and living through long-term unemployment. This participant also experienced ongoing symptoms of depression and flirted with suicidal ideation while unemployed. During his long-term unemployment, the participant stated, he had a small stroke which, at the time of the interview had not left permanent damage but which may ultimately shorten his life span.

As noted above, since the start of the Great Recession, individuals have been looking for work longer than they had before (Ilg & Theodossiou, 2012; Krueger & Mueller, 2011). All five of the men of this study were experienced professionals with years of management experience, yet none of them could find management work again by the time of their interview. All of the participants, at one time or another during their unemployment, became fearful that they would not find work again. For some participants, this fear hit immediately after being fired and then later subsided. For others, the fear continued throughout their unemployment. One participant in particular was

quite confident that he would be able to find work shortly after being terminated but found himself still unemployed after 12 months, which led to his increasing anxiety and fear that he would not be able to work at a comparable management level job again.

As previously discussed, during midlife some individuals experience a tumultuous period of upheaval and challenging emotional and psychological disturbances. Each of the participants of this study experienced a period of upheaval and change that was forced upon them against their will, and they suffered. For these men, the experience of being involuntarily terminated by their employer and then living through long-term unemployment represented a classic "midlife crisis" as discussed by Wethington (2000) and Wethington et al. (2004). Although challenging, as it has been for these participants, their "midlife crisis" associated with long-term unemployment also presented itself as an opportunity for transition, re-orientation, and psychological growth and development (Hollis, 1993; Jung, 1930/1960; Robinson, 1997; Stein & Stein, 1994; Stein, 1983), which will be further discussed below.

Duration of distress. Over time, difficult psychological and emotional reactions to being unemployed started to diminish for three of the five participants, and at the time of their interview, each of these three men stated that they were feeling much better about themselves and their future than they had previously; they felt more hopeful. Collinson and Hearn (1996) and Eagly and Karau (2002) wrote about various characteristics attributed to men who held management positions including feelings of self-confidence, ambition, independence, and the ability to control one's self. Each of the three men whose symptoms of distress subsided spent their time during unemployment re-evaluating their careers and what they wanted from work. As they came to new

conclusions about what they wanted their next career steps to be, their sense of self-confidence, ambition, and ability to control their own destiny increased, ultimately leading to a reduction of distress associated with being unemployed. It should be noted that two of these men had financial means and could afford to never work again and the other participant was the youngest man in the study who was exploring a different field of work.

Impact of loss of structure/routine. Four of the five participants reported that the loss of the structure and having a regular routine associated with being employed caused upheaval and distress in their lives once they became unemployed. These participants talked about feeling lost, terrified, and experiencing increased symptoms of depression. These difficulties are similar to the turmoil, disruption, and confusion of having a midlife crisis. The challenges these men faced once losing their sense of direction and purpose in the world additionally support the idea that forced unemployment during midlife is a major disruption and potential opportunity for re-evaluation and re-orientation in the world.

Identity changes. All of the participants discussed how being unemployed impacted their feelings of self-esteem and identity. Previous research (Sharone, 2007) has shown that unemployment among male and female white-collar professionals who are looking for work can have a negative impact on those individuals' sense of self-esteem, which was also been experienced by four of the five participants in this study.

In addition, Lachman (2004) suggested that for many middle workers, their sense of who they were was in part defined in part by the work that they did. Mendenhall et al. (2008) found that middle-aged management-level males struggled with identity issues

after losing their jobs. Two of the participants also spoke about losing a sense of who they were after they were terminated from their employer. This research has validated that middle-aged management-level workers determine their sense of self-esteem and in some cases, sense of personal identity through their work.

Switched to second person narration. There were particular aspects of the experience of being fired and living through long-term unemployment that were not only difficult to discuss but also were difficult to self-acknowledge, as indicated by some of the participants switching from first person narration to second person narration. They did so by using the pronoun "you" instead of "I." As noted earlier, managers have been found to share certain shared characteristics such as self-confidence, control, self-sufficiency, and independence (Collinson & Hearn, 1996; Eagly & Karau, 2002). Possessing these characteristics, as middle-aged managers, these participants found it difficult to admit to themselves and others that they were not in control and that their sense of self confidence, self-sufficiency, and independence had been shaken. These three participants were still in the process of acknowledging and accepting aspects of what was a painful and difficult experience.

Coping with unemployment. All of the participants found ways to cope with their experience of long-term unemployment. Below, various subthemes are discussed, beginning with an examination of the dynamics associated with how these men learned to cope with their long-term unemployment experience. Next it will be shown why talking about the lived experience of long-term unemployment improves mood and helps the unemployed feel better. This is followed by a discussion about the benefits of helping others and the possible reasons why these middle-aged unemployed men found relief by

being of service. Under the Building Hope subtheme, turning a midlife crisis into an opportunity for new beginnings is explored. Ending the overarching theme dealing with coping with unemployment will be a discussion related to the fears that a majority of the participants had that their inability to secure new employment is due to age discrimination by prospective employers.

Retrospective coping. It has been found that middle-aged adults in positions of management often do not change their opinions and find it difficult to listen to others (Eaton, Visser, Krosnick, & Anand, 2009). In addition, this research has shown that certain management characteristics caused and amplified the participants' distress associated with being involuntarily fired and living through long-term unemployment. However, the participants in the study, over time, changed how they thought about themselves and their circumstances and reached out for help. Possibly, the same management characteristics that caused emotional and psychological difficulty also helped the participants learn how to cope with their unemployment experience. Managers tend to be ambitious, self-confident, and motivating people who look for solutions and lead others. Managers also tend to be resourceful (Collinson & Hearn, 1996; Eagly & Karau, 2002). After the initial shock of being fired and experiencing unemployment, the participants used underlying management characteristics to figure out ways to cope.

Earlier it was noted by Mendenhall et al. (2008) that unemployed professionals tend to re-evaluate their job searching strategies in light of new economic realities. Similarly, two of the participants of this study discussed how they began to re-assess how they were looking for new work opportunities and changed strategies as a way to cope with their long-term unemployment experience validating this previous research.

Talking about the experience helps. Many psychotherapeutic methods involve one person talking to another, with the patient telling the professional their problems and concerns. The two of them then work together to find solutions for the patient's difficulties with the implicit hope that through this process healing happens and the patient's symptoms will be reduced and, if applicable, his mood elevated. The relief that can be found by talking with an understanding and empathetic person can also be found outside the consulting room, as evidenced by the participants in this study. The men in this study noted how much it helped them to talk about their experiences with supportive and understanding people in their lives. Most turned to friends and peers, some utilized 12-step based recovery support groups, one found support by talking with his wife, and another found support through talking with mental health professionals.

The participant who continued to experience ongoing symptoms of depression at the time of his interview was the only respondent who did not reach out to talk with others while being unemployed, but he noted that talking about his long-term unemployment experience with the researcher during his interview had brought him a sense of relief. This participant was so stuck by how much it helped him to discuss his long-term unemployment difficulties that, during the interview, for the first time in years he considered seeking psychotherapeutic professional help to supplement the psychotropic medications he had been prescribed and was taking. In fact, three of the five participants spontaneously noted at the end of their interview that being part of this research project and talking with the researcher had helped them emotionally and psychologically. They reported gaining new insight into their experience and expressed gratitude that they were able to share their stories without appearing to the researcher to

have become overwhelmed with shame or other strong adverse negative reactions while participating in the interview.

Helping others. As discussed in a previous chapter, Erikson (1963) proposed that psychological maturation was achieved by successfully completing a series of developmental conflicts, or stages that spanned an individual's lifetime. The developmental conflict associated with middle age was labelled "generativity versus stagnation." An and Cooney (2006), Newman and Newman (2011), and Lachman (2004) noted that middle-aged adults developed a concern for the well-being of future generations. All of the participants stated that their mood improved by helping others while they were unemployed. One participant helped out by continuing to work for his employer to help the transition process, which he stated helped elevate his mood. Other participants volunteered. A few of the men participated in 12-step based recovery programs and shared their experience and hope with other members of the group. All of these activities contributed to the well-being of others.

McAdams (2000) noted that the act of generativity had been found to correlate with feelings of happiness and self-esteem, among other positive moods. This study validates the research that shows that when middle-aged adults help others in a generative fashion, it also helps that person feel emotionally better and improves his overall mood. Based on this research, this would even be true when middle-aged adult males are experiencing hardship in their lives.

Building hope. All of the participants were hopeful about their future. As described above, characteristics associated with being a manager both contributed to these participants' distress and also helped them through their unemployment experience.

As this research has shown, being ambitious and driven helped propel these men to continue to strive and remain optimistic.

As a midlife crisis experience involving distress and difficult life changing events, this long-term unemployment experience ultimately led some of the participants to re-evaluate their lives. Two of the men, upon reflection, found their involuntary firing to be a blessing, as they re-evaluated how and where they wanted to work in the future. Another participant had also been relieved to be fired, and he too, eventually, after much suffering, found new ways to engage in life that brought him joy. Ultimately, he realized that being physically and socially active were important for his well-being.

Understanding the context of unemployment: Age discrimination. All five participants attempted to make sense of their ongoing unemployment. Four of the five participants believed that they were experiencing age discrimination and offered this as the reason for their inability to find work. The youngest participant, who was changing careers, was trying to get established and make money in his newly found passion.

As noted frequently in this discussion, managers, while working, are known to be in control and self-assured, among other traits (Collinson & Hearn, 1996; Eagly & Karau, 2002). During long-term unemployment, a majority of the participants struggled to understand why they did not have control over their ability to find work. Attempts to understand why they continued to be unemployed would be an expected reaction among this particular pool of participants who were older, more experienced, and used to being in positions of leadership.

Four out of the five participants felt that the reason why they were not becoming employed was some form of age discrimination on the part of prospective employers.

Lachman (2004) detailed research that has shown that older unemployed workers have difficulty in finding new work due to their higher earning potential and the possibility that their skills have become outdated or obsolete. Two of the participants explicitly talked about how their years of experience and expertise should be a valuable contribution to potential employers, but they felt that the reason why they were not getting hired was because today's employers prized lower cost, less experienced, younger employees over them. The belief these two men shared is similar to the concept of the "experience/expertise conundrum" as described earlier in this paper by Gabriel et al. (2010). Overall, the four participants felt their age was holding them back from obtaining new employment.

Additionally, it should be noted how spontaneously these four participants started discussing their fear of possibly experiencing age discrimination. Each was over 50 years old, and clearly the possibility of age discrimination is of great concern to unemployed middle-aged workers looking for new employment.

Not ready to retire. Aldric and Callanan (2011) as well as Ilg and Theodossiou (2012) defined discouraged workers as unemployed individuals who had searched for work for at least some period of time during the previous 12 months but then stopped looking. None of the participants of this study had become discouraged workers. They continued to look for work, even the two participants who had financial means never to have to work again. Though financial necessity was a major reason why three of the participants continued to look for work, all participants noted that they wanted more out of life and were excited about new possibilities.

Thus, the idea of the development stage associated with Erikson's (1963) middle age conflict between generativity and stagnation was a motivating factor for why these men wanted to continue to work and did not become discouraged workers. A number of them talked about wanting to help out and that working helped increase their sense of self-esteem and improved their mood. None of them were prepared to give up and stagnate. Each participant felt that he had more to contribute, even after living through such a difficult and challenging period of his life.

Summary. For middle-aged, managerial-level U.S. males, the experience of being involuntarily terminated from employment and then living through long-term unemployment is difficult and elicits adverse emotional, psychological, and physiological reactions, with feelings of fear and confusion being two of the predominant consequences. Employment brings structure to these men's lives, and when unemployed, without that structure they struggle. They lose their sense of self-confidence and identity in the world. Some become suicidal. Others have difficulty internalizing their experience.

However, unemployed managerial-level, middle-aged men find ways to cope. They find solace in their spiritual practices; they find relief in sharing their stories and helping others. They remain hopeful and resilient. Some even use the experience to grow in different directions. They are partially driven by their innate need to be generative in the world, although they fear that their inability to find new work is due in part to age discrimination. Regardless, they continue to strive and never give up. The lived experience of long-term unemployment among middle-aged, managerial-level U.S. males is a complex and nuanced story, as illustrated by this research.

Alchemical Hermeneutics: Experiencing Pirate

For me, appearances of Pirate have always led to turmoil and upheaval through which change and growth happened. Positive change is also possible as a result of having a something dramatic happen, like having a midlife crisis. Living through a major disruptive experience like forced firing and long-term unemployment is a classic example of a midlife crisis. As a midlife crisis, this experience can also offer an opportunity to re-examine, re-imagine, and grow, which is exactly what some of the participants in this study did while unemployed. Although unemployment was thrust upon them against their will, they came to realize that their former employment had not been fulfilling, and they learned that they actually wanted something different in their future employment endeavors.

Pirate also taught me the virtue of patience, which is helpful for the long-term unemployed to embrace. Even though all of the participants were unemployed for more than six months, they all continued to look for work and they remained hopeful that they would ultimately find new employment. They were practicing patience even if they did not specifically note that was what they were doing.

Some of the participants spoke of feelings of loneliness, which is something else that Pirate knows well. All of the participants also talked about their feelings of confusion and fear—a confusion and fear of the unknown that lay ahead during their long period of unemployment experience. Pirate knows the experiencing of the unknown well. Once again, even though all five participants experienced some level of anxiety and fear about whether they would ever find work again, they remained hopeful in spite of their not

knowing what was next. Pirate, too, remains hopeful as he sails and searches, looking for new horizons and new opportunities.

Clinical Implications

Previous research, which has been primarily quantitative, has shown how unemployment can have a negative impact on the psychological, emotional, and physiological well-being of the unemployed. This study has validated many of the previous findings, but has also added an important qualitative depth to previous research which can help clinicians when working with middle-aged, managerial-level U.S. males who suspect that they are going to be fired, have recently been terminated from their place of employment, or are living through unemployment.

Clinicians working with this population should assess for symptoms of depression, anxiety, agoraphobia, or other mental health issues and treat accordingly. Clinicians should also assess for potential suicidality, and if suicidal ideation is present. help their patients address their thoughts of self-harm. Discussions around experiencing a loss of sense of self-esteem and identity should be encouraged. Helping patients internalize and integrate their unemployment experience may also be beneficial. Clinicians should also encourage their patients to get medical exams to assess for any potential adverse physical reactions to their unemployment experience.

The good news is that there is hope. Clinicians should be aware that middle-aged, managerial-level unemployed men are resilient. Knowing this, clinicians can explore with their patients what resources they have that could provide additional emotional support and help them begin to build confidence. Moreover, as would be expected, just by hearing their stories in a nonjudgmental, caring way, clinicians help these men find some

relief. Support groups could also formed in which unemployed middle-aged men share their stories and help each other through their unemployment journey. Working with patients to develop structure in their lives as a way to cope with unemployment should also be explored. This includes integrating social and physical activities into a patient's daily routine. Middle-aged men have an innate drive to remain engaged and contribute to society. Clinicians should encourage their patients to find ways to volunteer.

Unemployed, middle-aged, managerial men also want to continue to work, not only for income but also as a way of participating in society. Clinicians can offer emotional support while their patients look for work, assessing whether patients feel they are experiencing age discrimination in their employment pursuit. Additionally, unemployment may turn out to be a proverbial blessing in disguise, and clinicians should be open to exploring with their patients new career directions and life opportunities.

Clinicians who are comfortable working from a depth psychological perspective may also want to explore the dream life or other potential unconscious processes that may be coming up for their unemployed patients. There are a number of different therapeutic ways to glean insight from a patient's unconscious. During stressful times, a patient's psyche may be particularly active and trying to get its potentially healing message through. Working in concert with the unconscious could provide relief and guidance to their unemployed patients.

Policy Implications

As indicated by the difficulty the researcher had in securing interviews with long-term unemployed men, many long-term unemployed, middle-aged, managerial-level men may be suffering symptoms of depression and anxiety silently and without reaching out

for help, while also dealing with the shame associated with losing their jobs. Due to the breadth of adverse reactions that these men experience, public policy should be developed that includes greater outreach to long-term unemployed, middle-aged men to encourage them to seek counseling services. These outreach attempts should focus on the fact that talking about the experience of unemployment has been shown to be helpful and that there are ways to help build self-esteem and hope even while struggling with finding new employment.

Limitations

This study is limited to examining the lived experience of long-term unemployment of middle-aged, managerial-level U.S. males from California only. The impact of being involuntarily fired and living through unemployment may be a different experience for men in other parts of the United States. Additionally, the population of this study was skewed towards men who were older middle aged—in their mid- to late 50s at the time they were fired. A more evenly distributed population of men between the ages of 40 and 60 years old may also yield different lived experiences, particularly for those men who are in their early to mid-40s at the time they involuntarily lose their jobs.

In addition, this study includes only one married participant. Of the five participants, three men were involved in 12-step based recovery programs. Both of these demographic factors could impact how these participants experienced long-term unemployment, so the results of this study may not hold true for the general middle-aged unemployed male population. Regardless of these limitations, as seen, these participants both validate many previous studies, as discussed in Chapter 2, and also provide a qualitative depth to the lived experience of the long-term unemployed in the U.S.

Future Research

Future research should include a more geographically diverse sampling to assess whether there are subtle differences in this experience among this particular population of men. In addition, this research only examines the lived experience for men who meet a specific criterion. Given the number of people who became unemployed during the Great Recession and who continue to live through long-term unemployment, future research could be expanded to examine the lived experience of unemployment for a variety of different populations, including unemployed women who are also middle aged and have held positions in management, unemployed men and women who are younger, and unemployed men and woman who did not hold management positions, among other sets of unemployed individuals.

Future research could also explore the lived experience of long-term unemployment among individuals from different cultures and countries. As previously noted, other nations provide different levels of public social support for the unemployed. How the lived experience of long-term unemployment differs between countries that offer more public assistance and conversely, less public assistance than the U.S. may be of important value in shaping future U.S. public policy on the unemployed.

Personal Meaning

Being middle aged, having experienced long-term unemployment, and seeing this unemployment experience, although not involuntary, as an opportunity for re-evaluating and re-visioning myself, I feel a special connection with the participants of this study and with unemployed people in general. I profoundly know what it feels like to put hours into a job search only to wonder from where my next employment opportunity will come. I

also know all too well what it's like to apply for multiple positions, many times never hearing back, and when lucky, getting an interview only not to get the job. I know that fear. I know that confusion. I have adjusted how I look for work and how I present myself in the hopes of finding employment.

I wanted to know how other similarly aged unemployed men dealt with their experiences of unemployment, particularly men who had reached some level of success in their lives and had their employment termination involuntarily forced upon them. I wanted to hear their stories and in some way help—maybe them, maybe others like them, maybe just myself. My research and clinical interests are in the midlife crisis phenomenon and the potential growth and opportunities that can come out of such a traumatic experience. This study has deepened and furthered my understanding of how men cope with crisis and just how resilient and hopeful they can be.

I also believe that I was fortunate that an image came to me—an image of Pirate. His appearances helped inform my experience of my own unemployment journey and the experience of producing this work. Pirate called me to this research because of my own particular history and psyche. I hope that others can also find a benevolent guide with whom they can experience both growth and comfort.

References

Aldric, R. M., & Callanan, Y. (2011). Insights about researching discouraged workers. *Journal of Occupational Science*, *18*(2), 153-166. doi:10.1080/14427591.2011.575756

Allegretto, S., & Lynch, D. (2010). The composition of the unemployed and long-term unemployed in tough labor markets. *Monthly Labor Review*, *133*(10), 3-18.

An, J. S., & Cooney, T. M. (2006). Psychological well-being in mid to late life: The role of generativity development and parent-child relationships across the lifespan. *International Journal of Behavioral Development, 30*(5), 410-421.

Brand, J. E., Levy, B. R., & Gallo, W. T. (2008). Effects of layoffs and plant closings on subsequent depression among older workers. *Research on Aging, 30*(6), 701-721. doi:10.1177/0164027508322574

Broadridge, A., & Hearn, J. (2008). Gender and management: New directions in research and continuing practice. *British Journal of Management, 19*(1), S38-S49. doi:10.1111/j.1467-8551.2008.00570.x

Burgard, S. A., Brand, J. E., & House, J. S. (2007). Towards a better estimation of the effect of job loss on health. *Journal of Health and Social Behavior, 48*(4), 369-384. doi:10.1177/002214650704800403

Butterworth, P., Leach, L. S., Pirkis, J., & Kelaher, M. (2012). Poor mental health influences risk and duration of unemployment: a prospective study. *Social psychiatry and psychiatric epidemiology*, *47*(6), 1013-1021. doi:10.1007/s00127-011-0409-1

Ceccherini-Nelli, A., & Priebe, S. (2011). Economic factors and suicide rates: Associations over time in four countries. *Social Psychiatry and Psychiatric Epidemiology*, *46*(10), 975-982. doi:10.1007/s00127-010-0275-2

Coleman, D., Kaplan, M. S., & Casey, J. T. (2011). The social nature of male suicide: A new analytic model. *International Journal of Men's Health*, *10*(3), 240-252. doi:10.3149/jmh.1003.240

Collinson, D. L., & Hearn, J. (1996). Breaking the silence: On men, masculinities and managements. In D. Collinson & J. Hearn (Eds.), *Men as managers, managers as men: Critical perspectives on men, masculinities and managements* (pp. 1-24). London, UK: Sage.

Creswell, J. W. (2007). *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five approaches* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Cunradi, C. B., Todd, M., Duke, M., & Ames, G. (2009). Problem drinking, unemployment, and intimate partner violence among a sample of construction industry workers and their partners. *Journal of Family Violence*, *24*(2), 63-74. doi:10.1007/s10896-008-9209-0

Dukes, S. (1984). Phenomenological methodology in the human sciences. *Journal of Religion and Health, 23*(3), 197-203. Retrieved from www.jstor.org/stable/27505782?origin=JSTOR-pdf

Eagly, A. H., & Karau, S. J. (2002). Role congruity theory of prejudice toward female leaders. *Psychological Review, 109*(3), 573-598. doi:10.1037/0033-295X.109.3.573

Eaton, A. A., Visser, P. S., Krosnick, J. A., & Anand, S. (2009). Social power and attitude strength over the life course. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin, 35*(12), 1646-1660. doi:10.1177/0146167209349114

Elsby, M. W. L., Hobijn, B., & Sahin, A. (2010). The labor market in the great recession. *Brookings Papers on Economic Activity, 41*(1), 1-69.

Erikson, E. (1963). *Childhood and society.* New York, NY: Norton.

Facts and Figures. (n.d.). Retrieved November 2, 2014, from https://www.afsp.org/understanding-suicide/facts-and-figures

Gabriel, Y., Gray, D. E., & Goregaokar, H. (2010). Temporary derailment or the end of the line? Managers coping with unemployment at 50. *Organizational Studies, 31*(12), 1687-1712. doi:10.1177/0170840610387237

Godofsky, J., van Horn, C., & Zukin, C. (2010). The shattered American dream: Unemployed workers lose ground, hope, and faith in their futures. *John J. Heldrich Center for Workforce Development*, 1-43. Retrieved from www.heldrich.rutgers.edu/sites/default/files/content/Work_Trends_23_December_2010.pdf

Heppner, P. P., & Heppner, M. J. (2004). *Writing and publishing your thesis, dissertation and research: A guide for students in the helping professions.* Belmont, CA: Brooks/Cole.

Hollis, J. (1993). *The middle passage: From misery to meaning in midlife*. Toronto, Canada: Inner City.

Ilg, R. E., & Theodossiou, E. (2012), Job search of the unemployed by duration of unemployment. *Monthly Labor Review*, *135*(3), 41-49. Retrieved from www.bls.gov/opub/mlr/2012/03/art3full.pdf

Janicki-Deverts, D., Cohen, S., Matthews, K. A., & Cullen, M. R. (2008). History of unemployment predicts future elevations in c-reactive protein among male participants in the coronary artery risk development in young adults (CARDIA) study. *The Society of Behavioral Medicine, 36*(2), 176-185. doi:10.1007/s12160-008-9056-5

Jung, C. G. (1953). The personal and the collective (or transpersonal) unconscious. In H. Read, M. Fordham, & G. Adler (Eds.), *The collected works of C. G. Jung* (R. F. C. Hull, Trans.) (Vol. 7, pp. 63-78). New York, NY: Pantheon. (Original work published 1917)

Jung, C. G. (1960). The stages of life. In H. Read, M. Fordham, & G. Adler (Eds.), *The collected works of C. G. Jung* (R. F. C. Hull, Trans.) (Vol. 8, pp. 387-403). New York, NY: Pantheon. (Original work published 1930)

Kessler, R. C., Mickelson, K. D., Walters, E. E., Zhao, S., & Hamilton, L. (2004). Age and depression in the MIDUS survey. In O. G. Brim, C. D. Ryff, & R. C. Kessler (Eds.), *How healthy are we? A national study of well-being at midlife* (pp. 227-251). Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.

Krueger, A., & Mueller, A. (2011, Spring). Job search, emotional well-being, and job finding in a period of mass unemployment: Evidence from high-frequency longitudinal data. *Brookings Papers on Economic Activity*, 1-57.

Kyriakidou, O. (2011). Gender, management and leadership, *Equality, Diversity and Inclusion: An International Journal, 31*(1), 4-9. doi:10.1108/02610151211201296

Lachman, M. (2004, February). Development in midlife. *Annual Review of Psychology*, *55*(1), 305-331. Retrieved August 6, 2009, from Academic Search Premier database. doi:10.1146/annurev.psych.55.090902.141521

Libby, A. M., Ghushchyan, V., McQueen, R. B., & Campbell, J. D. (2010). Economic grand rounds: Psychological distress and depression associated with job loss and gain: The social costs of job. *Psychiatric Services, 61*(12), 1178-1180.

Luo, F., Florence, C. S., Quispe-Agnoli, M., Ouyang, L., & Crosby, A. E. (2011). Impact of business cycles on US suicide rates, 1928–2007. *American Journal of Public Health*, *101*(6), 1139-1146. doi:10.2105/AJPH.2010.300010

Mandal, B., Ayyagari, P., & Gallo, W. T. (2010). Job loss and depression: The role of subjective expectations. *Social Science & Medicine, 72*(4), 576-583.

Mandal, B., & Roe, B. (2008). Job loss, retirement, and the mental health of older Americans. *The Journal of Mental Health Policy and Economics, 11*(4), 167-176. Retrieved from http://www.tfrec.wsu.edu/pdfs/P547.pdf

McAdams, D. (2000). Generativity. In A. Kazdin (Ed.), *Encyclopedia of psychology, vol. 3* (pp. 459-463). New York, NY: Oxford University Press.

McKee-Ryan, F. M., Song, Z., Wanberg, C. R., & Kinicki, A. J. (2005). Psychology and physical well-being during unemployment: A meta-analytic study. *Journal of Applied Psychology, 90*(1), 53-76. doi:10.1037/0021-9010.90.1.53

Mendenhall, R., Kalil, A., Spindel, L. J., & Hart, C. M. D. (2008). Job loss at mid-life: Managers and executives face the "new risk economy." *Social Forces, 87*(1), 185-209.

Morin, R., & Kochhar, R. (2010). The impact of long-term unemployment: Lost income, lost friends—and loss of self-respect. *Pew Research Center,* 1-19. Retrieved from www.pewsocialtrends.org/files/2010/11/760-recession.pdf

Moustakas, C. (1994). *Phenomenological research methods.* Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Mroczek, D. (2004). Positive and negative affect at midlife. In O. G. Brim, C. D. Ryff, & R. C. Kessler (Eds.), *How healthy are we? A national study of well-being at midlife* (pp. 205-226). Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.

Newman, B. M., & Newman, P. R. (2011). *Development through life: A psychosocial approach* (11th ed.). Belmont, CA: Wadsworth.

Paul, K. L., & Moser, K. (2009). Unemployment impairs mental health: Meta-analysis. *Journal of Vocational Behavior, 74*(3), 264-282. doi:10.1016/j.jvb.2009.01.001

Phillips, J. A., Robin, A. V., Nugent, C. N., & Idler, E. L. (2010). Understanding changes in suicide rates among the middle-aged: Period or cohort effects? *Public Health Reports, 125*(5), 680-688.

Powell, G. N., & Butterfield, D. A. (2003). Gender, gender identity, and aspirations to top management. *Women in Management Review, 18*(1/2), 88-96. doi:10.1108/09649420310462361

Romanyshyn, R. (2007). *The wounded researcher: Research with soul in mind*. New Orleans, LA: Spring Journal.

Robinson, J. (1997). *Death of a hero, birth of a soul: Answering the call of midlife*. Tulsa, OK: Council Oak Books.

Sahin, A., Song, J., & Hobijn, B. (2010). The unemployment gender gap during the 2007 recession. *Current Issues in Economics and Finance, 16*(2), 1-7.

Scott-Jones, D. (2005). Recruitment of research participants. In B. Sales & S. Folkman (Eds.), *Ethics in research with human participants* (pp. 27-34). Washington, DC: American Psychological Association.

Sharone, O. (2007). Constructing unemployed job seekers as professional workers: The depoliticizing work-game of job searching. *Qualitative Sociology*, *30*(4), 403-416.

Stein, M. (1983). *In midlife: A Jungian perspective.* Woodstock, CT: Spring.

Stein, J., & Stein, M. (1994). Psychotherapy, initiation and the midlife transition. In L. Mahdi, S. Foster, & M. Little (Eds.), *Betwixt and between: Patterns of masculine and feminine initiation* (pp. 287-303). Peru, IL: Open Court.

Sullivan, D., & von Wachter, T. (2009). Job displacement and mortality: An analysis using administrative data. *The Quarterly Journal of Economics, 124*(3), 1265-1306. doi:10.1162/qjec.2009.124.3.1265

U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics. (2012). Employed persons by detailed occupation, sex, and age, Annual average 2012 (Table 15). Retrieved October 27, 2014, from www.bls.gov/cps/occupation_age.xls

U.S. Census Bureau. (2011). *Age and sex composition: 2010* (U.S. Census Bureau Publication No. C2010BR-03). Retrieved June 9, 2012, from http://www.census.gov/prod/cen2010/briefs/c2010br-03.pdf

Webster's new collegiate dictionary. (1979). Springfield, MA: Merriam.

Wethington, E. (2000). Expecting stress: Americans and the "Midlife Crisis." *Motivation and Emotion, 24*(2), 85-103.

Wethington, E., Kessler, R., & Pixley, J. (2004). Turning points in adulthood. In O. Brim, C. Ryff, & R. Kessler (Eds.), *How healthy are we?: A national study of well-being at midlife* (pp. 586-613). Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.

Wooten, K. C., & Valenti, A. M. (2008). The questionable impact of gender on job loss reactions: Implications for employment counseling. *Journal of Employment Counseling*, *45*(4), 146-155.

Appendix A

Interview Questions

1. Do you remember how you felt when you first learned that you were being involuntarily separated from your last job and that you would become unemployed?
    a. What feelings were evoked by this experience?
    b. What thoughts were prominent for you?
    c. Were there any bodily changes or states that you became aware of?
    d. What were the spiritual effects of the experience, if any?
    e. What did you do once you became unemployed?
2. Did you talk with anyone about your reactions?
    a. If so, what was their reaction?
    b. Did their reaction impact you in any way?
    c. How did this experience affect significant others in your life?
3. What was your sense of self-esteem, overall mood, and sense of efficacy in the world while you were working in a managerial-level position?
    a. Has this unemployment experience impacted your sense of self-esteem, sense of self-respect, overall mood, or sense of efficacy in the world?
    b. Do you do anything today or while you have been unemployed to help elevate your sense of self-esteem, efficacy, self-respect, or mood?
    c. What has it been like as your unemployment has continued?
4. What changes in your life do you associate with this experience?
5. How do you feel about the experience today?
6. Have you shared all that is significant with reference to the experience?

Demographic questions to be asked at the end of the interview

1. How old are you?
2. How many management-level positions have you held?
3. What was your last position that you were in prior to your employment being terminated?
4. How long were you in that position at that employer?
5. How long were you with that employer?
6. How many people did you manage at your last employer just prior to when your employment was terminated?

Appendix B

Ethics Committee Approval

Ethics Committee
Application for Approval for the Use of Human Participants

I. Please fill out. Write "n/a" if question is not applicable.

Researcher: Daniel S. Szuhay, MA Today's Date: March 16, 2013

Full Address: 1129 N Hoover St., Apt. 207, Los Angeles, CA 90029

Daytime phone: 323-304-1280 Evening phone: 323-304-1280

Title of Activity: The Lived Experience of Long-Term Unemployment among Middle Aged Managerial-Level U.S. Males: A Phenomenological Study

Sponsoring Organization: Pacifica Graduate Institute
Contact Person: Oksana Yakushko, Ph.D.

II. Affix appropriate signatures
I will conduct the study identified in the attached application. If I decide to make any changes in the procedures, or if a participant is injured, or if any problems arise which involve risk or the possibility of risk to the participants or others, including any adverse reaction to the study, I will immediately report such occurrences or contemplated changes to the Ethics Committee.

Investigator Signature: DSS Date: 3/16/2013

I have read and approve this protocol, and I believe that the investigator is competent to conduct the activity as described in this application.

CRP Chair: O. Yakushko Date: 3/16/13

III. Notice of Approval
The signature of the representative of the Ethics Committee, when affixed below, indicates that the activity identified above and described in the attached pages has been approved with the conditions and restrictions noted here.

Restrictions and Conditions: ok as is

Ethics Committee Representative: Michael Byrnes PhD Date 3-19-13