AN INVESTIGATION INTO THE PSYCHOLOGICAL IMPACT OF UNEMPLOYMENT WITHIN A GROUP OF UNEMPLOYED WORKING CLASS AND MIDDLE CLASS INDIVIDUALS

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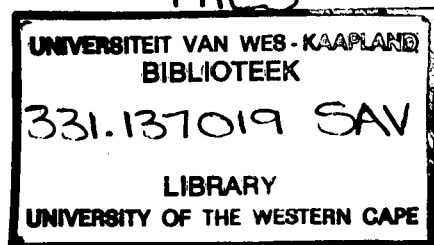
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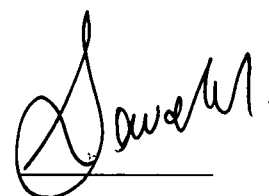
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ABSTRACT

30% of the country's population are currently unemployed and this statistic is increasing steadily. Further deterioration of the South African economy and increased unemployment, is likely to increase social instability and continue to marginalise a major proportion of society. Global economic downturn as well as the crash of the Asian economies in the mid-1990's resulted in job losses for both the working class and middle class sectors of society. The literature however suggests that the effects of unemployment are likely to be experienced differently by working and middle class individuals. This reiterates the argument that the unemployed should not be perceived as a homogenous group. The study utilises a broad epistemological framework of social constructionism and employs the theoretical assumptions of Marxism as the theoretical basis for the research. The study further adopts a qualitative methodological approach, with focus group interviews advocated as the procedure to gather the data on the unemployed. The use of a qualitative framework is a departure from previous quantitative studies that have characterised unemployment research. Through qualitative research, detailed explanations of how unemployment is experienced and how meaning is assigned to these experiences are made possible. Furthermore, a better understanding of the effects of unemployment are obtained since the participants' own perspectives of their behaviour and actions within the social context, are taken into account. This thesis utilises a thematic analysis to examine the impact of unemployment on thirty-four individuals from working class and middle class societies. Two sets of focus groups were conducted with the analytical comparison undertaken in the report section. It was found that employment and unemployment are socially constructed categories dependent on cultural, historical and politically specific social contexts. The findings further revealed

that unemployment generates psychological distress and deterioration in psychological health, but these reactions were manifested differently in the working class and middle class. Negative psychological reactions, for the working class, were largely related to issues of poverty and the inability to provide for the family, while for the middle class, the most pertinent reactions were related to issues of self-identity and social status. Furthermore, the presence of tensions and contradictions within the participants' responses reflects recent views that conventional class groups are being fragmented, resulting in the heterogeneity of social actors between and within class groups. The findings of the study stress the urgency for confronting the problem of unemployment from a position that examines how the experiences and meanings of unemployment are constructed, within a broader cultural, political, historical and economic social context, instead of only expressing concern for its most visible consequences or manifestations.

DECLARATION

The author hereby declares that this whole thesis, unless specifically indicated to the contrary in the

text, is his own work.

S. SAVAHL

DEDICATION

**DEDICATED TO THE MEMORY OF ROSHINI GOVENDER**

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To my sister Aneeka, thank you for your loving companionship and your enduring support, transcending the realm of sleep, throughout the duration of this project.
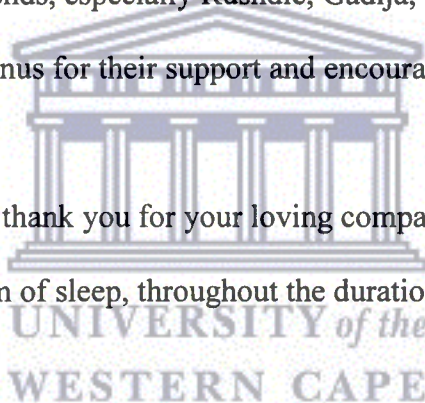
To the community organisers.   My sincerest gratitude.   Your diligent and unselfish actions made this all possible.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 BACKROUND

More than eight-hundred million human beings are unemployed in the world and the global unemployment rate has eclipsed its highest level since the Great Depression of the 1930's (Rifkin, 1995). The onset of new computer and communication technologies is permanently eliminating workers from the economic process. Rifkin (1995) predicts an economy of automated production by the mid-decades of the 21st century and believes that a society without mass formal employment is to be the single most significant social issue of the coming century.
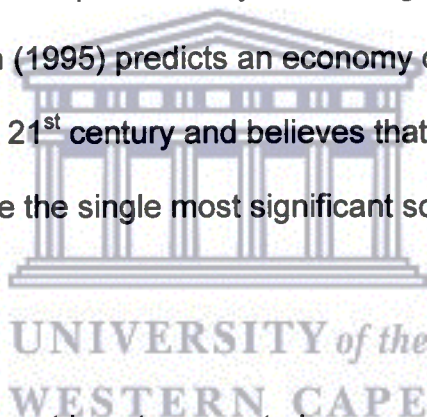
In South Africa unemployment is not a recent phenomenon. The South African government takes a conservative stance and perceives it as:

"...a cumulative problem inherited from previous political and economic policies. It is a result of population growth, lack of attention to human capital development, a prolonged deterioration in the real growth rate, and rising capital intensity of productions and declines in savings and

investments, since the mid- 1960's" (Department of Labour,

1998, p. 20).

On the other side of the coin, radicalists question whether we can have equality of provision and opportunities for all, while opting for a society in which free enterprise and the search for profit (i.e. capitalist economic development) are placed above the needs of human beings. Marx reminds us that the production of surplus value and the accumulation of profit, are the immediate purposes and the determining motives of capitalism (Leledakis, 1995). du Toit (1994) is sceptical about the job creating potential of non-racial capitalism and questions whether full employment is at all possible. In South Africa, capitalist exploitation was further advanced by the national oppression of the majority of the population. More than forty years of national oppression resulted in seventeen million people living in poverty, without proper homes or food. Furthermore, 66% of the population cannot read or write (Pampalis, 1991). Apartheid crushed the economic aspirations of the majority, forcing blacks to work for white industry and denying them the opportunity to create their own businesses.

Riordan (1992) believes that any statistical analysis and/or projection on the rate of unemployment in South Africa is an exceptionally difficult task. According to research conducted by the Labour Research Service, the unemployment rate is at thirty percent of the population (Labour Research Report, 1997). This figure consists of 19,8% who are unemployed but not seeking work because they are

discouraged, and 10,3% who are presently seeking work. The research shows that the highest level of unemployment is amongst the African population (38,5%). This is followed by the Coloured population (20,9%), and lastly, the White population (4,5%). [1] Of greater significance is the fact that about three hundred and fifty thousand jobs need to be created per annum to absorb new entrants into the labour market (Department of Labour, 1998).

1.2   THE CONCEPT OF CLASS

The current study intends to gather information on the psychological effects of unemployment on working and middle class individuals. One of the central theoretical assumptions that will be elaborated upon is that these effects are likely to be experienced differently by the working and middle class. The issue of social class needs to be defined here and the conception by Lenin seems to be the most appropriate at this juncture. Lenin sees social class as groups of people that differ from each other by the place they occupy in a historically determined system of social production, by their relation to the means of production, and by their role in the social organization of labour (Ossowski, 1967).

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[1] These racial terms will be used as defined by the Population Registration Act of 1950. During the apartheid era, unemployment impacted differently on various racially defined groups. Therefore this kind of structural analysis helps reveal the current character of unemployment as impacted on by the previous National Party government of South Africa.

From a Marxist perspective, social class can be defined by the role that the individual plays in the production process (Furbank, 1985). Wright (1997) adds that in the Marxist tradition, social class should be seen in terms of the link between property relations and exploitation, and not in terms of the individuals' source of income or financial position. He defines classes as relational categories shaped by exploitative relations between producers and means of production. The concept of exploitation is central to a Marxist understanding of social class.

Although there exists many debates around the defining characteristics of each social class, the Marx-Weber dichotomy remains at the forefront of any class analysis. This discussion will be further elaborated upon in Chapter Two. For the purpose of the current study, the terms working class and middle class will be utilised in their simplest forms.

Working class will refer to, for example, factory workers or labourers who sell their labour (and who have little or no formal training). These individuals were typically products of the Own Affairs education system that was designed to serve the wider goals of apartheid. A central aim of the state schools was to train 'non-whites' for unskilled labour. Therefore, the working class is usually poorly educated and employed in jobs that require little conceptual input.

Middle class will refer to the professionally trained or skilled workforce. These individuals are typically products of more fortuitous families as well as products of the expanded schooling system introduced by the apartheid legislature to meet the economy's growing demand for an educated and skilled workforce (Nuttal, Wright, Hoffman, Sishi, and Khandlela, 1998). They are usually employed in positions that require a considerable degree of conceptual input and the application of acquired knowledge.

1.3   RATIONALE

According to van der Berg (1991), serious attention to the unemployment problem is significant in addressing the plight of the poor and destitute in society. He adds that, "even under the most optimistic scenarios for economic growth, and capital intensification, unemployment will remain a problem for years to come" (1991, p. 3). Further massive unemployment is likely to fuel the process of social instability and is likely to result in a large proportion of the society being marginalised.

Despite a genuine acknowledgment of the seriousness of unemployment, it is surprising that so little research has been conducted from the perspective of the unemployed. Research in the area of unemployment has often been characterised by reductionist and quantitative initiatives, with little emphasis on qualitative initiatives. These studies often failed to connect with the experience

and everyday realities of the unemployed and tended towards describing the statistical relationship between psychopathology and unemployment. According to Gallie and Marsh (1995), relevant research in the area of unemployment requires investigations into the causes and consequences of unemployment as well as an understanding of how the unemployed create meanings in their life. Research on the relationship between unemployment and the social class structure has been especially scarce. Therefore a key role that this study intends to play, is to gather information on the interaction between unemployment, its consequent deprivation and its psychological effects, and to understand the way in which the different social classes perceive the situation. Qualitative interpretations of the experiences, attitudes and beliefs would allow for the generation of systematic comparisons of these social actors. Furthermore, the qualitative procedure fosters an understanding of how the perceptions of unemployment are socially constructed and maintained in a capitalist society, and more specifically, how the unemployed construct, give meaning to, and experience their social reality, as a result of these constructions.

1.4 FOCUS OF THE PRESENT STUDY

This study explores the differences in the experience of unemployment for working class and middle class individuals. The following research questions have been formulated to guide the research process:

I.   How do unemployed working class individuals construct and experience their unemployment?

II.   How do unemployed middle class individuals construct and experience their unemployment?

III.   To what extent are there differences/similarities in the constructions and experiences of unemployment for working and middle class individuals?

1.5   CHAPTER ORGANISATION

By way of conclusion, a brief outline of the ensuing chapters is provided.

In Chapter Two, a detailed review of the relevant literature on unemployment is provided. This chapter also includes a discussion of the theoretical frameworks that inform the study as well as a brief consideration of the concept of class.

Chapter Three offers a detailed motivation for adopting a qualitative framework for the investigation of unemployment. Furthermore, the methodological procedure, aims, research questions and method of analysis, are demonstrated. Finally, the ethical considerations that guide the study are also discussed.

In Chapter Four, the analytical approach of Vaughn, Schumm and Sinagub (1996) is utilised to provide a detailed thematic report of the collected data.

Various themes are identified and listed, together with their relevant

interpretations.

Chapter Five concludes the study by providing a brief summary of the findings.

This chapter includes an assessment of the limitations of the study and provides

pertinent suggestions for future research.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter will proceed from a discussion of the various theoretical perspectives on unemployment, to a review of the relevant literature on the effects of unemployment. The theoretical perspectives of Marie Jahoda's (1982) deprivation model, Social Identity Theory, Social Constructionism and Marxism will be briefly considered. Furthermore, current theoretical debates regarding the concept of class are also reviewed. Finally, relevant literature on the impact of unemployment will be highlighted within the context of both quantitative and qualitative research studies.

2.2 THEORETICAL APPROACHES

2.2.1 The Deprivation model of Marie Jahoda [2]

The deprivation model of Marie Jahoda is often regarded as one of the most influential theoretical frameworks in understanding psychological reactions to unemployment (Gershuny, 1995; Moller, 1993). This model of unemployment was a result of extensive personal observations conducted in the 1930's. She believes that unemployment denies individuals access to five functions or categories of experience that are vital for personal well being. Jahoda (1982) states that work

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[2] Even though Jahoda's theory does not have a specific Marxist theoretical underpinning, it provides a dynamic account of the processes involved in unemployment, and could therefore be used to supplement a Marxist theoretical framework.

imposes a time structure on the individuals day. It determines at what time they get out of bed, the time they spend away from home, and how they will spend time during the day (Hayes and Nutman, 1981). Unemployment results in what Jahoda (1982) calls an "enforced destruction of a habitual time structure" which leads to a heavy psychological burden (p. 22).

Secondly, Jahoda (1982) believes that work allows individuals to develop social contacts and experiences outside the family. People need to feel that they have a place in a group and tend to find social relationships satisfying (Hayes and Nutman, 1981). In modern societies work has become a significant source of social contacts. Jahoda (1982) therefore believes that the loss of work leads to loss of friendship, social isolation and loneliness.

Thirdly, Jahoda (1982) states that the position people hold in society together with their occupation serves a vital role in the conception that they form of themselves. In modern societies, the traditional indicators of status and identity have been lost, which has resulted in the occupation of an individual becoming a significant indicator of status and identity (Hayes and Nutman, 1981). They add that the undermining of the individual's status could further negatively impact on self-esteem, which could lead to feelings of uselessness.

Jahoda's (1982) fourth category of experience links work to broader goals and purposes in life. Whatever the individual's occupation, there exists a strong desire

to be needed (Hayes and Nutman, 1981). It is important to note that since work provides the link between the individual person and the rest of society, people deprived of work feel useless and worthless and suffer from a sense of purposelessness in their life (Moller, 1993).

Finally, Jahoda (1982) states that an important function of work is fulfilling the need to be active. Neff (in Hayes and Nutman, 1981) found that the most common mentioned reason given by unemployed people for wanting to work, is that it would rid them of their boredom and inactivity. Creativity stimulates the minds and provides them with the feeling that they have achieved meaningful goals that could further positively influence the self-concept.

Considering Jahoda's belief that employment fulfils a number of vital latent functions, which she refers to as "categories of experience", it is clear that her approach, in essence, highlights the need for life structure and community ties (Gallie and Marsh, 1995). There exist sustained debates in the literature about the relevance and adequacy of Jahoda's theory. First amongst the critics is Fraser (1981) who claims that Jahoda had severely underrated the relevance of the effect of sheer financial deprivation on the psychological health of the unemployed. Gallie and Marsh (1995) extend their criticism towards the fact that Jahoda did not adequately address the difference between men and women's experience of unemployment. They further add that the theory does not explore whether or not experiences that existed outside employment could meaningfully compensate for the loss of unemployment.

Criticisms by Moller (1993) centre around the fact that the model is based on limited empirical observations and therefore have no universal application. A point which has particular relevance to the essence of the current thesis is raised by O'Brian (in Moller, 1993) who noted that Jahoda had totally ignored job content and focussed specifically on extrinsic job satisfaction and work structure. Finally, Warr (1987) has raised the point of the curvilinear nature of the effects of Jahoda's categories of experience, resulting in people suffering from both high and low exposure to them.

Despite the wealth of theoretical criticisms, Jahoda's model remains greatly influential and has found support in many research studies, e.g. Gershuny (1995). He found the central thrust of Jahoda's theory to be correct, which raises questions about factors that could mediate the experiences of the unemployed. Furthermore, research conducted by Reynolds and Gilbert (1991) reveals how the substitution of these latent functions could alleviate the negative influence of unemployment. They found that individuals with high levels of social interaction outside the workplace were less likely to suffer from psychological ill health due to unemployment, than individuals with low levels of social interaction. Similarly Frye and Payne (1984) found that unemployed individuals who were proactive reported less psychological symptoms than those who were less active. Reynolds and Gilbert (1991) advance their argument by categorising people in terms of two independent factors: autonomy or social dependency (sociotrophy).

"Social dependency refers to an investment in relationships with other people in order to maintain reinforcement and motivation. Autonomy refers to an investment in independence, achievement, mobility and personal rights" (Reynolds and Gilbert, 1991, p. 76).

Consequently, a sociotrophic (person's) condition would be adversely affected by negative interpersonal events, while an autonomous (person's) condition would be affected by negative achievement events. Unemployment could therefore be a detrimental experience for both sociotrophic and autonomous individuals.

In the final analysis, Jahoda's theoretical perspective can be regarded as descriptive rather than analytical. Therefore, she provides useful empirical pointers of the effects of unemployment but fails to give a critical account of the ideological source of these effects. In other words, Jahoda refrains from overtly challenging the structural genesis of unemployment. This is problematic from a Marxist perspective since Jahoda's theory consequently appears to perpetuate the existence of the dominant ideological structures.

2.2.2   Social Identity Theory

An understanding of Tajfel's Social Identity Theory (SIT) provides a useful passage to understanding the impact of unemployment on personal and social identities. SIT is regarded as one of the most successful attempts at explaining the social
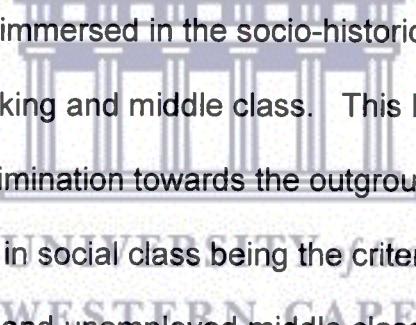
psychological basis of intergroup relations. The theory works from the premise that membership to a group will lead to qualitative transformation of people's identities and ultimately their motivations, judgements and perceptions (Brown, 1996).

Central to the theory, is the assumption that all individuals have a desire for a positive self-identity (Drigotes, Insko, and Schopler, 1998). According to Deschamps and Devos (1998), the status of the group to which the individual belongs determines whether identity is perceived as positive or negative. The status of the group is internalised and becomes part of the individual's self-concept thus defining one's position in society (Calhoun, 1994; Deschamps and Devos, 1998).

Of great significance to SIT, is the concept of social categorisation. "Social categorisation refers to psychological processes which tend to organise the environment into categories or groups or persons, objects, events (or groups of some of their characters) according to their similarities, their equivalencies concerning their actions, their intentions or behaviour" (Tajfel, 1972, p. 272). Social categories are often perceived as cognitive categories where people are grouped together on the basis of criteria that have relevance to the classifier (de le Rey, 1991; Deschamps and Devos 1998). According to Wetherell (1996), Tajfel perceived these categories as socially constructed products of human activity in specific historical contexts. Furthermore, categorisation plays an important part in

determining how the unemployed structures their environment (Deschamp and Devos, 1998). It appears to take place on two levels.

The first level is a basic level where the social world is either classified as employed or unemployed. It is on this level that the evaluative component of SIT is most pronounced. According to de le Rey (1991), the outcome of this evaluation or social comparison determines whether group membership confers positive or negative status on the individual's social identity. Unemployment inextricably leads to low self-esteem, negative self-evaluation and thus a negative social identity.

On the second level one is immersed in the socio-historical process culminating in the distinction between working and middle class. This level is characterised by in-group favouritism and discrimination towards the outgroup. Here social categorisation has resulted in social class being the criteria for classification. Unemployed working class and unemployed middle class identify themselves more with their own class group, thus reducing differentiation between the self and the in-group, while simultaneously increasing differentiation between groups (Deschamps and Devos, 1998).

From the above it is clear that SIT offers a dynamic and flexible approach to the study of unemployment. SIT is able to elucidate the hierarchical nature of social reality in terms of large-scale categories such as class and race (de la Rey, 1991), which has a significant impact on the way unemployment is investigated. In this

way the theory helps to reveal a wider range of meanings of unemployment, and consequently leaves the way open for further elaboration and exploration.

2.2.3 Social Constructionism

Billig (in de la Rey, 1991) has rightly suggested that as soon as we concern ourselves with intergroup relations we are ultimately addressing the social make-up of society. Immediately then one is drawn into the interpretative nets (Marshall, 1996) woven by individuals and groups, which emphasise a theory that is concerned with the socially constructed nature of society. This perspective focuses not on the individual but rather on forms of life and activities that make up sociality (Wetherell, 1996); the conception of the self and the environment is socially constructed (Smith and Bond, 1996).

Social constructionism's initial thrust was to campaign for the inclusion of the search for meaning in social inquiry and an ultimate understanding of the ways we negotiate the meanings in our life (Bayer, 1998). Shotter (1998) however argues that the meanings constructionism sanction are not those that are explicit, predictive, cognitive and representational, but rather meanings that are implicit in people's unique interpretative experiences and responsive reaction to their environment.

Watson (1996) believes that a starting point for a social constructionist perspective

on unemployment will be the influence of the environment in the creation of meaning

and the construction of identities. The reasoning is that:

"... identity is socially built into every individual and modulated

in every social position... it is an ideological construction... it is a

guide for individuals actions and it is essential for the function of

our society" (Deschamps and Devos, 1998, p. 3).

What is at stake here, according to Michael (1996), is not only the process of the

social construction of identities, but that the reality of the unemployed is embedded

in an emphasis on, and not independent of (de Nora and Meehan, 1994), the

historical, cultural and politically specific instruments through which it is registered.

This emphasis on culture, politics and history is a fundamental feature of

contemporary constructionism. Gergen (1985), for example, states that the "terms

in which the world is understood are social artefacts, products of historically situated

interchanges among people" (p. 267). Similarly Bayer (1998) claims that social

constructionism "cannot claim any special residency outside of culture, history,

movements, technology or politics" (p. 3). The historical account together with the

political and the ideological, in the context of this study, make up the social.

Unemployment provides the social arena where we find what Michael (1996) refers

to as "identities in action" (p. 15). Consequently, there exists a continuous cycle of

action and reaction between the self and others (Smith and Bond, 1996). In this

sense unemployment plays a significant role in the way we are perceived and evaluated by ourselves and others, and therefore proves to be vital in the construction of the self. More specifically, the deprivation of disposable income yields the processes of interaction where the selves are mediated and constructed.

Gergen (1985) states that the descriptions and explanations of the world constitute the primary components of social patterns and intergroup relations. The underlying structure of the social constructionist approach is the importance attached to the narrative, language and discourse (Bodily, 1994; Burr, 1995; Gergen, 1994, 1999; Sampson, 1998; Sarbin and Kitsuse, 1994). The narrative is used to convey social experiences, derived from historical, cultural and social contexts. Social reality becomes constructed in the process of narration (Gergen, 1994; Sarbin and Kitsuse, 1994). Sarbin and Kituse (1994) however warn that since traditional psychological research has been influenced by positivist theory and methodology, social constructionists are responsible for the construction of more complete narratives "that give voice to members of politically, economically and disenfranchised groups" (p. 7). Wetherell (1996) adds interpretation to the equation and argues that identities are products of discourse, language and interaction. She believes that the:

> **"… aim is to describe patterns in contemporary ideologies, to understand the social and psychological implications of certain ways of thinking, especially for people's definitions of their own**
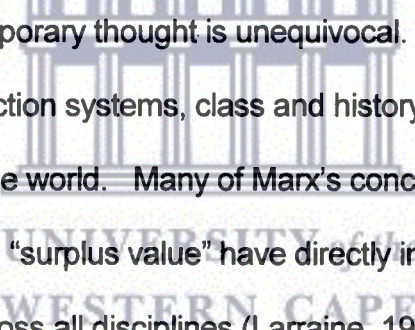
and others identities, and the way in which interpretation

becomes bound in with patterns of action" (Wetherell, 1996, p.

223).

"Language and history and social context in fact become psychology, and psychology becomes language and history" (Levine, 1992, p. 2). Drawing from Levine's contention, advocates of the social constructionist approach place great emphasis on the role of language and discourse as history's, society's and culture's agent in the construction of reality (Bayer, 1998; Sampson, 1998). According to Bayer (1998), language and discourses organise and arrange the meanings of everyday and social life. Gergen (1994) however believes that language only gains its meaning as a result of discourse in ongoing relationships. He therefore proposes a shift in focus from the linguistic structure and the use of language to the relational pattern in which language is used. "Words (or texts) within themselves bear no meaning; they fail to communicate. They only appear to generate meaning by their place within the realm of human interaction. It is human interchange that gives language its capacity to mean, and must stand as the central locus of concern" (pp. 263-264).

How the unemployed give meaning to, construct their reality and relate to society, through various activities and associated discourses, is thus central to a social constructionist understanding of unemployment. Social constructionists are compelled not by rigid methodological techniques reminiscent of positivist structures,

but by the assumption that as active social agents, we are accountable for the

knowledge we acquire, the language we use and the structures and institutions in

which we function (Bodily, 1994). At the very least a social constructionist

epistemology makes it possible to comprehend how the construction of the social

environment by ourselves and others, by valuing different types of narratives,

become meaningful for individuals and groups (Bodily, 1994; Watson, 1996;

Wetherell, 1996).

2.2.4 Marxism as a Theoretical Base

Marxist influence on contemporary thought is unequivocal. Marx's theory

surrounding capitalist production systems, class and history, dominated the course

of events in many parts of the world. Many of Marx's concepts, such as "alienation",

"reserve army of labour" and "surplus value" have directly impacted on

unemployment research across all disciplines (Larraine, 1985). Any attempt at

research with the unemployed would be inherently partial at a conceptual level,

should it fail to consider the basic tenets of Marxism. This research study therefore

utilises the theoretical framework of Marxism as a central conceptual component to

guide the analytic process.

The history of capitalism shows clear evidence of continuous transformation in every

sphere, from within institutions and revolutions, to the technological arena. Gray (in

Gosling, 1999) states that nearly a decade after the failure of the centrally planned

economies of communism, global capitalism is showing its first crisis by the recent

crash of the Asian economies. There has been a dramatic world-wide rise in

unemployment, poverty, crime and environmental destruction, but Korten (in

Gosling, 1999) believes that the problem is not only capitalism but rather a corrupted

system of global economy that is spiralling beyond control.

Economically the world is teetering between peaks and troughs, as both growth and

decay strengthen and plague societies (Smith, 1990). The resultant social decay

which includes all forms of violence, discrimination, homelessness, poverty,

exploitation as well as large scale unemployment, demand radical change urgently

(Sherman, 1995). It is Marxist theory that delves into these social institutions, and

through emphasis on the conflicts, hidden tensions and inner contradictions,

highlights the path of decay of society. Marx believed that these defects were not

surface phenomena of a capitalist society, but that the whole system in itself is

abusive (Arnold, 1990). "In this sense, therefore, a return to Marx is a paradigmatic

way to pose certain themes of contemporary relevance while at the same time

indicating which theoretical assumptions are to be discarded and which retained "

(Leledakis, 1995, p. 7). According to Marx's original theory of history and society,

human nature:

> "... is not a fixed essence that belongs to each person as an
>
> individual. Rather personhood is constituted by historically
>
> specific and historically evolving social relations. Not all social

relations, however are equally important. The forces and
relations of production are central in determining the structure of
a given society and the transformation of a particular society into
a different one. Technical resources and the social organisation
of labour determine history by creating economic classes-
collective social agents who act on interests derived from their
roles in the production and control of material wealth.
Intellectual, political, and cultural life are, therefore, not
autonomous but dependent. They reflect and support a
particular level of historical development and a particular set of
class interests" (Gottlieb, 1989, p. 4).

In essence then, the Marxist view states that an individual's social and material world
is created through human labour (Aveneri, 1970; Baranski and Short, 1985; Smith,
1990). Arnold (1990) believes that it is the capacity to labour that is central to a
Marxist conception of human nature. According to his material conception of
history, "it is labour, the objectifying of oneself in material objects, which is the means
by which human beings create themselves as truly human" (Urry, 1985, p. 113). He
viewed the process of labour as necessary social activities forged through either
direct or indirect social relations. It is therefore believed that in a capitalist society an
individual realises his existence through his work.

Conservatives put the entire blame of unemployment on rising wages. The general solution to involuntary unemployment is the reduction in wages until the amount of labour demanded equals the amount supplied (Leftwick and Sharpe, in Sherman, 1995). Marx believed that the idea of cutting wages to lower unemployment fails to take into account that by lowering wages one cuts the aggregate consumer demand which lowers profits (Sherman, 1995). He adds that unemployment is integral to capitalism since production is motivated by the need to generate profit and not by the need to provide employment (Showler and Sinfeld, 1981). To effect the maximum profit, capitalism needs to dominate workers politically and psychologically (Gottlieb, 1993). Therefore, Marx understood unemployment to be the result of the exploitative capital-labour relationship's need to have a "reserve army of labour" to keep wages low relative to profit (Ashton, 1986; Aveneri, 1970). Marx refers to the unemployed workers as the "reserve army of labour". For the employers to increase their profits, they need to keep wages as low as possible and also control workers as much as they can. It is thus vital for capitalism to have this large surplus of unemployed workers in order to maintain low wage rates and control the organisation and demand of the employed workers. Ashton (1986) believes that this "reserve army of labour" desperate for employment at any wage, is capitalism's most powerful weapon.

Work, according to Marx, is the most significant medium for the construction of meaning and satisfaction in one's life. Under capitalism however, work becomes a negative experience. Since the driving force behind capitalism is the production of
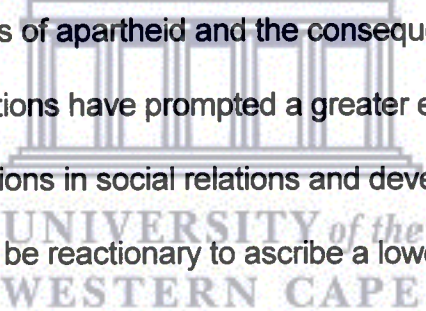
surplus value, workers are not only exploited, but have their creative potential

stunted.   This invariably leads to alienation. (Watson, 1996).

The concept of alienation is a key factor in a Marxist understanding of

unemployment.   Rattansi (1989) provides a good overview of the relationship

between alienation and capitalist production.

> **"Firstly, alienation as a result of production, that is part of a**
>
> **process of class domination in which the worker's product is**
>
> **appropriated by another whose power is continually augmented**
>
> **by this process; second alienation in the act of production,**
>
> **determined by the division of labour and manifesting itself as a**
>
> **painful labour, physically exhausting and devoid of all intellectual**
>
> **skill and intent; third in the form of domination by exchange, in**
>
> **which the worker is dehumanised to the status of a commodity…**
>
> **at the mercy of an inhuman power, the market" (p. 4).**

The above demonstrates how alienation is effected in the work process.   This does

not however imply that the unemployed are unaffected.   Arnold (1990) believes that

the loss of work does not lead to freedom from the alienating constraints of work.

On the contrary, the entire cyclical process imposed by the capitalist production

system on society is alienating in itself.   Marx believed that that workers are

alienated by their type of work, as well as by their position in production (Arnold,

1990).   According to Jacobson (in Liem and Liem, 1988), the effects of

unemployment are directly related to the effects of alienating work. Therefore

Arnold (1990) believes that loss of work is in itself alienating, since the worker has

become dependent on a wage to meet external needs. Jacobson (in Liem and

Liem, 1988) adds that individuals who experience high levels of alienation through

their work are most likely to be affected by unemployment. Under capitalism,

unemployed workers lose their self-identity and perceive themselves as a

commodity, or more specifically, as a mechanical component of the system (Ashton,

1986). For these individuals unemployment represents a "confirmation of their

status as a mere object" (Liem and Liem, 1988, p. 89).

The destruction of the bonds of apartheid and the consequent and continuous

removal of all related institutions have prompted a greater emphasis in the

significance of class distinctions in social relations and development. Many would

correctly argue that it would be reactionary to ascribe a lower degree of significance

to the influence of racial inequalities within the current socio-political arena. Neo-

Marxists however, would welcome it as an overdue progression, believing that

issues surrounding social class, exploitation and capitalist production systems, which

have been masked by a preoccupation with racial inequalities, procure greater

attention. This research study proceeds from a belief that any social research in

South Africa cannot be conducted without considering the influence of ethnic

labelling and the feudal-like stratification of South African society, which was used to

entrench white political hegemony.

In this research study, the author adopts a predominantly social constructionist position, embedded within a broader theoretical framework of Marxism. Jahoda's (1982) theory of deprivation and Social Identity Theory, although useful in understanding the dynamics of unemployment, only fulfils a supplementary function. To utilise Marxism as a successful theoretical framework, the author attempted to remove the essentialist ingredient of traditional Marxism (Leledakis, 1995). The idea was therefore to engender a contemporary Marxism, which has as its main emphasis the interrelationship between society and psyche, concerned with labour, production, alienation, interpretation, identities, discourses, and construction of meanings.

2.2.4.1   Theorising on Class

The use of the word class denotes a variety of different meanings and has contributed to a lack of clarity in identifying a meaningful perspective (Crompton, 1993). It is often used to describe traditional hierarchy, social prestige and status, material inequalities, as well as revolutionary social ideologies (Crompton, 1993). Recently however, the concept has been the target of major criticisms from empirical sociologists and a segment of the post-modern social theorists, who argue that class as a concept is "becoming increasingly irrelevant" (Crompton, 1993, p. 8). Pahl (1989), for example, has insisted that the concept of class is "ceasing to do any useful work" (p. 710). Holton and Turner (1989) further describe class as "an increasingly redundant issue" (p. 194). There is still however consensus to the

contention that insufficient evidence exists for an outright rejection of the concept of class. Studies by Marshall, Newby, Rose and Vogler (1988) emphatically support this contention and state that social class "is to the fore among conceptions of collective identity. It is still the case that important differences in shared beliefs and values are structured more obviously by class than by other sources of social cleavage" (pp. 267- 268). The concept of social classes would therefore still continue to, as Johnson (1982) put it, "present the central conditions of human existence" (p. 13).

Most social scientists accept that changes in the economy, the onset of democratically elected governments, and the onset of the information age, has had drastic effects on class relations. Societal processes and social interaction has now refuelled the debate surrounding interpretative frameworks regarding these effects (Bradley, 1992). In this respect, contemporary South Africa is a boiling pot, or conversely, a happy hunting ground, for the two main proponents of class relations, Marx and Weber. It is not the intention of the author to enter into this polemic, although a brief description of their differences in the conception of class will be useful to foster a better understanding of its relation to unemployment.

Marx described classes in terms of relations of production. He believed that the "mode of production" generated the processes of class inequalities (Milner, 1999). "The mode of production of material life conditions the general processes of social, political and intellectual life" (Marx, 1975, p. 475). Even though Marx refrained

from giving a formal definition of class, its centrality to his work remains undoubted.

He candidly defined human history in terms of the struggle between classes. "The

history of all hitherto society is the history of class struggles. Freeman and slave,

patrician and plebeian, lord and serf, guild-master and journeyman, in a word

oppressor and oppressed, stood in constant opposition to one another..." (Marx and

Engels, 1967, p. 79).

Marx largely identified two classes, the bourgeoisie and the proletariat, as the major

historical components of modern capitalist societies. The bourgeoisie consisted of

the owners of the material means of production, while the proletariat consisted of the

owners of the wage labour, or those that sold their labour for material survival. He

did not however deny, as he is often criticised of doing, the existence of a "middle or

intermediate strata" which "obliterate lines of demarcation everywhere" (Marx, in

Milner, 1999, p. 20). While it is clear that he often suggested a multiple class model,

he also further agreed to possible internal divisions of class which he termed

fractions (Milner, 1999). Marx's main focus was not however the demarcation of

boundaries between or within classes, but rather a portrayal of the nature of

economic exploitation by one class over the other, as well as the possible "role of

social classes in the transformation of society" (Crompton, 1993, p 24).[3]

Weber, however, defined classes in terms of market advantages (Parkin, 1971;

Wright, 1989). According to Weber, it is proper to speak of a class "when (1) a

---

[3] A feature of Marx's writings was his insistence that the proletariat i.e. the working class or the revolutionary class as he often called it, would ultimately cause the demise of capitalism and usher in a classless society.

number of people have in common a specific causal component of their life chances in so far as (2) this process is represented exclusively by the economic interests in the possession of goods and opportunities for income, and (3) is represented under the conditions of the commodity or labour markets" (1948, p. 181). Classes are thus seen as historical social groups which cannot exist independent from a market economy (Milner, 1999). Weber's central focus concerned the effects that the increasing fragmentation of society imposed on class divisions. Weber further paid special attention to the dynamics and the development of the middle class, as well as the supplementary effects of status and party political groupings on the structure of class (Bradley, 1992). The middle class is perceived to be a completely autonomous and socially significant group (Dahrendorf, 1959; Lockwood, 1981) and not as Marx essentially perceived it as, an ideological illusion (Wright, 1989).

Bradley (1992) believes that studies into contemporary class relations should adopt a flexible approach to these models. Beyond the Marx-Weber debate, authors such as Bradley (1992), Gorz (1982) and Wresch (1997) believe that the social consequences of emerging technological advances are of utmost significance. The onset of the information age and the simultaneous economic downturn of global economies have caused a fragmentation of the working class. Wresch (1997) in his dramatically entitled, "Disconnected: the have's and have-nots of the information age", shows explicitly how technological advances have excluded a major proportion of the society and has contributed to the development of the underclass. Dahrendorf (1959) uses the term underclass to refer to those individuals

permanently embedded in a culture of poverty, who are unable to secure any sort of employment, making them fatalistic or apathetic and eventually unemployable (Bradley, 1992).[4]

Gorz (1982) believed that computer technology would make manual work redundant and predicted that unemployment rates would continue to escalate, resulting in a fragmentation of the working class into three groups consisting of the permanently unemployed, the semi-employed, and the casualised low paid workers. The evolution of computer technology and the related demand for new types of jobs brought on by e-commerce and Internet subsidiaries, is proof that Gorz was partly correct in assumption. He appears though to have underestimated the job creating potential of information technology and consequently failed to identify affluence or upward mobility of a small segment of the working class into these vacant positions.
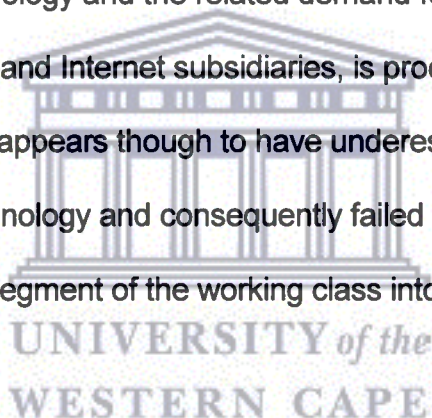
For the middle class, the information age has resulted in them being somewhat proletarianized, i.e. sucked into the dimension of the working class and becoming wage labourers (Bradley, 1992). This concept is similar to that of task degradation or deskilling as suggested by Allen, Braham and Lewis (1992), and has prompted the middle class to acquire new marketable skills in order to maintain their status in the occupational hierarchy.

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[4] The use of the term underclass remains a greatly contentious issue. Critics see the term as a label that stigmatises and blames the individuals for their inability to secure employment.

The growing critique of positivism during the 1960's and 1970's sparked the view that social facts cannot be objectively defined but are socially constructed (Crompton, 1993). A major proponent of this direction of thought was the historian E. P. Thompson, whose work appears to be in line with this study's largely constructionist approach.

In line with a Marxist understanding, Thompson (1968) perceives classes as being embedded in relations of production. Thompson (1968) does however, explicitly emphasise the indivisibility of class from class-consciousness (Crompton, 1993). For as Thompson states, "class experience is largely determined by the productive relations into which men are born - or enter involuntarily. Class-consciousness is the way in which these experiences are handled in cultural terms: embodied in traditions, value systems, ideas and institutional forms" (1968, p. 10). Thompson's central concern was the meanings constructed by these experiences, and the process by which these experiences mediates between being and consciousness (Milner, 1999). "Class eventuates as men and women live their productive relations, and as they experience their determinate situations" (Thompson, 1978, p. 150). Thompson's work was essentially a cultural studies approach to class relations. It is the feature of this cultural studies approach (Crompton, 1993), that culture is defined as "encompassing both the meanings and the values which arise amongst distinctive social groups and classes, as well as the lived traditions and practices through which these meanings are expressed and in which they are embodied" (Hall, 1981, p. 21).

Considering the above one might deduce that conventional indicators of class are perhaps becoming less applicable in contemporary society. However, if one considers the historical link between class and race in South Africa, as well as the different expressions of consciousness that currently prevail as a result of a segregated past, it would be insensible to deny the political existence of traditional structural locations.

In the current study the researcher utilises traditional class locations. The working class refers to the traditionally unskilled low-paid workers, with poor formal education, involved in manual labour, where little conceptual input is required. The middle class refers to the higher-paid salaried workers, who are often educated and skilled, and involved in employment positions that require a considerable degree of conceptual input.
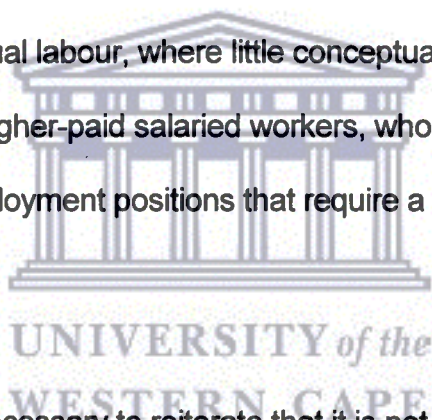
In conclusion, it might be necessary to reiterate that it is not the researcher's intention to sanction one conceptual theory of class over another. However, following the study's Marxist theoretical framework, the researcher adopts a Marxist understanding of class, while simultaneously acknowledging the conceptual input of Weber's model. Of greater urgency is the realisation that changes in social reality, which includes technological advances, political systems, economic instability and relationships between social classes, poses social problems of immense magnitude and demands new assumptions, new methods of inquiry, as well as a

reconfiguration of the conceptual apparatus, to one that takes past and constructed experiences into account (Ossowski, 1967; Wresch, 1997).

2.3   RELEVANT LITERATURE

Research indicates that unemployment has serious repercussions on the psychological well being of the individual.   According to Essenberg and Lazarfeld (in Irvine, 1984), unemployment represents a personal threat to an individual's economic security, fear is increased, sense of proportion is shattered, individuals lose their common sense of values, and prestige is lost.   Furthermore, the individual develops feelings of inferiority, loses self-confidence and suffers from increased levels of stress (Irvine, 1984).   Brenner and Starrin (1988) state that due to the daily anxieties associated with unemployment, stress would rapidly escalate to a high level of chronic stress.   This chronic stress is characterised by severe depressive reactions and negative physiological changes.

Hayes (1983a) notes that unemployed individuals posit feelings of shame and guilt, as they are unable to provide for their family.   People are products of society and are often stigmatised by the negative stereotypes which place their feelings of self-worth at risk (Moller, 1993).   They tend to feel useless and withdraw from society, which leads to social isolation (Ullah, Banks and Warr, 1985).   White (1991) found social isolation to be a significant factor, which emerged from his studies.   Loss of confidence, self esteem, and the inability to cope with life is often experienced by the

unemployed. This could result in social isolation and may inhibit reintegration into the working society (Moller, 1993).

In research conducted by Gallie, Gershuny and Vogler (1995), similar patterns of social withdrawal and social isolation were identified. They found that social isolation could be in part attributed to the absence of financial resources that is necessary to participate in usual social activities, as well as in part as a result of the loss of self confidence and self- esteem. Furthermore, they found that the unemployed appeared to be segregated in social networks, which consisted of a high proportion of unemployed friends. The nature of these networks offers weak psychological support and tends to bind their unemployed position in the labour market.

It is a widely accepted fact that unemployment erodes the self-esteem. Barling (1990) found clear evidence to suggest a direct association with unemployment and low self-esteem. Moller (1993) believes that a loss of self-esteem is not only a reflection on the individual but on society as well. Marx believes that people are products of society and that the 'self' is developed, managed, and affirmed through the individual's interaction with society (Sherman, 1995). People are therefore compelled to accept the images which society place upon them (Moller, 1993). The danger, according to Moller (1993), is that the stigmatised individuals may develop a self-fulfilling prophecy. The result, as mentioned earlier, could bind their position in the labour market. Moller (1993) believes that the working class suffers less

damage to the self-esteem than the middle class. She believes that this occurs since the working class, who generally possesses an instrumental work value, does not regard occupational position as a significant indicator of self-identification. Findings suggest that depression follows unemployment and that unemployed individuals, as a group, are more depressed than their employed counterparts (Barling, 1990). People become depressed when they realise that changes to their lifestyle will have to be made coupled to not wanting to and not knowing how to make these changes (Ligthelm & Kritzinger-van Niekerk, 1990). According to Ellis's theory, the individual's depression is not caused by the unemployment, but rather by the consequences of the individual's irrational beliefs that the individual adopts in relation to being employed (Hayes & Nutman, 1981). In relation to this, White (1991) found that it is not unemployment in itself but various problems such as financial deprivation, negative stereotypes and failure to secure other employment, that results in poor psychological health. Furthermore, because of fear of rejection, the individual has a reluctance to pursue other employment opportunities. This reluctance is frequently manifested in the behaviour and dress of the unemployed (Hayes & Nutman, 1981).

A related issue is that of job insecurity. Gallie and Marsh (1995) believe it to be a major mechanism leading to increased levels of stress. Furthermore, in research conducted by Burchell (1995), no significant difference between the level of stress among the unemployed and among the highly insecure category of the employed was found. Burchell's research further showed no marked improvement in stress

for the unemployed that acquired temporary employment. Fraser (1981) equates this threat of insecurity with the threat of poverty. Similarly Shapiro (1977) believes that job security is of greater significance for working class employees since it is a value associated with the lower end of Maslow's hierarchy. Finally Baum, Flemming and Reddy postulate that unemployment is generally stressful because of the actual job loss, as well as the perceptions of loss of control (Barling, 1990).

Unemployment is also associated with cognitive difficulties such as attention and concentration problems (Barling, 1990). Furthermore, results obtained from both cross-sectional and longitudinal studies indicate significantly higher anxiety levels for unemployed than employed individuals, and that the process of becoming unemployed significantly increases anxiety levels (Barling, 1990). The stress and frustration of being unemployed often leads the individual to behave in antisocial ways (Fineman, 1987; Hayes, 1983). Warr, Jackson and Banks (1988) reported a slowing down of cognitive and problem solving activity. They found that 37% of the participants in their study reported "that they were now taking longer to do things than they previously did, and 30% said they were getting rusty at things they used to do well" (p. 53).
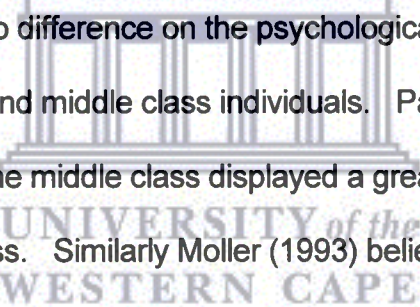
Jahoda says that, "employment also provides some definition of one's position in society, status and personal identity" (1979, p.13). Furthermore, during research conducted by Geshuny (1995), it was found that there exists a significant difference in the unemployed experience of low and high status occupations. He further found

that unemployed individuals in the lower end of the employment hierarchy, suffered

significantly greater social and psychological distress, than individuals in higher

status occupations. Hayes and Nutman (1981) contend that the relationship

between status and personal identity is fundamental in any understanding of the

unemployed. They believe that the loss of the status of a working person poses a

serious threat to the integrity of the self-image. This occurs because personal

identity is developed, managed and affirmed through the status of a working person.

Thus, Jahoda (1988) believes that the unemployed suffer not only from a loss of

status but even more from an undermining of their sense of personal identity, as well

as losing the means by which the integrity of the self-image is maintained. Marx

was explicit in his critique on this harmful effect of capitalism which expressed the

widespread attitude that a person's value is determined by their labour power

(Arnold, 1990).
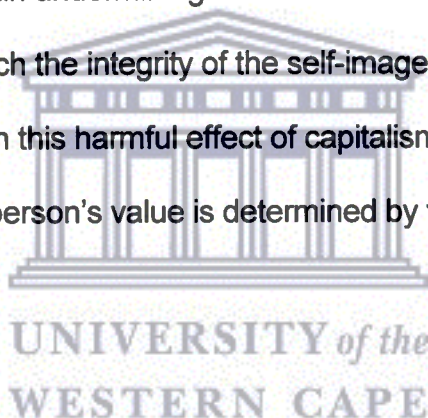
Related to the above, is the issue of work commitment. There exists much

evidence to support the connection between unemployment and work commitment.

White (1991), for example, found that the greater the work commitment, the more

stressful is the experience of being unemployed. He states that a vacuum is

created in one's life when work is removed. In relation, Moller (1993) believes that

unemployment may have devastating effects if work is perceived as a central factor

and gives meaning to all other aspects of life. Studies conducted by Warr et al

(1988) served to confirm the significant effect that employment commitment has on

psychological health. Their results showed that individuals with a high employment

commitment exhibited significantly large increases in psychological distress. Therefore, it is assumed that persons with an intrinsic work commitment are usually more affected by the loss of the work role, whereas persons with an instrumental work commitment are more affected by the deprivation of disposable income (Moller, 1993; Rifkin, 1995; Warr and Payne, 1983). One could find an explanation for this in Arnold's (1990) understanding that Marx believed that intrinsically rewarding jobs were not unalienating. Therefore, when these people with an intrinsic work commitment lose their jobs they suffer extreme alienation rooted in the fact that they have lost their 'self confirming essence'.

Warr et al (1988) reported no difference on the psychological effects of unemployment for working and middle class individuals. Payne, Warr and Hartley (1984) however found that the middle class displayed a greater psychological burden than the working class. Similarly Moller (1993) believes that the middle class would experience more damage to the self-worth and lower levels of self-esteem than the working class. Payne et al (1984) identifies perceived stigma and loss of status as the main factors responsible for the middle class's poor psychological health. Warr et al (1988) contend that the working class suffer mainly from poverty and severe financial constraints. In agreement, findings by Moller (1993), revealed that 50% of the sample listed "starvation and fear of eviction due to inability to pay rent, as the most pressing problems" (p. 73). Children leaving school (23%), insufficient clothing (21%), and debts (6%) were also mentioned. Significantly, it was discovered that less than 10% of the sample identified problems
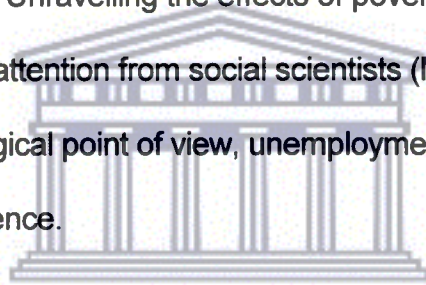
such as isolation, loss of status, fear of ridicule, and feelings of inferiority, as major

problems.

The effects of age on the impact of unemployment are well documented in

longitudinal studies conducted by Warr et al (1988). In their research on the

unemployed between the ages of sixteen and sixty-four, the youngest group (sixteen

to nineteen) and the oldest group (fifty-nine to sixty-four), showed significantly better

mental health than all the other groups. They further found that the age group

between twenty and fifty-nine posited the highest psychological deterioration scores

than any other group, especially in the first few months of unemployment. Bolton

and Oatley (1987) found similar results during their research on depression and

unemployment. Warr et al (1988) further found that on average, the poor

psychological health stabilised about six months after becoming unemployed. This

was consistent with results found by Liem and Liem (1988) who attributes this

stabilisation to two factors that Warr et al (1988) identify as constructive adaptation

and resigned adaptation.

> **"Constructive adaptation is where unemployed people take**
>
> **positive steps to develop interests and activities outside the labour**
>
> **market. Hobbies may be taken up, social networks expanded and**
>
> **voluntary work for the community initiated and enjoyed.**
>
> **More common is resigned adaptation, involving reduced**
>
> **aspirations and lower emotional investment in the environment.**

People withdraw from job seeking, depend upon limited routines

of behaviour, and protect themselves from threatening events by

avoiding new situations and potentially stressful or expensive

activities" (Warr et al, 1988, p. 55).

In research conducted by Moller (1993) it was found that poverty and unemployment

are often synonymous in urban black society. The increased and continuing high

level of unemployment has meant extreme poverty for many of the out of work

(Showler & Sinfeld, 1981). Unravelling the effects of poverty from psychological

deprivation warrants much attention from social scientists (Moller, 1993). She

states that from a psychological point of view, unemployment can be seen as a

condition of forced dependence.

Even though social insurance programs can relieve the stigma of poverty, it does not

eliminate mental illness and loss of personal well being. In some societies where

structured and effective unemployment insurance exists, poverty is curtailed to a

large extent. However, Moller (1993) believes that in societies like South Africa,

which provide inadequate social security benefits, poverty would play a major role in

the decline of personal well being. Furthermore, Hayes (1983b) states that the

working class, with their limited financial resources, experiences much more intense

mental health problems due to unemployment than any other social class and is

unable to maintain a basic standard of living. This in turn leads to the development

of health related problems. Poor families cut back on food in order to survive and it

is in this way that unemployment has severe effects on nutrition and health (ERASER, 1991).

Apart from the psychological effects and social effects, unemployment also causes serious health problems. Research studies indicate that unemployed individuals show higher blood pressure levels, higher uric acid levels and higher cholesterol levels than their employed counterparts (Hayes & Nutman, 1981). Warr et al (1988) further reported a worsening of dermatitis, eczema and headaches. Results also indicate that unemployed males show a higher incidence of peptic ulcers. It should be noted that high blood pressure and cholesterol levels are major predisposing factors for coronary heart diseases as well as cerebrovascular diseases (C.R.I.C., 1993).

Further in the debate, it was found that the psychological reactions brought on by unemployment are never an individual problem and often results in a family problem. Jackson (in Barling, 1990) believes that an unemployed individual turns more to family than to friends for social support. Liem and Liem (1988) strongly suggest that "unemployment can be a significant threat to the marital relationship" (p. 97). The quality of family relationships prior to the loss of the job may be significant. Unhealthy relations before job loss may destroy the family (Moller, 1993). Research studies also suggest that a relationship between unemployment and divorce exists because of the severity of the stress associated with unemployment (Barling, 1990).

Comprehensive statistical research conducted by Lampard (1995) found that unemployment was a major causal factor of marital dissolution. He ascribes this to severe financial and psychological stress associated with unemployment. Lampard (1995) cautions against blaming unemployment itself for the high incidence of marital dissolution, and believes that secondary factors such as poverty should be taken into account. Withdrawal of respect and support from the family could cause as serious pain as financial hardship.

Barling (1990) contends that unemployment exerts no consistent effects on global marital satisfaction. Kelvin and Jarret (1985) also found inconclusive evidence with regard to marital tension. They found that while unemployment was likely to lead to the termination of fragile marriages, it reinforced bonds in stable relationships. Dew, Dromet and Schulberg (1987) contend that it is the husband's psychological responses to unemployment that is significant in influencing reactions and behaviours toward unemployment. Liem and Liem (1988) found similar results and state that if the husband showed positive affect and exhibited confident behaviour, family cohesiveness could result. Therefore, the emotional state of the husband can alter the general atmosphere in the family and can partially mediate the effects of unemployment on the family unit.

There are, however, some findings that suggest that major role changes occur when husbands lose their jobs, especially if the wives seek and obtain employment. The forced re-arrangement of domestic roles brought on by unemployment as well as the

removal of disposable income results in domestic tension, which affects all members of the family. Withdrawal of respect and support from the family could cause serious psychological pain (Barling, 1990). Of particular importance, is the fact that the unemployed males often suffer from a sense of failure and a loss of authority in the eyes of their children (Lampard, 1995).

Some studies indicate that spouse abuse could result from unemployment (Barling, 1990). Hyslop (1989) however, contends that spouse abuse does not always result and states that cohesion between spouses sometimes develops following unemployment. Furthermore, White (1991) found that large families as well as families with children suffered the greatest psychological stress and ill health. White (1991) further associates unemployment with physical and emotional child abuse. Finally, Barling (1990) contends that unemployment affects parent-child interactions in various other ways. For example, it was found that the consequences of a child's exposure to unemployment will become pronounced when the child reaches adulthood, where he/she may manifest employment values and attitudes that are inappropriate for adequate functioning in current work environments.

It is important to keep in mind that the unemployed are not a homogenous group and that unemployment affects individuals from different social backgrounds in different ways. Moller (1993) warns against the limitations of earlier research on unemployment in which the unemployed is treated as a homogenous group. The belief that all the unemployed pass through similar patterns of subjective

experiences is no longer assumed. Similarly Gallie, Marsh and Vogler (1995) strongly emphasise the heterogeneity of the unemployed and believe that they should be realised as diverse categories for which unemployment has an extremely different significance. Finer distinctions are now being made between factors such as sex, education, social class, occupational status and financial position (Moller, 1993; Warr, 1987; Watson, 1996).

Thus far, predominantly quantitative research has been cited. Quantitative research, however, with its roots in positivism, often overlooks and reduces the meaning of the social reality (Stevens, 1996) of the unemployed to a set of statistical variables. In psychology, positivist science has been institutionalised globally, sanctioning research methods and theories that are consistent with the depiction of human beings as passive organisms that are suitable for study by natural scientific methods (Durrheim, 1997; Kuhn, 1970; Sarbin and Kitsuse, 1994). Practitioners in this model regard human behaviour as predictable, objective and representational and conspire for the meanings of the everyday world to be translated into psychological terms (Bayer, 1998).

With the onset of a new paradigm, social constructionism along with new qualitative methodological techniques emerged to offer an alternate account of meaning; one that emphasised meaning as the central theoretical issue and product of everyday social interaction (Sarbin and Kitsuse, 1994). Bodily (1994) contends that social constructionism recognises the discrepancy between the meaningful nature of

human activity and the objective natural scientific methods used to account for it.
With the shift in the epistemological perspective from explanations focussing on
internal determinants to descriptions of social, cultural and historical transaction
patterns and their contexts (Wiener and Markus, 1994), comes a fundamental
transformation in how one might investigate unemployment. Perceptions of the
unemployed are now realised as socially shared constructions seen through the
lenses of a particular socio-cultural matrix (Durrheim, 1997; Wiener and Markus,
1994).

Although social constructionism was used to account for many areas of study, which
included sexuality, addiction, abuse, etc, Watson (1996) was one of the first to
directly tackle the problem of unemployment from a constructionist standpoint.
Watson's (1996) main focus concerned the meanings attached to work and how
identities were constructed and maintained by the loss of work.

Constructionists' inherent predilection for the 'social' refocuses the researcher's
motivation towards the everyday discursive processes through which unemployment
is constituted (Holstein and Gubruim, 1994; Watson, 1996). Social constructionism
thereby elucidates the role of language, discourse and communicative interaction in
the construction of everyday explanatory categories, that depicts the unemployed as
either deserving of the situation, or as a casualty of local or global economic
downturn.

Watson (1996) believes that to get a better idea of how the perceptions of the unemployed are constructed and maintained, we need to take a closer look at the deep structure of unemployment and the meanings attached to work. Deep structure implies both the basic assumptions on which unemployment is built, and certain features that allow for the unelaborated use of the term. The continued presence of the negative perceptions of unemployment is dependent on societies' willingness to keep its deep structure hidden and show concern only for its most visible consequences or manifestations (Bodily, 1994).

The concept of unemployment therefore functions as both description and explanation. What begins as a transcription, is socially transformed into a self-contained explanation (Scheibe, 1994). The heart of this thesis is to transform the social construction of the unemployment problem – to eradicate constructions of unemployment as a problem that is unique or internal to the individual and to conceive it instead as a social responsibility. This cannot be achieved by the implementation of orthodox methodological strategies, based on the positivist model, that tended to focus on the psychological impact of unemployment on the individual, family and community. Rather, success can only be realised through a veritable commitment to deconstruct contemporary social constructions by tracing their psychosocial effects, within the broader social historical and political context, to the voice of the unemployed category of society.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 INTRODUCTION

Chapter two examined the relevant literature in the area of unemployment and described the theoretical framework on which the current study is based. However, it is worth noting that research in the area of unemployment is dominated by studies that are quantitative in nature.

This chapter therefore provides a rationale for the use of qualitative inquiry for effective research in the field of unemployment. Furthermore, the aims, research questions, procedure, analysis and ethical considerations are demonstrated.
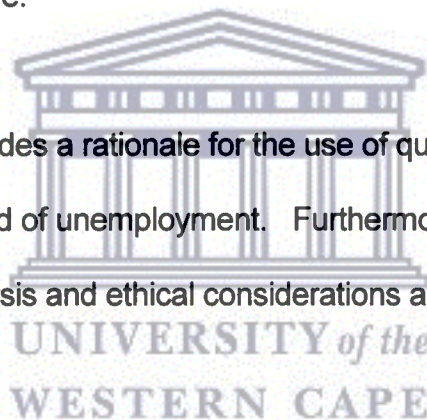
3.2 IMPLICATIONS OF A QUANTITATIVE APPROACH IN UNEMPLOYMENT RESEARCH

Lincoln and Guba (1985) usually refer to quantitative and qualitative research as being dependent on divergent paradigms and "assumptions about what should pass as warrantable knowledge about the social world" (Bryman, 1993, p. 5). The choice between the two is therefore grounded in the two opposing trends of positivism and anti-positivism.

Positivism usually refers to a philosophical outlook that is informed by certain

assumptions about the nature of knowledge (Denzin and Lincoln, 1994).   Positivist

research "proceeds by the formulation and testing of hypotheses with a view of

making inferences about the causal connection between two or more social

phenomenon" (Jupp and Norris, 1993, p. 40).   Henwood and Pidgeon (1993)

emphasise that the paradigm's framework is based on universal laws of cause and

effect that works on a realist ontology - the belief that reality consists of a world of

objectively defined and observed facts.   Moll (1990) believes that the primary idea

of positivism is that knowledge exists independently of human understanding.   In

other words, the objective reality is the only component of valid scientific knowledge.

Positivism constitutes that the procedures, ideas and methods of the natural

sciences are applicable to the social sciences (Bryman, 1993; Kolakoski, 1993).

von Wright (1993) states that:

"…one of the tenets of positivism is methodological monism, or

the idea of scientific unity amidst the diversity of the subject

matter of scientific investigation…the exact natural sciences set

a methodological ideal or standard which measures the degree

of development and perfection of all the other sciences, including

the humanities" (p. 10).

This conveys the positivist belief that the methods and procedures for acquiring valid

knowledge, and for reporting experience through theoretical reflection, are generally
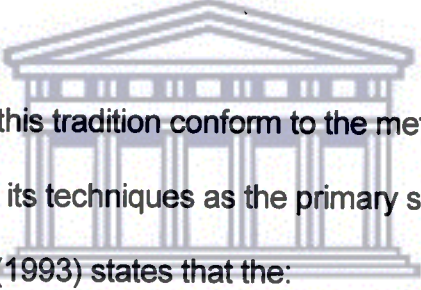
the same in all areas of experience. Quantitative research generally conforms to and reflects the methods, aims and techniques of the natural sciences, and is therefore considered to be inherently influenced by positivism (Bryman, 1993; Lincoln and Guba, 1985). Therefore, it appears that quantitative research not only imposes severe limitations on unemployment research, but also could have resulted in a partial understanding of unemployment. One is immediately left to ponder whether the anxiety and depression scales, general health questionnaires, etc, used so assiduously by past researchers, could accurately reflect the social reality of unemployed communities. Stevens (1996), similarly questions "whether social interaction can be quantified accurately and therefore reflect social reality in a valid manner" (p. 30). In South Africa, for example, large-scale quantitative studies conducted by Moller (1993) show that her questionnaires failed to elicit any detailed information with regard to the social processes of the unemployed. Furthermore, Katz (in Stevens, 1996) argues that quantitative research often left researchers embodying defeatist attitudes, feeling that they were unable to successfully negotiate the social phenomenon being investigated.

Clearly, a quantitative approach is a partial research initiative for investigating unemployment. An alternate approach, that engenders a commitment to understanding how unemployment is socially constructed and how the unemployed give meaning to their life, is required to compliment and supplement such an approach.

3.3 QUALITATIVE INQUIRY AS AN ALTERNATIVE APPROACH IN UNEMPLOYMENT RESEARCH

The alternate position is expressed in the anti-positivist, naturalistic or interpretative paradigm. The advocates of this paradigm strongly reject the framework put forth by the natural sciences. The emphasis of this paradigm is on understanding and description rather than explanation; inductive reasoning which emphasises the theory from data; and the representation of social reality through the eyes of participants (Henwood and Pidgeon, 1993).
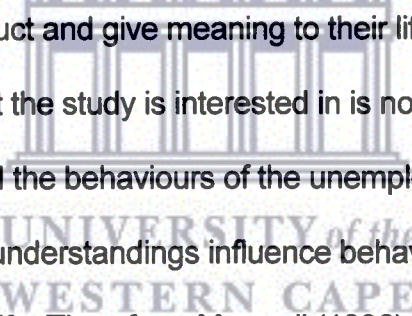
Furthermore, researchers in this tradition conform to the methods and procedures of qualitative inquiry and regard its techniques as the primary source of data collection and interpretation. Bryman (1993) states that the:

"… **most fundamental characteristic of qualitative research is its express commitment to viewing events, actions, norms, values, etc. from the perspective of the people being studied** (p. 61).

Considering the research question and the aims of the study, a qualitative study would appear to be the most appropriate procedure, since it attempts to describe and explore domains of meanings and processes which have not been adequately identified. For example, the focus on the difference between working and middle class has generally been an unexplored area in unemployment research.

Qualitative research is generally interested in the way in which people being studied understand and interpret their social reality (Bryman, 1993). The approach therefore entails the immersion in the daily life of the unemployed and values the participants' perspectives of their social world (Mason, 1997). Giving voice to those perspectives by the unemployed is the central issue with regard to the significance of qualitative research. Furthermore, Patton (1990) states that the environment of the subjects being studied should have " minimum investigator manipulation" and believes that the main point of qualitative research " is to understand naturally occurring phenomenon in naturally occurring settings" (p. 41).

How the unemployed construct and give meaning to their life is central to the qualitative procedure. What the study is interested in is not the physical / psychological symptoms and the behaviours of the unemployed, but rather how they comprehend this, how their understandings influence behaviour, and how it impacts on the construction of the self. Therefore, Maxwell (1996) believes that the perspectives on the actions and experiences held by the unemployed, should not only be seen as their account of the actions, but actually their reality that one is trying to understand. Qualitative research is thus interested in how the experience of the unemployed is socially constructed in a capitalist reality and how it is manifested in the life of the unemployed.

According to Mason (1997), it is not possible to maintain a safe distance from the politics of social research. When thinking about the significance of qualitative

inquiry on unemployment studies, one needs to consider issues about the socio-
political context of the unemployed directly and understand debates about, for
example, the usefulness or emancipatory potential of research (Marshall and
Rossman, 1989). Qualitative research procedures provide this opportunity far
beyond the statistical variables of quantitative research; it leads to a more complete
portrayal of the problems of the unemployed, and produces understandings on the
basis of rich, contextual and detailed data. Furthermore, a better understanding of
the class structure and the effects of the system of capitalism in general is possible
with qualitative research. For Marx, human action is based on history and culture
(Faulcorner and Williams, 1985). In turn, history and culture are manifestations of
the underlying economic and political consciousness. Qualitative research, by
collecting rich and detailed information, is capable of revealing the ways that
oppressive social formations impact on the relationship between labour and capital,
resulting in the current crisis of unemployment.
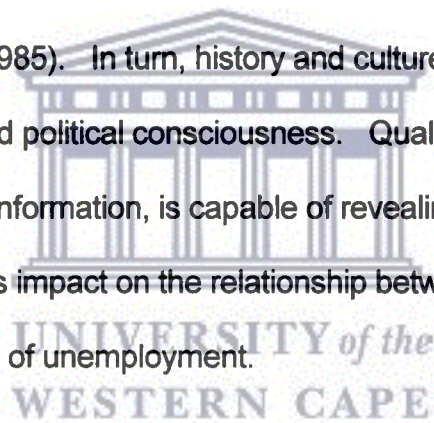
It is often suggested that the decision between quantitative and qualitative research
should merely be seen as a technical issue resting on the research question. Rist
(in Bryman 1993) however, warns against this and states that when:

> **"… we speak of quantitative and qualitative methodologies we**
>
> **are in the final analysis speaking of an interrelated set of**
>
> **assumptions about the social world which are philosophical,**
>
> **ideological, and epistemological" (p. 50).**

Furthermore, Filstead (1979) states that quantitative and qualitative methods

constitute opposing epistemological and conceptual frameworks for

comprehending social reality. They thus encompass more than just simple

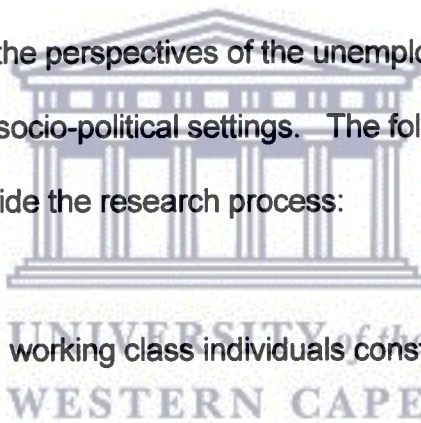research strategies and data gathering techniques.

Finally, Stevens (1996) contends that quantitative research and its associated

positivist paradigm may not always be compatible with contemporary social science

research and believes qualitative research to be "more suited to meaningful

research" as well as "ethically more appropriate" to studies of social interactions (pp.

24 – 28). While qualitative research can make a substantial contribution to the

discipline of psychology by providing fundamental skills and techniques to assist in

the generation of theory (Henwood and Pidgeon, 1993), it also allows the researcher

access to phenomena which may not have been visible had the domain of study

been rooted in a quantitative procedure (Bryman, 1993).

3.4 AIMS

The purpose of this research study is to gather information on the experiences of

unemployment from a group of unemployed working class individuals and a group of

unemployed middle class individuals, with particular regard to their constructions and

associated meanings of the psychological effects of unemployment. This research

does not have as its major intention, the influencing of policy making with regard to

the alleviation of unemployment or to provide us with an arsenal of job creation

strategies. Rather, the aim is to identify the psychological effects of unemployment and to explore how unemployment, as a socially constructed category, impacts on the working and middle class. In other words, how the unemployed working and middle class construct and give meaning to their social reality; and how they comprehend, interpret and experience unemployment, are the central motives for the study.

Gathering information from the perspective of the unemployed is the key issue in conducting a qualitative study. Therefore, Maxwell (1996) argues for a qualitative approach that emphasises the perspectives of the unemployed and the understanding of particular socio-political settings. The following research questions have been formulated to guide the research process:

I.   How do unemployed working class individuals construct and experience their unemployment?

II.   How do unemployed middle class individuals construct and experience their unemployment?

III.   To what extent are there differences/similarities in the constructions and experiences of unemployment for working class and middle class individuals?

3.5   MOTIVATION FOR USING FOCUS GROUPS AS A DATA COLLECTION

When deciding on which methodology to use in social sciences research, the deciding factor should be the purpose of the study.   According to Stewart and Shamdasani (1990), "the key to using focus groups successfully in social science research is assuring that their use is consistent with the objectives and the purpose of the study" (p. 76).   Therefore, the methodology should match the problem.

The focus groups must be designed and constructed in such a way as to be in line with the purpose of the study.   It is important to note that the focus groups were conducted separately with the working and middle class, and a comparison done in the analysis phase.   Knodel (in Morgan, 1993), has identified the usefulness of focus groups in comparing views of people with differing backgrounds or attitudes toward the problem.

Focus group research is essentially a methodology that collects qualitative data to provide insight into the attitudes, perceptions and opinions of the subjects.   The key motivation for the use of focus groups is that it is a socially orientated research procedure (Krueger, 1994).   People are social creatures who are influenced by the interaction with others and do not form opinions in isolation.   Albrecht, Johnson and Walther (in Morgan, 1993), contend that in focus groups interpersonal communication and social influence are 'omnipresent'.   Albrecht et al (in Morgan, 1993) believe that this communication, being both verbal and non-verbal, is a mutual

influencing process that reflects and reinforces cognitive patterns for all subjects involved. Furthermore, considering the fact that focus groups are social events, as well as the interactive nature of the process, the data gathered is more ecologically valid than methods that assess individuals' opinions in experimental settings (Morgan, 1993).

Another key consideration for using focus groups is that the direct interaction format allows the moderator to probe. Frey and Fontana (in Morgan, 1993), contend that besides being an excellent mechanism for reducing the distance between researcher and participant, its strength is that its flexibility allows considerable probing. This probing gives participants the opportunity to qualify their responses or highlight important contingencies related to the answers. This direct interaction also allows the researcher to observe non-verbal responses. In relation, focus group research has an open response format which elicits rich amounts of in-depth information and allows the researcher to obtain deep levels of meaning. The researcher can thus draw deeper meanings into the effects that unemployment has on them, and thus a greater depth of understanding is achieved. Unlike quantitative research, this is a critical issue as it allows the expression from the perspectives of the unemployed.

3.6 PARTICIPANTS

The purpose of the study drives the selection procedures, identifies the population, and highlights the degree of specification required in the sample (Kruger, 1994).

For the purpose of the study, two sets of focus groups were conducted for each social class group since the intent is a comparative study between unemployed working and middle class individuals. In support, Morgan (1993) states that when using focus groups in comparative studies with people of different backgrounds, the best approach is to hold separate focus groups for each group, and conduct the comparison in the interpretation phase.

For this research study, our population can be broadly defined as unemployed individuals in the Western Cape. More specifically, participants were conveniently selected from a working class residential area as well as a middle class residential area. Stewart and Shamdasani (1990) state that convenient sampling is the most common method used for selecting participants in focus groups. The participants for the working class groups were drawn from the Heideveld Township situated in an area known as the Cape Flats in the Western Cape. Heideveld was established to house people, who under the Group Areas Act, were forcibly relocated from areas reserved for the establishment of white communities. The participants for the middle class groups were drawn from the suburb of Wynberg, which traditionally housed a more affluent segment of the population of the Western Cape. Access to the participants was obtained via prominent community members in the various areas. Previous employment position and the level of conceptual input required in that position, as well as the level of formal education and skills was the criteria ultilised to determine the participants' membership to the required class group.

Krueger (1994) contends that it is important to note that the intent of focus groups is to understand and not to infer, to determine the range and not to generalise, to provide insights on people's opinions and perceptions of a situation and not to make statements about the population. Thus, what is required is a flexible research design, with randomisation not required as a primary factor.

Although Stewart and Shamdasani (1990) believe that effective focus groups require homogenous participants, it may not be the most effective and efficient way to generate data or to develop analysis and theory in this study. According to Mason (1997), participants should be selected in a way that will allow for key comparisons to be made, as well as to develop theoretical propositions. Therefore, homogeneity of participants will not be regarded as an important sampling criterion.

In the current study two focus groups, one hour long, were conducted for each social class group. Most literature e.g. Krueger (1994), Stewart and Shamdasani (1990), Ferreira and Puth (1990) and Morgan (1993), usually recommend a group size ranging from six to twelve participants. The working class participants consisted of a total of eighteen (nine in each group), three of which were women. Ages ranged between nineteen and forty-three years and all participants, with the exception of one, were married. The length of their unemployment ranged from six months to twenty-four months. The middle class groups consisted of a total of sixteen (eight in each group), four of which were women. The participants' ages ranged between

twenty-four and forty-three years and all participants were married. The length of their unemployment ranged from four to twenty-four months.
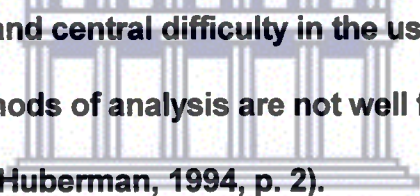
3.7 PROCEDURE

The two prominent community members from Wynberg and Heideveld were vital to the success of the group. They showed enormous interest in the study and were keen to provide help in any possible way. After an initial briefing with the researcher, the organisers arranged the participants for the groups, finalised the venues and times of the sessions, and even attended the groups to introduce the researcher to the participants.

After introductions, the aims and process of the study were conveyed to the participants. It was explained to them that the main aim of the study was to acquire a first hand understanding of how unemployment impacted on their life. Consent for their participation in the group as well as permission for using an audio recorder was obtained. Furthermore, participants were assured of anonymity and confidentiality.

From the onset the participants seemed eager to participate. The atmosphere in all the groups was comfortable, friendly, open and conducive to collecting information. The researcher used a semi-structured interview schedule, consisting of ten questions, to guide the research process, and to ensure that no relevant areas of

investigation were omitted during the interviews (see Appendix I). The questions
were all open-ended in order to maximise the amount of information received, and to
elicit rich detailed explanations (Krueger, 1994). Furthermore, the questions were
all worded and sequenced to extract the necessary information with regard to the
major aims of the study (Krueger, 1994). These questions were derived partly as a
result of the findings reflected in many previous studies and were meant to elicit
different experiences associated with unemployment.

3.8   DATA ANALYSIS

"The most serious and central difficulty in the use of qualitative

data is that the methods of analysis are not well formulated"

(Miles, in Miles and Huberman, 1994, p. 2).

The above statement centres on the main criticism launched against qualitative
research by the practitioners of quantitative research. Analysis guidelines, or lack
thereof, have left qualitative researchers reeling under fire from the canons of
credibility and validity. Patton (1990) believes that the root of the problem lies in the
fact that qualitative research generates massive amounts of data. He says, "I have
found no way of preparing students for the sheer massive volume of information with
which they will find themselves confronted with when data collection has ended" (p.
379). Miles and Huberman (1994) believe that it is a lack of a clearly defined social

reality that does not warrant the development of systematic methodological guidelines. Furthermore, Bertrand, Brown and Ward observed that there:

"... is minimal explanation of just what the analyst does and writes down ... It is unclear why so little has been written on the mechanics of the final steps of the research. Perhaps some consider that the procedure is self- evident and worthy of only the briefest mention. Others may feel that the techniques are not scientific enough to merit elaboration. A third reason may be that given the degree of insight and intuition necessary to the analysis of qualitative data, the question of how to approach the data is seen as the prerogative of the researcher" (Vaughn, Schumm and Sinagub, 1996, p. 104).
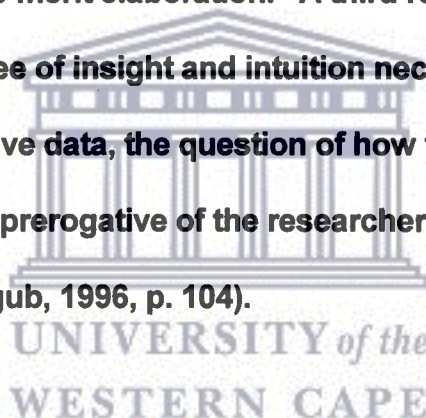
However, besides these apparent obstacles, it must be said that recent texts have begun to address the problem of analysis more vigorously. For example, Miles and Huberman (1994) effectively display matrix and network analysis. Strauss and Corbin (1990) have more effectively described grounded theory methods. Furthermore, inductive analysis (Patton, 1990), discourse analysis (Potter and Wetherall, 1992), grounded hermeneutic analysis (Addison, 1992), template analysis (Crabtree and Miller, 1992), and Thomson's (1990) depth hermeneutics, have emerged as well respected field methods.

Punch (1998) believes that the resultant diversity and variety in the emergent approaches stresses the point that there is no single right approach for analysing qualitative data. He adds that the deciding factor should rest on the purpose of the research. In agreement, Coffey and Atkinson (1996) state that "there is variety in techniques because there are different questions to be addressed and different versions of social reality that can be elaborated" (p. 14).

Most experts of focus group research believe that the type of analysis that is required, depends on the purpose of the study (Morgan, 1993). The first step in the analysis process is to have the interviews transcribed (Stewart and Shamdasani, 1990). This involves a word for word transcription from the audiotapes, coupled with field notes of the moderator. Since non-verbal communication, gestures, and behaviors are not affected in the transcript, it is necessary to supplement the transcript with notes made during the interview.

Krueger (1994) has highlighted a number of considerations when analysing focus group results. He firstly states that the researcher should note the actual choice and meaning of the words used by the participants. Furthermore, the researcher should consider the context of the response and interpret it according to the extent that other group members influenced the response. Finally, factors such as consistency, frequency, and intensity of the comments should also be noted to ensure effective and accurate interpretation (Krueger, 1994).

The specific thematic analysis procedure implemented in this study was put forward by Vaughn, Schumm, and Sinagub (1996). Before deciding on which procedure to utilise, it was important to consider factors such as number and size of the group, the research aims, the amount of analysis required, as well as the experience of the researcher. Thus, after careful consideration, it was decided that the procedure suggested by Vaughn et al (1996) was most appropriate. Their approach emphasises the inductive properties of analysis but also stresses that the analysis be systemic, practical and verifiable. The analysis is inductive to the extent that the researcher attempts to make sense of the situation without imposing pre-existing expectations on the phenomenon or setting under study (Patton, 1990). Patton (1990) believes that inductive analysis refers to the patterns, themes and categories of analysis that come from the data; "they emerge out of the data rather than being imposed on them prior to data collection and analysis" (p. 390). Inductive analysis begins with specific observations and builds towards general patterns. Categories or dimensions emerge from open-ended observations as the investigator identifies patterns and themes. Or as Punch (1998) states, "concepts are developed inductively from the data and raised to a higher level of abstraction, and their interrelationships are then traced out" (p. 201). Furthermore, findings are grounded in specific contexts; theories that result from the findings will be grounded in real world patterns.

The procedure of Vaughn et al (1996) is basically a rough adaptation of the "constant comparative method" (Glaser and Strauss, 1967) as well as methods

suggested by Lincoln and Guba (1985) and Krueger (1994). Their five-step
approach that the author used will now be briefly discussed.

The first step involved identifying the 'big ideas'. Here the researcher considered
the actual responses; ideas that have emerged in the group; intensity and frequency
of the responses; and non-verbal communication. Vaughn et al (1996) warn that
this should not be seen as a simple matter of counting a reported idea, but rather a
fragile and sophisticated process. "It requires an awareness of the extent to which
the theme is an emotional one or is important for a few of the participants versus all
the participants" (Vaughn et al, 1996, p. 105). Furthermore at this stage, the
emergent themes were regarded as impressions and not yet as conclusive findings.

The second step is referred to as unitising the data. This involved the process of
identifying, coding and classifying units of data that evolved into the defining
categories. According to Vaughn et al (1996), a unit should be regarded as the
smallest amount of interpretable information such as a phrase, sentence or
paragraph. The researcher then categorised the coded units into relevant content
related categories - that ultimately represented organisational themes.

After the themes, categories and supporting evidence had been finalised for each
individual social group; the researcher then attempted to identify themes and
categories across focus groups. Patton (1990) refers to this fourth step as cross-
case analysis. The final step re-examines the big ideas identified in the first step

and highlights the categories that support these ideas. These refined ideas were now considered definite themes. Vaughn et al (1996) state that the:

"… themes consider the big ideas from the focus group data as well as the information units and categories. The researcher's role is to identify the themes and determine the extent to which categories support these themes" (p. 112).

Marshall and Rossman (1989) believe that "identifying salient themes, recurring ideas or language, and patterns of belief that link people and settings together is the most intellectually challenging phase of data analysis and one that can integrate the entire endeavour" (p. 116). The resultant patterns, categories and emergent themes culminate into the development of the findings. It is significant to note, however, that the strength of the emergent findings would ultimately depend not only on effective data analysis procedures, but also on effective interpretation.

According to Patton (1990), interpretation involves "attaching significance to what was found, offering explanation, drawing conclusion, extrapolating lessons, making inferences, building linkages, attaching meanings, imposing order, dealing with rival explanations, disconfirming cases and data irregularities" (p. 423). Cresswell (1994) insists on an interpretation that advances from a theoretical framework consistent with the assumptions of an inductive qualitative design. In agreement, Miles and Huberman (1994) state that "a conceptual framework explains, either graphically or

in narrative form the main dimensions to be studied- the key factors or variables- and the presumed relationship among them" (p. 18). Furthermore, they add that the interpretation of qualitative data should occur within a specific historical, social and political context.

Qualitative interpretation therefore requires an elevated comprehension and focussed attention to analysed data, as well as a deep understanding of the intricacies of socio-political contents and the relationship between the two (Marshall and Rossman, 1989). The current study therefore follows an interpretation that is based on a Marxist understanding of material and historical conditions, and the manner in which this informs social constructions of the unemployed participants.

3.9   ETHICAL STATEMENT

According to Mason (1997), qualitative research should be conducted as an ethical practice within a political context. Considering this, there are a number of important points that need to be noted. Firstly, since unemployment is a sensitive issue, privacy and confidentiality were strictly maintained. A second consideration is that of informed consent. It was vital that the participants fully understood the purpose of the groups. They could have falsely believed that participation could result in securing employment, or that the research could improve employment opportunities in the immediate future. Furthermore, because of the sensitive nature of

unemployment, the moderator probed and gathered information in a way so as not to offend the participants and to further affect their psychological health.

Finally, as part of being a responsible and reflective researcher, the information obtained from the research process was relayed back to all participants to ensure that the research accurately depicted their constructions of reality. It also provided the participants with a dynamic format through which to engage the data, the researcher's interpretations, their own interpretations, as well as those of other participants involved in the study.

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CHAPTER FOUR
REPORT

4.1   INTRODUCTION

In this chapter a detailed report of the results of the current study utilising the thematic analysis method advocated by Vaughn, Schumm and Sinagub (1996), is provided.

For the qualitative researcher the rich detail of human experience that is uncovered, must be effectively conveyed (Maykut and Morehouse, 1994). This process requires "weaving descriptions, speakers' words, fieldnote quotations and their own interpretations into a rich and believable descriptive narrative" (Strauss and Corbin, 1990, p. 22), that enables the audience to have access to the interpretations made by the researcher.

The discussion of the themes was informed by the literature reviewed, the research questions which have guided the study, and the theoretical frameworks identified in Chapter Two. Of particular interest is the manner in which these themes have emerged comparatively for the working and middle classes. The final product will thus consist of a construction of the participants' experiences and the meanings they attach to them (Cresswell, 1994). Firstly however, to locate the themes within its social-historical context, a brief sketch of South Africa's labour history is provided.

4.2   THE SOCIO-HISTORICAL CONTEXT

South Africa's political and labour market histories were characterised in fundamental ways by strategic legislation, intent on abetting political agendas and securing 'white' economic interests.   The establishment of a cheap labour system was paramount in this regard.   From as early as 1894, legislation such as The Glen Gray Act (1894), The Land Act (1913), The Industrial Conciliation Act (1924), The Wage Act (1925) and The Mines and Workers Act (1926), together with the implementation of pass laws, hut laws, and poll taxes, were instrumental in perpetuating this cheap labour system.   This legislation essentially laid the basis for a racially discriminatory labour market (Alexander, 2000; Barber, 1999; van der Berg and Bhorat, 1999).

With the advent of institutionalised racism (Apartheid) in 1948, came further legislation for 'non-whites', "that sought to undermine their ability to accumulate human capital, to increase their wages, to gather relevant job experience, and to negotiate for better wages and working conditions (van der Berg and Bhorat, 1999, p. 7).   The economy seemed to thrive on this divided workforce in the early twentieth century as well as in the 1960's global economic boom. However, with industrialisation, the continuing growth of capitalism and the consequent need for a skilled labour force, segregated labour was becoming a significant hindrance to economic progress.   Furthermore, chronic industrial action was dramatically reducing profits and productivity.   In search of a solution,

the South African Government initiated two commissions of inquiry, led by Professor Nic Wiehahn and Dr. Piet Riekert respectively. Under recommendation from these commissions, pass laws and job reservations were scrapped and 'non-whites' were allowed to participate in skills acquisition. But these measures appeared to be insufficient to rescue a now failing economy, plagued by global economic sanctions and the intensification of foreign disinvestment (Alexander, 2000; van der Berg and Bhorat, 1999).

Between the years 1976 and 1990 unemployment had increased by 32%. By 1994, it was estimated that half of the economically active population was unable to secure formal sector employment. By this time capitalism had created a more skilled, dangerously educated, and passionately militant 'non-white' proletariat, that was instrumental in initiating South Africa's first democratic election (Alexander, 2000; van der Berg and Bhorat, 1999). Therefore, it appears that apartheid essentially "created its own gravedigger" (Alexander 2000, p. 126).

Growing unemployment effectively translates into a higher incidence of poverty and general social degradation. Poverty is therefore regarded as a profoundly political issue (Wilson and Ramphela, 1989), a harsh remnant of more than a century of oppression, exploitation and racially conceived inequality. The core issue in fighting poverty is to create jobs. However, depending on whose statistics one subscribes to, the harsh reality is that the current rate of

unemployment stands between 30% and 50% of the population (Labour Research Report, 1997).

According to the United Nation's South African Human Development Report 2000, eighteen million South African's, which translates into nearly half the population, are living in poverty (Sylvester, 2000). Besides South Africa's legacy of inequality, the chief culprit was identified as the adopted macro-economic policy of Growth, Employment and Redistribution, or GEAR.

Since GEAR's inception, economists such as Chossudovsky (in Blake, 1996), were sceptical of its job creating potential. Chossudovsky argued that GEAR was a photocopy of a typical Structural Adjustment Programme, that had a long history of creating economic havoc and social misery (Blake, 1996). In support of his argument, Andrew Levy and Associates found that during the period 1997-1998, "from a period of so-called 'jobless growth' through the mid -1990's, the economy actually appeared to be moving into a phase of 'job-shedding growth'" (CASE, p. 12). Indeed, the United Nation's Report similarly found that GEAR was unable to stimulate growth in the core economy and consequently failed to create more jobs (Sylvester, 2000). Moreover, they also found evidence to support the contention that GEAR was actually contributing to a rapid escalation of 'job-shedding growth'. Of further significance is GEAR's inefficiency in generating meaningful social relief expenditure (Sylvester, 2000). Chossudovsky (in Blake, 1996) therefore appears to have been tragically

accurate when he predicted that persistence with the GEAR economic strategy would lead to a bleak picture of massive job losses, increased inflation, and decline in social relief expenditure.

4.3 EMERGING MEANINGS

In social constructionism, emphasis is placed on the ways we negotiate the meanings within a social environment.   Therefore, before we consider the themes that emerged, it may be beneficial to deliberate on how these meanings were conveyed.   Thus, the researcher was interested in the role of language in conveying the meanings.

Scheibe (1994) scratches the surface when he suggests that meanings emerge when the respondents' description is socially transformed through narrative discourse, into a self-contained explanation.   In this sense, the narrative functions to elucidate the meanings that dwell at a deeper psychological level. To arrive at a more comprehensive answer, it may be necessary to go deeper.

Consider the traditional view of language that followed from an empiricist view of language as reflecting reality.   In this tradition, social scientists subscribed to the picture theory of language (i.e. words function as pictures and are used to describe what we experience).   It follows then that truth can be conveyed through language.   Social constructionism vehemently rejects this belief and

insists that there is no privileged relationship between word and world (Durrheim, 1997; Gergen, 1999). They favour an understanding of language as constructive. Support for the constructionist argument is found in the work of Wittgenstein. He essentially replaces the picture metaphor with that of the "language game", which is in turn embedded in a broader range of social practices or "forms of life". Wittgenstein (1978) further argues that words acquire their meaning by "its use in the language", or as Austin (1962) put it, we "do things with words". Others such as Durrheim (1997), Gergen (1994), Parker (1992) and Sarbin (1993) add the relational dimension to the equation. They believe that a word only becomes meaningful by its relation to other words. Therefore, the descriptions the respondents conveyed through the narrative, function as truth telling because of their successful functioning in the relational ritual (Gergen, 1999).
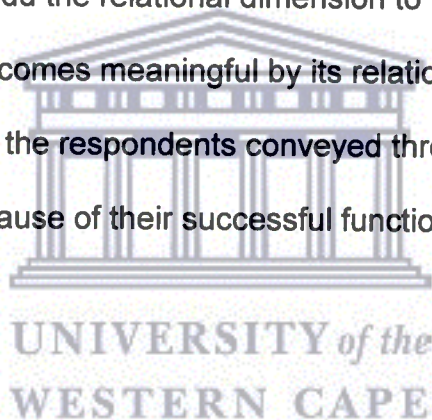
The meanings of our worlds therefore emerge through the functional character of words, in relation to other words, from within particular social conventions.

4.4 THEMES

The central theoretical assumption, that unemployment would be experienced differently by working and middle class individuals, emerged as the central theme in the study, around which all other themes were based. Countless examples were evident in the interviews of how unemployment impacted differently on the

working and middle class. The meanings attached to unemployment within the psychological and social thematic categories conspicuously conveyed these differences.

4.4.1 The Psychological Meanings

It was immediately apparent that both classes suffered severe psychological ill health directly related to unemployment. Of greater importance to the current study is an in depth understanding of the degree to which these experiences highlighted social class distinction as a significant factor. Consequent discussions will reveal that issues surrounding the severity of psychological distress are linked primarily to the concepts of work commitment and poverty.

Most participants from the working class cited feelings of guilt, shame, inferiority and low self-esteem. This reiterates the belief of White (1991), who states that working class individuals are strongly influenced by traditional work roles. Feelings of guilt and inferiority were surrounded by dialogue about being unable to provide for the family.

> Working class (G)   Ek het all right guilty gevoel. Is amper soos jy jou familie verlaat.
>
> Working class (F1) Ek het ook guilty gevoel. Jou vrou en kinders depend mos op jou.

Working class (F2) En 'n man voel soos daar niks is wat jy kan

doen nie.   Waar moet ons geld kry vir kos en kleure.   Wanner ons

werk verloor kan jy al die hongerte voel.

Working class (D2) Die bottom line is; ons kinders lui honger, en

die kouede vang hulle die swaarste.

Working class (F1) Sien jy as jou motjie (wife) jou aan die lewe

hou is dit nie reg nie.   Dan is jy mos nie 'n man nie.

Working class (D1) Soos ons niks werd is nie.   Sonder werk is jy

hulpeloos.

Working class (M2) Ons voel verwaarloos, mismoedig (frustrated),
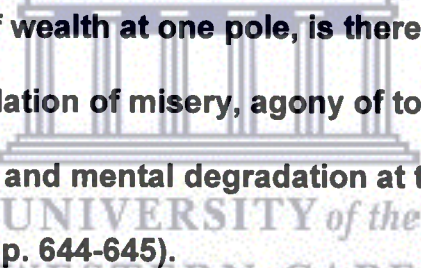
baie, baie mismoedig.
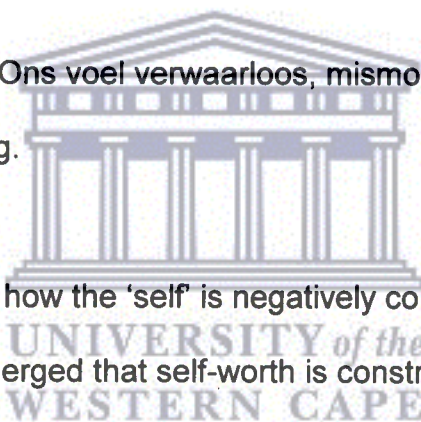
The above extract conveys how the 'self' is negatively constructed within a

capitalist framework.   It emerged that self-worth is constructed as a function of

one's capacity to provide for the family and to be a productive contributor to

society.   Their "*guilt*", feeling that they are worth "*nothing*" as well as feelings of

helplessness, are a direct result of defining themselves within the capitalist

framework, as providers, breadwinners, or in relation to their productive capacity.

In this sense their "*guilt*" in relation to their family is reflective of their guilt in

relation to society, as the 'family' becomes society's arm of accountability.   This

functions to keep the individuals in the production process and ultimately

reinforces and perpetuates the entire cyclical and exploitative production system.

Crompton (1993) argues that in such instances, a socially constructed inferior

status has facilitated economic exploitation of a particularly severe kind. The participants further distinguish between acceptable and unacceptable behaviour "*is dit nie reg n*ie" (its not right) in terms of society's rules. What comes across as a moral judgement is actually a manifestation of capitalist ideals and clearly illustrates how capitalism, as an ideology, has pervaded South African society.

The discourses further portrayed the absolute desperation and helplessness (*jy's hulpeloos*) of the situation. Comments such as "*soos ons niks werd is nie*" (like we are worth nothing), and "*ons voel verwaarloos*" (we feel worthless), further depict feelings of worthlessness suffered by the unemployed. These feelings essentially paint a picture of how the ruling ideologies alienate individuals from society. The repetition of the word "*ons*" (our), further reveals a sense of alienation. The effects of being alienated are that it renders the individual powerless. Furthermore, it destroys individualism, shackles self-determinism and causes intense "*frustration*", which has the ability to further destabilise the individuals' psychological integrity. Where the working class were historically at the mercy of white political domination, they are now at the mercy of the market.

The use of words such as "*hongerte*" (hunger) and "*koude*" (coldness), as well as the repetition and emphasis on words such as "*kos*" (food) and "*kleure*" (clothes), conveyed a discourse of poverty and demonstrated the sheer financial deprivation and blatant implications of poverty faced by the working class. The term "*waneer ons werk verloor kan ons al die hongerte voel*" (when we lose our

jobs we can already feel the hunger), strongly conveys the immediacy of the impact of unemployment. The working class does not possess any financial reserves to buffer the impact of sudden job loss. The psychological ill health experienced by the working class therefore stems directly from the resultant financial deprivation and poverty. These revealing comments found consensus with all participants of the working class groups who easily identified with the hardships of starvation and the lack of money needed for basic necessities such as clothes, blankets and electricity. Marx blames the capitalist production system and argues that:

"… accumulation of wealth at one pole, is therefore at the same time, accumulation of misery, agony of toil, slavery, ignorance, brutality and mental degradation at the opposite pole" (Marx, 1970, pp. 644-645).

From a social constructionist standpoint, the emerging psychological phenomena do not only reflect individual responses to unemployment but also deeper structural/ social relations between unemployment and society. In other words, one should not view the psychological manifestation of unemployment as mere indicators of the constructions of unemployed individuals, but rather as a guide to understanding their constructions of the relationships between the institutions of family and employment, within a capitalist society. Essentially, this implies that there exists a dialectical relationship between the psychological manifestations of unemployment and society.

The psychological imbalances for the middle class groups were found to be directly related to the issue of work commitment. It is of importance to note that they displayed values associated with intrinsic work commitment as well as a great internalisation of the ideals, values and norms associated with a capitalist society. Marx believed that individuals with an intrinsic work commitment would suffer extreme alienation under unemployment since they have lost their self-confirming essence (Arnold, 1990). Participants were asked "how they felt on becoming unemployed". Responses suggest that the middle class participants tended towards determining their value as a person by their job description and perceived their work to be a significant contributor to self-definition.

Middle class (S)   For me my work was my life. So if you searching for issues pertaining to self-esteem, I can definitely concur. I think my self-esteem is at its lowest point ever.

Middle class (H)   While one can be aware of all the variables and complexities, it doesn't eliminate or even lessen the impact that being unemployed has on your psyche. What I'm saying is that you begin to feel inferior or useless, even when you know you shouldn't.

Middle class (B)   I agree, it should be easy to deal with, but it's far from that. If I'm not practising then what am I. There is a tremendous amount of stress.

Middle class (C)   It placed a tremendous strain on day to day functioning.

I: How come, could you explain?

Middle class (C)   For example, going to the shops is stressful these days, because you have to constantly be on the lookout for people you know, to avoid them.   If you run in to anybody you know, then you are forced to face a battery of uncomfortable questions all regarding your work.

Middle class (H)   It's a result of the negative connotations associated with unemployment.   As we mentioned earlier, you end up thinking less of yourself even if it is unjustified.   And societal influences only add to the dilemma.
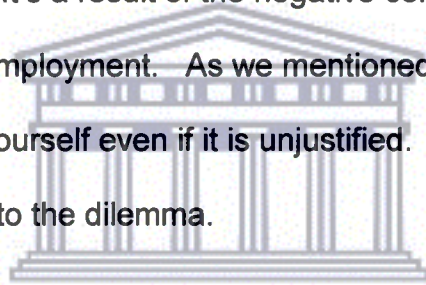
The participants reported stress to be the main psychological effect experienced since becoming unemployed.   However, the stress was frequently associated with the sudden loss of status in a social circle where type of employment directly determined the social hierarchy.   Furthermore, Watson (1996) argues that employment positions one in the power structures of society.   Phrases such as "*my work was my life*" and "*If I'm not practising, then what am I*", further reveal that employment is central to self-definition.   Employment is therefore seen as the 'meaning' generator and the primary building block of the 'self' and social identity.   Similarly, Watson (1996) states that employment "plays a significant role in the way we are perceived and evaluated by others, and as such, is a

significant factor in the construction of *self* and *identity*" (p. 247). Therefore, the social reality of the middle class participants appears to be constructed around the status of a working person. Unemployment, consequently, furnishes grounds for feelings of 'shame' as the middle class participants perceive themselves as inadequate in relation to society. This consequently impacts on the stability of the self-image.

The experience of unemployment is therefore constructed in relation to the 'self', which means that the individual is perceived as their 'own' arm of accountability. Therefore, having to reconstruct one's life without employment could result in a negative 'self' and a disrupted social identity. This implies that the psychological functioning of the middle class would be hampered since a significant structure that governs their existence and provides them with a sense of being, has been removed.
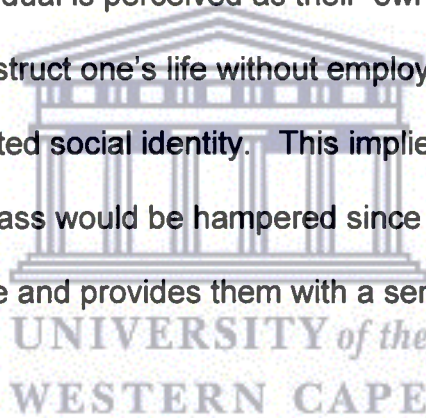
In relation, the respondents further revealed that the construction of their self-identity is actually beyond their control, since "*you begin to feel useless even when you no you shouldn't*" and "*you end up thinking less of yourself even if it is unjustified*". In this sense, they have become alienated from the process of constructing the 'self' and forced to adopt the image that capitalism bestows. This assumption is based on Marx's belief that people are products of society and are often forced to adopt the images which society place upon them. Marx and Engels state that:

"... **as long as activity is not voluntary, but naturally, divided**

man's own deed becomes an alien power opposed to him,

instead of being controlled by him. For as soon as the

distribution of labour comes into being, each man has a

particular, exclusive sphere of activity, which is forced upon

**him and from which he cannot escape" (1967, p. 54).**

This implies that the individuals' position in the system of labour, although involuntary, creates material conditions and social institutions, that eventually gain an independence over and above the individuals, by exerting an objective power which ultimately dominates them (Larrain, 1983).

Further examination of the responses expose issues inextricably linked, but beyond work commitment and social status. It was found that the actual act of competing in the social hierarchy (e.g. as a chemical engineer) appeared to give meaning to the middle class. The effect of unemployment is that it denies them qualification to the competition, thereby severing a significant contributor of meaning in their lives. This is evident by the use of the word "*what*" instead of "*who*" in the statement, "if I'm not practising, then *what* am I". This use of the term "*what*" denotes a construction of the self as a physical entity; "a chemical engineer" as opposed to "John Smith". This suggests that the individual is not only a chemical engineer in his work environment, but also whilst interacting with society in general.

Closer examination of the middle class interviews further elucidates fractions within the middle class, with some of the participants contentiously reporting conflicting degrees of impact.

> Middle Class (F)   I think I'm in the wrong group.   These guys don't appear to have any financial problems.   And that's all I can think about, where am I going to get money for the next month?   I'm suffering I tell you.
>
> Middle Class (B)   No, No.   I agree with you.   It's the beginning of the month and I don't have any food in the house, and no money to buy food.
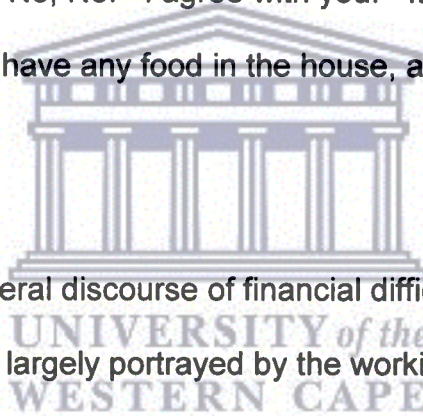
The responses show a general discourse of financial difficulty, which as discussion has revealed, is largely portrayed by the working class.   Furthermore, the use of the terms "*they*", "*them*" and "*these guys*" when referring to other members of the group, suggest an active attempt not to be identified as members of the group, and consequently indicates the fragmentation of the middle class group into various strata; or *fractions* in Marxist terms.   The presence of these fractions appear to support the contention that conventional class boundaries are radically shifting and resulting in the heterogeneity of social actors (Crompton, 1993).   These volatile processes disrupt the functioning of the economic system, since it requires stable social structures to function effectively.   Consequently an interesting contradiction arises where unemployment, which is itself created by

the prevailing economic system, appears to be fuelling these processes.

The psychological reactions of both classes are primarily a direct result of the socially constructed nature of unemployment. These reactions also reflect, in some ways, internalised ideological constructions operating at a broader social level. The social reality of the unemployed therefore exists within a framework of negative conceptions, shared perceptions and stereotyped assumptions that operate within a framework of an exclusionary and exploitative regime. The psychological manifestations consequently represent underlying features in society itself. This understanding of how unemployment is socially produced and maintained would be the vital first step in combating the perpetration of unemployment.
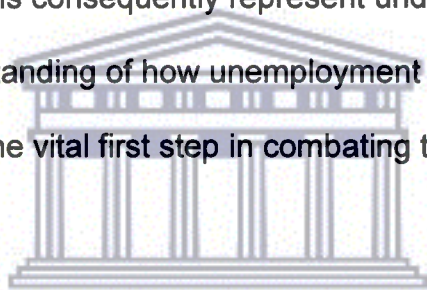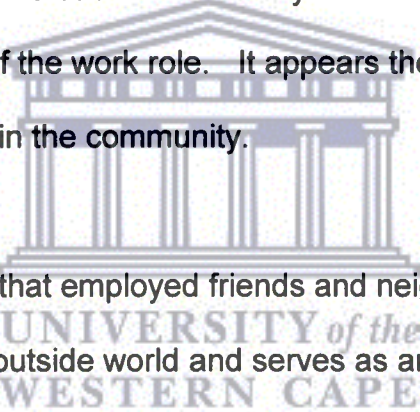
4.4.2 The Social Meanings

4.4.2.1 Social Interaction

A prominent theme emerged surrounding the relationship between social interaction and psychological well being. Reynolds and Gilbert (1991) found that unemployment resulted in less psychological distress if there existed effective social interaction outside the workplace. By increasing social interaction the unemployed is compensating for the loss in social interaction that formal employment provides.

Against traditional beliefs the current study found that working class participants reported an increase rather than a decrease in the amount of time they spent with friends and neighbours. It appeared to be an integral part of their daily routine, and there was no tendency to sever contacts with friends as would be implied by the social withdrawal thesis (Gallie et al, 1995). This implies a greater tenacity to patterns of sociability for the working class. Similarly Warr and Payne (1983) point to an integration of the unemployed in the working class communities. Reiterating the theoretical belief of Jahoda, Gallie et al (1995) tentatively suggest that this increase in sociability could reflect an effort at compensation for the loss of the work role. It appears then, that the working class is seeking refuge within the community.

Responses further indicate that employed friends and neighbours represent a significant contact with the outside world and serves as an inquiry base for employment opportunities. Similarly, Gallie and Vogler (1995) state that, "through such sociability, they are more likely to receive information on the grapevine about available jobs" (p. 150).

> Working class (F1) Ek is baie by Grebo, sienjy, hy's mos op die
> pad en kan mos uitkyk vir graaf vir n' man.
> Working class (F2) Jou brasse (friends) kyk uit vir jou, verstaan, in
> die land is it belangrik om saam te staan, jy weet nooit nie- more
> oormore draai die wiel.

I: And what else do you do there?

Working class (M)   Ons chill net, miskien 'n bier of twee- of ons kap 'n pyp.

Working class (D1)   Jy lam it net uit en watch t. v. – en it help jou om beter te voel – 'n bier of 'n game dominoes of kaare.   En op die naweek is daar altyd 'n lekker game op.

I: Where do get the money for those things?

Working class (M)   Ons gooi saam.   Daar is altyd geld as jy saam gooi.   Ons kyk na mekaar.

I: Do you guys ever go out to look for work?

Working class (M)   Jaare my broer, elke dag skarrel 'n man vir graaf.

Working class (F1)   It gets to you.   I looked for work for a solid two weeks with no luck.
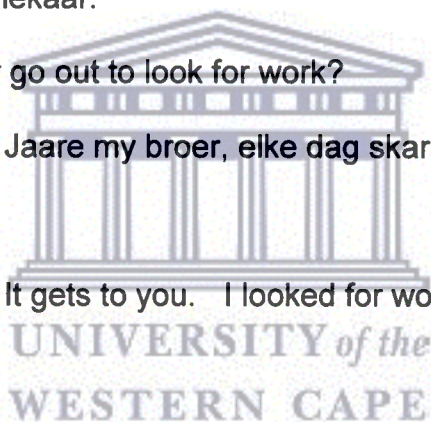
The participants' discourses clearly indicate 'social relations' as a means of compensation for the loss of the work role.   The extract further delineates the presence of solidarity and strong in-group favouritism.   The use of the terms such as "*jou brasse kyk uit vir jou*" (your friends look out for you), "*belangrik om saam te staan*" (important to stand together), "*ons kyk na mekaar*" (we take care of each other) and "*ons gooi saam*" (we club together) show how unemployment as a common denominator serves to construct bonds and intimate relationships between members of the working class.   Furthermore, while the participants'

allusion to an involvement in substance abuse may be considered socially

dysfunctional, it could also be perceived as opportunities for social interaction

that serve to enhance social relationships. Responses further indicate that the

working class participants attached extreme significance to friendship and

displayed a high level of co-operation. The usage further implies that the

working class perceives and categorise themselves on the basis of their class

group, and not their employment status.

Considering the above, it appears that social cohesion and strong social support

networks have developed within the working class community. Unemployment

therefore, serves to confirm community ties and social relationships between

members. This reiterates the theoretical view of Tajfel's Social Identity Theory

that demonstrates how in-group favouritism helps forge bonds between members

of a group. If unemployment fosters social cohesion and community

relationships, one would intuitively question the experiences under formal

employment. However, it would be important to take cognisance of the fact that

under capitalism, unemployment and employment should be perceived as a

single cyclical process. In other words, it should be seen as a single entity that

functions to ensure the perpetuation of the capitalist system.

Unemployment is further perceived as a daily and natural occurrence. This is

reflective of the capitalist labour production system that regulates the "reserve

army of labour" and effectively dictates the unemployment numbers. Similarly,

Moller (1993) believes that for the working class the "composition of the unemployed sector of society begins to closely resemble that of the population as a whole" (p. 58). It was further found that the social networks of working class unemployed, consisted of a high proportion of unemployed friends. The significance of this is stated by Gallie et al (1995).

"Unemployed friends were less likely to be in a position to offer strong psychological support or effective assistance in meeting financial problems or the difficulties of finding a job. The nature of the social networks of the unemployed offered relatively few opportunities for alleviating the stress of unemployment and helped to lock the unemployed into a position of labour market disadvantage" (p. 257).

Several comments reveal the belief that theirs is a culture of unemployment.

Working class (D1) As jy geretrench is, of jou besigheid maak toe.
Is mos nie jou skuld nie.

Working class (F1) Wat kan jy doen, die hele land gaan net so.

Working class (R) Ja is bad vir almal. Daar is nerens werk nie.
Die government moet its doen.

Working class (A) Is die ekonomie van die land wat werkloosheid veroorsaak. Ander lande wil nie besigheod maak met ons nie. En
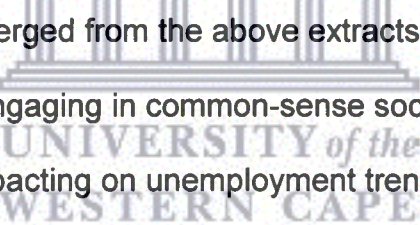
sien jy as hulle geld in sit dan maak it die ekonomie sterk. Maar daar's te veel violence en korrupsie.

Working class (F2)   Ja is mooilik, maar is waar wat hy se, is die hele land.

Working class (A2)   Is glad nie die hele land nie.   Sienjy, eerste was it apartheid en die whities het al die werk gekry, en nou is dit affirmative action en die daakies kry al die werk.

Working class (R)   We nothing, we cares about us.

Working class (F2)   Hier in die Heideveld is werkloosheid part van die lewe.

Two significant aspects emerged from the above extracts.   Firstly, the participants appear to be engaging in common-sense social commentary on the macro-economic issues impacting on unemployment trends.   The responses suggest an understanding of the broader socio-economic issues as the root of the unemployment problem.   In this respect they appear to have located the problem externally.   For example, the use of the terms "*is die ekonomie van die land wat werkloosheid veroorsaak*" (it's the economy of the land that causes unemployment and "*die government moet its doen*" (the government must do something), reveal how the working class externalise the blame for their situation and place it squarely on societal and governmental shoulders.   The use of the word "*moet*" (must) underscores this contention.   They have thus managed to construct their unemployment within a political institution.   Similarly Moller (1993)

found that "the unemployed perceive their situation to be part of a larger process and not one of their own, failing for which they are alone responsible" (p. 58).

Furthermore, the extract highlights the issues of victimisation under the former apartheid system, as well as the notion that they appear to be marginalised under the current dispensation. The 'racialised' discourses (Stevens, 1996) conveyed by the use of term "*eerste was dit apartheid en die whities het al die werk gekry, ... is dit affirmative action en die daakies kry al die werk*", and perceiving themselves as "*nothing, who cares about us*", support the perception of themselves as a marginalised social category under the present affirmative action dispensation. These discourses further function to conceal the contradictions of oppressive social formations. Since the respondents ascribe blame to the "*whities*" and "*daakies*" and not the system of production, the exploitative ideology is further perpetuated and reinforced. These 'racial' explanations are therefore indicative of the way 'race' functions as an ideological apparatus (Althusser, 1971), which facilitates the continuance of oppressive relations of production.

A certain degree of anger was also detected in its delivery, which could represent discontent and a fear of being economically deprived through a new form of oppression. Ashmore and Del Boca (in Stevens, 1996) point out that this anger at the 'blacks' being granted economic privileges, formally enjoyed by other categories of society, is typical of societies undergoing social transition. It is

nonetheless ironic that this phenomenon is present in the respondents'

discourses, since it is usually expressed by 'whites'. Stevens (1996), however

points out, that it is the 'economically' deprived social character of the working

class that generates these feelings of discontent. It is this social class that has

been historically deprived of access to economic resources. He says that:

"… the perception of threat generates a compensatory

defensiveness, particularly for the working class who requires

these resources for their basic survival… when the working

class perceives its meagre economic resources to be under

threat from others… we have seen the backlash towards

'ethnic' separatism, xenophobia and even neo-fascism as a

means of defending them" (Stevens, 1996, p. 92).

It is also interesting to note the usage of the words "apartheid" and "affirmative

action" as two sides of the same coin. Therefore, It is apparent that the term

'affirmative action' has been transformed from liberatory discourse,

sensationalised by media and mainstream political discourse (Stevens, 1996), to

that of exclusion and oppression. The term is now conceived with equal

contempt to that of the job reservations policy of the apartheid legislature.

This externalisation and disassociation from the blame depicts a somewhat

successful, if not unjustifiable, coping skill that functions as a psychological

defence mechanism. In this way the inability to secure employment can be attributed to external causes, thereby preserving the self-esteem.

However, the 'oppression' portrayed above is not simply a result of forceful racist domination. "More often oppression follows from ideological domination through hegemonic meaning structures which mask real relationships of power" (Grundy, 1987, p. 114). The second aspect to emerge was the concept of hegemony. The concept, coined by the Italian Marxist, Antonio Gramsci[5], is clearly demonstrated in the use of the terms "*Wat kan jy doen, die hele land gaan so*", or more powerfully in "*Hier in die Heideveld is werkloosheid part van die lewe*", and "*that's how it's supposed to be*". The presence of these hegemonic discourses reflects how the dominant values and beliefs permeate the working class society. Thus Marx and Engels state that the "ruling class are in every epoch the ruling ideas, i.e. the class which is the ruling material force of society is also the intellectual force" (1970, p. 64). Domination is achieved through passive acceptance as well as active consent to these dominant ideas (Holub, 1992; Milner, 1999). Grundy (1987) therefore believes that ideology, which simply refers to the dominant ideas and beliefs of a group or culture, functions through hegemony. Apple (1979) states that:

"... hegemony acts to saturate our very consciousness, so that the educational economic and social world we see and

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[5] Gramsci's discussion of the concept of hegemony can be found in Q. Hoare and G. Nowell-Smith (Trans.) (1971). *Selections from Prison Notebooks.*

interact with, and the commonsense interpretations we put on it, becomes the … only world.   Hence hegemony refers not to congeries of meaning that reside at the abstract level… Rather it refers to an organised assemblage of *meanings* and practices, the central effective and dominant systems of *meanings*, values and actions which are lived" (p. 5, emphasis added).

Ideology is thus in operation when the socially shared meanings that emerge within the culture of unemployment, is unreflectively accepted.   In this sense ideology distorts the reality (Grundy, 1987) of the unemployed, by masking the socially constructed nature of unemployment and allowing it to appear natural. This results in a distortion of reality, described by Marxists as 'false consciousness' (Burr, 1997; Crompton, 1993).
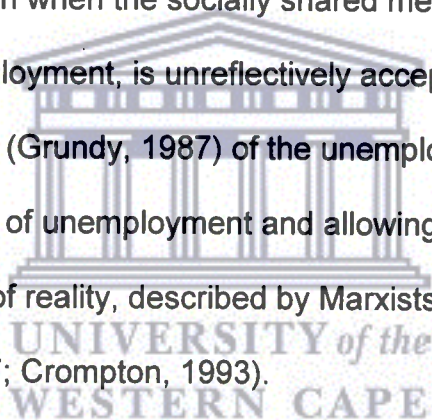
Responses from the middle class participants, however, tended to support the view that unemployment undercuts sociability.   Some of the more revealing comments further expose issues surrounding social status as well as negative stereotypes regarding unemployment, as directly influencing the participants' withdrawal.

Middle class (Y)   It's embarrassing to run into people you know. That's why it's better to stay at home and avoid those potentially

embarrassing situations.   Think of it as an effective coping

strategy, necessary to ensure sanity...

Middle class (N)   I tend not to partake in social visits as often as

I was used to.

I: Why is that?

Middle class (N)   I suppose I'm trying to avoid the attached

stigma, or I'm not too sure.   It just feels uncomfortable.

Middle class (C)   Well I suppose it relates to the perceptions that

we think society have regarding the unemployed.   And most

definitely related to psychological functioning as we mentioned

earlier.

Middle class (A)   Yes, I agree. Also it is important to understand

that while I am familiar with the functioning of issues such as

embarrassment, social stigma, stereotypes and the such, one

would think it could easily be dealt with.   However, in reality it

appears to be more complicated and the effects are definitely

internalised.

Most middle class participants identified the socially shared negative perceptions

and stereotypes regarding the unemployed as a critical contributor to poor

psychosocial functioning.   Participants' discourses were indicative of an

internalisation of the dominant oppressive ideology.   These discourses together

with an emphasis on words such as "*social stigma*", "*embarrassing*" and

"*stereotypes*", further reveal the manner in which the dominant ideology, at the inter-social level, is reflected, produced and perpetuated, through discursive practices.   The direct implications of this are effected in their socially withdrawn behavioural patterns.   It is important to note that the middle class participants seem to have a great psychological investment in the structures of formal employment, as both the self-identity as well as the social identity is determined by the employment position.   Therefore, for the middle class, the embarrassment and 'shame' of being unemployed directly impacts on their social activity.   This is further supported by active attempts to "*avoid*" the possibility of confrontation. On another level, employment could be metaphorically compared to an addictive substance that maintains the systems of self-identity and social identity, which is needed to function effectively in a capitalist society.   Unemployment, consequently, disrupts these systems resulting in poor psychological and social functioning.
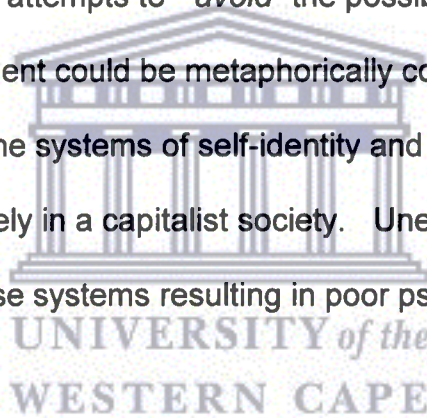
Subtly emerging in the discourses, and especially considering the earlier presence of fragmentation, was a sense of contradictory interests within the middle class.   On the one hand they are indifferent to the plight of the working class.   On the other hand though, they are like the working class, since unemployment has extracted them from prominent positions in the production process (Wright, 1989).   Therefore, while their responses would at times appear conservative, they also often embody radical social commentary about the exploitative relations between state and society.   It is important to note that

historically, educated middle class individuals, with a heightened sense of critical consciousness, were responsible for the shaping of anti-capitalist opinions and ideas that stood in opposition to oppressive social formations (Ossowski, 1967).

Also significant, is the high level of emotion present in the delivery of some of the responses.   Participants were often prepared to engage in extended commentary in order to clarify a response.   Indeed, these phenomena were also strikingly present in the working class interviews.   This suggests that the participants were rarely given an opportunity to express themselves on a social platform and consequently viewed these interview sessions as a platform to this end.   This again points to issues of marginalisation and isolation.

Several participants also argued that unemployment was perceived to be contagious and that 'others' would avoid confrontation at all costs.   This is clearly portrayed in the following extract.

> Middle class (A)   If people hear that you are unemployed, the
> conversation is quickly terminated.   You can see it in their facial
> expressions, their body language and their voice.   They just want
> to get away from you, for fear of contracting the unemployment
> disease.   It's every man for himself out there.
>
> Middle class (R)   Your friends don't want to know you anymore.
> I think the worst part is if they actually avoid you the next time they

see you.

Middle class (Y)   We've unemployment leprosy.

I: What do you mean?

Middle class (Y)   If they spend too much time with us, their job is

going to fall off.

The above extract strongly reflects how unemployment is negatively constructed

by society.   The unemployed, although necessary for the successful functioning

of the system, is positioned at the lower echelon of society and needs to be

isolated.   The fact that the "*conversation is quickly terminated*" when "*people*

hear that you are unemployed" and that their "*facial expressions*" and behaviour

is dramatically altered, suggests that the word "unemployment" has evolved into

an extremely powerful social cue that essentially assists the isolation and

marginalisation process.   These constructions are actually internalised as social

pressures, which have the capacity to disrupt the psychological and social

functioning of the individual.   This disruption affects the self-identity and self-

worth and results in the individuals perpetuating and maintaining their 'own'

marginalisation and isolation.   In this way the 'self' has become the subject and

object of rule, or as Joyce (1995) argues, "we rule ourselves" (p. 4).

The metaphorical use of the term "*leprosy*" to describe society's reaction to

unemployment further supports this contention.   The analogy of unemployment

with this incurable contagious disease and the "*fear*" that they instil into society

further promotes unemployment as a dangerous entity that needs to be severed from society. At a deeper level this exposes how society essentially denies responsibility for unemployment and constructs it as a problem that is internal to the unemployed. The "*every man for himself*" attitude delineates distinct rifts between the employed and unemployed and effectively promotes further alienation of those without work. The term is clearly class defined and functions to perpetuate the internalisation of the dominant ideology. It consequently portrays society as a battleground where individual gain and search for profit, rather than collaboration, co-operation and a consideration for human needs, are necessary for survival.

4.4.2.2   Family Functioning
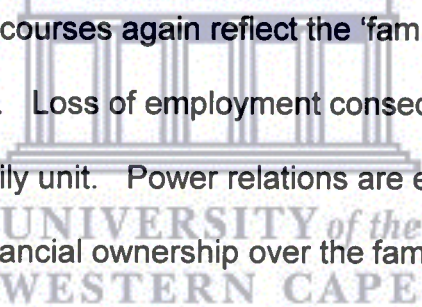
The centrality of work in marital relationships emerged as an important theme in the current study. It is apparent from the responses that the working class groups posited extra sensitivity to the well-being of the children. Feelings of guilt, helplessness and worthlessness were also displayed. The source of these negative psychological reactions, could lie in the fact that the working class subscribe to the traditional work roles, that essentially administrates the responsibility of breadwinner to the "*man van die huis*" (man of the house). The negative psychological reactions together with the belief of traditional work roles and suffering of poverty are manifested in marital tension.

Working class (F2)   My vrou werk op my nerves.   Sy gaan aan en

aan- n' man try mos.

Working class (D1)   Ja kykhier, hulle sit op jou kop.   Issie (its not)

jou skuld nie maar jarre.

Working class (A)   Ek en my vrou werk noggal lekker saam.   It

baatie (its not worth it) jy baklei nie, dit maak net alles worse.   Ons

was altyd baie close.

Working class (F1)   My vrou het verstaan, maar nou raak die lewe

n' bietjie hard, en sy's vol nonsens.

On closer inspection the discourses again reflect the 'family' as the arm of

accountability and pressure.   Loss of employment consequently signifies the

loss of status within the family unit.   Power relations are eroded as the formally

employed male loses his financial ownership over the family, as he is unable to

fulfil his role as provider.   This also points to issues of gender roles within

society.   Employment is traditionally constructed as an integral component of the

masculine identity.   Unemployment, however, impedes the construction of the

masculine identity and often results in the manifestation of intense negative

emotions, which have the potential to evoke severe marital tension and even

domestic violence.   The usage and tone of the phrases "*My vrou werk op my*

nerves" and "*hulle sit op jou kop*", convey how the anger and frustration of being

unemployed is transferred to the family.   Some responses however appear to

contradict this contention.

Working class (A1) I think that maybe we are close.   We sit and

worry together lots of times about what we going to do.

Working class (F2) As daar geld probleme is, kan jy mos dink dat

daar conflict gaan wees.   Maar ons sort dit uit.

Working class (F1) Ja ek meen ma, ons is mos nie diere nie.

The above extract exhibits co-operation and sensitivity and goes a long way to

counter the stereotyped notion that unemployment unequivocally causes marital

tension.   Participants posited an acute awareness of this negative construction.

The term "*ons is mos nie diere nie*" (we are not animals), although sarcastic in its

delivery, makes a moral statement against society's stereotyped portrayal of

working class as 'less than human'.   At a deeper psychological level it also

reflects society's unconscious motivation behind constructing unemployment as a

problem that is inherently internal to the working class.   In this way the "have

nots" of society through racial and class prejudice (Wresch, 1997), economic

domination and exploitation, and historic political exclusion, are fast becoming

the "are nots" of society.

The constant use of the word "*geld*" (money) in the responses, further suggests

that the financial component of being unemployed significantly impacts on the

condition of the marital relationship.   The functional use of the word "*het*" (did) in

the phrase "*My vrou **het** verstaan, maar nou raak die lewe n' bietjie hard, en sy's

vol nonsens*" (my wife did understand, but now life is difficult and she's full of

nonsense), reveals how increasing financial deprivation erodes the stability of the relationship.

Some support was also found for the widely held belief that the condition of the marital bond is dependent on the strength of the relationship prior to the onset of unemployment. For example, one of the participants who described strong marital relations, qualified their description by claiming that "*ons was altyd baie close*" (we were always very close). Also, and perhaps sarcastically, displayed in the following statement, "*my vrou was vol nonsens voor ek my werk verloor het, en sy's no nog vol nonsens*"(my wife was full of nonsense before I lost my job, and now she's still full of nonsense).

Participants from the middle class groups reported an increased involvement with the family and a positive attitude with regard to the acceptance of role changes.

> Middle class (D)   It just seems fair that I take care of the household since my wife is working. … it just seems unnecessary to burden her. My family is important to me.
>
> Middle class (A)   There is no harm done in accepting the domestic role. Ja our families are our lives.
>
> I: Are you saying that you have no problem in fulfilling a traditional female role.

Middle class (A)   I think its in order to say that we are living in a,

for all intents and purposes, in a liberated society.   That does not

affect me at all, besides I suppose it's the norm these days.

Middle class (C)   I agree.   I think the concept of traditional

female work roles is fast becoming extinct.   As the country

develops we can see the general shift to greater female

involvement in fulfilling important political, economic and social

roles.

From the above extract, it appears that at face value, the males have not

displayed negative perceptions of their change of roles, and have not realised it

as a dent in their ego.   On closer inspection, however, it seems that the

participants are intellectualising the situation in an attempt at constructing their

new roles as appropriate to "*the way society is today*".   The responses further

appear to project a politically correct and sophisticated reaction to

unemployment, and the changing roles and changing power dynamics within the

family and society.   The presence of hegemonic discourses ("*the way the world

is*") and ("*it's the norm these days*") help support this assumption.   Responses

such as "*My family is important to me*" and "*our families are our lives*", suggest

that the middle class is seeking refuge within the family unit.   This behaviour

could imply an attempt at compensation for the loss of a significant contributor of

meaning (work) in their lives.   This finding is significant as it could represent the

impetus behind Dew et al's (1987) theory that ascribes the husbands'

psychological reaction to unemployment as the major determining factor of family cohesiveness. In this sense it is not the husbands' positive attitude, proposed by Liem and Liem (1988), that determines family cohesiveness, but rather, a successful transformation from one meaning making generator (work) to another (family).

Overall the discourses suggest that the participants are endeavouring to justify and rationalise their acquired roles in society. This essentially indicates attempts at adjustment to their social positions. On the other hand, however, the general tone of the participants, as well as their choice and use of words, implicate a structured yet unconvincing attempt at social desirability. But this social desirability goes beyond simply conceding to group dynamics. Rather, it reflects the desire to be portrayed in the broader context of society as effective and fully functioning family members. It therefore fulfils a defensive function, by maintaining the internal psychological stability and self-worth that is disrupted by the ideological prescription to traditional work roles.

Finally, it is important to note that the reconstruction of their 'productive' capacity not only reflects attempts at social desirability, but could also point to the potential of unemployment to alter traditional gender roles. This in itself reflects a contradiction to the capitalist structure, which perpetuated these gender roles in the first place.

4.4.2.3 Leisure Activities

Participants from the working class reported a complete termination in active leisure activities. Responses show that the underlying factor is the lack of funds to participate in previous pastimes.

Working class (A1) There's no spare money to go out.

Working class (A1) My social life is brought to a dead still. There's no money to go dancing or anything anymore. All there is to do is watch t. v.

Working class (A2) Ons het eerste baie stadium toe gegaan maar daai is nou lank verby
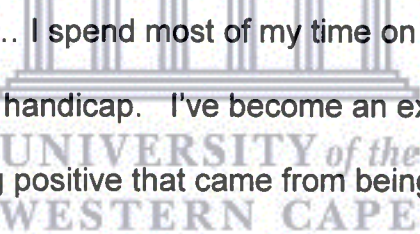
Working class (F1) Daar is nie geld vir kos nie, nog minder om uit te gaan nie.

Working class (D1) Ja man. Daar is nie geld vir kos nie, jy's ses maande agte op die rent, waar kan jy nog uitgaan.

The hardships faced by the working class emerges strongly in the above extract and one is made aware of the debilitating consequences that results from the financial deprivation brought on by unemployment. Discourses once again reflected poverty and deprivation. Consequently, little concern was shown for their inability to participate in leisure activities. Participants were generally

irritated by the focus of the question and responded in relation to their lack of food, clothes and money for rent.

For the middle class, the situation appears somewhat different. While it is clear that the participants posited behaviour that could be tentatively linked to social withdrawal, they showed greater resilience to the effects of the loss of time structure and reported a substantial increase in active leisure activities. This could be viewed as an attempt to compensate for the loss of structure brought on by unemployment (Jahoda, 1982). It could also be viewed as an attempt to create meaning in their life.
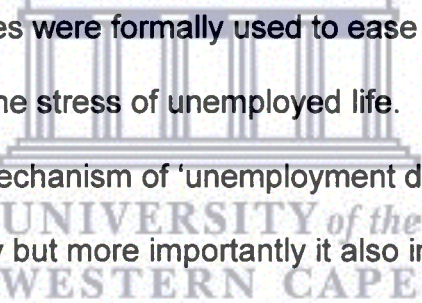
Middle class (D)   ... I spend most of my time on the golf course. I now have a scratch handicap. I've become an exceptional golfer. Well that's something positive that came from being without work, all that free time was put to good use. When I walk onto the tee with my driver, they scatter.

Middle class (P)   Yes, I am the top angler at my club now, I haven't missed a competition, for the past two months. The trophy's mine at the end of the season. Nothing's going to stop me.

Identification of themselves as "*exceptional golfers*" and a "*top angler*" shows how the participation in leisure activities has succeeded 'work' as the primary

source of meaning. Support for this contention is found in the significance that the participant attaches to winning the "*trophy*". His determination (*nothing's going to stop me*) further assists in portraying these activities as significant generators of meaning. Further support is also found in the use of the pronoun "*my*" instead of "*the*" in the term "*my driver*", which implies that the golfing apparatus has become a significant source of self-identification. These leisure activities therefore serve to ease the psychological burden brought on by unemployment (Gallie et al, 1995), by reconfiguring the meaning making system in the individuals life.

Where these leisure activities were formally used to ease the stress of employed life, it is now used to ease the stress of unemployed life. However, it could also simply be perceived as a mechanism of 'unemployment denial'. This points to aspects of social desirability but more importantly it also implies that participation in leisure activities acts as a social distancer. Therefore, through participation in these activities, the middle class is attempting to re-enter the social world through the sophisticated re-framing of experiences, and in this way they are able to distance themselves from the stigma and negative connotations attached to unemployment.

4.4.2.4   Survival Strategies

Participants were asked how they survived or coped financially since the onset of unemployment.   As is the trend throughout this chapter, responses differed markedly for the working and middle class participants.   For the working class, financial reserves were to a large extent non-existent.   Economising on daily expenditure and a variety of income generating behaviour characterised their unique coping strategies.   Moller (1993) says that they "typically tap various sources of income to increase their chances of survival and play off one risk against another" (p. 42).   The most frequently cited source of income was the spouse or girlfriend or boyfriend.   However, the amount received was quite low and was generally perceived to be a supplementary income before the onset of unemployment.   The responses reflect a variety of methods or strategies employed to capture vital funds.
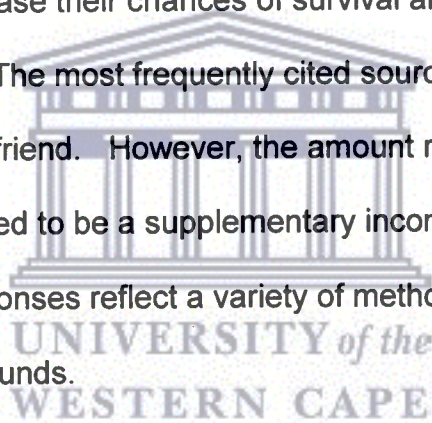
Working class (F1) Ek doen nou en dan 'n privaat job, maar geld is
skaars en die mense will nie baie betaal nie.   Maar ek kry dam
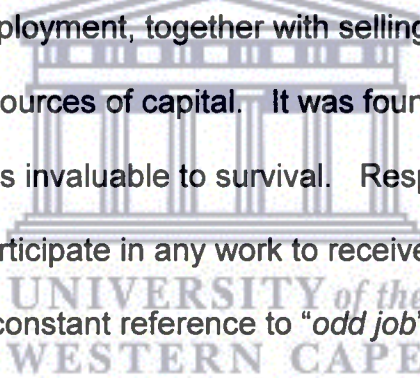ietsie in.   Issie vaste werk nie maar ek survive

Working class (A)   My motjie (wife) werk, en ek kry 'n casual so
nou en dan.   Ek het my T.V. en video verkoop.

Working class (F2) My vrou werk, maar die geld is nie te goed nie.
Maar dit gaan baie bad, en daars nie altyd geld vir kos nie.

Working class (D2) Ek het ook meeste van my goed verkoop. Ek

haardloop uit goed om te verkoop, en ek skuld baie mense geld

Working class (M1) You see there's money out there on the street.

You just have to know how to get to it, and not think that its going to

come running to you. Wat ek doen is koop en verkoop alles. Ek

maak all right, ek ken die pad baie goed.

Working class (M) Daar is altyd geld op die pad, maar is nie altyd

jou dag nie. Ek casual so nou en dan by die slaghuis.

Informal and temporary employment, together with selling goods of value,

appeared to be other vital sources of capital. It was found that securing casual

employment was sometimes invaluable to survival. Responses show a

desperate willingness to participate in any work to receive income. This

desperation, together with constant reference to "*odd job*" and "*casual*", strongly

reflect how Marx's "reserve army of labour" has perpetuated South African

working class society and reveals how unemployment functions as a vital

component of the capitalist system.

Ashton (1986) contends that the concept of "reserve army of labour" effectively

projects a lack of structure, in the lives of the working class. This lack of

structure together with a large degree of uncertainty is clearly conveyed by the

terms "*ek weet nie wat ek gaan doen nie*" (I do not know what I'm going to do)

and "*is nie altyd jou dag nie*" (it is not always your day). It is through this

uncertainty that the capitalist system is able to subjugate control over the working class. To escape this uncertainty the workers have to submit to the demands and conditions dictated by the ruling class (Gotlieb, 1983). However, "the reserve army of labour" as a component of the cyclical process of a capitalist production system appears to be less applicable in contemporary society. Previously, the cyclical nature of the system implied that employment opportunities would eventually become available. However, in contemporary society, joining the serried ranks of the unemployed is largely permanent. While some, especially Marxists, would blame the abusive nature of the system that is motivated for the search for profit and not to create employment. Others, such as Gorz (1982) and Wresch (1997) ascribe blame to the technological advancements of recent years that has created a faction of unemployable workers. Gallie and Vogler (1995) believe that the central problem is that these are typically semi-skilled or unskilled individuals without an educational background. They state that "structural change in the organisation of work is then likely to make the re-entry problems of those without qualifications particularly severe" (p. 51). It is these individuals who eventually regress into the ranks of the underclass (Dahrendorf, 1959) and ultimately become unemployable.

Moller (1993) however, provides a different view regarding the exploits of the working class. "An infinite variety of odd jobs and self-generated employment opportunities testify to the ingenuity of unemployed persons" (p. 41). While an

analysis of the responses certainly portray the working as resilient and resourceful, Moller (1993) however, appears to have overplayed the force of human agency in overcoming deprivation and hardship. And like Jahoda (1982), she seems to have underestimated the intense and systematic poverty that results from unemployment. Whether the coping strategies utilised by the working class can be considered ingenious, resilient or desperate does not mask the blatant reality of deprivation that they experience. In this study, discourses of poverty emerged very clearly. Respondents made constant reference to the fact that there was no money for food and evoked a great sense of fear and insecurity, often responding in hesitant, unclear and restrained voices.

While these discourses of desperation, deprivation and poverty present throughout the interviews are typically representative of a capitalist production system, they also reflect an inadequate welfare system. In agreement Dr. Zola Skweyiya (2000), the Minister of Welfare and Population Development, believes that past welfare systems have failed to address the plight of the poor and destitute in society. While he admits that a legacy of poverty, violence and social inequality has placed an enormous burden on the delivery of social welfare services, he however, attributes the systems' failure to the:

> **"...disintegration of the social of the social fabric, of family**
>
> **and community life is a reality that has not been**
>
> **acknowledged at a fundamental level. Our social policies**

assume the ability of families and communities to respond to

the crisis.   Welfare has proceeded as if these social

institutions are fully functional and provide the full range of

social support that is required to restore the well being of

people" (Skweyiya, 2000, p. 2).

The Department of Welfare has consequently embarked on strategic policies to address this problem.   Together with victims of HIV, abuse and violence, the unemployed have been earmarked to receive urgent social support.   Skweyiya (2000) however, states that these financial safety nets would lose impact if not accompanied by strategic economic restructuring and a commitment to job creation policies.   However, the principles of the current macro-economic policy, GEAR, are not supportive of social welfare distribution and therefore the altruistic ideals are impeded from gaining material existence within the social totality. Similarly, Chossudovsky (in Blake, 1996) argues that GEAR is inherently opposed to the social welfare distribution.

The middle class appeared to cope much better financially.   For the middle class participants, as was the case for the working class, the primary source of income was the spouse or partner.   Despite the obvious enormity of financial commitments, participants reported that the partner's income provided an adequate and comfortable living.   It is important to note that the spouses were generally professionals who were employed in high profile jobs.

The middle class participants referred to their coping "*on a monthly basis*", which implies that their situation was not as desperate as for the working class who placed greater emphasis on a daily survival and a hand to mouth existence. Responses further show that participants possessed adequate financial reserves to curtail the economic effects of sudden income loss. Reference to "*insurance policies, investments and savings*" further testifies to the financial security of the middle class. Financial assistance was largely intra-familial and no shift in behaviour towards temporary employment was considered. Overall, the implications of survival and coping strategies for the middle class group may be seen as a trivial issue. Moller (1993) however, expresses an alternative view and argues that poverty and deprivation are relative. She contends that "persons at the top end of the occupational hierarchy may experience the loss of income derived from a top executive position as extreme economic hardship" (p. 70).
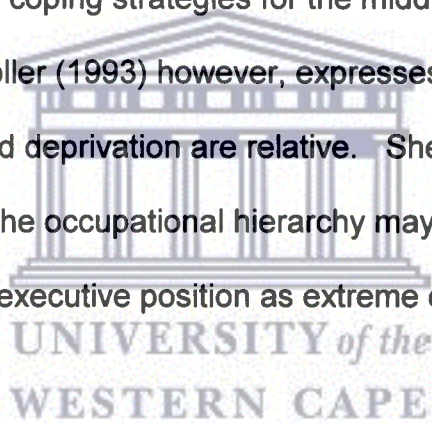
4.4.3 Perceptions of the unemployed

An analysis of the psychological and social meanings of unemployment conveyed a problematic construction of the unemployed. Of particular importance was the negative perceptions of the working class that pervades society in general. A theme that emerged quite clearly during interviews, was that the perceptions of middle class participants regarding the working class unemployed, were largely reflective of that of society.

Middle class (Is)   … what can we do,   …I think the working class

has generally built up their endurance.

Middle class (P)   Yes invariably when you working class you can

survive with far less.

Middle class (Is)   They are used to penny pinching…   They are

fine.

The participants further postulated that unemployment for the working class was

more socially acceptable and would consequently imply a greater social

sentiment.

Middle class (C)   Hy het sy Job veloor – it's not such an

unacceptable term in the working class.
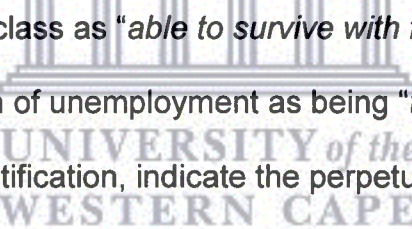
Middle Class (D)   … its more acceptable.

Middle class (Q)   I suppose that it's actually the norm there.   It's

like an everyday occurrence.

The above extracts typify society's attitude towards the unemployed.   The

extract further suggests a denial of responsibility, "*what can we do*", as well as a

rationalisation of the situation since "*they are fine*" and "*it's like an everyday

occurrence*".   Since unemployment is far more prevalent among the working

class it is often perceived to be less stigmatic (Gallie and Vogler, 1995).   The

stigma attached to unemployment would therefore not be as destructive.   In

other words if a high proportion of the reference group is unemployed, psychological distress is curtailed to a large extent. Membership would then be an accepted norm that individuals are accustomed to dealing with.

The issue of work commitment was also raised. Participants argued that for the working class, satisfaction and commitment arouse from the earning power supplied by formal employment. Furthermore, they believed that employment did not contribute significantly to the development of the self for the working class. Unemployment would then imply a reduction in income and not a destruction of the building block of self-identity.

Perceptions of the working class as "*able to survive with far less*", being "*used to penny pinching*", a depiction of unemployment as being "*the norm*", together with discourses of denial and justification, indicate the perpetuation of a capitalist ideology. These derogatory and problematic constructions of the working class that permeated throughout the interviews help to reinforce the ruling ideology as well as to maintain the status quo. As Larrain (1983) put it, "ideology aspires to keep social practice as it is" (p. 212). To achieve this, the working class have been essentialized i.e., they have been defined as a social category that exclusively possesses a set of intrinsic qualities and characteristics (Gergen, 1999). This in turn sets in motion a range of presupposed ideological constructions that present these qualities and characteristics of the working class as 'given' and unchanging social features.

It is important to note, however, that these constructions and representations are not the result of a single ideological perspective. Stevens (1996) notes that "social actors interpretations of events seldom rely on a single ideological perspective" (p. 123). Rather, the constructions are representative of perpetuation of the contending oppressive ideologies, which clearly illustrate the manner in which oppressive labels have been integrated within the psyches (Stevens, 1996), discourses and non-discursive practices of the social actors. Henceforth it is political society, as well as civil society, "with its institutions ranging from education, religion and the family to the microstructures of the practices of everyday life" which "contribute to the production of meaning and values" that in turn produce, direct and maintain these oppressive ideological regimes (Gramsci, in Holub, 1992, p. 6).
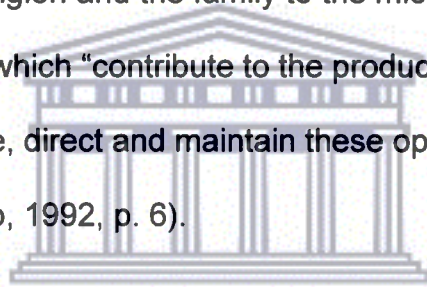
These problematic constructions of the working class generate severe implications on a societal level. Consider Gergen's contention that "much depends on the way we are represented in others' talk-their descriptions, explanations, criticisms or congratulations" (1999, p. 42). These representations effectively constitute social reputations, which Berger and Luckmann (1966) propose are maintained by rational support structures, or plausibility structures. As the reputations become shared, the plausibility structures allow these reputations to become constructed as taken-for-granted social realities (Berger and Luckmann, 1966; Gergen, 1994, 1999). These constructions essentially furnish grounds for judging themselves negatively. The meanings attached to

the working class as lazy, or deserving of the situation, are a direct result of these shared negative representations or reputations.   The emphasis and continuous use of the pronoun "*they*" as opposed to "*us*" or "*we*", functions to justify these representations, but also functions to locate the problem of unemployment internally, which further assists in promoting a deference of responsibility.

> Middle class (Q)   … They don't want to look for work.   They expect the government to just provide for them.
>
> Middle class (D)   No they just can't depend continuously on state funds.   Instead of trying to find work, they are more interested in striking, and marches.
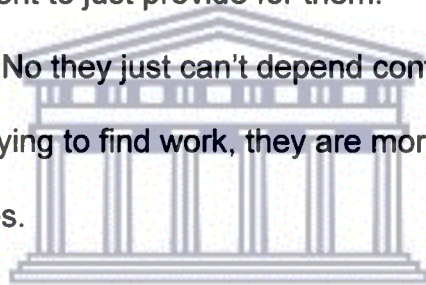
Central to this assumption is an emphasis on the relational aspect of language and representation.   Gergen (1994) believes that any social construction only gains its meaning through human interaction (relationships).   In this sense the 'relationship' replaces the 'individual' as the prime constituent of social life.   This suggests that all perceptions of unemployment, their representations and the meanings attached to them, are dependent on their position within the realm of social interaction.   However, these relationships are themselves dependent on the place they occupy within their specific cultural, historical and political reality. The fact that the participants perceived 'their' unemployment as a result structural, economic instability, but insisted on locating the responsibility for the

working class internally, was challenged by some participants. These

participants' discourses did not reflect the internalisation of the dominant

ideologies of classism and capitalism, but rather that of opposing ideologies. As

one participant aptly stated:

> Middle Class (F)   The working class is always blamed. You
>
> have enough financial reserves, you immune to unemployment.
>
> It's a money thing; you have no appreciation for the sufferings and
>
> difficulties of the working class.

The above extract alludes to society's perceptions being dependent on financial

status. The internalisation of a particular ideology could therefore also be

intimately linked to financial status. Consequently, constructions and

representations of the 'self' and 'others', through discursive practices, depends

on the financial "*appreciation*" or sensitivity to the situation, that unemployment

places you into.

In the final analysis, the major difficulties faced by the unemployed in South

Africa appears to be socially constructed as a result of society's conceptions of

unemployment. Strategies to assist the unemployed, as well as what we know

about them including knowledge gained from research, are socially constructed

products of our conceptions of the unemployed. In other words, the major

problems faced by the unemployed are those that society creates for them.

Ultimately, the result of these negative representations of unemployment is a deference of social responsibility and a construction of unemployment as a problem that is internal to the individual.

4.5   CONCLUSION

Both the working class and middle class groups reflect contradictory constructions of the experience of employment and unemployment within the underlying social system.   The responses from both groups were not homogenous responses, but rather reflected tensions and contradictions that were responsible for both progressive and conservative constructions of society. Furthermore, these tensions do not only reflect contradictory constructions but also reflect an internalisation of negative social forces functioning within society. Some responsibility for these contradictions can be attributed to the fact that unemployment and technological advancement is resulting in the fragmentation of conventional class groups, and the consequent heterogeneity of social actors between and within classes.   By way of conclusion, it may be of importance to briefly summarise the most pertinent of these contradictions.

For the working class, the 'family' appears to function as society's arm of accountability, as negative psychological reactions such as guilt, worthlessness and helplessness, arise from their inability to provide.   What is concealed however, is the nature of the power relations within the family.   Since

employment provides them with this power, unemployment inevitably erodes their position as head of the household. The contradiction emerges where capitalism, which initially prescribes unemployment, requires the very structure of traditional power relations to function efficiently.
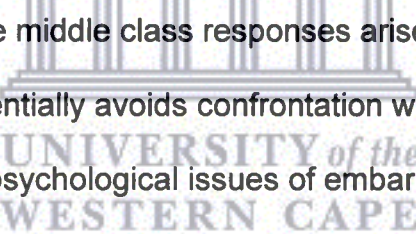
Further contradictions in the working class groups can be attributed to the dual nature of their consciousness, one part of which reflects the ideas of the ruling class and its intellectuals, whilst the other part is derived from common sense understandings of the everyday experience of the world (Thompson, 1992). Consequently, the opposing perceptions demonstrated by hegemonic discourses and discourses that located the problem externally, emerged within the responses. The discourses further point to communities as resilient sites that foster the development of social cohesion and strong interpersonal bonds. However, the contradiction lies in the fact that the community itself is essentially an ideological institution that functions to advance oppressive social formations, by reinforcing prescribed roles in the production process. Thompson (1992) believes that community members function, themselves, through the process of interpellation (Althusser, 1971), as active agents or carriers of the capitalist social structure. In this way the community, along with the family can be perceived as 'ideological state apparatuses' (Althusser, 1971)[6], that serves to reinforce psychological domination and economic exploitation.

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[6] The term 'ideological state apparatuses' used by Althuser (1971), refers to the ways people are manipulated and controlled by ideology.

For the middle class groups, negative psychological reactions appeared to be linked to issues of 'self' and not 'family'. Consequently, the 'individual' instead of the 'family' is perceived as the arm of accountability. This revealed an interesting contradiction within the middle class responses in that their claimed increased investment in the family should not be perceived as the result of feelings of guilt or shame, but rather as an attempt to portray the 'self' in a favourable and desirable light within society. This point is better demonstrated if one takes cognisance of the fact that the middle class has a great psychological investment in the social system, in the sense that employment serves as the primary contributor to self-identity and social status.

Further contradictions in the middle class responses arise as the participants point to behaviour that essentially avoids confrontation with the broader society. Participants claim that the psychological issues of embarrassment and shame are the driving forces behind these avoidance behaviours. The contradiction arises as they still actively participate in leisure activities that appear to have a significant social dimension. Participation in these leisure activities can therefore be perceived as sophisticated methods of re-framing the experience of unemployment, in an attempt to reconstruct the social reality as favourable and supportive. Simply stated, leisure activities act as mechanisms to maintain social status as well as the psychological integrity of the self-identity. Therefore, they also seem to assist in constructing social society as fair and just. Finally, discourses of the middle class also reflect contradictory views with regard to the

current state of the capitalist labour production system. These contradictions were probably manifested as a result of the recent growth of unemployment within the middle class sector.

It also tentatively emerged that unemployment was resulting in the disruption of traditionally prescribed gender roles. This stands in contradiction to the current production system that is dependent on these specifically defined roles to operate effectively.

Polarising the perceptions of employment and unemployment and attempting to examine the constructions of each as separate entities is problematic in itself. Unemployment and employment should rather be seen as appendages of the same ideological construction, which functions in a mutual and symbiotic way to advance control, domination and exploitation, and thereby reinforce the prevailing oppressive social formations.
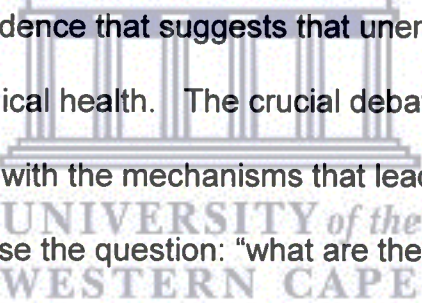
CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSION

5.1 INTRODUCTION

In this chapter we provide a brief summary of the major findings of the study. Furthermore, the limitations, as well as pertinent issues for future investigation, are suggested.

5.2 SUMMARY OF THE FINDINGS

There exists a wealth of evidence that suggests that unemployment has a marked effect on psychological health. The crucial debate in unemployment research is now concerned with the mechanisms that lead to this. Similarly, Gallie and Marsh (1995) raise the question: "what are the most important aspects of the experience of unemployment that generate psychological distress"(p. 16)? Watson (1996) believes that part of the answer lies in the fact that the:

> "... predominance of work, its cultural and 'moral' value and
> its links with access to material resources, pervades all our
> experiences and plays a significant part in how we value
> ourselves in relation to others" (p. 254).

The current study has added the social dimension to the debate and with its emphasis on the search for meaning, has highlighted how a social constructionist understanding of unemployment can elucidate a new range of understandings and explanations, that was not possible with former empiricist methods of enquiry.

The discourses of both the working class and middle class groups suggested a lack of homogeneity and reflected contradictory constructions and tensions within and between contending oppressive ideologies. These contradictions essentially revealed how negative social forces are internalised by the unemployed category of society. Participants often adopted or imputed to others a variety of contradictory positions from response to response and discussion to discussion, sometimes even within the same utterance. As a result, it was not possible to fully understand how the experiences of unemployment are constructed without simultaneously considering the range of contradictions through which it was registered.

These contradictions are further reflective of the shifting of conventional class boundaries and the fragmentation of class groups, which is resulting in a new type of polarisation within society. While the gap is widening between the wealthy (owners of production) and the poor, the middle class is being struck by the immense growth of unemployment.

The themes identified in the current study generally concern the meanings brought to everyday social life. These meanings allow one to reflect on how the social, political and indeed the historical are drawn together within a 'language of unemployment' that result in meaningful understandings, and understandings that confer meanings. Social class was used in the traditional manner to historically categorise the perpetuation of unemployment. However, it emerged that class processes did not operate in isolation from the political and social dimension. Throughout the study it became exceedingly clearer that it was impossible to perceive the economic reality in isolation from the 'political', 'historical', or 'social' dimension of society. In this sense, the study provides one with an understanding of how these dimensions contribute to the construction of unemployment in a manner that facilitates economic exploitation.

Evidence in the current study revealed that there are distinct differences in the experience of unemployment for the working class and middle class. Responses from both groups, however, point to the socially constructed nature of unemployment as the driving force behind all negative psychological reactions to unemployment. Poverty, lack of financial reserves, and the inability to provide for the family were identified as the most salient issues impacting on the working class. In particular, feelings of guilt, helplessness and low self-worth appeared most pertinent. For the middle class, an intrinsic commitment to work roles and a great psychological investment in the capitalist labour system was most pivotal.
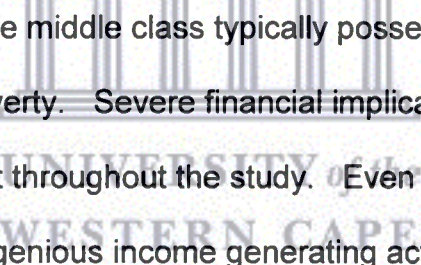
Negative psychological reactions associated with self-identity and social status were thus forthcoming.

The working class reported a drastic increase in social interaction since the onset of unemployment. Unemployment as a common entity was consequently instrumental in social integration and cohesion of the working class community. More significantly, it appeared that the working class found refuge within these relationships as well as a means of coping for the loss of the work role. Externalisation and disassociation from blame was effectively used as a psychological defence mechanism. The middle class reported a decline in social interaction since the onset of unemployment. This was mainly attributed to issues surrounding social status as well negative stereotypes regarding unemployment. The internalisation of the negative discourses associated with unemployment is therefore manifested in their socially withdrawn behavioural patterns.

With regard to family functioning, unemployment posed several implications for both classes. For the working class, the 'family' was perceived as society's arm accountability. Deterioration in the family relationship as well as some degree of marital tension was reported. However, it was the financial component of unemployment that appeared to exert these pressures, and some participants, against traditional beliefs, reported the development of strong bonds within the family. The middle class appeared to be intensely immersed within the family

unit. Therefore, as opposed to the working class, who seeks refuge within the community, the middle class seeks refuge within the family. This increased involvement in home-based activities implies an attempt at redefining the meaning system in their lives. Alternatively, however, it could also be perceived as attempts at social desirability. In relation, increased active participation in leisure activities by the middle class constituted a further attempt at redefining the self-identity and compensating for the loss of meaning formerly provided by employment. Involvement in these activities however, also pointed to issues of 'unemployment denial', and suggests attempts at distancing themselves from the stigma of unemployment.

Responses revealed that the middle class typically possessed financial reserves and were unaffected by poverty. Severe financial implications for the working class were however evident throughout the study. Even though they were credited with unique and ingenious income generating activities, poverty was omnipresent and generating devastating consequences on a social and psychological level. Compounding the problem, is the fact that little support is being offered by an inadequate welfare system.

A major theme that emerged in the study concerned the negative perceptions regarding the working class. These perceptions essentially constitute shared negative representations, which have their conceptual roots in the subscription to oppressive ideological practices that renders these representations as taken-for-

granted realities. These derogatory social constructions then reinforce the ruling ideologies, and assist the regime in constructing a society where the scrimmage for profit and individual well being, are placed over and above a commitment to economic restructuring and job creation policies.

Some support for Jahoda's thesis was evident in the study. The evidence suggests a greater applicability of the categories of experience for the middle class. The working class, however, does appear to be influenced by the loss of time structure. It is inconclusive whether the working class were able to construct their lives as to mimic these experiences that were removed by unemployment, or that these categories are not easily recognisable in the working class. What we can conclude however, is what Fraser (1981) refers to as a vulgar Marxist perspective - the psychological effects of unemployment stem directly from the socio-economic consequences of the loss of the wage. The current study would then serve to confirm the role of poverty and deprivation as significant contributors to psychological distress, and in this way contribute to the critique of Jahoda's thesis.

5.3   LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

From the outset of the study, the researcher was hampered by the fact that there was an absence of qualitative research in the area of unemployment.

Consequently, the researcher had very few resources that could be used to inform the study, which ultimately hindered the research process.

The study also appears to suffer from a gravitation towards the generation of thematic categories, rather than an out and out exploration of how the effects of unemployment are manifested in the experience of unemployment. A discourse analysis, which involves a rigorous analysis and interpretation of the discourses conveyed by participants through their symbolic constructions (language), within a specific socio-historical context, would have generated more diverse themes and made possible a greater range of meanings (Stevens, 1996).

Finally, the study also falls short in providing current data on the variables such as age, gender and length of unemployment, which is traditionally lacking in contemporary unemployment research.
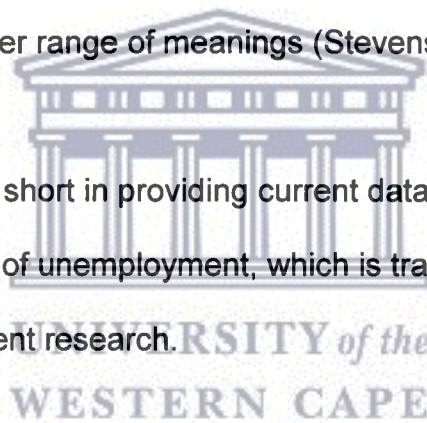
5.4   INDICATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

Given the harsh realities of unemployment and the massive and systematic poverty that results, one would welcome any meaningful research that is capable of adding to the arsenal in the fight against unemployment. Social scientists however, need to identify the role that they intend to play in the fight against unemployment.

Widespread acknowledgement and acceptance of structured debates concerning epistemological inadequacies have nonetheless left crucial advancement grounded.   A new blueprint is therefore needed by social science practitioners investigating unemployment.   At the conception, the right questions need to be asked in order not to disparage the experiences and understandings that one strives to elucidate.   Large-scale qualitative projects across class and racial barriers are therefore suggested.   Pertinent issues around social networks, effects on the family, and re-integration of the unemployed into society, demand urgent qualitative attention.   Of paramount importance is the lack of in-depth information regarding society's perceptions of the unemployed.   Perceptions of the working class as expendable and the general feeling that they remain in labour market disadvantage because of their own inadequacies, is cause for concern.   How to change these perceptions remains the central question in unemployment research.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX I INTERVIEW GUIDE

1. How did you feel when you lost your job?

2. How do you think of yourself now that you have become unemployed?

3. How do you think other people think of you since you have become unemployed?

4. Could you describe your health since becoming unemployed?

5. How has being unemployed affected your family life?

6. How do you think being unemployed affected your social life?

7. How do cope with being unemployed?

8. What do you think could help lessen the impact of being unemployed?

9. How do you think working class individuals experience unemployment as opposed to the middle class?

10. Is there anything that you would consider important, but that we have not yet spoken about?
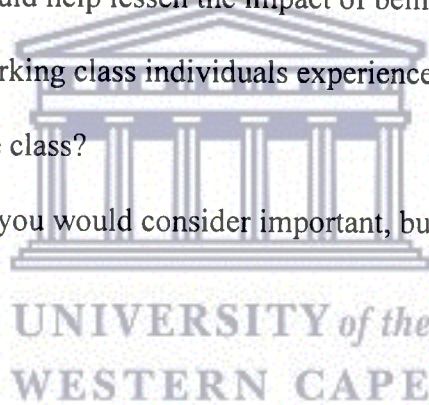
APPENDIX II TRANSCRIPTS

WORKING CLASS GROUP 1

I: How did you feel when you lost your job?

F2: Okay, ja, I was very upset man, I wanted to smash up the place.   It wasn't my fault you see.   Plus a man is all right worried.   You see I got two lities, and the small one is very sick, he's in and out there by the Red Cross.   Sienjy vir Malik, daai litie, ek weet nie hy't klom kwale (problems)

I: You say you wanted to smash up the place.   That sounds violent?

F2: You see my lities must suffer, for some else's kak.

I: You keep mentioning your children?

J: Sien jy, as daar lities involved is, is daar groot probleeme.   Sien jy, jy's mos die man in die huis, en jy moet sorg.   Jy voel mos all right offside as daar nie 'n stikkie brood is nie.

D2: Ek het allright guilty gevoel.   Is amper soos jy jou familie verlaat.

F1: Ek het ook guilty gevoel.   Jou vrou en kinders depend mos op jou.

F2: En 'n man voel soos daar niks is wat jy kan doen nie.   Waar moet jy geld kry vir kos en kleure.   Wanner ons werk verloor kan ons al die hongerte voel.

I: I hear what you are saying, Frankie you wanted to say something?

F1: 'n Man het worried gevoel.

I: Why?

F1: Soos James gese het, jy's geworried waar jy geld gaan kry vir kos en goed.   Is net, sienjy dat, is elke dag wat jy kos mekeer, so elke dag mekeer jy geld.   En is nie net daai nie, is kleure en goed vir skool en lig en rente, naai sonder werk kak jy .

D1: It slat jou hard, onetime my broer.   Jy weet somer jy's in die kak, en daar's niks wat jy kan doen nie.

I: What do you mean?

D1: Ek mean jy kan op jou kop staan, jou graaf is weg, en jy's in die kak. Issie so maklik om weer werk te kry nie.

I: So you just have to accept it?

D1: Ja, jy,s hulpeloos.   Is ek reg manne?

CONSENSUS

I: Mark, Andre, you guys have anything to add?

M1: It's, how can I say- you stressed out.

I: Go on

M1: Ja, jy't mos ander dinge op jou mind.   Nou sit jy skielik sonder werk. It plaar mos jou mind.   Jy kan mal raak van al die worry.

I: If we kan go on to the next question then.   How do you guys think of yourself, now that you are unemployed?- Andre?

A: Wel, ek het stupid gevoel. Ek het by die company vir sewe jaar gewerk. Klomp keur kan ek ander werk gekry het, maar ek wou bly. Nou is ek werkloos en daar is nie ander opportunities nie.

F1: Ek voel soos 'n fokkop. Sienjy as jou motjie aan die lewe hou is dit nie reg nie. Dan is jy mos nie 'n man nie.

F2: I agree, I felt like shit and I still do.

M2: Ja daai is die waarheid. Ons voel verwaarloos. Mismoedig, baie, baie mismoedig. Is glad nie lekker nie.

D1: Soos jy niks werd is nie. Sonder werk is jy hulpeloos.

D2: Die bottom line is; ons kinders lui honger en die koede vang hulle die swaarste.

I: Maanie? James?

M1: Naai ek het niks om te se nie.

I: What do you think other people think of you?

M1: In die plek, kan jy mos dink my broer- met die skinner bekke.

F: Hulle is dood verseker jy's niks werd nie.

W: Me I don't care a damn.

D1: Laat die mense dink wat hulle wil. Ek gattie my self uit sit nie.

M2: You no on the one hand, I mean I don't know why people look at you funny. It happens everyday here. You can't think shit of anybody 'cause tomorrow you sit without graaf.

D2: Hier as jy werk verloor is dit jou skuld. Jy het seker kak aan gevang.

S: Issie almal wat so dink nie-is net 'n paar skinner bekke. Die mense hier weet dat ons almal in die selfde boot is. Die hele land is opgefok.

I: So what do you think the people think of you?

S: Wat kan hulle dink. Is part van die lewe.

I: What is the condition of your health now that you are unemployed?

F1: Health?

I: Jou gesondheid?

F1: Ek weet wat health is. Ek dink ek was okay. Praat jy nou van verkouers en goed.

I: Anything?

F1: Ja verkoers en goed. Naai

A: Eers was ek nogal siek. Se so 'n jaar gelede. Ek het hoe bloed gehad en klomp mag kwaale (stomach problems).

S: I did not experience any health problems.

M2: Me neither.

D2: Headaches, I had terrible headaches. From worrying. En hier by my rug.

I: And you Maanie?

M1: Laat ek nou dink. Ek kannie se nie.

I: Daan?

D1: Ek het altyd kwale met my mag.

F1: Jou naai, jy drink te veel.

D1: Fok jou.   Jy moet laaste praat jou vark…

I : Okay lets get on to the next question? How did your unemployment affect your family life?

F1: My vrou het verstaan, maar nou raak die lewe 'n bietjie hard en sy's vol nonsense.

D2: Ja dit gaan so is mos die stress en die motjie worry mos- van die kosgeld en die lities en goed.   Issie so maklik nie, ek weet.

D1: Dit werk op jou moer, 'n man try en hulle gaan aan en aan.   Ek soek elke dag 'n graaf.

F2: My vrou werk op my nerves sy gaan aan en aan, 'n man try mos.

I: Anyone else?

D1: Ja kykhier, hulle sit op jou kop.   Issie (its not) jou skuld nie maar jaare.

A: Ek en my vrou werk nogal lekker saam.   It baatie jy baklei nie it maak net alles worse.   Ons was altyd baie close.   Ek help dan ook uit met die huiswerk

M1: Jy's lekker mal.

F1: Ek moet mal wees.

F2: Ek sal nog nooit nie.   Ek dink is weer die lities wat die meeste suffer.   Ek meen 'n man kan nie lekker sorg vir die kinders nie.   Hulle kan nie lekker eet nie en daar is nie geld vir kleure nie.   Is fokkon koud in die winter, sienjy.

M2: I know what he's talking about.   Sometimes there is no money for food.   It's just very bad man you know.

I: How did your unemployement affect your social life?

F: Niks affect nie, jy moet net by die huis bly.   Dis al.

I:What do you mean.

F1: Kykhier daars'ie geld vir niks nie.   "Social life" is mos uitgaan en goed?

D1: Ja man.   Daar is nie geld vir kos nie, jy's ses maande agte op die rent, waar kan jy nog uitgaan.

M2: You see you cannot do as much as want to these days there's no spare money for stuff like that.

F2: Check here there's no money to go out.   I used to go out on the fishing boats once in a while, but now that I got no work, I can't do that no more.   Also I used to go to the rugby.   Daai is no lank verby.

F: Die bottom line is dat daars nie geld nie.

I: Social life means also going to, and visiting friends.   Do you still see your friends?

F2: So ja, I'm a lot by my friends, there's cool.   Like to lam it out, and you no just chill, with a lekker slow boat or something.   Or watch t.v.

D1: Ja when there's no work, tv. is your best friend.

D2: I go a lot to Maanie, you see to watch soccer and rugby.   He's got M.NET.

D1: Ou Maanie, maak hom wys van jou M.NET.

D2: He's got a gechipte M.NET.

M1: Jy moennie my besigheid uit praat nie, jou tief.

I: Okay guys never mind that. Tell me were do you get the money for the drugs.

F2: By Maanie, jou naai (laughter), you not listening to us, jy's supposed om slim te wees, jy's mos wys. Is jou tape recorder an.

M1: Die ouens praat nou kak, get on to the next question. Hou jou bek nou!

I: Okay, How do you think working class people experience unemployment as opposed to middle class people?

M2: You want to know the differences in experiences?

I: Do you guys understand the question?

F2: Ja.

F1: Sienjy die middle class het nog duisende rande in die bank. Hulle het ook karre en huise. Daars'ie fout nie.

S: Issie altyd hulle goed nie, is die bank se goed. Is ook bad vir hulle.

D1: Naai man hulle lewe verander so 'n bietjie, is nog nooit so bad nie. Hulle het geld weggesit.

S: Nie altyd nie.

D1: Sienjy hulle gaan nie honger nie.

A: Moettie glo dat hulle duisende rande het nie. Hulle het ook klom accounts en goed. Hoor wat ek vir jou se. Is ek reg se vir die mense hier.

I: It's your discussion, what do you think?

M2: I think it's worse for us.

M1: Naai man ons kan it handle, is worse vir hulle.

D2: Maanie, hulle gaan nie honger nie. Daar is altyd geld vir lig, vir kos, kleure en enige iets anders wat hulle mekeer.

F2: Ja is worse vir ons.

D1: Maanie moettie kak praat nie, is worse vir ons.

D2: Ophou stry nou, what's the next question?

I: No, let the guys speak finish.

D2: Hulle is klaar, go ma on. Die goed moet ek burn.

D1: Ja los die stryery, maak kla man.

I: How do you cope with being unemployed?

D: My motjie werk, en ek doen 'n odd jobbie so nou en dan. Maar is swaar, ek het my T.V. en video al verkoop. Met daai geld kan jy nou survive vir 'n tydjie.

S: Ek het my ringe verkoop, en my bracelet. Jy moet werk soek. As it vir 'n dag is moet jy dit net vat.

I: Has anybody else sold any of their possesions.

A: Ja, amper alles. T.v., my video, my radio alles.

F2: Ja.

I: Maanie, Deon belived that you had an interesting way of making money.   It's okay to speak.

M1: Is net dat die mense hier, hulle hou van hulle bekke verby praat.   Okay, sienjy, there's money out there on the street.   You just have to know how to get it, and not to think it's going to come running to you.   Wat ek maak is ek koop en verkoop alles wat ek my hande op kan kry.   Ek ken die pad baie goed.

I: Is the items stolen? Can you explain more?

M1: *Laughter*

I: Is there anybody else that does the same?

S: Ja ek kyk ook my ding op die pad en ek survive all right.   Is net daars'ie elke dag geld nie.

I: How does the other guys feel?

F: Ja is moeilik, my broer.   Ek skuld klomp mense geld.   Naai ek weet nie.

I: Let's get on to the next question.   What do you think could have helped to lessen the impact of being unemployed?

D2: I think it's the government that must do something.

F: Ja, hulle kan kos hampers uitgee, of miskien geld vir die werkloos.

M2: It's not that easy, I think the government, daar is so veel wat verkloos is.   I think the government must set up maybe one association in an area that deals with the government, and give any money evenly.

S: Ja, but the government must be willing to give the money.

D1: Daai is die ding, waar gaan hulle geld net so uitgee.

M1: En dan intercept die mense die geld wat op die association sit.

A: Daai is 'n moeilike vraag, ek weet nie.   Maar die mense hier in die gebied, mekeer kos, dink ek meer as enigeiets anders

I: Is there anything else that you think is important, but that we have not spoken about?   Deon?

D2: the government is definitely responsible, I think that they must do something to create jobs, if they can just give people jobs then everything will be all right.

END.

WORKING CLASS GROUP 2

I: What did you feel when you lost your job?

F1: Mo, daai was 'n lank tyd terug. Ek dink ja 'n man was seker geworried. Hoe se jy Mo, stressed out. Don't stress me out. Naai seriously, sienjy, ek het nou drie lities, ek moet vir my familie sorg.

R: Me too, I was terribly worried. It's not nice being broke, and now I must depend on my father for money.

A1: I know, it's just me and my mother, and she's too old to work.

I: So that really bothered you then?

A1: Ja really, I was so stressed out.

F2: Ja, maar julle is mos lekker ryk. Julle het nog klomp goed om te verkoop. Al my geld was in my van. Nou is dit gesteel. Ek het nou fokkol. Sienjy.

A1: Hou op nou ons is nie ryk nie.

F2: Julle het klomp mooi goed in julle huis. Ek try nie om nou funny te wies nie, maar is die waarheid. Ons praat lekker hier, of wat. Ja praat die waarheid.

D: Kykhier ek dink ek praat vir almal as ek se as jy jou werk verloor is jy in die kak. En 'n mens voel alles wat saam met daai gaan. As it nou nou is dat jy geworried is of stress of wat oekal. Ons almal voel die selfde. Is ek reg?

CONSENSUS

D: Jy will nog kom baie praat die goed hier sal vir twee ure aan een kak praat.

I: Thankyou Derrick, maar ek will he dat almal moet praat.

D: Okay, okay.

I: Right, the next question. How do you think of yourself, nou that you are unemployed?

D: Moettie so kyk nie. Hy vra hoe dink julle van julle self?

I: Thankyou Derrick.

F1: Der ophou kak maak.

D1: Ja allright man. Ek try net om te help.

G: Ek het gedink ek beter iets vinnig doen.

I: Yes, but how did you think of yourself?

A2: Ek het guilty gevoel. Sienjy jou vrou en kinders depend mos op jou.

G: Ek het ook guilty gevoel is amper asof jy jou familie verlaat. Ek voel soos 'n gans.

F2: Of soos 'n fokkop. En 'n man voel soos daar niks is wat jy kan doen nie. Waar moet ek geld kry vir kos en kleure. Waneer jy werk verloor kan jy al die hongerte voel.

M: Verstaan jy.   It's glady reg nie.   Hier try jy jou beste, naai man…Jy dink eerste issie jou skuld nie, maar soos die dae verby gaan begin jy soos 'n fokkop voel.

D2: Julle moet nie uintlik guilty voel nie.   Miskien as 'n mens verkeerd gedoen het by die werk, bv., gesteel het of iets, en jy is gefire.   Daai sal nou onverantwoordlik wees.   Maar as jy geretrench is of jou besigeheid waar jy werk maak toe.   Is mos nie jou skuld nie- wat kan jy doen, die hele land gaan so? Verstaan julle.

D1: Ja maar jou kinders lui honger, fire of retrench, baatie hoe jy afgesit is nie.   Dis dieselfde ding.

F1: Naai maar it issie reg nie, ek meen ma.

I: How do you think other people think of you, now that you are unemployed.

A1: People here thinks my mother has a lot of money, and that we should be fine.   But it's not like that.   We really depend on that money that I used to earn.

F2: Die goed hier dink kak van jou.   Ek verstaan nie.   Onse mense in die area moet mos verstaan hoe dit gaan nou in die wereld, maar hulle will net skinner en nonsense praat.

G: Is die skinnery wat my befok maak.   Hulle weet nie mos wat aangaan nie.

M: Hulle kan gerus iets doen om te help.

D1: As jy geretrench is, of jou besigheid maak toe.   Is mos nie jou skuld nie.

F1: Ek dink meestens verstaan die mense.   Almal weet onse land sukkel. Wat kan jy doen , die hele land gaan net so.

R: Ja is bad vir almal.   Daar is nerens werk nie.   Die government moet its doen.

A1: Is die ekonomie van die land wat werkloosheid veroorsaak.   Ander lande wil nie besigheid maak met ons nie.   En sien jy as hulle geld in sit dan maak it die ekonomie sterk.   Maar daar's te veel violence en korupsie.

F2: Ja is mooilik, maar is waar wat hy se, is die hele land.

A2: Is glad nie die hele land nie.   Sienjy, eerste was it apartheid en die whities het al die werk gekry, en nou is dit affirmative action en die daakies kry al die werk.

D1: Nou praat jy sommer fokkin reg ou Allie.

G: Ja is daai A.N.C. wat al die werkloosheid veroorsaak.   Toe die N.P. nog in power was, was alles nog fine.

F1: Moettie nonsense praat nie.   Is die whities wat al die kak in die eerste plek veroorsaak het.   Jy moet regkyk.   Is mense soos jy wat die N.P. die Wes-Kaap gee.

G: Ek kan stem vir wie ek wil.

F1: Ja jy's stupid.

I: Okay guys never mind that, lets get back to the question.   The question was what do you think other people think of you.

R: We nothing, who cares about us.

F2: Hier in die Heideveld is werkloosheid part van die lewe.

M: I don't care a fuck. Die mense dink altyd die worst van jou.

How has your health (gesondheid) been now that you are unemployed?

F1: Ek was net geworried oor die lities, as hulle siek raak.

I: And your health?

F1: Niks problems vir my nie.

D: Niks nie.

F2: Ek het klom kopsere gehad maar ek kannie se ek was siek nie.

A: I had a cold quite a few times.

I: Anyone else?

I: How did your unemployment affect your family life?

A1: It's really hard for me and my mother. I suppose we are just getting by. But if I don't get a job soon, I don't know what we are going to do.

I: And the relationship between you and your mother?

A1: I think that maybe we are very close because we sit and worry together lots of times about what we are going to do.

I: Anyone else, was there any changes?

M: Nie vir my nie. My vrou was vol nonsens voor ek my werk verloor het, en sy's nou nog vol nonsens.

D1: Is nog dieselfe vir my

F1: Ja maar kykhier daar is tye waar ons nou vassit. Jy kan mos dink as daar geld probleeme is, dan is almal mos los gespan.

F2: As daar geld probleeme is, kan jy mos dink dat daar conflict wees. Maar ons sort dit uit.

F1: jy ek stem saam ons is mos nie diere nie.

M: Issie net daai nie, hulle expect jou om huiswerk te doen. Sy's lekker befok.

F1: Ja jy's reg, ek sal nie…

F2: Daars niks verkeerd nie. Ek help nou uit in die huis. Is reg ja.

G: Jy's befok. Naai daai is 'n vrou se job. 'n Man is te besig, werk soek- daar is nie tyd nie. Ek sal mal wees om huis skoon te maak- miskien die yard skoonmaak…

I: Most of you are agreeing, and what if your wife was working

F1: My vrou werk en my suster kyk na die kinders.

D1: … My ma kyk na my kinders.

R: Julle is baie verkeerd, it vattie te lank om skoon te maak nie, 'n uur of twee. Ek verstaan nie vir julle nie.

D1: Jy sallie verstaan nie.

I: Okay can you tell me how your unemployment has affected your social life? Tell me about all forms of your social life, going to your friends …

A1: There is no spare money to go out. My social life is brought to a dead stand still. There's no money to go dancing anymore. All you can do is watch t.v.

A2: Ons het eerste baie stadium toe gegaan maar daai is nou lank verby.

M: En elke sondag gebraai, met 'n lekker paar bierre.

F1: Daar is nie geld vir kos nie, nog minder om uit te gaan nie.

D1: Ja man. Daar's nie geld vir kos nie, jy's ses maande agte op die rent, waar kan jy nog uitgaan.

I: Do you still socialise with friends?

F1: Ek is baie by Grebo, sienjy, hy's op die pad en kan uitkyk vir graaf vir 'n man.

F2: Jou brasse kyk uit vir jou, verstaan, in die land is dit belangrik om saam te staan, jy weet nooit nie- more oormore draai die wiel.

I: And what else do you do there?

M: Ons chill net, miskien 'n bier of twee, kap 'n pyp. Watch t.v. baie

D1: Sienjy jy lam it net uit, watch t.v.- en it help jou om beter te voel- 'n bier of 'n game dominoes of kaare. En op die naweek is daar altyd 'n lekker game op.

I: Where do you get the money for those things?

D2: Ons gooi saam. Daar is altyd geld as jy saam gooi. Ons kyk na mekaar.

I: Do you guys ever go out to look for work?

M: Jarre elke dag my broer, elke dag skarrel 'n man vir graaf. Elke oggend gaan ek soek.

D: Ja ek ook, ons is elke oggend uit. Werk is skaars.

F1: It gets to you. I looked for work for a solid two weeks.

I: How do you think working class people experience unemployment as opposed to the middle class?

A: I suppose it's the same for both, you know. I know quiet a bit of people, who I think is middle class, and I think it's just as bad for them I think.

F1: Is worse vir hulle, weet jy hoekom, ons is gewoond die lewe en…

A2: Ja, ons kyk onse lewe teen die pad. Ons survive so lank die nomer sterk is.

F1: Hulle raak seker mal van worry,

R: As jy iets gewoond is en jy verloor dit, hulle kan nie cope nie.

M: Hulle het genoeg geld weggesit, hulle kan jarre, naai man hulle het klomp geld om maklik te survive.

G: Daar's no way hulle is worse af. As hulle werk verloor dan maak hulle net 'n besigeheid oop of iets. Daar is klomp geld weggesit, of hulle kry die package- dan sit hulle op meere geld dat wat ons ooit sal sien. Hulle kan vir altyd op daai geld survive. Daar is niks van honger lui nie.

D1: As jy 'n package kry, jy hoeffie om te werk nie. Jy kan vir altyd op daai geld survive.

M: Verstaan jy, oor genoeg.

D2: Is mooilik vir hulle ook dink ek.   Maar is meer maklik as vir ons.
Daar is altyd kos dinkek in hulle huis

How do you cope with being unemployed.
F1: Die motjie werk.   Ek doen nou en dan 'n privaat job, maar geld is
skaars en die mense wil nie baie betaal nie.   Maar ek kry dam ietsie in.
Issie vaste werk nie, maar ek survive.
F2: My vrou werk, maar die geld is glad nie goed nie.   Maar dit gaan baie
bad, en daarsnie altyd geld vir kos nie.
D1: Ja my vrou werk ook, ek weet wat hy meen, ons survive net net.
F2: Soos jy die geld inkry, is it weg.
D1: Dan lyk vrydag so lang weg.
A2: Ek kyk die odd job op 'n taxi maar ek kyk my kroon op die pad, baie.
M: Is net daar is altyd geld op die pad, maar is nie altyd jou dag nie.   Ek
casual so nou en dan by die slaghuis.
D2: Ek het meeste van my goed verkoop.   Ek hardloop uit goed om te
verkoop, en ek skuld baie mense geld.
R: Yes, I also sold a lot of my things.
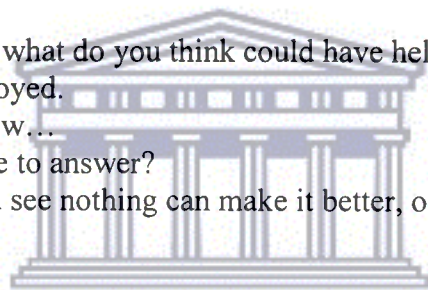F2: My T.V. het lankal gefly.

I: Okay, okay what do you think could have helped to lessen the impact of
being unemployed.
A: I don't know...
I: Anyone care to answer?
F1: Okay, you see nothing can make it better, only jobs.   That's it.
END.

MIDDLE CLASS GROUP 1

I: What did you feel when you lost your job?

S: For me, my work was my life. So if you're searching for issues pertaining to self-esteem, I can definitely concur. I think my self-esteem is at its lowest point ever.

H: While one can be aware of all the variables an complexities, it doesn't eliminate or even lessen the impact that being unemployed has on your psyche. What I'm saying is that you begin to feel inferior or useless, even when you know you shouldn't.

B: I agree, it should be easy to deal with, but its far from that. If I'm not practicng then what am I. There is a tremendous amount of stress.

Is: I'ts definiely hard to deal with. You have to remember, we are quite unfamiliar with how to deal with the situation, and all these strange inner feelings, that causes the stress. Like anxiety, you know that's quite bad.

F: Yes I would say that it affects your self image, your self identity. To know how you think of yourself.

I: That takes us to the next question, how do you think of yourself now that you are unemployed?

Is: That sought of relates to the first question. Issues that seems relevant for me would be, how my self-identity is affected.

S: I think that appears to be the crux of the problem of how to effectively cope with being unemployed. If you can get this negative feelings out of your mind and think of yourself differently, things will look up.

Is: Most definitely.

I: What negative feelings?

P: Well people think of themselves as useless. I felt like a failure in my profession.

D: Let me explain, if you are supposed to be good at what you do, and your company lets you go- then you not the best- result- all the psychological problems you're looking for.

I'm sure we can name them for you. Inferiority, feelings of uselessness.

S: Failure

Is: etc…

How do you think other people think of you?

F: I'm not too sure actually. You know on the one hand, well I suppose it's a result of the stigma attached to it.

D: I suppose you cannot escape the sympathy.

F: That's what I mean, sometimes that causes more harm.

H: It's a result of the negative connotations associated with unemployment. As we mentioned earlier, you end up thinking less of yourself even if it is unjustified. And societal influences only adds to the dilemma. I think we create the problem for ourselves. We shouldn't let other people determine our self worth.

I: What do the rest of you guys think?

B: Well I don't think it's as bad as that. At least not anymore. You know it seems that unemployment is becoming the norm, these days.

P: Yes, the stigma attached to unemployment is diminishing by the day. But that can't be a good thing?

H: Definitely not.

I: How has your health been know that you are unemployed?

H: Expensive!

C: Ja, no medical aid, very expensive.

I: Any illnessess, ailments?

H: High blood, or is low blood, something to do with the blood. The cost is all the same though.

S: Quite healthy.

I: Any colds, flu, bronchitis?

Is: You looking for a link between unemployment and illness. It will be difficult to say that. But, okay. I had a few bouts of flu, I'm not sure that you can ascribe blame to unemployment though.

I: Continue.

Is: I had gastro- something problems also-something with the stomach-maybe that hey. Did anyone have ulcers after they became unemployed? I think that's a good indicator.

F: Yes I've got ulcers.

P: I don't think the unemployment causes any health problems. What it does is lower the immune system, all this negative feelings impacts and weakens your body's defences.

I: Yes there is a theory like that. Anything else? Yes let's get on with the next question.

I: How has your family life been since becoming unemployed?

C: Well kind of laid back I suppose. No problems. My family including my wife was very understanding. I think that's important. If your family is supportive then everything is okay.

H: I most definitely agree to that. Can you imagine losing your job and your wife doesn't stand by you. I think your relationship with your wife is the most important.

I: Have any of you been affected by role changes in the family now.

Is: I think that concept is outdated now. To start out, my wife earns more money than I ever did. And to make matters worse, she's self employed and works from home. So I've got no problem putting in an extra hand to help her. Although she insists on me not to. Besides domestic responsibilities these days refers to directing the housekeeper, and being taxi to the children.

D: It just seems fair that I take care of the household since my wife is working. I'm not too busy during the day and it just seems unecessary to burden her. You know what's the use if she's working and then has to come home to worry about simple things. You get what I'm saying. My family is important to me.

B: Yes, you can include me too. I do most of the housework these days.

H: Hey, I'm a man's man, but hell, there's no harm in seeing to a few things at home. I'm sure the rest of the guys agree.

I: Okay then tell me your relationship with your partner, has that been affected? Is there any marital tension?

F: At first I, there was some tension. But I admit it stemmed from persistent irrational behavior on my part. Generally I can safely say that there has is no abnormal marital tension, or should I say tension that was caused by unemployment.

I: I think that when one explores issues on marital tension, you firstly need to identify the causal factors. On face value I think one could cast the blame on the way in which the unemployed perceives or rather reacts to the situation. Once you successfully negotiate that, the rest is easy.

H: Yup, I think he said it all, but like I said earlier it depends on who your partner is.

B: Ja, right I have no problem, is all our wives her in this room understanding?

P: That's got something to do with it, but realistically speaking, she married you she's not going to freak out if if you lose your job, you know what I'm saying, of course if it happens every week.

I: Right, next question. How has unemployment affected your social life?

S: Going out and socialising with friends, no that's not for me.

C: I can tell you. It places a tremendous strain on your day to day functioning.

I: How come, could you explain?

C: For example, going to the shops is stressful these days, because you have to constantly be on the look out for you know, to avoid them. If you run in anybody you know, then you are forced to face a battery of uncomfortable questions all regarding your work.

H: It's like I mentioned earlier, you are influenced by society.

P: I can identify with that, it is just better to stay out of sight.

I: Anyone disagree?

I: No-one, and what about activities that you used to take part in.

D: Well, I don't know about the other guys, but I spend most of my time on the golf course. I now have a scratch handicap. I've become an exceptional golfer. Well that's something positive that came from being without work, all that free time was put to good use. When I walk onto the tee with my driver, they scatter.

P: Yes I am the top angler at my club now, I haven't missed acompetition, for the past two months. The trophy's mine at the end of the season. Nothing's going to stop me.

Is: Can't disagree with that, at the moment I,m on holiday, Golf, surfing, I do it all, now that I've the time, you now

F: I spend most of my time in the garden.

I: Generally, then has your activity levels decreased?

CONSENSUS: No

I: Next question.   How do you think the working class experience unemployment as opposed to the middle class.

Is: I think that unemployment impacts differently on the working and middle class.   And I think the middle class is affected more severely... because of the comforts that they are accustomed to.

I: The middle class?

Is: Yes, most definitely.   I know of suicides as a result of people losing their jobs.   Besides, what can we do.   I think the working class has generally built up their endurance.

P: Yes invariably when you working class you can survive with far less.

I: They used to penny pinching...They are fine.

D: You know it's also, well there's less stigma attached to losing your job there. Not only the stigma, what I mean is that it's more acceptable.

H: Fine , hey, but let's look at the other side of the coin.   Consider not being able to eat.   I think that's the reality of the situation for the working class.   Yes,

S: They're living on the breadline, permanently.   They really depend on that R5-00 for basic sustinence.   I think we should not forget that.

D: No but they just can't depend continuously on state funds.   Instead of trying to find work they are more interested in striking or marches.

F: The working class is always blamed.   You have enough financial reserves, you immune to unemployment.   It's a money thing; you have no appreciation for the sufferings and difficulties of the working class.

H:Yes, poverty is one of the, or rather the most significant social problem on the continent.   Even in South Africa it remains number one on the list.   We have to realize that unemployment is without a doubt the direct cause of poverty.   I think it's safe to assume that any one of us here, have not had to go hungry ever.

C: It's only our perception.   We can only begin to imagine, actually we cannot predict.   Maybe you should consult some working class people.   Me personally, I think unemployment should be quite devastating.   But it's quite difficult to put ourselves in that position, or maybe should I say impossible, you know- it's definitely different- it would actually be interesting to hear their point of view.

I: Let's finish up.   How do you cope with being unemployed?

P: Well my wife is employed, and I suppose we utilise that money on a daily or monthly basis.

I: What's your wife's occupation?

P: She's a systems analyst.   For more expensive things like my daughters computer and my son's school fees. I have to draw on my savings.   I suppose we survive comfortably.

D: I cashed in an insurance policy- but sometimes it's sometimes necessary to draw on savings.

I: And the rest of you?

H: Well I think most of us has partners in employment. Also you know, we don't want to talk too much about that...

S: Yes, we've enough financial reserves to survive it for some time to come.

I: Is it ever necessary to sell anything of value?

S: I suppose getting rid of unwanted debt is- comes along with unemployment, but I don't think I had to sell in order to survive. Not yet anyway. I don't know about anybody else.

I: Anyone else?

P: Ja, I don't think I've reached that stage either. I'm sure we are all in similar positions.

F: I think I'm in the wrong group. These guys don't appear to have any financial problems. And that's all I can think about, where am I going to get money for the next month? I'm suffering I tell you.

B: No. No. I agree with you. It's the beginning of the month and I don't have any food in the house, and no money to buy food.

I: Right let's finish up then. What do you think can be done to lessen the impact of unemployment?

H: We could be here forever, before the economists, get into that question, firstly what you doing now, research, definitely the first step, but it all depends on central government, linked to current global issues...

S: The Asian crisis. You no also, getting rid of the curses of Cape Town, crime will greatly increase job opportunities for everyone.

I: And to lessen the impact of unemployment.

S: Like I said to lessen the impact, create jobs. Or increase the stock price, that will make me happy.

I: Anyone else? Is there anything you think, that is important that we have not mentioned

END.

MIDDLE CLASS GROUP 2

I: Can you describe what you felt when you became unemployed?

R: Many things, you know. Anxious, that was a long time ago. Probably you no you concerned, about financial survival.

I: Depression?

Q: I suppose you feel depressed, but it's more frustration with yourself or this immense feeling of anger at the mere thought of being thrown into the club of the workless.

A: Yes confusion, I think look here, your mind goes a long way, and the stress. You know I always get this itchy feeling down my back, that's what I felt.

Y: Axiety, worry, stress, I think all those things.

C: I would have to agree to that, it's definitely linked to unemployment. I know of , two friends of mine, or rather some associates, who, the one developed ulcers, the other one some heart problem. So I say yes, unemployment could result in health disorders.

I: Anyone else agree?

Q: No I don't think we can ascribe illnessness with unemployment per se, we can only hypothesise that its linked.

N: You know, this is not uncommon, there is a well known link between severe stressors in life and physical illnessess. And unemployment is I'm sure classified as a stressor.

I: Okay, I think you went off the question. I was asking how you felt, your feelings. But let's continue. How did you think of yourself when you became unemployed?

H: I suppose we live in a society were we determine our self by the work we do. What I'm saying is that we identify ourselves by our job. You know by what you do?, it's common questions. I'm sure we all experienced that before.

R: Yes, so because of that, how we determine ourselves, by our job I mean, we suffer accordingly.

H: Exactly, look here I'm a C.A. know tha's what I'm living everyday. I'm a C.A. before I'm a human, right know I'm unemployed, what am I now- nothing.
So accordingly we suffer from feelings of being worth nothing...

I: Because the thing that was developing your self-identity and self-worth is gone.

H: Exactly.

G: Okay, but can we generalise that?

I: What do you think?

G: Well to a certain extent it's true. Or maybe I'ts completely applicable, but the extent varies. I hear what is being said, but that means it would affect everybody severely, or everybody that had a good job, or a high status job. I'm an information systems analyst, at first I agree maybe, but

after the initial shock, I'm having a jol of a time. I don't think I'll go back to work just yet, even if I get a job. That's just the way I feel.

N: Sorry, I don't think that 's what was meant, I agree with you, hey, but I think that should go without saying. When it comes to human reactions, or experiences, we can't never assume uniformity.

H: Yes, right.

Q: I see you guys have this covered. Hey I agree, that's all I have to say. How do you think other people think of you? Listen you don't have to agree with what the group thinks, there is no right or wrong answers, so everybody share their thoughts?

R: Ja, once again these questions all appear intimately related. On the one hand you'd assume that maybe because of the attached stigma, you'll be looked down at, or yes there's always sentiment invoved. People feel sorry for you no matter what. Yes and on the other hand, well you know, the fall of, or rather the rise of unemployment globally, nationally, locally, it just appears to be an accepted fact. Take for example, le'ts just look say our working class, unemployment for them must imply an everyday occurrence.

C: I don't think the stigma is that bad for them. Or the stigma is non-existent.

H: No matter how you look at it, there is always a stigma.

Q: How you think or perceive the way they think of you, that also affects your psyche. I understand that, but we can go on for hours speculating, and trying to find links for this and for that, or whatsoever. I think everyone will agree to getting on with the crucial reason why we here. What's the central question.

And we can discuss everything else around that.

I: The central question involves your thoughts of the differences in the experience of unemployment for working and middle class individuals. But before we get to that, I would like to know how unemployment affects your family life and your social life.

Y: Okay my family life. Well I became the cook.

I: You have no problem with that?

Y: No, not at all. I'm beginning to feel, anybody back me up?

A: There's no harm done in accepting the domestic role. Ja our families are our lives.

I: Are you saying you have no problem in accepting a traditional female role?

A: I think it's in order to say that we are living in a, for all intents and purposes, in a liberated society. That does not affect me at all, besides I suppose it's the norm these days.

C: I agree. I think the concept of traditional female work roles is fast becoming extinct. As the country develops we can see the general shift to

greater female involvement in fulfilling important political, economic and social roles.

N: Yes that's happening already. I have no problem with housework.

I: How has the relationship been with your partner?

H: She got a good laugh out of it at the beginning, but I can say very warm, supportive.

Y: You see it's like they have to look after the family- and they just love taling on the provider role.

C: In fact I think unemployment actually strengthened my relationship with my wife.

Q: I agree, you know what, I think it makes them feel better. My wife has got this glow about her now, that she's provider.

R: Unemployment, I think strengthens relationships. It closes any distances and brings couples closer. My partner was extremely supportive. Our relationship is as stable as ever. But I think it also depends on the type of person that your significant other is.

N: You see there's a common enemy, and the relationships adapts to deal with the problem.

G: If there was money problems it might cause problems and then it depends on as he said, the type of person your wife is.

H: All in all, ja, I think family life is quite fine, you wanted to know about social life.

H: Well I don't, well when you're unemployed you tend to not to go out much.

I: Why's that?

H: I don't realy know, you tell me.

I: It's your discussion.

Y: It's embarassing to run into people you know. That's why it's better to stay at home and avoid those potentially embarassing situations. Think of it as an effective coping strategy, necessary to ensure sanity…

H: That's right, I could not have said it better myself.

N: Yes, you tend to keep more to yourself. I tend not ot partake in social visits.

I: Why is that?

N: I suppose I'm trying to avoid the attached stigma, or I'm not too sure. It just feels uncomfortable.

I: Anyone else care to answer?

A: As we said your work is your life, so no work, there's no functions or, or ja, you just stay at home.

C: It's because your social life is part of your work life, that's why. Well I suppose it relates to the perceptions that we think society have regarding the unemployed. As we mentioned earlier.

A: Yes I agree. Also it is important to understand that while one can be familiar with the functioning of issues such as embarresment, social stigma, and the such, one would think that it could easily be dealt with.

However in reality it appears to be more complicated and the effects are most definitely internalised.

H: Yep, could be that too. You know you shouldn't feel like that, but you do.

A: If people hear that you are unemployed, the conversation is quickly terminated. You can see it in their facial expressions, their body language and their voice. They just want to get away from you for fear of contracting the unemployment disease. Its every man for himself out there.

I: Spend any time with your friends?

N: I'd say maybe your very close friends, but, you no your friends are mostly your collegues.

H: Ja.

Q: Generally you tend to keep to yourself, yes I agree.

R: Your friends don't want to know you anymore. I think the worst part is if they actually avoid you the next time they see you.

Y: We've unemployment leprosy.

I: What do you mean.

Y: If they spend too much time with us their job is going to fall off.

I: Anybody disagree?

CONSENSUS ON NO

I: Next question. How do you think unemployed working class people experience unemployment as opposed to the middle class?

C: I think that unemployment impacts heavily on people both working and middle and I think It's worse for the middle class.

Q: Yes it's easier for them because they're used to that sought of life. Middle class people have become accustomed to that way of life, not that it changes much, but there is still a major change and you don't know how to deal with it.

C: Also it's more acceptable.

I: What do you mean?

C: Hy het sy job verloor- it's not such an unacceptable term in the working class. Not only that it's the whole I suppose stigma attached to being the labour force. I can draw an analogy at the company I worked for. We had seven hundred people out in the production area, I went for a tour through there one day, and you know in all honesty, I was disgusted at my self for only then recognising these workers as people and not numbers. Unfortunately that's the way it is and it's a way of life for these people- and unemployment is part of their life whether we like it or not.

Q: Yes, I agree, I think it's actually the norm there. It's like an everyday occurrence. They don't want to look for work They expect the government to just provide for them.

H: No, I think it's definitely worse for the working class.

I: Why's that.

H: Well, for starters we are not affected by starvation or poverty, I think that alone makes it easier for us to deal with. Also most middle class have tented to be fortuituos and have been able to build up a substantial nest-egg on which to draw from.

A: Yes I would agree, middle class people generally have enough resources to manage without the monthly income.

C: Yes, but that's not the only problem, having no money. They can deal with effects of stigma more easily than we can.

H: Sure, but you have never had to go hungry. You even understand the concept of stigma, or you've even enough money to deal with it.

Y: Let's face it, we stand a better chance of getting work again. We are more educated and posses abilities to adapt to the changing market.

R: Yes I think the working class suffer suffer from being, what's the term, unemployable. Manuel labour is abundant, and if you don't have specific skills, it's quite hard to find work.

I: How do you cope with being unemployed.?

H: Like we said earlier, the female of the species steps in.

G: Right.

Q: My wife makes enough money for us to manage quite comfortably. Actually she makes excellent money- more than I used to make.

A: Ja, right.

I: And if you don't have a partner, then, do all of you have significant others.

H: Like I said the female of the species. Okay I suppose, you know, like we mentioned earlier, we have enough financial reserves.

I: Reserves run out.

Y: Yes, fair enough it can't last forever, but it can keep you up and running for quite a while until you find another job.

I: What do you think can be done to alleviate the effects on unemployment.

H: No man that's for the politicians.

A: You can start with research, you, well I would like to know the extent of unemployment in this area.

H: But that can't alleviate it.

A: It's a start, you know. Is that the last question?

I: Well I wanted to know if there is anything we've missed that you think is important?

H: I think we've pretty much covered everything.

I: Anyone else?

....

END.