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TOWARDS MASTERY AND CONTROL

By

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Research portfolio submitted
in fulfillment of the requirements for the
Doctorate in Counselling Psychology

City University London
Department of Psychology
November 2010

For my mother

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**THE FOLLOWING PARTS OF THIS THESIS HAVE BEEN REDACTED
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Relinquishing Control.....

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SECTION A : PREFACE

This portfolio has focused on two inter-related concepts, which have been the subject of multiple major theories and a vast body of experimental and naturalistic studies, namely *personal control* and *mastery*. It is considered herewith that both concepts are worthy of attention by Counselling Psychologists who in their everyday practice are likely to encounter clients whose problems relate to uncontrollable events. Such events may threaten fundamental assumptions that a person holds about their life including the idea that one is both invulnerable and immortal (Janoff-Bulman, 1999) or that the world is a just place and that essentially one is in control (Moorey and Greer, 2002).

Both terms have been used expansively and have been variously defined in the literature. For the purposes of this portfolio, two general definitions which appear to sufficiently capture their essence have been selected. Firstly, *personal control* is defined as the perception that one has the ability, resources or opportunities to get positive outcomes or avoid negative effects through one's own actions (Thompson and Schlehofer, 2007). Secondly, *mastery* is defined as the extent to which one regards one's life chances as being under one's own control in contrast to being fatalistically ruled (Pearlin and Schooler, 1978). As highlighted by Younger (1991), control is a concept that is related to mastery but it lacks the focus on outcome and growth.

From an organismic perspective, theorists have argued that these perceptions of control constitute fundamental human psychological needs. For example, White (1959) asserted that all humans (and other higher mammals) come with the inborn desire to be effective in their interactions within the social and physical context. Similarly, various authors have posited that all people are intrinsically motivated to produce effects to make things happen

(Elliott and Dweck, 2005; Koestner and McClelland, 1990). In keeping with the notion that control reflects an organismic need, events perceived as uncontrollable are likely to represent a significant threat to an individual if they believe that no control can be exerted over the situation. In this vein, research has demonstrated that the psychological effects of prolonged exposure to loss of control shape concurrent motivation, volition, emotion and cognition as well as future-oriented states such as optimism and hope (Kuhl, 1984). Accordingly, therapeutic interventions may be warranted and potentially beneficial.

As highlighted by Rothbaum, Snyder and Weisz (1982), there is extensive evidence that people strongly value and are reluctant to relinquish the perception of control. These authors explain that people may attempt to re-gain control either by bringing the environment into line with their wishes (i.e., primary control) or by bringing themselves into line with environmental forces (secondary control). In the latter case, responses may appear to be lacking in adaptiveness and Rothbaum et al. (1982, p.31) caution that therapists may "inadvertently trample on" or unintentionally undermine attempts at secondary control. For example, an individual may attempt to exert control through adopting inward behaviours (i.e., passivity, compliance, submissiveness). Attributing responsibility to oneself may also be a way of asserting control and preserving one's sense of control (Wortman, 1976). In a similar vein, Park and Folkman (1997) have suggested that individuals may exert control over a stressful event by changing the meaning of the situation to be more consistent with their goal's and beliefs (i.e., by identifying opportunities for growth).

Returning to the concept of mastery, Younger (1991) has drawn attention to the way in which individuals who experience uncontrollable events (e.g., illness or other stressful health conditions) may emerge, not demoralized and vulnerable, but healthy and possibly stronger. She further posits that the shock of discovering one's personal vulnerability may be replaced by a decrease in the need to believe in one's invulnerability and by an

acceptance of life on those terms, without abandoning the opportunity to exert personal influence on events. In this way, a sense of mastery may be regained through responses to difficult or stressful circumstances in which competency, control and dominion have been gained over the experience of stress.

It is beyond the remit of this portfolio to attend to the broad nuanced analysis of control which exists within the literature. The above précis has merely sought to highlight links between an individual's fundamental need for personal control and mastery, the potential effects of a loss of control, and adaptive responses aimed towards re-instating a sense of control and mastery in situations perceived as uncontrollable. A heightened sensitivity to these issues may also serve to increase Counselling Psychologists' awareness of the importance of promoting a truly egalitarian therapeutic climate in which a client's autonomy is recognised and feelings of powerlessness are diminished. In this way, and through effective interventions, the therapist may facilitate a client's journey **towards mastery and control**.

This portfolio consists of four sections (including Section A : Preface). Each section is linked to a theme of *mastery* and *control*.

Section B : Research

The research section of this portfolio consists of a qualitative exploration of reactions and responses to involuntary redundancy amongst a cohort of City Professionals during an economic recession. My reasons for choosing to research this topic stemmed primarily from a desire to explore a topical issue. To this end, the redundancy phenomenon triggered by an unprecedented global recession appeared to be a topic worthy of exploration. Daily news footage which portrayed City Professionals exiting renowned corporate banking institutions

with their personal possessions in cardboard boxes and bin liners caught my attention. As a Counselling Psychologist in-training, my curiosity was aroused in relation to the potential psychological impact on those individuals in relation to the shock and uncontrollability of their experience.

I considered that an exploratory study reflecting more recent working trends might be timely and of potential benefit to clinical practice. This view reflected my awareness of the potential for distress or more serious mental health issues to arise as a consequence of the involuntary nature of the event and the potential for long-term unemployment given the scale of the problem. Through grounded theory analysis, the findings showed that many City Professionals appear to share personality traits and characteristics including high levels of self-esteem and heightened perceptions of control and mastery. Consistent with the existing literature, those psychological resources were shown to be adaptive in relation to the participants' ability to *survive* their experience of involuntary redundancy. At the same time, however, the meanings attributed to the experience appear to have presented a significant challenge to individuals who possess such traits and characteristics. Ultimately, for the majority, the process of surviving involuntary redundancy appears to have further enhanced perceptions of mastery and control. These findings have been incorporated into a five-phase model which denotes the process of *survival* over time.

Section C : Professional Practice

This section includes a Cognitive Behavioural combined Process Report and Client Study in which I am working with a 35 year old female who is undergoing treatment for breast cancer and who also suffers from symptoms consistent with a diagnosis of Specific Phobia of Vomiting (SPOV) also known as emetophobia. In both respects, control is a dominant issue. Specifically, cancer represents a loss of control over one's health. Consistent with

the psychopathology of SPOV as described by Veale (2006), Camilla¹ associated vomiting with the feared consequences of losing control. Her belief that she was able to control vomiting was maintained through the maintenance of a broad range of avoidance and safety behaviours. The recognition that invasive chemotherapy treatment might induce vomiting, was exacerbating her overall levels of anxiety.

Given the physiological effects of her treatment, the need to proceed with caution was paramount in our working and to this end the importance of “doing the work” and recognizing “when to hold back” proved difficult at times. I was also mindful of Camilla’s need to exert control over her situation. To this end, although I sensed that her fear of losing control was also proving to be an obstacle to opening up to her emotions in therapy, I purposefully adopted a tentative approach both in relation to encouraging the expression of emotions and in the delivery of CBT interventions. The piece presented highlights a moment in which Camilla assumes mastery of her experience by virtue of *deciding* to relinquish control.

Section D : Critical Literature Review

This review has focused on the role of mandatory personal therapy in the personal and professional development of trainee Counselling Psychologists. The relevance of this topic to a theme of control pertains to the fact that Counselling Psychology trainees are obliged to undertake at least 40 hours of personal therapy in order to achieve chartered status. Although there appears to be general consensus within the studies reviewed that personal therapy should be a *recommended* part of training, the question as to whether it should be mandatory for all remains a matter of debate. In this connection, the notion that training institutions or governing bodies should not assume “one size fits all” standards is

¹ For the purposes of confidentiality, my client has been referred to by a pseudonym.

recognised. Moreover, there have been calls for the uniqueness of each trainee to be emphasised, embraced and acknowledged.

A seminal study conducted by Risz and Target (2008a) produced findings in which all their participants expressed ambivalence towards the mandatory aspect of personal therapy, suggesting that professional insistence on personal therapy could paradoxically create some resistance to a fulsome engagement in the process. In the final analysis, one participant in Wiseman and Scheffler's (2001) study suggested that perhaps personal therapy should not be forced but instead should be a recommendation in the spirit of what it means to treat people.

The considered view appears to be that by denying Counselling Psychologists the right to exert control over a decision as to whether or not to engage in personal therapy, the integrity of the experience may be compromised. I would argue that training institutions might consider how to encourage trainees to engage fully in personal therapy but with a greater sense of mastery and control over the experience. For instance, training institutions might consider providing prospective candidates with an explanation of the rationale for mandatory personal therapy at the time of the selection process. In this way, trainees who then decide to accept a place will, by default, also be making an informed choice to engage in personal therapy. Thus, their perceptions of control will remain intact and the potential for resistance to arise may be minimised.

In sum, in different ways, all three of these academic works recognise that events perceived as uncontrollable may violate an individual's perceptions of mastery and control. Consequently, individuals are likely to seek opportunities to re-gain a sense of mastery and control over their environment. To this end, as posited by Thompson (1981), control may not need to be exercised for it to be effective and it may not even need to be real but just *perceived* for it to have effects.

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SECTION B

A "Survival of the Fittest Experience" :

**A qualitative exploration of
psychological reactions and responses to involuntary redundancy
amongst City Professionals in a climate of recession.**

ABSTRACT

A redundancy phenomenon triggered by the 2008/2009 global economic recession seems set to continue, representing a risk to all employees. This study has focused on a particular working sector (i.e., the U.K. Financial Services) which has suffered an unprecedented number of involuntary job losses. Notwithstanding diversity in backgrounds, this study has produced findings which show that many City Professionals appear to share similar psychological traits and characteristics which are well suited to working in an intensely competitive, goal driven and pressurised working environment. Namely, high self-esteem and heightened perceptions of mastery and control. Consistent with past research, these psychological resources have been found to be adaptive in relation to coping with the stress of job loss. Concurrently, this study has highlighted that the meanings attributed to involuntary redundancy by individuals who possess those traits appear to present a significant challenge to their psychological well-being.

The proposed holistic model conceives involuntary redundancy as a trajectory which begins with the *Awaiting* phase (pre-event). The model then progresses to four further phases each of which denote reactions, actions and interactions over time which are described in relation to Lazarus & Folkman's (1984) Transactional Model of Coping. The current model demonstrates how an individual with a strong sense of mastery and control may become vulnerable to more serious mental health issues over a prolonged period of unemployment. Drawing on Younger's (1991) Theory of Mastery, however, it also shows how an individual may emerge not demoralized and vulnerable but possibly with a stronger sense of mastery and control. Implications for clinical practitioners and recommendations for employers are discussed.

ABBREVIATIONS

U.S.	United States of America
U.K.	United Kingdom
GT	Grounded Theory
IPA	Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis
CPS	City Professionals

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

PRELUDE

All those who participated in this research study were forwarded a verbatim transcript of their interview. Some months later at a time when the researcher was immersed in data analysis, she received an acknowledgement by e-mail from one of the participants. The message content underscored the import of the topic being investigated both at an individual level and to Counselling Psychologists at large:

Thanks for the attached. Rather surprisingly or maybe not, I can't read it. I managed to get to line 270 something and then all the uncomfortable feelings came back and I can't re-visit them. I find that really interesting because I thought I was over the whole experience - obviously not, maybe the hurt (feeling of rejection) doesn't go away? (P. 11)

CHAPTER OVERVIEW

This study provides an in-depth exploration of the perspectives of City Professionals in relation to their experience of involuntary redundancy in a climate of economic recession. Specifically, this study has focused on gaining insight into the participants' subjective reactions and responses to redundancy over time. The chapter opens with an explanation of the contextual background to the research. This is followed by a review of a representative cross-section of the substantive 'pre' and 'post' redundancy literature with an emphasis on findings that are deemed to have relevance to the current study. Finally a rationale for this study including the research aim and questions is provided.

CONTEXT AND BACKGROUND

RECESSION is defined as a period of economic decline for two or more consecutive quarters which is typically accompanied by a drop in the stock market, an increase in unemployment and a decline in the housing market (Investorwords.com, 2010). The financial crisis of 2008 and 2009 which led to a worldwide economic recession is considered by many experts in the financial and business spheres to be the most severe since the Great Depression of the 1930’s. The crisis was triggered by the trade in U.S. sub-prime mortgages (i.e. home loans given to people with poor credit histories). Several factors contributed to the crisis including the availability of easy credit, complex financial instruments devised to trade the debt, weak regulation and the belief that the developed world had entered into a new paradigm of bull markets. Events came to a head in September 2008 when the U.S. government decided not to bail out Lehman Brothers, the fourth largest securities house. The bank collapse which followed made history as the biggest corporate bankruptcy since WorldCom in 2002.

The reverberations were felt immediately and drastic measures including downsizings and redundancies were implemented leading to mass unemployment on a phenomenal scale. The U.K. financial services industry, in particular, was severely affected with an unprecedented number of job losses estimated at a net total of 70,000 for 2008 and 2009 (City of London Statistics, 2010).

Table 1. Office for U.K. National Statistics : Labour Market Statistical Bulletin

Three month period to:	From one year earlier	Total Unemployed
April 2008	90,000 decrease	1.61 million
July 2009	743,000 increase	2.47 million
March 2010	53,000 increase	2.50 million*

* The highest number of unemployed people in the U.K. since December, 1994.

According to business and financial experts, the global economic picture remains unclear. Consequently, redundancies are likely to remain part of the landscape. Although economists generally view unemployment as an economic problem, Winefield (2002) has expressed the view that, whilst the causes of unemployment may be economic, the psychological consequences go beyond the economic (i.e. financial disadvantage). He has argued that in order to support this claim, empirical evidence is needed.

THE LITERATURE REVIEW

Key terms: *Redundancy, Job Loss, Job Insecurity, "Survivors"*

REDUNDANCY has been defined as the planned process of cutting back on human resources by terminating an individual's position within the organization (Hardy, 1986, p. 275). Redundancy has also been described as a response to market change (Lewis, 1993). The impact of change in the context of an economic downturn, reflects the implementation of organizational re-structuring, downsizing, mergers, acquisitions and other types of structural change which can lead to multiple redundancies occurring over time. Within the literature, the term *redundancy* is used interchangeably with JOB LOSS which is defined by Holmes and Rahe (1967) as a "life event that removes paid employment from an individual involuntarily." (see Latack, Kinkicki & Prussia, 1995, p.313). Latack et al. posit that job loss (an *event*) can be distinguished from unemployment (a *state*) by the concept of duration. Accordingly, job loss and unemployment form a continuum based on duration with the job loss event at one end and prolonged, chronic unemployment at the other. According to Latack et al., job loss as a *life event* pertains to adjustment after the fact.

In a climate of economic unpredictability and a rapidly changing organizational environment, Schaufeli and Greenglass' (2001, pp. 503) observation that "job loss is rampant as is the *threat* of job loss" is arguably valid. The *threat* pertains to JOB

INSECURITY which has been defined as: "the perceived powerlessness to maintain the desired continuity in a threatened job situation" (Greenhalgh & Rosenblatt, 1984, p. 438); "the subjectively experienced anticipation of a fundamental and involuntary event related to job loss" (Sverke, Hellgren & Naswall (2002, p. 243) and "a work stressor that results in detrimental job attitudes and behaviours" (Lim, 1997).

In tandem with Latack et al.'s (1995) distinction, Sverke et al. (2002) concur that job insecurity must be separated from job loss on the basis of the difference in the experience itself. These authors argue that job loss is immediate whereas job insecurity is an everyday experience involving prolonged stressfulness associated with uncertainty about the future. In response, the current researcher proposes that the distinction made between job insecurity and job loss, whilst valid, does not attend to the *similarities* between both experiences in the sense that the post-event process may also relate to prolonged stressfulness and uncertainty about the future in relation to securing another job. Indeed, it might be argued that the term job insecurity might also be utilized to describe the *state* of unemployment until a job has been secured.

Notwithstanding the fact that a distinction between pre- and post-event job loss reactions has permeated the literature thus far, Dekker and Schaufeli (1995) have acknowledged an association between job insecurity and unannounced redundancies in relation to an employee's uncertainty as to who, if anyone, will be forced to leave the organization. Although job insecurity is not always followed by job loss, these authors posit that job insecurity must be considered to be a *prelude* to the termination of a job and unemployment. For Jacobson (1991), job insecurity represents an *intermediate category* between secure employment and unemployment.

Given that job insecurity is to a large extent context-dependent (Klandermans and van Vuuren,1999), in a climate of radical economic change permeated by multiple job losses over time, the current researcher posits that based on the findings, the period of insecurity prior to the event constitutes a component of the overall “adjustment” to redundancy process. In this vein, a further dimension to the pre-event investigative literature is noted in relation to the reactions of those who remain working in organizations following downsizings. These “survivors” of redundancy not only remain subject to threat but may also experience involuntary redundancy firsthand in a later organizational “cut”. In consideration of what might be conceived herewith as a “global” perspective, the job insecurity and ‘survivor’ literature are both deemed to be relevant to the redundancy experience as a whole and are accordingly included in this review.

At this juncture, it should be noted that findings relating to psychological consequences and coping at an individual level have been selected for inclusion in this review. Physiological consequences and impact on others have been purposefully excluded.

WHAT IS THE MEANING OF UNEMPLOYMENT?

Researchers have typically pre-empted their work with descriptions of existing frameworks which describe the meaning of unemployment. Two models in particular are consistently cited. Firstly, Jahoda’s (1982) *latent deprivation model* states that unemployment produces profound changes in the life of working adults, including the loss of five latent functions of employment (time structure, social contact, collective purpose, status and activity). Jahoda believes that, unless individuals manage to locate alternative ways of achieving these outcomes, unemployment will be destructive from both latent (psychological) and manifest (economic) perspectives.

A second "vitamin" model proposed by Warr (1987, 2007) accounts for differences in the quality of work experiences and social issues. To this end, job characteristics are grouped into nine (later twelve) categories that relate differently to mental health outcomes according to the type of "vitamin" they represent. This model is able to explain why individuals who exit unpleasant dissatisfying organizations may be psychologically refreshed and not oppressed as Jahoda's model would predict.

Essentially, research has indicated that employment provides people with social status, professional identity and collective purpose (Wanberg, 1997), social connectedness, feelings of self-worth and the valued role of "breadwinner" (McKee-Ryan, Song, Wanberg & Kinicki 2005; Price, Choi & Vinokur, 2002; Latack et al. 1995). According to De Witte (1999), the threat of unemployment means the frustration of these needs and the loss of important (financial, social and societal) resources. Of note is Paul and Moser's (2009) observation that theoretical accounts regard unemployment as a cause of distress but not the other way round.

PRE-EVENT

JOB INSECURITY

JOB INSECURITY is described by De Witte (2005) as a sizeable social phenomenon caused by fundamental changes in the economic system of most European countries and the United States. Predominantly quantitative literature on this topic is located within journals of management, organizational psychology and organizational behavior. Canaff and Wright (2004) have observed that the fields of counselling, social work and psychology have paid little attention thus far to the need for interventions with this "job insecure" population. Given that job insecurity is likely to affect the individual's life in a variety of ways, including psychological, marital and family, as well as organizational consequences, Canaff et al. argue that the phenomenon of job insecurity provides a

fertile ground for employment counsellors not only in relation to fulfilling a counselling role but also in a collaboration/consultant and advocacy role within organizations undergoing transition.

WHAT ARE THE PSYCHOLOGICAL CONSEQUENCES OF JOB INSECURITY?

The threat to job security (i.e., job insecurity) has been conceptualised as a *chronic job stressor* (Van Vuuren, 1990) which generates stress for the individual and consequently reduces well-being (DeWitte, 1999; Sverke et al, 2002; Lim, 1997). Lim (1997, p. 252) has defined the *job stressor* as "causes of job stress" and *job strains* as "the individual outcomes associated with the stressor". Lazarus (1966) described three types of situations that result in feelings of stress: firstly, those that represent harm and loss, secondly, those that are perceived as a threat to an individual's sense of well being, and thirdly, those that are positive challenges in an individual's life, such as a new job or a job relocation. In tandem with Canaff and Wright's (2004) assertion that individuals experiencing job insecurity are likely to experience one or more of these situations, Lewis, Lewis, Daniels and D'Andreas' (2003) observation that they can be viewed as a vulnerable population can be seen to be valid.

With relevance to stress reactions, associations between job insecurity and reduced well-being have been documented (Fryer, 2000; Hellgren, Sverke & Isaaksson, 1999; Barling & Kelloway, 1996; Hartley, Jacobson, Klandermans, van Vuuren, Greenhalgh & Sutton, 1991; Jick, 1985; Warr, 1984). Specifically, job insecurity has been linked to psychological distress, anxiety and depression (Roskies & Louis-Guerin, 1990; Roskies, Louis-Guerin & Fournier, 1993) and more negative emotional feelings (van Vuuren, Klandermans, Jacobson & Hartley, 1991), suggesting that prolonged exposure to job insecurity can lead to a wearing out of the resources of the individual worker (Dekker & Schaufeli, 1995). The term "burnout" is used to describe an increased level of mental,

emotional and physical exhaustion that results from long-term involvement in work situations that are emotionally demanding (Schaufeli & Greenglass, 2001). According to De Witte (2005), longitudinal studies have "legitimized" these and similar earlier findings.

A relationship between job insecurity and feelings of hostility and anger has also been identified (Kleinfield, 1996). Shore and Tetrick (1994) explain that when an employee perceives that the organization has failed to meet its obligations, anger, outrage, distrust and resentment are more likely to occur. Similarly, when employees perceive their job security is threatened due to downsizing, Schaufeli and Greenglass (2001) suggest they are more likely to feel betrayed and as a result, experience anger, cynicism and hostility. Increased levels of irritation and anxiety and psychosomatic complaints are also added to this list (see review by De Witte, 2005). Further, Greenhalgh and Rosenblatt (1984) suggested that employees experiencing a reduction in workforce may also present with feelings of grief and loss, not unlike those individuals experiencing an anticipated death. These authors explain that, as workers begin the grieving process in anticipation of the loss, they may psychologically withdraw from the *to be lost* object, namely the job.

HOW DOES JOB INSECURITY AFFECT PSYCHOLOGICAL WELL-BEING?

Theoretical perspectives

The concept of job insecurity has been defined in different ways, however DeWitte (1999) has noted that researchers have tended to adopt an *overall concern* about the continued existence of the job in the future. For example, Van Vuuren (1990) proposed three components to job insecurity. Firstly, it is a *subjective* experience of perception. Secondly, it implies *uncertainty* about the future in relation to being made redundant, and thirdly, doubts about the continuation of the job *as such* are viewed as central to job insecurity. With relevance to the latter component, De Witte (2005) highlights a distinction between *quantitative* job insecurity which refers to the continuity (or loss) of

the job itself and *qualitative* JI which refers to insecurity regarding the continued existence of valued aspects of the job. This review will focus on *quantitative* job insecurity.

The idea that job insecurity is not just a matter of social construction but instead relates to actual changes in a company's situation has been the subject of some debate. For example, based on interviews with employees in three different companies, Hartley et al., (1991) found that feelings of job insecurity reflected the objective changes (an improvement or a decline) in the company's situation. However, these authors also noted that not all the variance in job insecurity could be explained by the company's situation and that workers facing identical situations, differed in their feelings of job insecurity. Although Hartley et al (1991) concede that personality factors known to determine feelings of insecurity such as low self-esteem or pessimism may underlie subjective insecurity, they argue that these factors become irrelevant in companies where jobs *are* at risk.

Notwithstanding Hartley et al.'s proposition that there is a *correlation* between objective and subjective states of insecurity, De Witte (2005, p. 1) asserts that job insecurity is an internalized perception, typified by the subjective conceptualization of insecurity about the job in the future. Indeed, there appears to be some consensus amongst researchers that the subjective experience is the cornerstone of most psychological definitions of the 'job insecurity' construct (DeWitte, 1999; van Vuuren, 1990; Sverke & Hellgren, 2002). Consequently, the majority of research thus far has studied job insecurity almost exclusively as a subjective state (Bussing, 1999).

Greenhalgh and Rosenblatt (1984) assert that subjective threat is derived from objective threat by means of the individual's perceptual processes. They explain that employees

have three basic sources of data, each of which requires interpretation. Firstly, official organizational announcements which Jick and Greenlagh (1981) suggest are typically minimal during times of change; secondly, unintended organizational clues evident to employees and thirdly, rumours which abound during times of threat, especially when official measures are scarce. Accordingly, Greenhalgh and Rosenblatt posit that it is not surprising that employees vary widely in their assessment of subjective threat.

In line with Van Vuuren's (1990) second component, *uncertainty*, Sverke et al. (2002) note that job insecurity reflects the subjectively experienced *anticipation* of a fundamental and involuntary event. *Anticipation*, in this context, reflects subjective worry about the *uncertainty* of losing a job which as argued by Jacobson (1991) is one of the most salient features of job insecurity. The notion of "appraisal" as described by Lazarus and Folkman, (1984) is relevant here since an individual will only be affected by job insecurity once they perceive their job to be insecure. According to this theory, how individuals respond to a potentially stressful situation (i.e., a downsizing), is dependent on how they *appraise* or interpret the situation.

Furda and Meijman (1992, p.133) have distinguished between two factors which they suggest could be relevant in explaining the harmful impact of "uncertainty", namely *predictability* and *controllability*, both of which are shown to reduce psychological well-being (Warr, 1987). *Unpredictability* reflects a lack of clarity about the future and about the expectations and behaviours that the employee should adopt. *Uncontrollability* pertains to a feelings of powerlessness over the continuity of a job.

In their quest to provide conceptual clarity, Greenhalgh and Rosenblatt (1984) grouped the subjective threat involved in job insecurity into two basic dimensions: the severity of the threat to one's job and powerlessness to counteract the threat. The sense of

powerlessness is viewed by these authors as an important element of job insecurity because it exacerbates the experienced threat due to the lack of protection a worker feels. The threat pertains to the ambiguity of what type of interventions might guarantee job continuity. For example, employees may be uncertain whether concrete actions should be undertaken or not.

Potential moderating affects

De Witte (2005, p. 2) highlighted a distinction between *antecedents* to job insecurity which include: variables on a macro level pertaining to the national or regional degree of unemployment and changes in the organizational structure (i.e., contextual factors), and *positional variables* such as age, gender, occupational levels and *personality traits*. Whilst contextual factors may be common to all (i.e., economic climate), *positional variables* reflect an array of individual differences which are likely to determine the degree to which individuals experience job insecurity.

- *Age*

Research has shown that unemployment is more distressing for respondents between approximately 30 and 50 years old (Warr & Jackson, 1984). This is explained in relation to increased family responsibilities and financial resources which may be more burdening. Further, the position of “unemployed” may be socially less legitimized. De Witte (2005) has noted that it is unclear whether these age differences also apply to the experience of job insecurity.

- *Gender*

Males have been found to experience significantly increased levels of distress in relation to job insecurity than females (i.e. Fryer & Payne, 1986; Warr & Jackson, 1984). Although De Witte (1999) found no such difference, he has suggested that

earlier findings may be attributed to 'role' theory which considers that females have more alternative roles available to fall back on. In order to test this theory, De Witte suggests that comparisons of single women to women who are married with an employed husband must also be investigated. The current researcher, would note the relevance of determining whether the female provides the main source of household income.

- *Occupational status*

Although Worrall and Cooper (2004) observed a pervasive sense of job insecurity throughout all management levels, there appears to be some consensus amongst researchers that in the context of organizational downsizing, executive level managers have more control over their work and decisions affecting their jobs than middle managers (Swanson & Power, 2001). Furthermore, middle managers have been shown to perceive a greater threat of job loss and sense of powerlessness than executive managers in terms of their ability to influence decisions concerning the future of their job prior to the downsizing (Armstrong-Stassen, 2005).

- *Social support*

This term has been defined as "information that leads a person to believe that he or she is cared for, esteemed, valued and belongs to a network of communication and mutual obligation" (Lim, 1997, p.252). Greenhalgh and Rosenblatt (1984) posit that social support somehow increases the individual's ability to cope with stressful organizational situations by buffering their life outside the organization. Indeed, Bussing (1999) argues that social support at work may keep an individual "healthy" despite job insecurity. Dekker and Schaufeli (1995) highlight a distinction between three social support factors, namely, support from colleagues,

confidence in management and protection by trade unions. They argue that all three sources of support can provide employees with a feeling, or at least an illusion, of control over the stressor of job insecurity (p. 58).

Erera (1992) examined how supervisors perceived social support in the working context. She found that only subordinates were perceived as supportive, providing emotional support and approval. In contrast, superiors were criticized for providing inconsistent and insufficient information and withholding emotional approval and tangible support and peers were accused of withholding emotional support. Moreover, alienation was found to activate dysfunctional attitudes such as blame, anger, suspicion and mistrust, which Erera concluded were "plainly counterproductive to social support since employees will often withdraw and communication channels will be shut down" (p.257). On the other hand, Dekker and Schaufeli (1995) posit that an increasingly high level of psychological stress may be an incentive for employees to seek social support.

- *Personality factors*

Klandermans and van Vuuren (1999) have suggested that in more secure circumstances, it is predominantly personality factors that determine feelings of job insecurity. In this vein, a range of *personality factors* have been associated with *increased* job insecurity, for example, conservatism, attributional tendencies, i.e., greater importance attributed to work or attributions of self-blame (Greenhalgh and Rosenblatt, 1984), pessimism (van Vuuren et al, 1991), negative affect (Roskies et al., 1993); low self-esteem (Kinnunen, Feldt & Mauno 2003; Klandermans, van Vuuren & Jacobson, 1991; Van Vuuren et al., 1991) and external locus of control (Greenhalgh & Rosenblatt, 1984; Van Vuuren et al., 1991).

HOW ARE 'SURVIVORS' AFFECTED BY REDUNDANCY?

SURVIVORS are described by Brockner (1992) as those who remain within an organization after a significant cut in the workforce. Much of the 'Survivor' literature thus far has emanated from North America and Canada and, in line with the job insecurity research, has utilized mainly quantitative methods. Allen, Freeman, Russell, Reizenstein and Rentz (2001) aimed to fill gaps in the literature by conducting a longitudinal study of 'survivors' over three periods of time. Although these authors found that negative attitudes to downsizing reached more favourable levels after a period of time, consistent with the work of others (for a review see Armstrong-Stassen, 2005) initial "less favourable" reactions were identified, including decreased morale, job satisfaction, organizational commitment and job involvement. According to Baruch and Hind (1999, p. 29) this may be due to stress and anxiety based on fear of further downsizing/restructuring, or due to diminishing trust between employees and management or a combination of these factors.

Of relevance to the current study are empirical findings which show that management-level 'survivors' are not immune from the adverse effects of downsizing (Worrall & Cooper, 2004; Allen et al., 2001; Worrall, Cooper & Campbell, 2000). Campbell (1999) conducted a seminal qualitative study, in which data were collected from managerial and non-managerial employees in two large U.K. financial organizations. She identified a wide range of negative emotional reactions amongst 'survivors' following downsizing including feelings of stress, uncertainty, shock, confusion, insecurity and frustration. Consistent with the observations of others who have viewed 'survivor' reactions as analogous to a grieving process that occurs after divorce or the loss of a loved one (Newman & Krzystofiak, 1993), Campbell also noted a similarity between the emotional reactions of 'survivors' and those of the grieving process as described by Kubler-Ross (1984). Campbell also found evidence of feelings of mistrust and less respect towards

management throughout the redundancy process. Moreover, feelings of insecurity and uncertainty prompted 'survivors' to turn their attention to seeking alternate employment.

The term "survivor syndrome" has been used to describe the mixed bag of behaviours and emotions exhibited by employees remaining after redundancies in their organizations (Vinten & Lane, 2002, p. 430). Notwithstanding the body of evidence suggesting a range of profound adverse affects, Baruch and Hind (1992) produced findings which demonstrated contradictory evidence amongst employees in a large U.K. financial institution. Accordingly, they mounted a second study aimed towards exploring the possible reasons for the non-existence of the syndrome. They concluded that "best practice" by the organization (i.e., a fair and open approach) and "timing" seemed to be key to explaining the absence of "survivor syndrome". Baruch and Hill explained that "timing" in relation to more positive 'survivor' reactions appeared to reflect a "less turbulent" economic climate than that prevailing in earlier studies (i.e., in the 80's) that were undertaken at a time of heightened uncertainty in the business community.

It might be argued that the absence of "survivor syndrome" may be less indicative of reactions pertaining to exogenous variables (i.e., timing) but rather a reflection of data collected from employees in a specific organization where "best practice" was demonstrated and experienced by remaining employees. The qualitative approach taken by Campbell (1999) appears to have provided an enhanced explanation of *how* "best practice" might moderate the strength not only of 'survivor' reactions but also those experiencing redundancy firsthand. For example, from an *organizational* perspective, she found that communications on the announcement day and post announcement were found to have a huge impact in relation to individuals' thirst for information and the desire for more explanations as to why certain decisions were made (p. 19). Similarly, Brockner (1992) found that 'survivors' were less likely to exhibit negative attitudes and

behaviours if there had been clear and adequate explanations for the redundancy situation. Campbell also noted that, although organizations often offer outplacement and counselling facilities to those people who leave an organization, they rarely offer assistance to those who remain.

From an *individual* perspective, consistent with previous research (see Brockner, Davy & Carter, 1985), Campbell found that those who viewed themselves positively (high self-esteem) found the redundancies less threatening whereas those with a high level of job dependence (economic need to work) and those whose career expectations were high, were more likely to react negatively to redundancy. In the latter case, Kahn (1990) noted individuals with a high level of job involvement may be more sensitive to changes in the work environment. *Job involvement* in this context is defined as the extent that an individual is devoted to and psychologically identifies with his or her work (Lodahl and Kejner, 1965).

POST-EVENT

Key terms: *Job Loss, Redundancy, Unemployment*

JOB LOSS has been ranked as one of the top ten traumatic life experiences (Spera, Buhrfeind & Pennebaker, 1994) and in the upper quartile of unpleasant events that generate life stress (Holmes & Rahe, 1976). De Frank and Ivancevich (1986) suggested that for some individuals job loss can create almost as much stress as the death of a loved one and even more stress than divorce or the death of a close friend.

UNEMPLOYMENT can for many represent a difficult life situation which is characterized by a lack of activity and time structuring, less frequent meaningful social contacts, lower social acceptance and lack of opportunities to feel competent, as well as a general threat to one's identity (Paul and Moser, 2009). Such stressors can represent grave injuries to

the person's basic psychological needs (Trachsel, Gurtner, von Kanel and Holtforth, 2010) and can provide the breeding ground for negative emotions and the development of various mental problems (Grawe, 2006).

WHAT ARE THE PSYCHOLOGICAL CONSEQUENCES OF JOB LOSS AND UNEMPLOYMENT?

Across the literature, researchers have identified a strong association between the move into unemployment and psychological distress (Creed & Reynold, 2001; Fryer & Fagan, 2003; Winefield, 2002; Leana & Feldman, 1992). Specifically, job loss has been shown to precipitate multiple adverse health and mental health issues, including depression, health complaints and impaired psychosocial functioning (Trachsel et al., 2010; Paul and Moser, 2009; Dew, Bromet & Penkower, 1992; Price, 1992; Vinokur & Schul, 1997; Warr, 1987); a general reduction in well-being (Winefield & Tiggemann, 1990a; Kinicki, 1985), diminished self-esteem and perceived competence (Winefield, Tiggemann & Smith, 1987), changes in self-concept (Avison, 2001) and increased levels of stress (Winefield & Tiggemann, 1989; Dooley & Catalano, 1988).

As noted by Hanisch (1999), some positive effects following job loss have also been reported. For example, some individuals perceive unemployment as positive and liberating (Fryer & Payne, 1986) or experience increased feelings of excitement and challenge (Feldman & Brett, 1983). Moreover, job loss may allow an individual to re-direct career goals and priorities, develop new competencies, consider new alternatives or leave a dissatisfying or unchallenging job (Hartley, 1980).

With specificity to *higher occupational status*, Latack and Dozier (1986) proposed that a positive aspect of the job loss transition may be career growth and entry into a new psychological success cycle. With a similar focus, Tyson and Doherty (1991) aimed to

determine the personality and experiences of job loss amongst managers and executives. Findings showed that many of the sample had found the experience quite devastating. On the other hand, since many of these individuals were shown to be creative, enthusiastic and entrepreneurial, Tyson and Doherty noted that they used the event of redundancy as an experience with a lot of growth potential either by moving into self-employment or achieving the potential for a fulfilling semi-retirement phase in their lives.

HOW DOES JOB LOSS AND UNEMPLOYMENT AFFECT PSYCHOLOGICAL WELL-BEING?

Integrative Models

According to De-Frank and Ivancevich (1986) there are clear advantages to using integrative models to address job loss since they usually reflect an existing body of empirical findings and are accordingly more comprehensive than models that only examine a few variables. Their own model explains that the *immediate effects* of job loss (i.e., loss of income; change in status; loss of daily structure) and its *perceived impact* (i.e., appraisal as harmful or beneficial) are moderated by various *personal, social, economic and job-related variables* (i.e., more negative effects associated with older age, males and lack of social support). These authors further propose that *perceived stress* in turn, leads to coping attempts (that may be more or less successful) and to various longer terms outcomes including physical and health-related changes and psychological problems.

A second renowned model proposed by Leana and Feldman (1988) traced the job loss experience from the event itself (laid-off, fired or voluntary) to the individual job loser's cognitive, emotional and physiological reactions to job loss, to coping efforts (active vs. palliative), to job attainment status (satisfactory re-employment vs. continued unemployment) and to potential outcomes (general health, job attitudes, quality of family and social relations). Moreover, they included personality, demographic and

situational differences as potential moderators of these relationships. At each stage of their model, these authors proposed hypotheses regarding the linkages. In a similar vein, Schneer (1993) introduced a model in which involuntary job loss was hypothesized to have a negative impact on self-esteem, well-being and outlook on life. Self-blame, financial and psychological investment in work, social support and the unemployment rate were hypothesized to moderate these relationships.

Notwithstanding, a recognition that these models are largely based on studies of *small heterogenous samples, hypotheses* and calls for *future research*, findings have been incorporated into relevant sections of this review.

Stage Models

Models which have aimed to delineate stages or phases of reactions to job loss and unemployment have also been proposed. Such models have frequently alluded to models of bereavement where grief is generally conceived as a series of stages. For example, Kubler-Ross (1969) proposed that those experiencing a grieving reaction pass through several stages including denial, anger, bargaining and accepting. She did not suggest that everyone would go through all of those stages in the same order or with the same level of intensity but rather most people would experience facets of those stages. For example, Amundson and Borgen (1982) likened the feelings associated with unemployment to an "emotional roller coaster" which begins with a reaction to job loss comparable to Kubler-Ross' stages of grieving. These authors proposed that towards the end of the grieving cycle the acceptance phase is marked by the recognition that the job is over and the job search must begin.

Similar patterns of grief-like responses and adjustment were also observed by Archer and Rhodes (1995). They also noted a parallel to Parkes and Weiss' (1983) model of grief

whereby a stronger attachment to, or dependency on, the lost person (or job loss) was associated with a more pronounced reaction to the loss. Amundson and Borgen found that beyond acceptance although the early phase might begin with a great deal of enthusiasm, as people faced the realities of repeated rejections and unsuccessful interviews, the stress associated with burn-out would be followed by stagnation, frustration and apathy. Furthermore, in a difficult economic climate, the harsh realities of the job search would become evident and individuals would start to feel a sense of hopelessness and lack of progress. Stagnation would be accompanied by feelings of frustration and increasing willingness to give up and do less in the job search area. Similarly, Zawadski and Lazarsfeld (1935) described a 'typical' course of unemployment as a general feeling of injury, fear, distress, fury, numbness, calming down, hopelessness-fear, acquiescence or apathy.

Criticisms of stage models

The notion that responses to unemployment may usefully be described by an invariant order of qualitatively different stages over time has been described by Fryer (1985) as "compelling" (p. 259). Nevertheless, although Fryer acknowledges that the experience of being out of work will vary with time, he has argued against the assumption that variation in reactions occur in discrete stages. In essence he believes that there are too many inconsistencies in versions of stage theory, for example, the length of time stages last, the nature of each stage, how many stages, the lack of an underlying unifying structural principle for each stage and the individualistic focus of much of the research. Fryer also contests that the notion of ontogenetic stages of response may turn out to be largely an artifact of the way the social world of the unemployed person is organized whereby unemployed members may be perceived to live in socially constructed negative unemployed roles, hostile psychological environments and materially poverty-stricken circumstances (p. 271).

Although Fryer's arguments may be valid, it is the opinion of the current researcher that they do not constitute a convincing case for avoiding attempts to determine phases or stages of reactions to job loss and unemployment. Rather, they serve to emphasize a continued need to elaborate upon, enhance and validate as well as challenge earlier models. Indeed, it might be argued that stage models must be viewed as informative and flexible rather than prescriptive and rigid. As posited by Guindon and Smith (2002), employment counsellors should not only be cognizant of the emotional toll unemployment can take and recognize the symptoms of psychological distress that may keep their clients from fulfilling their job search goals effectively but they need to be able to assess the emotional stage of the unemployed worker within the job loss process. Such findings must surely be of value to all counselling psychologists in practice.

Post-event potential moderating influences

Researchers have considered a range of potential moderating influences and/or protective factors on reactions to JL and unemployment. According to McKee-Ryan et al., (2005) these variables are included because of their theoretical relevance to individuals' coping strategies, well-being and probability of re-employment and to other outcomes or predictors that have been included in job loss studies.

- *Type of Job Loss*

According to Waters (2007), one critically important yet under-researched factor is the way in which individuals have exited their previous job. Although researchers have acknowledged that the experience of job *leavers* is likely to differ from job *losers* (Miller & Hoppe, 1994; Leana & Feldman, 1992; Winefield, Tiggemann & Winefield, 1992a), Waters' claims that his 2007 study is the first to have separated job loss into voluntary and involuntary categories and then compare people in those two categories on depression and job search during

unemployment. Consistent with findings from a substantial meta-analysis (Paul & Moser, 2009), Waters found that *involuntary* redundancy was associated with higher levels of depression, greater passiveness in attempts to find new work and lower perceived job quality upon re-employment. He explains that individuals experiencing involuntary redundancy are more likely to perceive a psychological contract violation where two key aspects of the psychological contract are contravened, i.e., “voluntary choice” and “mutual agreement” (see Rousseau, 2004).

- *Characteristics of the Job Loss*

Leana and Feldman (1988) suggested that individuals who were part of a general reduction in workforce would experience less stress than those who were fired for poor performance. According to Warr (1978) the former can be attributed to lack of seniority or bad luck while the latter is more likely to be seen as a personal indictment of competence. The former authors also proposed that job loss would be more stressful for an individual if they were the only person in the workforce being terminated. Jick (1985) explains that, without the opportunity for social support from people in the same situation, the individual is more likely to perceive the termination as personally intended.

- *Implementation of the Job Loss*

Latack and Dozier (1986) found that a non-professional approach in the employer’s handling of the redundancy exacerbated a loss of self-esteem and a sense of control. For example, they suggested that the decision might be communicated in a way that is inconsistent with the employee’s perception of their status. Latack and Dozier believe that by giving advance warning and a full explanation of the reason for redundancy and providing a chance to resolve the

grief and anger, that some of the adverse effects of the redundancy experience might be ameliorated.

- *Age*

As highlighted (see 'Job Insecurity'), research has generally shown that persons of middle age suffer most from job loss (Broomhall & Winefield, 1990; Eisenberg & Lazarsfeld, 1938). According to Lahelma (1989) this relates to increased financial responsibilities and a strong career commitment making employment more important for their mental health than for older workers who are close to the end of their careers and for younger persons who are not yet completely integrated into the world of work and employment. More recently, however, Paul and Moser (2009, p. 279) noted a U-shaped association between age and unemployment distress with youths and persons older than 50 suffering more than middle-aged persons. Since these results were unstable when confounding influences were controlled, they suggest that they should be treated with caution.

- *Gender*

Paul and Moser's (2009) hypothesis that males would suffer more from job loss than unemployed females was confirmed in their meta-analysis. Their prediction is consistent with the assertion that masculine identity is intricately linked to having a job in Western societies and is severely threatened by unemployment (McFaydan, 1995), that women have access to alternative roles that may be able to serve to some degree as substitutes for employment, that unemployed married or cohabiting women can expect more financial support from their husbands than unemployed men can expect from their wives or partners (Leana & Feldman, 1992) and that stigmatization might be stronger against unemployed men (Kulik, 2000). Paul and Moser suggest nonetheless that, in order to get a more complete

picture of the moderator effect of gender, a meta-analysis comparison between unemployed males and females and employed males and females should be undertaken.

- *Length of unemployment*

Findings have consistently demonstrated increased negative effects over time (Paul & Moser, 2009) because of a cumulative stress factor (Warr & Jackson, 1984) as coping resources are depleted (Kinicki, Prussia & McKee-Ryan, 2000) and anxiety and tension mount from the prospect of unemployment benefits running out and savings being exhausted (McKee-Ryan et al., 2005).

- *Economic Climate*

As highlighted by Leana and Feldman (1988), when labour-economic conditions are poor, not only will employees experience distress at the present job loss but they will also feel pessimistic about re-employment.

- *Occupational status*

Latack et al. (1995) observed that professional workers experience what might be termed a "harder-they-fall" effect. (p. 327). As posited by Kaufman (1982), for workers who are economically better off and who may derive a larger portion of their psychological identity from work, the discrepancies are more severe than for hourly workers. Conversely, Schaufeli and van Yperen (1992) suggest that individuals in *high-status occupations* usually have access to better financial and social resources which may cushion the negative effects of unemployment. Schmeer (1993), contests that individuals with very healthy assets may be concerned about their finances after job loss because they have very high expenses. Schmeer also notes a direct positive relationship between financial

insecurity and job search whereby persons nearing the end of severance benefits may increase their search activity due to heightened financial insecurity. As job search activity remains unsuccessful, however, and their financial situation worsens, diminished well-being and outlook may be exacerbated which may have a direct negative effect on job search activity. Essentially, as suggested by Tyson and Doherty (1991), executives who are made redundant are often from a population who invest much time and money in their career and therefore have a lot of ego involvement in their job. Consequently, in the event of redundancy, it may be difficult to sustain a positive self-image and the impact of redundancy may be quite traumatic.

- *Financial resources*

Gowan, Rjordan and Gatewood (1999) suggest that financial resources insulate individuals from the most immediate negative effects of job loss. Indeed, *financial strain* has consistently been identified in the literature as a critical mediator in the relationship between unemployment and depression, anxiety and a negative outlook on life (Price et al., 2002; Vinokur & Schul, 1997; Dooley & Catalano, 1984).

- *Social support*

Research has consistently shown that negative effects of unemployment are buffered by social support (Atkinson, Liem & Liem, 1986; Gore, 1978) and in general spouses have been identified as one of the most important sources of social support (Vaananen, Cahtera, Pentti and Klyimaki, 2005). Gore (1978) suggested that partners can offer not only emotional support but also direct tangible support by stabilizing the couple's financial situations. Ultimately, Schneer (1993) posits that a job loser's concerns about status, finances and

finding a new job are reduced when family and friends are supportive of the situation thus job loss will be less damaging to self-esteem, well-being and outlook on life. Furthermore, greater social support can assist individuals in regaining employment (DeFrank & Ivancevich, 1968) and by providing a network of possible employment contacts thereby encouraging individuals to maintain an optimistic attitude during their job search (Liem & Liem, 1988).

WHY DOES JOB LOSS AND UNEMPLOYMENT AFFECT PSYCHOLOGICAL WELL-BEING?

Theoretical perspectives

Several theories have been proposed to explain the psychological effects of job loss and unemployment (for a review see Winefield, 2002, p. 139).

- *Learned Helplessness Theory* (Seligman, 1975) predicts that individuals experiencing an aversive uncontrollable outcome should be more likely to become helpless and experience loss of self-esteem and depression if they possess an unhealthy attributional style. This reflects the *helpless* person's belief that their current situation and most likely their future status will not be affected significantly by any decisions or actions that they take themselves. Seligman (1975) suggests that this type of perception reduces the motivation to initiate voluntary responses likely to control or reverse the undesirable outcome. Borgen and Amundson (1987) suggest that individuals who feel they have been able to control what happens in their lives and perceive themselves as responsible for their successes and failure, may nonetheless become vulnerable to *learned helplessness* during an extended period of unemployment.

- *Reactance Theory* (Brehm, 1966) proposes that an individual's response to a loss of control, rather than *helplessness* would more likely be one of *reactance*. Brehm argued that *reactant* individuals apply themselves in an effort to re-establish control. In 1975, Wortman and Brehm offered a synthesis of the two theories in which they suggested that *reactance* occurs early following exposure to an uncontrollable event and that *learned helplessness* emerges as exposure lengthens.
- *Agency Restriction Theory* (Fryer, 1986). In contrast to Jahoda's *functional model* (see *meaning of unemployment*) Fryer believes that people are proactive independent agents who strive to assert themselves, initiate and influence events and are intrinsically motivated. In the context of unemployment, Winefield (2002) explains that negative consequences arise because the exercise of personal agency is inhibited.
- *Status inconsistency* is a negative motivational state that the person will try to reduce (Festinger, 1957) and is defined as holding a position of inferior rank to the rank you perceive yourself to be in (Schneer, 1993). Thus, individuals who see themselves as competent hard workers and then experience involuntary redundancy will undergo status inconsistency between their view of themselves as competent workers and their actual circumstances of being fired. According to Schneer, unsuccessful attempts to reduce the status inconsistency will result in decreased self-esteem and poor well being and a negative outlook on life. Moreover, job losers may feel personally and socially alienated as the *self* is estranged from the role of job loser and is also estranged from the world of work.

Personality factors

Based on their meta-analysis of the literature, McKee-Ryan et al. (2005) noted that the personal resources most consistently theorized in relation to psychological and physical well-being during unemployment were those that related to individuals' self-perceptions of worth, perceived control over life events and 'core self-evaluations' as termed by Judge, Locke & Durham (1997) which include self-esteem, locus of control, generalized self-efficacy and emotional stability.

- *Self-esteem*

Pearlin and Schooler (1978) describe *self-esteem* as the positiveness of one's attitude toward oneself. According to Latack et al. (1995), individuals who have a strong sense of self-esteem are apt to believe they are capable of dealing with the threat of job loss because they hold a generally positive perception of their abilities.

- *Locus of control*

Rotter (1966) used the term *internalizers* to describe individuals who believe they are masters of their own fates and hence bear personal responsibility for what happens to them. In contrast, *externalizers* believe they are simply pawns of fate and that they are controlled by outside forces over which they have little if any influence. According to Pearlin, Lieberman, Menaghan and Mullan (1981) a high internal locus of control is associated with greater individual competency and an ability to adapt in the face of life transitions or difficult situations. As noted by Legerski, Cornwall and O'Neil (2006), internal control has been variously described as self-directedness, a sense of efficacy, instrumentalism or self-mastery.

- *Self-efficacy*

Wood and Bandura, (1989, p. 408) define self-efficacy as “beliefs in one’s capabilities to mobilize the motivation, cognitive resources and courses of action needed to meet given situational demands.” Thus, “self-efficacy is not concerned with what one has, but with judgments about what one can do with what one has.” (Bandura, 1983, p. 467).

- *Mastery*

Pearlin and Schooler, (1978, p. 5) define *mastery* as “the extent to which one regards one’s life-chances as being under one’s own control in contrast to being fatalistically ruled”. For Thoits (1995), a sense of control or mastery over life is one of the most common indicators of personal coping resources.

Although personality traits are generally considered to be stable over time (Phares & Trull, 2001), Goldsmith, Veum and Darity (1996) found external locus of control and feelings of helplessness increased amongst individuals experiencing extended periods of unemployment. Similarly, Hill (1977) proposed that unemployment has a sequential effect on personal *locus of control*. He explained that, over time individuals would be expected to become more ‘external’ as their unemployment was increasingly viewed as an event beyond their control. Similarly, Legerski et al., (2006) have suggested that mastery levels are subject to change in the face of major, life-changing events. On the other hand, these authors found no change in overall locus of control scores amongst their own sample of steelworkers. Goldsmith et al., (1996) have noted inconsistencies in findings, arguing that existing studies have failed to account for the full range of individual differences that may influence personality traits including gender, age, ability and quality of employment experiences.

COPING THEORIES

COPING is described by Pearlin and Schooler (1978) as behaviour that protects people from being psychologically harmed by problematic social experience and behaviour that importantly mediates the impact that societies have on their members. Although these authors note that the term *coping* is commonly used interchangeably with *mastery*, *defense* and *adaptation*, their own use of the concept pertains to any response to external life strains that serves to prevent, avoid or control emotional distress. Accordingly, they assert that it is necessary to examine coping in the context of the problems with which people have to contend and the potential emotional impact of those problems (p. 3).

Much of the *pre* and *post* event job loss literature has drawn heavily on the stress and coping paradigm presented by Lazarus and Folkman (1984). According to these authors, coping has two broad functions. Firstly, *problem-focused* which is directed at altering or changing the stressor and secondly, *emotion-focused* which is directed at regulating or managing one's emotional reactions to the stressor.

Two further similar dimensions of coping have also been described by Latack et al., (1995). Firstly, *control-oriented* which consists of actions and cognitive re-appraisals that are proactive and take charge in nature and secondly, *escape coping* which consists of actions and cognitive re-appraisals that involve escapist and avoidance strategies. According to Folkman (1992) *control-oriented* coping strategies are likely to be demonstrated when situations are viewed as controllable whereas *escape* coping is more likely to be used in situations in which there is little the individual can do to control the outcome or recurrence of the event.

Lazarus and Folkman (1984) believe that coping is a process that evolves from resources. *Resources* in this context pertains to psychological, social and organizational resources which are possessed by or available to a person and which influence whether a particular coping strategy can or will be implemented (Pearlin & Schooler, 1978). These latter authors explain that *social resources* are represented in the interpersonal networks of which people are a part and which are a potential source of crucial support. *Psychological resources* are the personality characteristics that people draw upon to help them withstand threats posed by events and objects in their environment.

Responses that function to control the *meaning* of the problem are also highlighted by Pearlin and Schooler (1978, p. 6) who explain that the same experience may be highly threatening to some people and innocuous to others, depending on how they perceptually and cognitively *appraise* the experience (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). Furthermore, variations in *coping efficacy* are also recognised whereby people exposed to similar life-strains may experience quite different levels of stress. Pearlin and Schooler stress that *coping efficacy* rests on an array of variables as explicated above (i.e., *life strains, psychological resources*) and the *coping responses* called upon to deal with the strains and the *emotional stresses* individuals feel.

COPING PRE-EVENT

According to Dekker and Schaufeli (1995) the job insecure population have no control over the continuity of a job nor are they able to do anything themselves in order to regain the security of their present jobs. Consequently, even though individuals may try to heighten performance levels in their present jobs, in a retrenching company even that will not ensure that their job is secure. As proffered by Lazarus and Folkman (1984), the uncertainty inherent in job insecurity will make it more difficult for the individual to use effective and appropriate coping strategies. Indeed, there is recognition across the pre-

event literature that it is the relative uncontrollability aspect that leaves employees seemingly powerless to combat job insecurity.

Notwithstanding the acknowledged *powerlessness* inherent amongst the job insecure population, researchers have sought to determine the influence of personality dispositions in relation to coping responses to job insecurity. To this end, based on laboratory studies, Roskies et al., (1993) found only minimal support for the view that personality aggravates or alleviates the stress of job insecurity via the selection of unhealthy or healthy coping strategies. "At best" these authors found that individuals high in positive personality attributes were less likely to use *cognitive avoidance* and more likely to use *cognitive redefinition* (p. 628).

Latack et al., (1995) explain that through *cognitive re-appraisal* an employee can re-frame the situation as an opportunity rather than a threat. Or an employee might seek to establish constructive social networks that provide emotional support (Vataliano, Russo, Carr, Maiuro & Becker, 1985). In contrast, coping behaviours with potential negative outcomes may include self-blame and wishful thinking (Vataliano et al. 1985), emotional avoidance (Lazarus, 1966), and withdrawal or "disinvolvement syndrome" as termed by Greenhalgh and Jick (1979). In the latter case, researchers have noted that employees may psychologically withdraw from a job or their whole organization when they anticipate losing their position within it (Hartley et al.; 1991; van Vuuren, 1990, Greenhalgh & Jick, 1979).

Turning to the 'survivor' literature, Armstrong-Stassen (1994) found that 'survivors' with highly optimistic predispositions and a strong sense of mastery were more likely to engage in control-oriented coping. *Dispositional optimism* has been described as a generalized expectancy that good things will happen (Scheier & Carver, 1985). For

Taylor and Brown (1988) *optimism* in the form of positive illusions about the self, one's control and the future, may be adaptive in threatening situations by promoting the ability to cope effectively with stress.

Armstrong-Strassen (2005) compared coping strategies used by middle and executive managers. She found that only middle managers engaged in avoidance and disengagement strategies in the initial stages, however, over time, differences no longer existed between the two groups. Furthermore, both groups engaged in more (and similar levels) of control-oriented coping, especially direct action and positive thinking rather than escape coping. This finding is explained in relation to increased powerlessness to control what was happening.

COPING POST-EVENT

As noted by Hanisch (1999), unemployment, by its very nature, requires individuals to cope regardless of whether they view it as a positive or negative event. Moreover, she argues that it is important to know what individuals do to help themselves before designing individual interventions.

Appraisals

The process of *cognitive appraisal* refers to the way a person construes the significance of a stressful event in their life (Lazarus & DeLongis, 1983). According to McKee-Ryan et al., (2005), general models of stress and coping (i.e. Lazarus & Folkman, 1984) and specific models of coping with job loss (Latack et al., 1995) are based on the notion that *appraisals* partially mediate relationships between work-role centrality, coping resources and human capital, and psychological and physical well-being. Gowan et al. (1999) explain that appraisals are likely to affect both the individual's choice and use of strategies. Leana and Feldman (1992) described three types of *appraisal* used to assess job loss:

1. *Intensity, threat, discomfort and disruption*

Lazarus (1991) has emphasized a distinction between *harm and loss* which refers to the negative impacts that have already occurred and *threat* which is focused on the future and emphasizes harm or loss that may occur later. Latack et al., (1995) explain that a *harm/loss* appraisal focuses on aspects such as lost salary and current bills whereas *threat* appraisals emphasize future oriented worries (i.e. inability to pay college fees next year). These authors assert that an individual who loses a job that provides their only source of income, primary psychological identity and primary social network will experience stronger *harm/loss/threat*. In this instance, early job loss appraisals have been found to trigger negative reactions and emotions (Jahoda, 1988) including shock and/or anger and denial (Latack & Dozier, 1986) and poorer mental health outcomes (McKee-Ryan et al., 2005).

2. *Causality*

Leana and Feldman (1988) suggested that job loss attributed to uncontrollable external factors would lead to greater threat and uncertainty and thus greater stress. In contrast, research has generally shown that those making external attributions for the job loss (e.g., the economic climate) report higher levels of self-esteem and lower levels of depression than those making internal attributions (e.g., self-blame) for the loss (Moore, Grunberg, Greenberg & Sikora, 2007; Schneer, 1993).

3. *Reversibility*

When individuals do not view the *present* state of affairs as permanent or catastrophic they are likely to view the environment as controllable and modifiable and accordingly will likely experience the least amount of stress (Gowan et al., 1999; Leana & Feldman, 1992). Perceptions of reversibility have also been shown to be

related to self-initiated job search activities, geographical re-location re-training and engagement in non-work activities formerly associated with work activities, such as social interaction, maintaining structure in daily life and successful completion of activities (Leana & Feldman, 1992).

Attributions

Based on a substantial survey, Moore et al., (2007) observed that over 80% of their sample framed their job loss as a decision over which they had a large degree of control even when it would appear that external factors had played an important role in the decisions. For example, some employees re-framed their enforced departure as “early retirement”. In accordance with their hypothesis that re-framing, conscious or not, may reflect an employee’s efforts to assert more control over the job loss or to protect their public image and self-esteem, they found that *control* in this way was found to be associated with higher levels of mastery and lower levels of depression. Others have also found an exaggerated perception of control to be associated with improved mental health (Latack et al. 1995; Miller & Hoppe, 1994).

Coping Strategies

Following on from the appraisal, two general categories of *coping* with job loss are noted in the literature. Despite similar meanings, the names used depend on different authors (Hanisch, 1999).

- *Problem or 'control' focused strategies* consist of actions and cognitive re-appraisals that are proactive and take charge in nature (Latack and Dozier 1986). They may involve planning and conducting a job search, including activities such as reviewing job skills and qualifications, sending out resumes, working on finances, re-training and re-locating (McKee-Ryan et al., 2005; Leana & Feldman,

1995). Research findings have consistently shown that problem-focused coping is related to obtaining re-employment (Hanisch, 1999).

Although it might be assumed that job-seeking activity would be associated with increased psychological health during unemployment, McKee-Ryan (2005) noted that job seeking activity may instead be associated with decreased psychological health. For example, individuals may feel discouraged by repeated rejections and on-going uncertainty. Furthermore, as noted by Kinicki et al (2000), job searchers may feel under pressure to accept any job they are offered and may settle for a low quality job. Leana and Feldman (1995) also noted that severance pay was found to have a negative effect on problem-focused job searching behaviours which they suggested may relate to a reduced sense of urgency to look for a job.

- *Emotion-focused coping strategies* are described by Lazarus and Folkman (1984) as attempts by the individual to change the way in which the stressor is construed without doing anything to actually change the reality of the situation. For example, *distancing* may involve attempts to psychologically remove oneself from the demands of the stressor (Leana & Feldman, 1995; Kinicki & Latack, 1990).
- *Symptom-focused coping strategies* refer to non-work activities such as membership in clubs, reading or increasing alcohol consumption (Gowan et al., 1999). Jahoda (1979) has suggested that non-work activities are important because they can provide structure and rewards that are not present once a job ends.

Individual differences and coping

Leana, Feldman and Tan (1998) found that consistent with other studies, *age* was one of the least important predictors of coping behaviours. In relation to *gender*, Malen and Stroh (1998) found that men engaged more in problem focused strategies (i.e., working with search firms) but no gender differences were noted in coping behaviours targeted at reducing the symptoms of job loss. In general, these authors noted that men had higher job search efficacy than did women, which they suggested might relate to the females' lack of confidence in their abilities to seek and obtain a new job.

Personal resources and coping

Leana and Feldman's (1988) suggestion that the three personality variables most frequently associated with *problem-focused* coping were *internal locus of control*, *Type-A behavior patterns* and high levels of *self-esteem* has been supported in the literature. For example, Latack et al., (1995, p. 326) explained that individuals high in *coping efficacy* are likely to select proactive goals for dealing with *harm/loss/threat* because they believe they are capable of replacing the loss or averting the future negative outcome posed by the threat. Accordingly, these authors argue that highly efficacious individuals would choose goals consistent with problem-focused coping strategies (e.g. conserving finances or actively searching for a job).

Latack et al. (1995) introduced a comprehensive integrative process model of coping with JL, grounded in a goal-oriented theoretical perspective incorporating constructs from coping, control and self-efficacy theory. This model proposed that job loss is an event that sets a cybernetic coping process in motion whereby an individual compares their status on four life facets (economic, psychological, physiological and social) with a referent (coping) goal. Drawing on coping theory (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984) the next step in the process is a discrepancy appraisal (perceptions of harm/loss/threat) which is

moderated by a person's perceptions of coping efficacy (Bandura, 1988). Coping goals then result in coping strategies. Coping resources (personal and environmental factors) will also have direct and indirect effects on coping strategies. Finally, coping strategies influence the referent goal.

Ultimately, these authors proposed that the coping process is distorted by anything that impairs or alters the feedback (input) sensor. For example, a depressed individual is likely to focus on the negative consequences associated with various coping strategies, thereby reducing motivation and persistence at tasks. In contrast, individuals who have what Taylor and Brown (1988) termed as either 'positive illusions' about themselves or of control over environmental occurrences, tend to encode information in a positive way. In the main, such positive illusions are likely to be adaptive, although Latack et al. state they may also lead to misguided coping strategies and deleterious outcomes.

Coping over time

Notwithstanding the array of variables likely to affect the coping process, Latack and Dozier (1986) assert that job loss (a discrete event) triggers a transition process that unfolds *over time*. Indeed, Latack et al. (1995) posit that virtually every aspect of their integrative model of coping with job loss relates to *duration*. For example, *challenge appraisals* may come into play over time, as some individuals use cognitive coping to re-appraise the experience as potentially growth-producing and beneficial (Latack & Dozier, 1986). On the other hand, some coping resources may become exhausted or depleted. Moreover, if individuals are unable to see a connection between their efforts and outcomes, they may become depressed and make fewer efforts to change their situations (Latack et al., 1995).

WHAT ARE THE IMPLICATIONS FOR COUNSELLORS?

Lazarus (1991) states that the expression of emotion can generally be seen as a universally adaptive impulse that represents a link between internal experiences and the outside world. As highlighted by Traschel et al., (2010), a variety of fears may motivate a person to appraise emotional disclosure negatively. For example, on an intrapersonal level the person may fear being overwhelmed by their emotions. Interpersonally, the person may dread being rejected or making him/herself vulnerable. Moreover, the potential affective costs of self-disclosure may threaten self-esteem or trigger emotions of shame, guilt or insecurity. Although empirical evidence is inconsistent, ambivalence over the expression of emotion has been shown to represent a vulnerability factor for the development of depressive symptoms for individuals experiencing severe stress (Katz & Campbell, 1994). Based on a survey of people who were unemployed, Traschel et al. produced a similar finding. Accordingly, they suggest that psychological interventions should identify and target individual sources of ambivalence contingent on extreme stressors such as unemployment.

Notwithstanding a weight of evidence demonstrating negative psychological effects of job insecurity and job loss, only a limited number of studies have focused on the role of counselling for this particular population. Those that exist are generally aimed towards employment counselling in particular. With specificity to job insecurity, Canaff and Wright (2004) proposed that counselling interventions should focus on presenting symptoms (i.e. anxiety, anger, depression, adjustment issues, grief) and explore the presence of any recent job transitions. In cases where high levels of stress, anxiety or depression are present, these authors suggest that a cognitive-behavioural approach has been found to be beneficial in addressing these symptoms.

For the unemployed, Guindon and Smith (2002) believe that employment counsellors can do much to assist their clients in overcoming emotional barriers to successful re-

employment. For example, stress management techniques, communication skills workshops, expressive writing and positive self talk. In order to assist employment counsellors to recognize the difference between normal reactions to job loss (e.g. some degree of stress, lowered self-esteem) and more serious mental health issues that might require referral to mental health clinicians, these authors have designed a "Decision Tree and Diagnostic Symptom Set". They caution, however, that misdiagnoses may occur if counsellors do not have the proper training.

RATIONALE FOR THE CURRENT STUDY

In 1988, Leana and Feldman expressed the hope that more empirical research would be generated which would better enable us to systematically explain the perceptions, reactions and coping behaviours associated with the impact of job loss on 'survivors' and on those who experience the stress of job loss and unemployment. Since that time, it would appear that their desire has been met with alacrity. Indeed, research endeavours thus far have demonstrated clear associations between job insecurity and/or job loss and/or unemployment and psychological distress. Furthermore, some positive effects have also been noted.

Concurrently, a myriad of moderating and/or mediating influences on reactions have been investigated. Despite commonalities, inconsistencies appear across studies. Researchers have typically attributed confounding results to: non-standardisation of type and quality of measurement tools and procedures; varying response rates; self-report data; small sample sizes and difficulty in controlling for confounding variables. The current researcher would also add: a limited number of female participants; a general lack of homogeneity within samples; non-specificity in relation to type of job loss (voluntary vs. involuntary) and a lack of acknowledgement of the economic climate prevailing at the time of data collection.

With relevance to the split between pre-and post event studies, researchers have tended to further emphasize the distinction via comparisons. For example, Dekker and Shaufeli (1995) cite studies which appear to show that the 'job insecure' phase may very well be the most stressful aspect of the whole unemployment process. DeWitte (1999), on the other hand, has cited studies where an apparent parallel is proposed between both experiences in relation to a decrease in psychological well-being although he also notes that authors have not tested their hypotheses statistically. For example, although Roskies et al. (1993, p. 356) stated that insecure respondents "had anxiety scores as high as those commonly found among those actually unemployed", no scores for unemployed managers were reported and the reported differences were not tested statistically.

Rather than attempting to delineate differences between degrees of distress the current researcher would argue that it is important to acknowledge that some degree of distress is likely for most individuals across the experience. Moreover, it is likely that pre-event distress will have some impact on post-event reactions and responses. Accordingly, it would appear that an holistic approach may not only be warranted but also timely since to the current researcher's knowledge, there have been no attempts thus far to integrate the redundancy experience (i.e., pre- and post-event) as a whole. Moreover, this review has highlighted an apparent scarcity of focus on reactions at the time of the job loss event. Further, as indicated by the most recent meta-analyses of the literature (e.g., Paul & Moser, 2009; McKee-Ryan et al., 2005), the models most frequently referred to in reviews are those which were undertaken in the late 80's which generally related to the experiences of male, blue collar workers. A model reflecting current working trends within a particular sector (i.e., financial) which has been subjected to a hitherto unparalleled redundancy phenomenon may, therefore, prove enlightening.

Many senior managers and executives affected by redundancy are able to access support via outplacement providers whose services are frequently offered by employers at a time of enforced job change. Services generally include individually tailored packages incorporating personal, financial and career counselling and/or group seminars/workshops (e.g., achieving goals; career visioning; self-development techniques). Although such support may be beneficial, some individuals may remain vulnerable to mental health problems. Consequently, clinical practitioners in a range of settings are likely to find themselves working with individuals (professional and non-professional) presenting with symptoms associated with or triggered by redundancy. Accordingly, as argued by Waters (2007, p. 297), researchers and practitioners have a continued obligation to improve the understanding of reactions to unemployment.

RESEARCH AIMS

This study aims to provide an holistic exploration of the subjective emotional reactions of City Professionals² to their experience of mandatory redundancy during an economic recession. Implicit within this exploration is the aim to understand how the participants perceive they have coped with redundancy. The overarching aim is to produce data and findings which might contribute towards the development of a psychological model of reactions to redundancy. It is hoped that such a model might allow clinical assessment of those who have experienced redundancy to be tailored and thereby prompt directions for the therapeutic treatment of psychological distress associated with or triggered by redundancy. A secondary aim of the study is to produce findings which might serve to educate and increase awareness amongst employers, in relation to appropriate measures which should be adhered to when implementing redundancy in order to minimise the potential for psychological distress to arise.

² City of London and the Square Mile

CHAPTER TWO

METHODOLOGY AND PROCEDURES

CHAPTER OVERVIEW

This chapter begins with a discussion of the methodological approach taken which includes the rationale for the choice of approach and the researcher's epistemological position. This is followed by a detailed description of the procedures. Both sections contain a reflexive statement by the researcher.

METHODOLOGY

DESIGN

A qualitative design was selected using Grounded Theory analysis following a format which has evolved through the work of Glaser and Strauss (1967), Strauss and Corbin (1990) and Charmaz (2006). Data were collected via semi-structured interviews.

RATIONALE FOR A QUALITATIVE APPROACH

According to Willig (2008), quantitative approaches are generally concerned with quantification and the identification of cause-effect relationships. In contrast, qualitative approaches are concerned with how individuals experience events and make sense of the world through exploring, describing and interpreting personal and social experiences. According to McLeod (1994), the aim of qualitative research is to produce intensive, authentic descriptive accounts of experience and action. In this way, "it is possible to get beneath the surface of social and subjective life" (Charmaz, 2006, p. 13). Further, Willig (2008, p. 9) suggests that the quality and texture of that experience as well as the meaning that individuals attribute to a particular event or experience is emphasised. Corbin and

Strauss (2008) stress that qualitative methods also allow for meanings to be determined through and in culture. Whereas quantitative methods involve quantifying known phenomena for the purpose of testing experimental hypotheses derived from existing theories, qualitative methods ask what Creswell (1998) terms *appropriate* questions such as *how or what* rather than *why*.

A further important distinction between the two methodological approaches relates to the issue of context. Quantitative approaches manage the influence of contextual factors by demonstrating that non-experimental variables have been controlled for across experimental conditions whereas qualitative methods are naturalistic and non-experimental. Moreover, rather than attempting to reduce or eliminate contextual variables, researchers actively account for context by detailed reporting and exploration of the way in which factors including setting, expectations and crucially, the researcher, interact in the production of a participant's subjective account of their experience.

An explicit consideration of the interaction between researcher and participant is viewed as core to qualitative research. Importantly, people are treated as subjects to be interacted with rather than objects to be studied. This not only constitutes a moral way of behaving in itself but crucially, as the researcher is encouraged to consider their own social and political behaviours, the interview process becomes a truly shared interaction.

In consideration of which research paradigm to adopt for the current study, a qualitative approach was deemed congruent with the research aim to provide an holistic investigation into perceptions of reactions and coping amongst a particular population (*City professionals; male and female*) in relation to the importance and meaning of a particular phenomenon (*involuntary redundancy*) experienced in a particular social and historical context (*high-powered, goal-driven working environment and an economic recession*).

RATIONALE FOR GROUNDED THEORY

According to Reicher (2000), differences between qualitative methods derive from differences pertaining to their philosophical roots, theoretical assumptions and types of questions asked. Accordingly, given the diversity in epistemological positions on which different methods of qualitative research are founded, the choice of method is important. Reicher (2000) has described two types of qualitative approach: *experiential* which aims to gain a better understanding of people's experiences, ways of thinking and actions and *discursive* which is concerned with the role of language in the construction of reality.

These two types of approach are underpinned by *realist* and *constructionist* epistemologies and within those are two contrasting positions. At one extreme is a position of *naive realism* which adopts the *positivist* view that it is possible to accurately and objectively describe objects, events and phenomena in the world. At the other, a position of *extreme relativism* denies that there is an external reality to be represented and argues that knowledge is only that which is *constructed* between people as they converse.

Madill, Jordan and Shirley (2000) proposed a continuum of approaches with *naive realism* at one extreme and *radical relativism* at the other. At a mid-point on that continuum is a *contextual constructionist* approach which roughly corresponds with Reicher's (2000) *experiential* category which assumes that it is possible to learn something about the world but views knowledge as contextual and standpoint-dependent. Based on Madill et al.'s (2000) classification, Willig (2008) has suggested that both Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) and the social constructionist version of Grounded Theory (GT) take a *contextual constructionist* approach.

Given the research aims and her own epistemological standpoint (see *epistemological position*), the researcher felt most drawn to a *contextual constructionist* approach and

consequently IPA and GT methods were considered. The mutual appeal of both approaches in relation to their focus on lived experiences and sense-making as well as their contribution to psychology were acknowledged. Furthermore, both approaches were seen to offer some flexibility in adapting and developing the method to the researcher's own way of working with the particular topic of investigation.

Differences pertaining to their goals were considered when deciding which method to adopt. Specifically, the goal of IPA is to describe, interpret and understand the meanings of experiences at both a general and unique level. By demonstrating the transferable general qualities of what makes an experience what it is and by explicating a variety of description across unique contents, empathic understanding is generated. IPA does not, however, allow for the production of a theoretical model, nor for hypotheses to be made for future research. GT on the other hand, emphasises the building of inductive theories that are directly grounded in the data. The goal is to develop a theory which provides an explanatory framework with which to understand the phenomenon under investigation and it is this explicit goal of theory development that makes GT unique amongst qualitative approaches.

In sum, both IPA and GT would have been able to provide an interpretative and contextual account of the redundancy phenomenon. At the heart of GT is its distinct focus towards producing innovative theory that is grounded in data collected from participants on the basis of the complexities of their lived experiences in a social context. Accordingly, the immense appeal of GT stemmed from its compatibility with the research aim to create an explanatory model of reactions to redundancy which might prompt directions for the clinical assessment and treatment of psychological distress associated with redundancy.

GROUNDING THEORY AND CHOICE OF VERSION

The early development of GT reflected the merging of two contrasting philosophical positions. Firstly *positivism* (defined above) and secondly, *pragmatism* which supports the inductive exploration of human experience in diverse contexts with an emphasis on reflexive confirmation and the use of the theorist's existing knowledge. The philosophical position most often associated with GT, however, is *symbolic interactionism* which was informed by *pragmatism*. Blumer (1969) defined three key assumptions of *symbolic interactionism*. Firstly that people act towards things and people on the basis of meanings they have for them. Secondly, that meanings stem from interactions with others and thirdly, that people's meanings are modified through an interpretative process used to make sense of and manage their worlds.

There are currently three main guiding versions of GT. Firstly, the original or "classical" version developed by Glaser and Strauss (1967). With its positivist epistemology and focus on emergent unforced categorical cross-comparisons, this version demands that the researcher suspends all prior theoretical knowledge and expectation and approaches the data 'blind' and unwedded to instinctive interpretations that risk distorting the reality before him (Glaser, 2002). Glaser further posits that this perspective can be distinguished from most traditional qualitative methods in that it emphasises explanation over description.

A subsequent version introduced by Strauss and Corbin (1990) has been viewed by many as a departure from the earlier 'Glaserian' inductive version. Instead, drawing heavily on pragmatism and symbolic interactionism, this later version emphasises the interplay between structure and process and adopts a formally structured coding system. The coding paradigm prompts the researcher to identify a set of dimensions of interest and then to explore the data in the light of those. This deductive version has been criticised by those

who argue that the original purpose of GT to allow the emergence of theory directly from data has been undermined.

The third version developed by Charmaz (2006) reflects a post-modern or constructivist philosophical stance and emphasises action orientation and thick thematic description. Charmaz has argued against an objectivist approach which assumes that data represents objective facts about a knowable world, that the data already exists in the world and that the researcher finds them and discovers theory from them. Instead, she contests that categories do not emerge from the data but rather they are constructed by the researcher through an interaction with the data. Essentially, she asserts that a constructivist approach places priority on the phenomena of study and sees both data and analysis as created from shared experiences and relationships with participants. Charmaz positions constructivist GT in the interpretive tradition and emphasises that any analysis must be contextually situated in time, place, culture and situation. As explicated by Willig (2008), in this approach the researcher's decisions, the questions that he or she is asking of the data, the way he or she is using the method as well as his or her (personal, philosophical, theoretical, methodological) background, shape the research the research process and ultimately the findings.

According to Charmaz (2006, p. 9), GT methods may be viewed as a set of principles and practices, not as prescriptions or packages. The principles adopted by Charmaz have evolved from the earlier works of Glaser and Strauss (1967) and Corbin and Strauss (2008). As detailed by McCann and Clark (2003b) any form of GT study requires the researcher to address a set of common characteristics: theoretical sensitivity, theoretical sampling, treatment of the literature, constant comparative methods, coding, the meaning of verification, identifying the core category, memo-writing and diagramming and the measure of rigor. Notwithstanding an allegiance to a coding paradigm, Corbin and Strauss (2008, p.

12) have cautioned that no researcher should become so obsessed with following a set of coding procedures that the fluid and dynamic nature of qualitative analysis is lost. Charmaz (2006) concurs and emphasises the importance of viewing GT strategies as flexible guidelines, not methodological rules, recipes and requirements.

With relevance to which version to select for the current study, the Glaserian version was rejected on the basis that it felt somewhat divorced from the researcher's critical and interpretative way of working as a counselling psychologist. The rigidity of the structured coding system advocated by Corbin and Strauss also seemed unappealing in consideration of its adherence to a formal coding protocol which it was felt might potentially hamper sensitivity or openness to the data. Accordingly the Charmaz version was selected on the basis of its emphasis on co-construction, subjectivity, multiple realities, and mutual engagement and process. Indeed, those key features were felt to be compatible and complementary to the core principles which lie at the heart of counselling psychology.

EPISTEMOLOGICAL POSITION

Willig (2008, p. 2) defines epistemology as "a branch of philosophy concerned with the theory of knowledge which involves thinking about the nature of knowledge itself, about its' scope and about the validity and reliability of claims to knowledge." Madill et al., (2000, p. 17) state that "qualitative researchers have a responsibility to make their epistemological position clear, conduct their research in a manner consistent with that position and present their findings in a way that allows them to be evaluated appropriately." To this end, the following narrative aims to provide clarity in terms of the researcher's³ epistemological standpoint.

³ The epistemological position of the researcher and reflexive accounts which follow, have been written in the first person (*italicised*) in order to address the reader directly.

In this study I have adopted a social constructionist approach to GT methodology. Accordingly, I have distanced myself from its early empirical, inductivist version which takes a positivist approach to knowledge production and assumed an objective reality. In this way social events and processes are deemed to take place irrespective of the researcher and consequently embrace a realist ontology. Instead, my own standpoint draws heavily on symbolic interactionism which directs grounded theorists to assume that meaning is made and constantly changed through interactions which are embedded in social context. Further, as a Counselling Psychologist in-training, I agree with Corbin & Strauss' (2008, p. 8) assertion that process is integral to studies because experience and action and interactions that follow, are likely to be formed and transformed as a response to consequence and contingency.

Fundamentally, I support the constructivist viewpoint that concepts and theories are constructed by researchers out of stories that are constructed by research participants who are trying to explain and make sense out of their experiences and lives both to the researcher and to themselves. From these multiple constructions, analysts are then able to construct "knowledge."

Drawing on Madill et al.,'s (2000) continuum of epistemologies, I have rejected an extreme position of naive realism in relation to the data whereby the participants' accounts have been treated as factual accounts of events. I have also rejected an opposing position of extreme relativism which denies that there is an external reality to be represented and argues that knowledge is only that which is constructed between people as they converse. Instead, at a mid-point on the continuum, I have taken a contextual constructionist stance which assumes that it is possible to learn something about the world but views knowledge as contextual and standpoint-dependent.

In relation to the status of the analysis, rather than aiming to produce accurate and valid knowledge about a particular social phenomenon from a realist position, I have adopted a relativist stance whereby I acknowledge that the findings emanate from my own worldview, interactions with, and reading of the data. In the words of Charmaz (1990, p. 180), I stand within the research process rather than above, before or outside it. I fully acknowledge that the participants' experiences can never be fully understood or reconstructed by me since my interpretations of their experiences will have been filtered through a lens which reflects my personal history and biography.

My explicit aim in this study is to gain insight and understanding into the participants' experiences of redundancy. I am interested in meaning, subjectivity and experiences. Accordingly, I have drawn on post modernist symbolic interactionism, from an interpretivist, contextual constructionist standpoint and relativist ontology with the overarching aim to develop knowledge that may guide practice.

COMPATIBILITY OF GROUNDED THEORY TO COUNSELLING PSYCHOLOGY

According to Morrow (2007), counselling psychologists have been at the forefront in psychology in calling for expanded methodological diversity, in particular qualitative research methods, to adequately explore the depth and complexity of the human experience. Ponterotto (2005) believes that such methods are well suited to counselling psychology for a number of reasons. For example, in relation to conducting research that is congruent with specific paradigms or to utilising methods that are more closely related to practice. Furthermore, the relevance of qualitative approaches to multi-cultural counselling and psychology and the advantages of methodological diversification and expansion to psychology have also been recognised.

Ponterotto (2005) has positioned GT as one of the most established and respected qualitative methods which Charmaz (2006, p. 50) asserts should be given credit for being in the front of the qualitative revolution. For the purposes of the current study, the compatibility of GT methods with the research aims has already been explicated. To illustrate its' compatibility to Counselling Psychology, however, the author has drawn on the definition of the discipline provided by the British Psychological Society (2005). In this way, the exploratory principles of GT are seen to cohere with clearly defined models of practice which are grounded in the counselling relationship.

Specifically, the engagement with the subjective and inter-subjective experiences, values and beliefs of individuals and the recognition of social contexts is emphasised. In addition, counselling psychologists are encouraged to empathise with their clients and to respect their first person accounts as valid in their own terms. In this vein, the British Psychological Society's Guidelines (2005, p. 1) state that the psychologist should "elucidate, interpret and negotiate between a client's perceptions and their world views but must not assume the automatic superiority of any one way of experiencing, feeling valuing and knowing."

The above statement is supported by the expressed expectation that there must be congruence between the research model and the values expressed in counselling psychology. To this end, GT has been used widely in Counselling Psychology for at least a decade. Fassinger (2005) has drawn attention to its clear and structured analytic procedures, its focus on generating experience-near theory regarding important social contexts, and its applicability to a wide range of issues of interest to counselling psychologists. It would appear that GT Theory provides a qualitative approach which can offer much promise in terms of illuminating some of the most pressing problems that counselling psychologists might address. The current topic is no exception.

REFLEXIVITY

The qualitative paradigm rejects the idea that a researcher can remain detached and impartial from their subject matter and thereby provide a truly objective view. Willig (2008) states that it is vital for researchers to reflect upon their own position in relation to the phenomenon in question in order to consider how they may have shaped and influenced both the process of the research and the findings. Cutcliffe (2003) questions *how* a researcher can completely account for themselves in the research since so much of what transpires takes place within the deeper levels of consciousness.

Notwithstanding the potential for debate, it is generally acknowledged that reflexivity remains what Finlay (2002, p. 532) has described as “valuable tool” in relation to “examining the impact of the position, perspective and presence of the researcher, to promoting rich insight through examining personal responses and interpersonal dynamics, to empowering others by opening up a more radical consciousness, to evaluating the research process, method and outcomes and enabling public scrutiny of the integrity of the research through offering a methodological log of research decision.”

Willig (2008, p. 10) has distinguished between two types of reflexivity. Firstly *personal reflexivity* whereby a researcher will reflect on how their own values, experiences, interests, beliefs, political commitments, wider aims in life and social identities may have shaped the research. Secondly, *epistemological reflexivity* which encourages a researcher to reflect upon their assumptions about knowledge and what can be known (*epistemology*) as well as their assumptions about the world (*ontology*) and to consider how these might have influenced the research and findings.

REFLEXIVE ACCOUNT : METHODOLOGY

As researcher, I have duly considered my involvement in the research process and have acknowledged the way in which my own view of the world and the nature of my interaction with the participants may have influenced both the data collection and analysis. In line with Willig's (2008) recommendation, I have also recognized that an awareness of my contribution to the construction of meaning from the data is vital. To this end, I have remained alert to issues of reflexivity and have attempted to maintain a critical examination of my influence upon the research throughout the study.

It is hoped that by embedding explicit examples of reflexivity within discussions of epistemology, methodology, procedures, analysis and results, that the development of the reflexive processes that have contributed to the study will become transparent and understandable to the reader. Likewise, in accordance with Maso's (2001) recommendation, it is hoped that by providing insights into how subjective and inter-subjective factors have influenced the research, its integrity and trustworthiness may be increased.

The importance of trying to be as reflexive as possible with regards to a researcher's starting point has been emphasised by Finlay and Gough (2003) in terms of being able, as far as possible, to engage with participants' accounts in a fresh and open manner. To this end, as I approached this study, I was aware of my many roles in relation to it. Namely, as a final year student on a Counselling Psychology Doctorate programme conducting a study which was a core academic requirement, as a qualitative researcher, as a practitioner involved in the psychological treatment of adults presenting with an array of mental health conditions within two independent hospital settings, as an observer of media portrayal of mass redundancies during an economic downturn, as a wife to a man whose business activities were being negatively impacted by the economic climate and as a mother of children on the threshold of their professional careers. Within these roles, I soon realised

that my desire to do this research was multi-faceted and I held this awareness throughout the research process.

From its early stage, the research process forced me to start thinking about what it was that had brought me to the study. I felt I needed to clarify for myself why I wanted to conduct this research. Was it simply the fact that I wanted to complete a Doctorate in Counselling Psychology? Did my interest stem from a desire to explore an area which was topical and 'out there' in the social milieu or did I have a vested personal interest in gaining a deeper understanding of the meaning of redundancy to professionals? It did not take me long to understand that my interest was fuelled both on a professional and personal level and that from the outset I was very much a part of the study.

From the moment I decided to investigate the chosen topic, I was keenly aware of the potentially sensitive nature of redundancy to the participants. I wondered how difficult it might be to recruit participants from a professional strata who may not want to enter into a research process for a variety of reasons. For example, might they find it demeaning on some level? Might they be reluctant to discuss personal issues with a stranger? Might they be loath to engage in a non-financially productive encounter? Might the sensitivity of their situation prompt them to actively avoid a fulsome focus on their predicament? Might the term "counselling" trigger a defensive response? In this sense, I recognise that I entered the research with an over-riding assumption that negative connotations in relation to their situation would be likely.

Rather than attempting to appear merely unbiased or objective, the aim of outlining these assumptions is to situate myself and my attitude at the beginning of the research process. As recommended by Finley & Gough (2003), my aim is to make evident the motivations and interests that I may have introduced into the research either knowingly or unwittingly.

To this end, as recommended by Morrow (2007), I kept a personal diary in order to keep a record of my self-reflections, focusing on biases, thoughts and emotions as they appeared during the interviews and analysis of data.

QUALITY, VALIDITY AND CREDIBILITY

It is a given that researchers must demonstrate that their studies are rigorous and reliable within the particular research paradigm chosen. To this end, several authors have proposed guidelines for good practice. The notion that it may be possible to produce a well-defined and unitary set of criteria by which qualitative research may be evaluated appears to be an on-going source of debate. For example, the idea that one set of criteria can cover the extensive range of methodological and epistemological standpoints within the qualitative paradigm has been contested (Sandelowski and Barroso, 2002). Furthermore, the notion that simply following guidelines will guarantee good research has also been challenged. According to Yardley (2008) guidelines are not a set of rules to be followed slavishly. Instead, he argues that they must be used thoughtfully and tailored to the methodology.

For the purposes of demonstrating quality and validity in the current study, the researcher has drawn on the guidelines for good practice proposed by Elliott, Fischer and Rennie (1999) which largely concur with those proposed by Henwood and Pidgeon (1992). Willig (2008, p. 144) states that "both sets of guidelines maintain that good practice in qualitative research requires the systematic and clear presentation of analyses, which are demonstrably grounded in the data and which pay attention to reflexivity issues." Furthermore she stresses that "such work is characterized by an awareness of its contextual and theoretical specificity and the limitations which this imposes upon its relevance and applicability."

Owning one's perspective: The researcher has endeavoured to disclose her own values and assumptions in order to allow the reader to interpret the analysis and to consider possible alternative interpretations. In line with Henwood and Pidgeon's (1992) principle of *reflexivity*, the researcher has also aimed to acknowledge her own role in the research process throughout the documentation of the research.

Situating the sample: In order to allow the reader to assess the relevance and applicability of the findings, some description of the participants and their life circumstances have been provided. At the same time, any information which might compromise issues of anonymity has been purposefully withheld.

Grounding in examples: In order to demonstrate the analytic procedures used and to explicate the understanding they have generated, examples have been consistently grounded in the data. In this way, it is hoped that the reader will be able to assess the fit between the data and interpretations.

Credibility: 'Triangulation' has been described as the use of multiple researchers, research methods, sources, or theories in order to assess the consistency of findings (Tindall, 1994). Fielding and Fielding (1986) note that although triangulation may result in a more "full" level of analysis it is not necessarily a more objective one. Nonetheless, with the aim of maximising credibility, from the initial coding of the first transcript and at repeated intervals, colleagues were approached and asked to comment on the researcher's interpretations of the data in order to establish the degree to which they concurred with the analysis as it progressed. In the main, concurrence and/or similarity was noted.

Sensitivity to negotiated realities: In line with Henwood and Pidgeon's (1992) recommendation, completed transcripts of the interviews were sent to the participants for

their information although participant validation with respect to the research findings was not sought or expected. Some of the participants suggested that they would be interested to read the study once completed. Accordingly, throughout the process of analysis and the write-up, the researcher remained sensitive to their potential reactions in relation to the findings since these had clearly emanated directly from their personal experience.

PROCEDURES

SAMPLING AND PARTICIPANTS

Male and female City Professionals who had experienced mandatory redundancy during the economic recession (2008/2010) were invited to participate in the study. In order to optimise a shared experience culturally, socially and historically, it was a pre-requisite that they had been employed in the City and the Square Mile for a minimum of five years prior to their redundancy. To encapsulate sufficient prior professional working experience and future working life expectancy, an age range of 30 to 55 years was specified and to emphasise cultural similarity pertaining to their reactions, the participants were required to have been either born and/or educated⁴ in the U.K. To eliminate purely retrospective accounts, participants who had already returned to work were excluded.⁵ In order to maximise researcher objectivity and neutrality, participants were not known personally to the researcher.

In GT, the size of the sample is not an issue. According to the principles laid down by Glaser and Strauss (1967), researchers collect data by *theoretically sampling* until *theoretical saturation* is achieved. That is, no theoretical variation in a concept emerges from the data being analysed. *Theoretical sampling* relates to selecting participants who

⁴ Participants who had studied abroad for part of their education were not excluded.

⁵ Participants who had secured positions at the time of the interview but who had not yet re-entered employment were not excluded.

have or are experiencing the phenomena under study. According to Glaser and Strauss by choosing *experts* in the phenomena, researchers are able to provide the best data available. The researcher then seeks out participants who may be able to provide deeper insights into the emerging patterns and categories and thereby increase the quality of the data gathered. The key to GT is, therefore, to generate enough in-depth data that can illuminate patterns, concepts, categories, properties and dimensions of the given phenomena. In this way, as argued by Auberbach and Silverstein (2003), it is essential to attain an appropriate sample size that will generate enough data.

Theoretical saturation, according to Strauss and Corbin (1998 p. 212) is said to have occurred when no new or relevant data seems to emerge regarding a category, the category is well developed in terms of its properties and dimensions demonstrating variation and the relationships among categories are well established and validated. In this vein, Charmaz (2006) argues that although a researcher continues to gather data until reaching the level of data saturation, in reality total saturation is probably never achieved. Dey (1999) suggests that the term "*theoretical sufficiency*" is a better description for the researcher's *conjecture* that the properties of the category are saturated.

For the purposes of the current study and in accordance with Charmaz' (2006) recommendations, the researcher aimed to reach saturation through determining that categories offered sufficient depth and breadth of understanding about the phenomenon under investigation and that relationships to other categories were made clear. Notwithstanding unavoidable constraints relating to time and resources, it is felt that this aim was met. From 14 positive responses, 12 interviews were undertaken. One participant withdrew due to family illness and another re-entered employment.

The recruitment of participants commenced in June 2009 and continued over a ten month period. Initial attempts to recruit participants via a web-based advertisement linked to a

Psychology Group Practice in the City, with City-based Charities and independent Counselling and Clinical psychologists proved unsuccessful. The eventual successful recruitment of the participant sample was achieved primarily via contact with two Outplacement Providers in the City, through *snowballing* sampling via personal contacts of the researcher and also through personal contacts of the participants themselves. In all cases, an introductory e-mail and attached Information Flyer providing full details of the study and contact details for the researcher (see *Appendix i*) were sent to all potential recruitment sources and/or participants directly. In addition, the researcher met individual Outplacement Provider Consultants with the purpose of introducing herself and explaining the purpose of the study in more detail. Those who agreed to participate in principle were then contacted either by e-mail or telephone to thank them for their interest, provide greater clarity in relation to the study itself and where appropriate, arrange a mutually convenient time and location for the interview.

INTERVIEW

The data were collected through semi-structured interviews conducted by the researcher and participants were offered a choice of venues. Rooms were booked in two London Universities and the City-based offices of an Outplacement Provider. Interviews were also held in the participants' homes and in the researcher's own home. Prior to home-based interviews, safety precautions involved ensuring that at least one other person was informed of the researcher's exact whereabouts and timing schedule and contact was made on immediate completion and departure from the interview location. Participants were asked to allow 1hr 45 minutes, to include initial completion of forms, briefing, the interview itself and de-briefing.

Informed consent was obtained from all participants for both participation in the research and for the recording of the interview (see *ethical considerations* below). Prior to

conducting the interview, demographic information was collected using the pre-interview questionnaire (see *Appendix ii*).

Consistent with the aims of GT and Charmaz' (2006) assertion that providing solid material is key to building a significant analysis, the interviews aimed to gather detailed, focused and full data pertaining to the participants' views, feelings, intentions and actions as well as the contexts and structures of their lives. To this end, although semi-structured interviewing is known to be time consuming in its planning, data collection, transcription and analysis stages, it was felt that the advantages of this method justified its use in this study.

Semi-structured interviewing is sometimes described as non-directive, however, it is generally accepted that it is the researcher who is driving the interview in order to obtain the kind of data which will answer the research question. On the other hand, Willig (2008) highlights the interactive nature of the interview process whereby the interviewer clarifies responses, checks the participants' understanding of the questions and finds out more about any apparent inconsistencies. Similarly, the participant is able to ask about the meaning of questions.

Willig (2008, p. 22) believes that "a carefully constructed interview agenda can go some way towards ensuring that the interviewer does not lose sight of the original research question." To this end, the initial interview framework (see *Appendix iii*), remained consistent throughout the data collection period whereby the opening question which asked participants to describe their experience of redundancy "*in the broadest sense possible*", was followed by more specific open questions aimed towards eliciting full responses pertaining to their experiences during the pre-redundancy period, the actual day of the redundancy, the next day and over time. Although the research question aimed to explore

reactions and responses to redundancy, questions were framed to encompass *experience* in order to maximise openness in the data. Questions relating to support, how the participants felt things might have been different (if at all) and how redundancy may have affected the way they defined themselves in relation to the future were also included in the schedule.

In accordance with the principles of theoretical sampling in GT, the interview schedule was modified throughout the data collection period as analytic leads derived from analysis were followed through by the researcher. Jargon and technical terms were avoided in order to promote clarity and every attempt was made to produce neutral questions in order to minimise participant expectancy effects. Some questions were not included if participants had covered the material elsewhere in the interview.

The semi-structured interview was initially piloted on an acquaintance who being known to the researcher was ineligible for the study. Amendments were then made to the interview schedule to include exploratory questions relating to the pre-redundancy period. A second pilot interview was then conducted with the partner of a colleague who was not known personally to the researcher. Given the richness and depth of the data obtained, that interview was considered suitable for inclusion in the study and initial analysis commenced.

From the outset and throughout the interview encounter, the researcher aimed to develop a rapport with the participants (see *methodological reflexivity*). At the same time, she was mindful of a need for pacing in order to allow the participants enough time to give full and complete answers. Participants demonstrated a range of styles of responding to the questions. Notably, the majority of those interviewed were expansive in discussing their experiences around all areas of the schedule with only minimal prompts required. Only two respondents required a greater use of the schedule and prompting. Although the schedule was constructed very early in the research process, it was felt that the questions enabled

the gathering of rich and nuanced data which reflected the aims of the research. The interviews lasted between approximately 75 minutes and two hours depending upon the participant. Issues of consent, confidentiality, de-briefing and post-interview contact are explicated below.

ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

As argued by McLeod (1994), the ethical implications of research must be considered at all stages of the process. To this end, the current study was examined in accordance with the ethical framework outlined by Meara, Schmidt & Day (1996) in which the principles of beneficence, non-maleficence, autonomy, fidelity and veracity are emphasised. The researcher also aimed to adhere to the ethical guidelines for research as recommended by the British Psychological Society (2006) thereby protecting the participants and enhancing the validity of the findings. Ethical approval was granted by the City University Department of Psychology before the research commenced (*see Appendix iv*). As any study could compromise ethical guidelines, the monitoring of the study by the researcher's supervisor throughout was a core requirement.

Informed consent was obtained from all participants. Prior to the interview, written information of the aims, procedures and use of findings were provided and questions were invited and answered fully. It was explained that the consent process would be formalised by asking participants to sign a form before the interview (*see Appendix v*) in which they would be asked to consent to their participation in the research, for the recording of the interview and for the use of anonymised quotes being included in the thesis, any publications or presentations. It was emphasised verbally and in writing that their consent could be withdrawn at any point, that certain interview questions need not be answered and that they could terminate the interview at any point. Participants were also advised that a verbatim transcript of the interview would be sent to them post-interview for their own

records, information and possible amendments. The consent form was also signed by the researcher and a copy was given to the participants for their own records.

Participants were assured that the information discussed would be treated sensitively and confidentially. Since the existence of tapes and transcribed interviews could compromise confidentiality, participants were informed who would have access to the transcripts and published material.⁶ They were also advised that any information which could potentially identify them would be removed from transcripts and digital recordings which would be stored securely on a password-sensitive computer or in a locked filing cabinet. Participants were informed that the recordings and transcripts would be destroyed on completion of the study.

As highlighted by Banister, Burman, Parker, Taylor, and Tindall (1994), the interview process may bring up emotionally painful experiences that cannot be dealt with in the research setting. Indeed, the study would have been breaching the principle of non-maleficence if participation were harmful. In due consideration of how they were affected through taking part in the research, participants were asked for feedback on the interview itself, specifically their reactions to the interview and to gauge whether the areas they considered important or relevant had been covered. The notion that "a researcher can never be certain why persons agree to be research participants" has been posited by Corbin and Strauss (2008 p. 29) who emphasise the importance of researcher sensitivity to non-verbal as well as verbal responses from the participants. It is, therefore, important that the interviewer should be suitably skilled to conduct the interview with sensitivity. To this end, the researcher was able to draw on learned counselling core skills during the interviews which were conducted with a focused sensitivity to the participants' reactions.

⁶ The Researcher, the research supervisor, external/internal examiners, publishers/publications.

In consideration of the potential for any adverse emotional consequences to have arisen as a result of participation, the researcher conducted a verbal de-briefing in order to discuss the experience of participating and to monitor for any unanticipated negative effects. Participants were also provided with a comprehensive list of contact details for psychological resources and supportive agencies (see *Appendix vi*).

Immediate thanks for their contribution was e-mailed to each participant post-interview. This was followed by a verbatim transcript of the interview once completed and an invitation for any comments or amendments to be made. No amendments were requested.

TRANSCRIPTION

The researcher transcribed each interview verbatim and took care to note any significant non-verbal behaviours, for example, laughter or noticeably long pauses. All identifying features of participants were changed at the time of transcription in order to maintain anonymity, including names, place names and any other identifying details as far as possible, in order to protect privacy. A 'number' was ascribed to each participant and used throughout the analysis.

COMPUTER PROGRAMME FOR ANALYSIS

A computer based tool (MAXQDA-2007) was used for analysis. The decision to depart from a more traditional manual approach was taken with due consideration to the debate relating to arguments for and against the use of computers in analysis. For example, Kelle (1997) has highlighted concerns amongst qualitative researchers who suggest that the use of computers could alienate the researcher from their data and enforce analysis strategies that go against the methodological and theoretical orientations qualitative researchers see as the hallmark of their work. Similarly, Corbin and Strauss (2008 p.310) caution that "using

computer programmes may stifle creativity and mechanize the analytic process.” These (latter) authors have since rationalised the use of computers in their own research on the basis that “computer programmes don’t do the thinking and they can’t write the memos, they only store them”. Instead they accept that such programmes can enhance the creativity of analysis because researchers may be enabled to try things first one way and then another, thereby seeking alternative explanations. Ultimately, Seale (2002, p. 108) suggests that computers may actually increase methodological awareness by providing an indisputable record of the researcher’s decisions.

Having decided to use the MAXQDA computer programme, the researcher’s unfamiliarity with the technology proved to be an initial distraction and early analysis was slowed down as a result. Paradoxically, trial and error in learning to navigate the programme had the effect of augmenting a greater familiarity with the data. Over the course of analysis, the researcher found the computer programme helpful in organising; storing; re-ordering; shifting and recursive examination of the data throughout the analysis. Furthermore, the flexibility of changing the working record enabled the integration of new ideas and creativity in the analytical process.

ANALYSIS

GT analysis was used and texts by Charmaz (2006) and Corbin and Strauss (2008) were used as a guide to data analysis. A summary of the development of codes and categories including line by line coding, focused coding, axial coding and memo-writing are detailed in Chapter 3.

According to Charmaz (2006, p. 135), “the acts involved in theorizing, foster seeing possibilities, establishing connections and asking questions.” To this end, throughout the theorizing process, the researcher aimed to maintain *theoretical sensitivity* to the data

through interacting with the data. A variety of techniques suggested by Corbin & Strauss (2008) proved helpful (e.g. the flip-flop technique, far-out comparisons). Corbin (1998, p. 122) stresses that the ideas generated from the use of these techniques do not constitute more data but stimulate reflection about the data at hand.

In accordance with the principles of *theoretical sampling* (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) the researcher sought participants who were experiencing the phenomena of involuntary redundancy. In this way, 'experts' in the phenomena were chosen. Thus they were able to provide the best data available (Corbin, 1998; Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Iterative analysis of the collected interviews throughout the data collection process, allowed the researcher to see the emerging patterns, categories and dimensions (Corbin & Strauss, 1998). Throughout the process of analysis, the interview schedule was refined and questions and prompts were focused with the aim of filling out those patterns, categories and dimensions to the point of saturation.

It should be noted that due to the slow start in recruiting participants and given the time restrictions for completion of the study, appointments were arranged with participants as soon as possible following initial contact. Consequently, some interviews were conducted too close together to allow time for transcription, analysis and concept development before the next round of data collection. Corbin and Strauss (2008) caution that gaps in the research may occur when analyzing previously collected data because there is not the opportunity for further exploration. These authors quantify their statement, however, by stressing that "a researcher can still do a high level of analysis on whatever data she has." (p. 150). To this end, the researcher reflected on each interview before the next one took place in order to inform the facilitation of the subsequent ones and accordingly made meaningful changes to the interview questions, prompts and probes. In this way, it is felt

that the richness of the data gathered was sufficient in terms of being able to generate a significant and rich description of categories and a consequent theory construction.

Theoretical saturation, as outlined by Strauss and Corbin (1990 p. 212) is said to have occurred when no new or relevant data seems to emerge regarding a category, the category is well developed in terms of its properties and dimensions demonstrating variation and the relationships among categories are well established and validated. Charmaz (2006) has argued that although a researcher continues to gather data until reaching the level of data saturation, in reality total saturation is probably never achieved. For Dey (1999) the term *theoretical sufficiency* is a better description for the researcher's *conjecture* that the properties of the category are saturated.

In accordance with Charmaz' (2006) recommendations, the researcher aimed to reach saturation through determining that categories offered sufficient depth and breadth of understanding about the phenomenon under investigation and that relationships to other categories were made clear. Notwithstanding unavoidable constraints pertaining to time and resources, it is felt that this aim was met.

REFLEXIVITY : PROCEDURES

Willig (2008) has emphasised the need for the researcher to consider a range of possible effects on what is being communicated in the interview. For example, the interviewer's own social identity, the cultural milieu of the participant and linguistic variability. Furthermore, the private setting and interpersonal skills of the interviewer may in itself engender an atmosphere of trust and respect in which the participant feels able to comfortably discuss issues that may be personal or distressing in nature. Charmaz (2006) stresses the importance of establishing rapport with participants which according to Willig

(2008) requires sensitive and ethical negotiation between the interviewer and the participant.

From the outset, I was mindful of a heightened sensitivity to the positioning of the participants in the interview process. Specifically, I was aware of the contrast between their unemployed status and my own overtly proactive professional endeavour aimed towards the ultimate goal of accreditation. Notwithstanding this disparity in our "status", although the participants were aware of my practitioner role as detailed in the Information Flyer, I held the belief that they would favour my position as an academic researcher. Indeed, I felt that my role as a trainee Counselling Psychologist might deter individuals from deciding to participate if they thought they were going to be psychologically assessed. After due deliberation, it felt appropriate to don the mantle of a "professional" and smart business attire was worn for interviews. In the main, this complemented the dress code of participants who were often 'on call' for interviews. At others, it was markedly at odds with participants whose own attire reflected their 'at home' status.

It became clear to me that many of the participants had rationalised their reasons for volunteering pre-interview and were keen to communicate their motivations to participate. For example, they had the time, it might be interesting, they were keen to help me and others in the process. In response, I was aware of trying to maintain a balance between conveying gratitude as a researcher on the one hand. On the other, I aimed to demonstrate a professional approach which would encourage their trust and diminish possible feelings of vulnerability.

From the initial interview, any thoughts I might have harboured in relation to viewing the participants as 'subjects' in my research were quelled and I started to see them as true collaborators in a shared enterprise. To this end, I felt it important to foster a friendly

atmosphere in order to negate the introduction of a power dynamic into our relationship. Likewise, the interview contexts themselves also had a part to play in the initial 'dance' whereby I was either a guest in their living room, they were a guest in mine or we faced each other in a more formal setting.

The idea that the participants may have been deciding how much they would allow me to know of their innermost experiences was uppermost in my mind. To this end, as I sat back, listened, observed and posed questions, I aimed to convey openness, flexibility, empathy and genuine interest. This approach appeared to foster a rapport with each of them that I feel in no small way brought me closer to their lived experiences and any gratitude expressed by myself at the end of the interviews emanated from a deep sense of humility and privilege to have been entrusted with their stories. In parallel, I found the process of self-reflection throughout the process of gathering data and analysis, illuminating in a way that I might not have anticipated when I first embarked on this study (see Boxes below).

Box : 1

Excerpt from reflexive diary

X was quite formal. Quietly spoken to begin with. Very composed. Extremely likable. Again, articulate, eloquent, open and honest. What had I expected? I realize I had expected to be speaking to participants who were less willing to be open... who would be guarded... that it would be necessary to "draw them out". I also thought they might be slightly dismissive of some of the questions. Less willing to discuss emotions. Perhaps, they might even try to take control of the interview? I recognize that these were assumptions based on my pre-conceptions of the likely characteristics of City Professionals. Thus far, my assumptions in many ways are proving unfounded.

Box : 2**Excerpt from Reflexive Diary**

Thoughts on interviewing a female after only males so far. There may have been a greater sense of empathic understanding on my part. A woman being able to understand a woman and see their experience with more "clarity". A heightened sense of understanding what she was telling me. How is this different to the interviews with men? It is almost as though I am not surprised by X's openness whereas I have been surprised by the honesty of the men – I hadn't expected that. I feel that interviewing a female has on some level validated the experiences of the men to me – or rather validated my understanding of their experience. Also as a woman and a wife and not the main bread winner, it has been illuminating to hear a woman describe having to go home and tell her husband that she has lost her job. Hearing the impact on him... what that felt like to her.

Box : 3**Excerpt from reflexive diary**

As X speaks, I find myself morphing into a "mother" at times and slightly slipping away from the professional researcher. Why? X has spoken about being the eldest son... he has mentioned his mother a couple of times.... as he speaks... my own role as a mother to two young career driven males (only a few years younger) has surfaced. This is not a maternal feeling... it is about my own feeling that I am getting some insight into the workings of a young male's mind in a competitive working climate. An interest in relation to learning more about my sons through my work. This is not something I ever been aware of in my role as a therapist – but this is research.... I am delving... finding out.... investigating.... not the same as exploring, increasing insight, intervening or devising strategies as would be the case in a counselling context.

CHAPTER 3

RESULTS

CHAPTER OVERVIEW

This chapter is organised as follows. Following a brief introduction, the participants' profiles are outlined. A summary of the development of codes and categories is then explained before the main findings are described. The chapter concludes with a brief summary of the findings.

INTRODUCTION

The findings are presented within a framework of an explanatory model which has been grounded in the data. With the aim of ensuring that the process of analysis is clear and transparent to the reader, an audit trail of the analysis and samples of memos have been provided in order to explicate the development of the core analytic categories (See *Appendices vii to x*). The quality and rigor of the analysis has been maximized throughout by utilizing a number of credibility checks, which will be made evident throughout this chapter (i.e. situating the sample, grounding in examples, a coherent account of the analysis, etc.).

To illustrate categories, anonymised *in vivo* quotes will be presented in italicised script throughout and abbreviations to designate their origin in the transcripts will be used. For example, 'P1:160' relates to a citation from Participant No. 1 which can be found in paragraph 160. Citations are presented as spoken and pauses and incomplete sentences are indicated by "....." For the sake of brevity, some sections of text have been removed

from excerpts and this is denoted by "(...)". In order to maintain uniformity and maximise anonymity of the participants, City Professionals (CPs) are referred to as "he" throughout.

The principle research question for this study was:

How do City Professionals react to mandatory redundancy in a climate of recession?

The secondary research questions were as follows:

- *How do City professionals cope with redundancy?*
- *What does mandatory redundancy mean to City Professionals?*
- *In what ways are reactions to and coping with mandatory redundancy influenced?*

Rather than responding to each of the research questions which may have restricted the analytic flow, the analysis was approached as a whole whereby codes and categories were identified and conceptual links were developed between them. In this way, the researcher was enabled to remain open to all possibilities in the data.

SITUATING THE SAMPLE

Participants were 8 male and 4 female CPs who had experienced mandatory redundancy in the 2008/2009 global economic recession and had been unemployed at the time of the research interview for a minimum of three months and a maximum of twelve months (mean = 9.6 months). The age range of the participants was between 30 and 50 years. All participants were British citizens. Four of the participants were born outside the U.K. Details on ethnicity of these participants are not presented in order to protect their anonymity. The length of time participants had been employed within the City Financial institutions in which they experienced involuntary redundancy ranged from two to eighteen

years (mean = 6.5 years). Table 1 summarises details about the participants in order to apprise the reader of a range of participant demographics.

Gender	Age	Relationship Status	Dependents: Partner + Children	Post held Pre-redundancy (in years)	Role Pre-Redundancy	Time Since Redundancy (in months)	'Supportive' Redundancy Settlement viewed as:	Financial Redundancy Settlement viewed as:
F	30-35	Single	None	12	Manager...	4	Acceptable	Acceptable
M	40-45	Single	None	2	Director...	7	None	Acceptable
M	36-39	Married	3	10	Director...	12	Acceptable	Good
F	40-45	Married	2	2	Vice Pres.	10	Good	Good
M	46-50	Married	4	7	Head of...	9	Acceptable	Acceptable
M	36-39	Single	None	2	Analyst	6	Good	Good
M	40-45	Separated	2	8	Manager...	10	Acceptable	Acceptable
M	30-35	Single	None	2	Manager...	5	Good	Good
F	40-45	Married	2	18	Director...	12	Good	Acceptable
M	30-35	Relationship	None	9	Manager...	4	Good	Acceptable
F	46-50	Married	2	2	Head of....	5	Good	Good
M	36-39	Married	3	4	Head of...	18	Good	Acceptable

Table 2 : Demographic participant information

To protect anonymity, participant details have been randomized and do not appear in the sequential order of the interviews.

CODING

Each transcript was read several times and coded separately. Initial line by line open coding involved the identification of units of meaning which were entered into the code system of the MAXQDA computer system for analysis (see *Appendix viii*) for an excerpt of an 'open coded' transcript). These codes were action-oriented where possible and descriptive. In order to stay close to the data, *in vivo* quotes were frequently applied.

Focused Coding

Those codes which explained larger segments of the data and made the most analytic sense, were highlighted using the "drag and drop" function of the computer programme and entered into the code system (see *Appendix ix and an example below*):

..... I mean I realized it before.... But my job really didn't define me as a person. That's not the way I looked at it. What I think this period of redundancy has done is reinforce in me that I am not defined by what it is I do. I am defined by me as a person and the fact that I am not working... it's almost irrelevant. I am still me with my skills and experience. The fact that I did work for X and now I don't is just another part of it. It's not.... Um.... I wouldn't say it's my core or my backbone. I would say that my family are and that the job is... the job is peripheral and supporting to that. You know I go to work to support my family and do those kind of things rather than go to work because without work I don't exist. It's not a defining part of me and I think going through this last year has reinforced that and I fully understand that now. (P 1 : 83)

Initially, this section of text had a number of codes:- *"Not being defined by work", "Values being reinforced", "Knowing who I am", "I'm still me", "The job is peripheral", "Existing as a person" and "Reinforcing core values".* The 'focused' code: *"Not being defined by work"* seemed to capture the essence of what this participant was saying.

Following focused coding, descriptive categories were developed through a process of examining the similarities and differences between the codes and segments of text they related to. From thereon, the data from subsequent interviews were integrated into the initial coding system and concepts were constantly reviewed. As categories developed, concepts were re-named to provide a better "fit" with the analytical meaning of the texts. The researcher constantly referred back to the original texts to check that the developing categories reflected the meanings of the original memos.

As analysis progressed, the researcher noted the development of a sequential series of phases of redundancy over time. A seemingly 'organic' emergence of phases commencing with the letter "A" stemmed from original code names and developing categories. The

relationship between the “A” in those phases and the “A” in the *apparent* personality type of the CP, as identified in the data itself, was noted by the researcher.

Development of codes:

Early focused code	Final code as used in the 5-Phase Model (to be described in ANALYSIS and DISCUSSION)
<i>Anticipating negative change</i>	AWAITING <i>Anticipation</i>
<i>Receiving the news</i> <i>Feeling shocked</i>	ACTUALITY <i>Appraisal</i> <i>Aftershock</i>
<i>Early days</i>	ADJUSTMENT
<i>Coming to terms with the reality</i>	<i>Assimilation</i>
<i>Rationalising the reason why</i>	<i>Appraisal</i>
<i>Assessing future plans</i>	<i>Assessment</i>
<i>Adapting to change</i>	ADAPTATION
<i>Taking action</i>	<i>Action</i>
<i>Re-evaluating options</i>	<i>Re-appraisal</i>
<i>Yearning and longing</i>	<i>Aspiration</i>
<i>Feeling agitated</i>	<i>Agitation</i>
<i>Recognising change in self</i>	ACKNOWLEDGEMENT
<i>A new awareness</i>	<i>Awareness</i>

Memo-writing

Memos for each concept were written and elaborated on throughout the data analysis. Excerpts and details from each interview were incorporated into ongoing memos in order to preserve context and meaning across interviews. The process of memo-writing enabled the researcher to note thoughts and reactions “in the moment”, to document the analysis and to enhance the analytic process. For examples of memos (*see Appendix vii*).

Negative cases

Once early links between categories had been made the researcher looked for negative cases. According to Willig, (2008), this allows the researcher to qualify and elaborate the emerging theory, to add depth and density to it and to capture the full complexity of the data on which it has been based. Excerpts from the research diary which describe negative cases have been described in Boxes 5 – 9 (*see Appendix xi*).

Axial Coding

Axial coding is described by Creswell (1998) as a way of sorting, synthesizing and organising large amounts of data and reassembling them in new ways after open coding. Although the researcher did not use axial coding according to formal procedures set out by Strauss and Corbin (2008), the pattern as described by Charmaz (2006, pp 61) was followed, whereby sub-categories of categories were developed and links were shown between them as more was learned about the experiences the categories represented.

ANALYSIS

“ First and foremost... I would rather be the master of my own destiny...”

(P 10 : 56)

“We cannot choose our external circumstances, but we can always choose how we respond to them.”

Epictetus

A recurring theme of “*survival*” appeared frequently in the data. This related to the participants’ quest to *manage their own and others’ reactions* and achieve a sense of *mastery and control* across their redundancy experience. Accordingly, *SURVIVAL* has been treated as the central category. To denote the chronological passage of time, five core categories: 1. Awaiting 2. Actuality 3. Adjustment 4. Adaptation and 5. Acknowledgement, subsume eleven sub-categories which denote ‘process’ over time: (1) *Anticipation*, (2) *Appraisal, Aftershock*, (3) *Appraisal, Assimilation, Assessment*, (4) *Action, Agitation, Aspiration, Re-appraisal* and (5) *Awareness*. These sub-categories subsume concepts identified in the early stages of the analysis. *Moderating Influences* which emerged during the analysis, have been incorporated into the descriptions of the five core categories where they are deemed to have specific relevance. A diagrammatic explication of the links between these categories is shown in Figure (1) below.

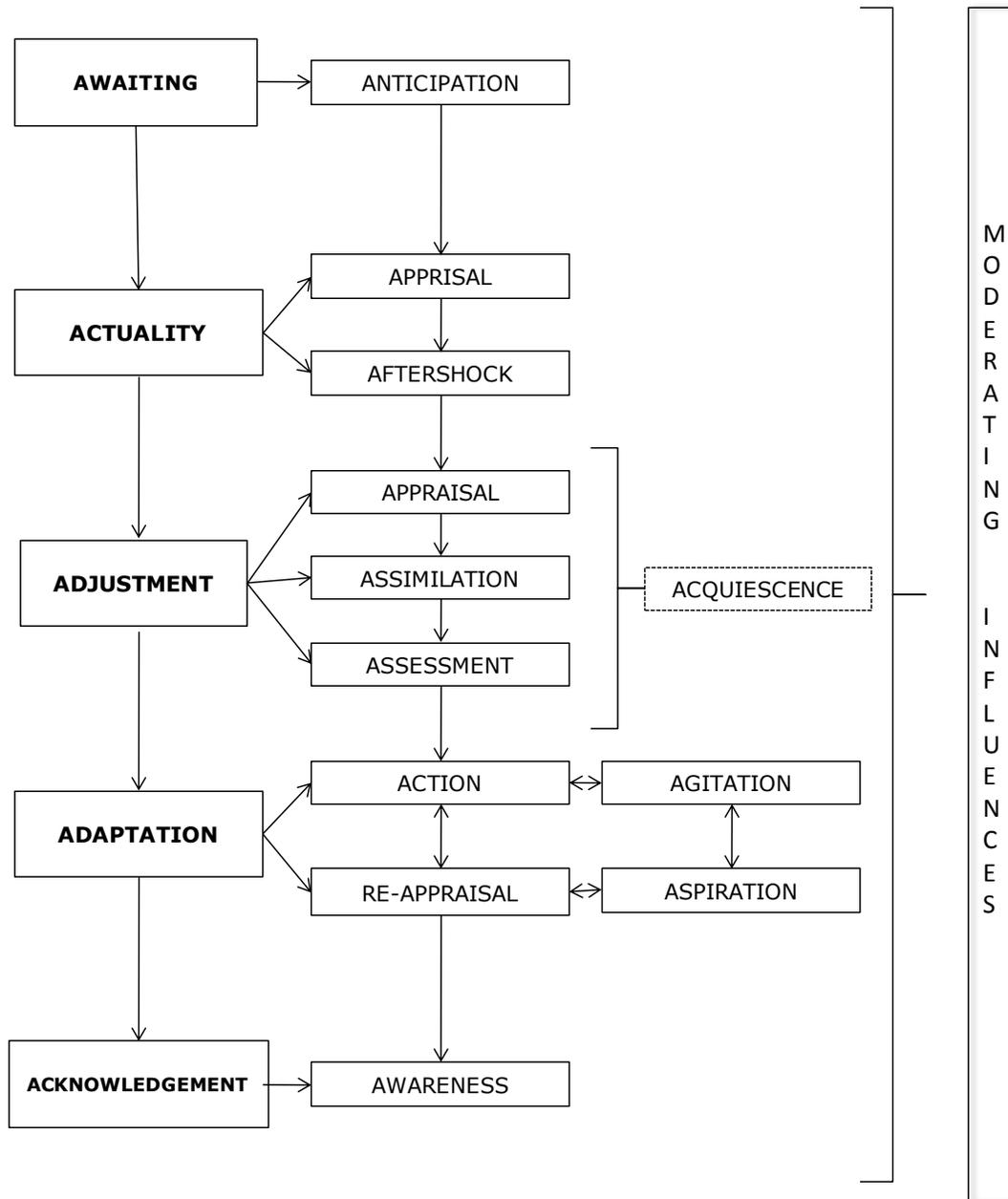


Fig. 1 : Links between categories : Phases and Processes

The following is a description of the content of the categories which emerged and developed from the coding process and the final analysis. Each category has been illustrated by a selection of representative excerpts from the data to provide evidence of trustworthiness.

CATEGORY 1 : AWAITING



Across interviews, it became apparent to the researcher that the period leading up to being made redundant was viewed by the participants as being a core component of their overall redundancy experience. The opening interview question: “*In the broadest sense possible, how would you describe your experience of redundancy?*” invariably prompted a reference to the CP’s experience in the period leading up to the *actuality* of that event. Accordingly, the “*awaiting*” phase focuses on the pre-redundancy period in which the CP is vulnerable to redundancy in a climate of recession.

The AWAITING phase subsumes one sub-category *ANTICIPATION* which describes:

- The meaning of redundancy to the participants.
- The participants’ subjective interpretations of their vulnerability to being made redundant pre-event.
- Emotionality based on those interpretations.
- “Survival” strategies.
- The recession as a moderating influence on reactions.

SUB-CATEGORY 1 : ANTICIPATION

Anticipation, according to the Cambridge on-line dictionary, pertains to expectation, premonition or foresight. Although the act of *anticipation* might be based on feelings of hopefulness or excitement, in a climate of economic recession and a consequential redundancy phenomenon, the anticipatory feelings experienced by CP’s emanate from feelings of apprehensiveness, fearfulness, uncertainty and trepidation. Those feelings are

underpinned by the projection of an event which encompasses negative change and loss of personal control.

The meaning of redundancy “then”

The pervasive fear in the *anticipation* phase appears to stem from the *meaning* of redundancy to the CP:

Meaning : Stigma

An association with perceptions of failure is explicitly acknowledged by CP's across interviews:

Especially in investment banks... some people still refer to it as being sacked.... People still say: Phhhh sacked!.... because it's 'survival of the fittest' (P 10: 22, 158)

Every couple of years the banks get rid of people... there's a minor downturn and they use that as an excuse... there's always a list of people they want... and so they get rid of them.... so everyone who's worked in the industry for more than a few years is familiar with it... it's just part of the industry you know..... (P 2 : 24)

I know you are supposed to say the post has been made redundant,.... but actually it's 'you' that has been made redundant..... (P 11 : 86)

Meaning : Loss

...of financial security

Although CP's reputedly enjoy comparatively large incomes cushioned by generous bonuses, their lifestyles in the main, are supported by that income:

What if I can't get a job.... I've got a mortgage.... (....) ...there are people in the City who can go for three months without a salary cheque and then it all comes crashing down around their ears..... (P 2 : 76, 104)

... of working structure and professional working identity

One of the things I always used to think and was actually worried about right up until the moment where I didn't have work to go back to.....was....you read all the time about people whose identity is tied up in their jobs..... and you fall apart.... Um....it is such an important part of my life..... (P 2 : 74)

.....of autonomy, power and control

They take the control away from you don't they....it's like having a baby, you can't control when you have it... you can't control when it arrives... you can't control when it's going to cry, when it's going to feed.... I'm used to being in control of everything..... (P 12 : 6)

Observing Signs

The negative meanings associated with redundancy and the resultant prediction that something 'bad' is imminent may be founded on the extrapolation of information based on observations. The 'watchful' CP will be increasingly fearful, vigilant, wary and on edge:

I could see a lot of activity... managers going backwards and forwards from New York to London, so I knew that in terms of job cuts that something was going to happen... (P 1 : 2)

... and the "rumour mill" (P: 3, 26)

And people do talk... and we had a network of people who could spread information very quickly... (....) rumours about how such and such in this department had heard 'this' and there was going to be a big announcement... it's an interesting thing to look at how it plays on people's mind....it's like Chinese whispers... it gets worse as the story goes on..... (P 10 : 40)

Will it be me? Won't it be me?

Based on “warning signs” and the prevailing climate of fear and uncertainty, the CP assesses his own personal risk of redundancy. Amongst participants interviewed, there were those who avoided the thought that it could be them. Others assessed the probability of being ‘at risk’ and others faced the likely reality:

We knew that there were redundancies but I didn't consider it once even.... that it could hit our desk.... because we were so busy.... (P 5 : 36)

I was sort of expecting it.... not so much for myself... but I knew that the company wasn't doing too well.....so I knew that something might happen but it was whether.... is it going to be me or is it going to be somebody else or is it going to be everybody or whatever....? (P 4 : 2)

Emotionality in the climate of fear

Although the CP may be inclined towards the belief he will be viewed as indispensable...

I was a little bit shocked that I was part of that.... that I was actually one of the ones put on the ‘at risk of redundancy’ list (P. 1 : 2)⁷

..... the predominant thought: “*it might be me*” triggers a “*massive rollercoaster.....*” (P3 : 26) of negative emotional reactions dominated by fear and uncertainty, leading to feelings of vulnerability, powerlessness, stress, pressure, tension, unhappiness, and loss of morale, motivation and recognition:

⁷ The term “at risk” of redundancy means that an individual’s post has provisionally been identified for redundancy.

There were people I knew at work who were extremely cool.....who became slightly edgy and tetchy... who smoke and smoked more.... who were prepared to work for even longer hours... (P10 : 46)

I was actually quite miserable and unhappy doing what I was doing... (P1 : 47)

Not much motivation as you would expect.... so it's not about: O.K., I want to get the world changed tomorrow because.....whatever you say, it may not be heard anyway..... (P4 : 36)

As 2008 progressed, average productivity went down because you know... morale just takes an enormous hit and these firms are all about morale really..... (P3 : 26)

Stressful long hours..... (...) ... working our guts out and getting virtually no recognition... (P2 : 43)

There might also be relief when the CP realizes that he has 'survived' a 'multiple cut':

...similar to the psychology that people described in the war when the bombing raids came and the following morning you are still alive and.... Oh dear.... some people over there are not... sort of thing..... (P3 : 24)

'Surviving' in a climate of fear

In order to *survive* in the climate of fear, the CP's may adapt their behaviours and adopt *survival* strategies in an endeavour to protect themselves from imminent threat. They may work autonomously, endeavour to 'anonymise' the 'self' and become vigilant, selfish, less helpful, calculating and strategic:

It became a bit more political... rather than focusing on the work and getting the work done and delivering, it was more about making sure you didn't get 'stabbed' in the back.... (.....) people were starting to be more afraid about making difficult decisions... it was almost like if I make that decision and I'm wrong then I'm out.... so it turned into a sort of state of paralysis really... (P1 : 16, 18)

You could see everyone just looking after their own area and basically looking after their job.... (P7 : 26)

You were constantly looking over your shoulder all the time.... (P6: 18)

The CP may detach or dissociate from a direct threat to the "self":

I was nervous but not actually nervous for myself..... (P1 : 16)

...and from emotional attachment to the company:

I was quite detached from the work situation.... It's more about getting in there and getting the work done... (P4 : 38)

The CP seeks the support of colleagues or significant others. By articulating the threat to "self", the CP externalizes his fears and attempts to normalize the existent situation. Accordingly he verbally and mentally prepares for potential danger:

...there was X.... he was a senior guy... and when it got too much, I could go into his office and vent and say Fuuuuuuuuck! (....) ...and I did go and chew his ear off a few times..... (P 2 : 64)

I talked to X about it prior to being put on the list and said look this might happen..... so I partly prepared for it anyway.... (P 1 : 18)

Less commonly, some CP's reported having experienced a heightened level of camaraderie with colleagues:

You almost feel closer to your colleague because suddenly he becomes a person.... more personable..... the moment that we're not there we won't be whatever title we were... we're just individuals.... (P 4 : 32)

Some of the CPs may try to take control of their personal situation by seeking roles elsewhere:

...even before I was given my marching orders, I'd already begun to think: Is this the place for me?and I had started to make one or two tentative enquiries outside the firm.... (P 3 : 10)

Moderating Influences

Woven into the participants' narratives are a range of contextual influences which may have affected their reactions in the different phases of the redundancy experience. Although not explicitly illustrated within each phase, the economic climate and the influence of support are pervasive themes throughout:

The Recession

In the 'climate of fear', the CP's vulnerability to redundancy is inexorably linked to the prevailing external market conditions. Across interviews, the contextual relevance of the recession in the *awaiting* phase is graphically illustrated. The CP acknowledges 'macro' affects which are beyond his personal control. As noted by the researcher, feelings of fear, panic, vulnerability and uncertainty may be exacerbated at a 'micro' level:

X is a huge sprawling... or it was... a monster of a bank... (...) the bank had over-extended itself and taken on far too much risk and had exposed itself to massive losses... (P 3 : 6)

The firm is in complete chaos.... They've just lost x-squillion dollars in sub-prime... the firm is in absolute convulsions.... (P 1 : 6)

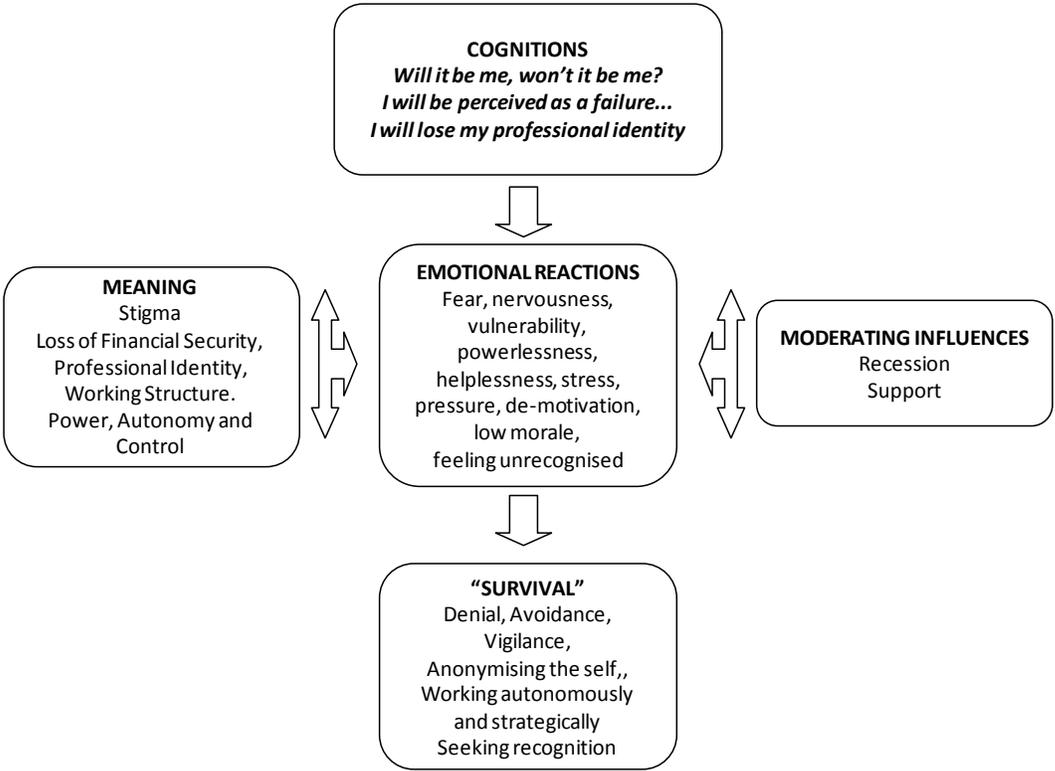


Fig. 2 : Summary : Phase 1 : AWAITING

CATEGORY 2 : ACTUALITY

"And now it's not a matter of „if“ it happens..." (P4 : 42)



The period of anticipation is terminated the moment the redundancy becomes a fact. Although the *anticipatory* period varies across individual experiences in relation to "knowledge" or otherwise that it may or may not happen, the *appraisal* is definite, intractable and apparently non-negotiable.

The ACTUALITY phase subsumes two sub-categories which describe the process of:

- *APPRISAL* : awareness of the forthcoming event and the event itself.
- *AFTERSHOCK* : the period immediately following the *APPRISAL* and the remainder of that day.
- Moderating influences on reactions.

SUB-CATEGORY 1 : APPRISAL

"Surprise surprise... you are going to be made redundant!" (P 2 : 28)

Across interviews, the participants' recollection of the sequence of events surrounding the *appraisal* was recalled with clarity and detail in relation to the time they received the "call", the period before entering the room and the process of being *apprised* of the redundancy itself.

Yeah.... Seemingly a normal day....then about 4.30... just when the markets closed... (P 6 : 86)

A phone call. "Come up to the..." whatever floor it was... (...) that was the realization that I was going to be laid off... (P 3 : 14)

My extension flashed... (...) ...it was my Boss from one of the meeting rooms....and I knew.... I knew.... I just knew... (P 5 : 40)

In that particular moment, the CP is caught unawares. He may be focused on a task or be in the process of communicating with a colleague. (Note: all participants instinctively projected the likely outcome of the designated meeting). The CP is obliged to stop what he is engaged in doing and make his way to the appointed rendezvous in the "knowledge" that he may or may not be returning to his desk. He *complies* with the request and leaves either instantly or within moments.

Although '*shell-shocked*' (P 6 : 86) and '*...in some respects on auto pilot*' (P 10 : 78), the CP may seek to manage or 'control' his external reactions. In this way he may be aiming to avoid alerting others to his predicament. There may be a sense of shame.

You know you do feel a bit like a dead man walking... because you have to walk through the floor.... (...) you stand and make sure and see if anyone is looking at you.... (...) the thing that occurred to me was that I didn't really want to show any emotion at all.... So that's all I thought about... (...) ...I didn't want to see anyone I knew on the way up... I just wanted to go in, hear what they had to say, confirm what I thought I already knew..... (P 10 : 66)

The CP's emotions appear to be suspended. With an awareness that he is in a position of powerlessness, he may detach himself from the situation and relinquish control in the moment:

I'm just going to be there... get a judgment.... I took myself out of the situation because it's not up to me any more.... (P 4 : 48)

Across interviews, participants described a standardised format for the *appraisal*:

I went in the room....it was my Boss and somebody from HR and it was a very formal short meeting. He literally had a script in front of him. He read from the script and said nothing else. Then the HR person read from the script and said nothing else. (P 3 : 38)

Typically, the CP will be advised that they are "at risk" of redundancy. Scripted terms such as "cost-cutting", "re-structuring" and "market conditions" form part of a de-personalized albeit "professional" process. The CP is effectively being treated as a commodity which has no further value or worth to the institution he has worked for. In this moment he is emotionally shocked and powerless as he finds himself in the process of being rejected and metaphorically "annihilated":

It was very surgical... it was like you were injected you know... and then you die immediately... (P 9 : 28)

The CP may be given the option to return to his desk to collect his belongings. More commonly, the CP is escorted out of the building and given a specific appointment when he is permitted to return... 'with your black bin liner...' (P1:26). The analogy to 'rubbish disposal' may constitute a further perceived endorsement of diminished status and value. In some cases the vulnerable and disempowered CP seeks reassurance:

I think I asked a question: ...Is it something personal? ...Meaning, is this performance driven? (P 4 : 60)

In the majority of cases, the CP's behavioural response to the *appraisal* is acquiescence, submissiveness and compliance. His may seek to manage his emotions:

.... *There isn't really a question that sprang to mind other than: What do you want from me now? It wasn't that I didn't want them to feel it didn't matter to me.... I think that if you consider yourself to be professional, you have to act as a professional... I thought if this was the last thing I would be doing... that I wouldn't want to be ashamed....(...)... actually when I left, I had a feeling of... you know, having some dignity I guess.* (P10 : 88)

Feelings of anger may be suppressed:

Then I was escorted down to my desk by my boss.... (.....) ...I didn't really say very much because I was still calculating... you know.... Do I just flatten the guy? (laughs) (P3 : 38)

Moderating Influences

One of the first versus one of the later

CPs affected in the first rounds of redundancy may have experienced feelings of optimism in relation to securing another role at a time when market conditions were uncertain:

Not really knowing how bad the markets were going to get and then deteriorate rapidly....(...)... I think I should have been... perhaps less blasé.... (P 1 : 81)

Conversely, being one of the first might exacerbate negative feelings in relation to increased perceptions of stigma, i.e., more easily dispensed with or of lesser value.

It's probably in the first couple of rounds they get rid of dead wood.... (P 7 : 4)

The CP may seek to rationalize his situation with a positive bias:

Because I'm first out on the street....it's interesting, people are trying to keep in contact with me because they know that... he's out there, he's starting the process earlier than me... I'm going to get some information off him. In the good days... you know... they are losers.... but now it's more... I need to get on with him and work with him because he's going to help me in the process..... (P4 : 138)

For "survivors", watching others go may have aroused feelings of loss. Moreover, anxiety may have been aroused in relation to "the self" and future uncertainty (i.e. analogous to "russian roulette").

When these redundancies happened... it was extremely painful because these were colleagues that I'd worked with..... (P3 : 20)

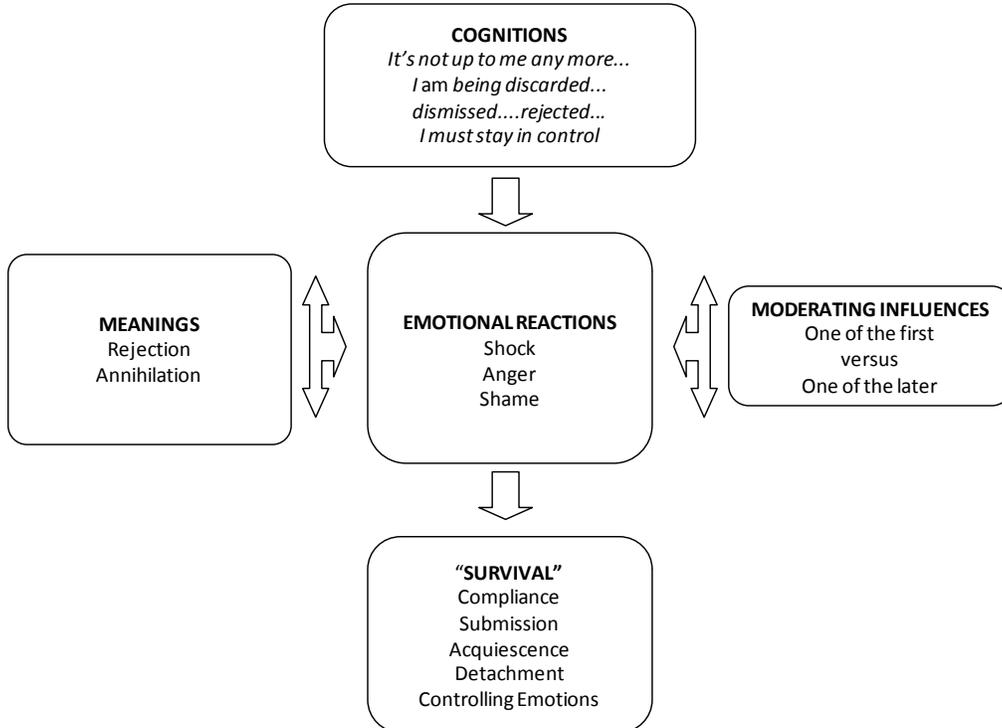


Figure 3 : Summary : Phase 2 : ACTUALITY • APPRISAL •

SUB-CATEGORY 2 : AFTERSHOCK

“I think I felt numb. It’s like the world had stopped....” (P 4 : 74)

The CP has just been *apprised* of his redundancy. He may be in a state of shock. He may feel emotionally numb. He may experience a sense of detachment, disorientation and dislocation. He may have no time to *assimilate* what has happened before he is catapulted back into the world. He may be summarily escorted out of the building. In this way, by eliminating any element of choice in the manner of his departure, the CP’s disempowerment, de-valued status and loss of worth are emphasized. Furthermore, the CP may be deprived of the opportunity for ‘closure’. For example, he may be denied the opportunity to say goodbye to his peers/colleagues and experience their supportive reactions on departure:

One of my friends was laid off.....and he was allowed to go back to his desk and have a chat with everyone and say goodbye... got a round of applause by 20 odd guys....(...) ...I don’t know... if somebody had applauded me off the floor it might have made it worse.....(...) but it would have been nice to go back and say to these people: I’m off... and see what they’d got to say.... (P7 : 64.66)

“Collecting my stuff...”

Alternatively, CPs are given the option of collecting their belongings before departure or returning at a later appointed date. In the absence of choice, the CP returns to his desk. He may struggle to manage his emotions in the presence of others who may recognize what is happening:

You are in such turmoil... you can't think straight... (...)...you can't say anything to anybody. They mean well... they want to be supportive... you don't see everybody... your focus is getting out as quickly as possible.... I just needed to get out of there... I was trying to keep everything in... tight, quick out!
(P5 : 56, 62)

Meaning: Rejection... Annihilation...

Notwithstanding the technical details pertaining to the final departure, there is a common strand woven into the process of ejection whereby the 'commodity' (the CP), is rejected, eradicated, obliterated and disposed of. He feels disempowered and helpless:

So I came out.... your pass is disabled... all your e-mail accounts or whatever are disabled....(...)... and I still had my Blackberry and that still worked... (...) ... and then it just lit up and then started wiping...100%... (P 7 : 58)

'Surviving' in the immediate aftermath

The CP may elect to make his way to the pub, wait for others to arrive and stay there until late. Although he may be seeking supportive interactions, he may inadvertently experience a sense of alienation from others whose own status is unchanged:

Obviously, that's when you realize that people have got meetings and they can't just drop everything.... I was on my own for about 20 minutes and then people came over and they were all sort of shocked.... (...) they were probably thinking it could be me... or have I escaped?... I don't know..... (P 7 : 72)

By default, the pub and alcohol may provide the CP with the means to detach or distract himself from the reality of what has happened:

The good thing about beer is.... you know I didn't really have a lot of time to think or much sense to think about things.... I crashed pretty much..... (P 4 : 94)

Others may choose to go straight home:

It's really something that you do need to digest and I knew that I needed to get away.... (P10 : 100)

Frequent references to "weird", "bizarre" and "strange" in the immediate aftermath are littered across interviews. The *aftershock* pertains to a dramatic change in the pre-existent status quo and a prevailing theme of shock, numbness and cessation of normality. Although the CP's emotions may be held in suspension, he may remain acutely sensitive to the perceptions of others:

Generally I would have read a book or listened to music... (on the train home) ... I don't think I did anything apart from think I wonder if people wonder why I'm going home in the middle of the day looking like a bag lady..... I did look like a 'bag lady' ... that was the worst thing.... (P11 : 44)

The CP arrives home early. This is unusual. The house might be empty as significant others continue their normal everyday routine. A pervasive sense of numbness is likely to be laced with an overriding awareness of undesired negative change:

The dog has made a bit of a mess in the hallway which is very unusual, so I thought: Oh well, this is a great day isn't it.... I've just been fired and I'm having to clear up this mess..... how much worse can things get.... A C.R.A.P. day!..... (laughs).... (P3 : 42)

Communicating the 'message' to others

In the *aftershock* there is a recognized need to impart the news of what has happened to significant others. The CP may or may not be the main bread-winner. He may or may not have dependents. He may or may not live alone. Notwithstanding the disparity in

demographic status, all the participants contacted a significant other in the immediate aftermath. The CP appears to be seeking emotional support. Through a process of verbalizing what has happened, the CP may take an initial step towards accepting the reality of his redundancy. The impact of communicating the message to others may arouse negative emotions in relation to the "self" - (a sense of failure, disappointment, fear of change, loss).....

Well you do feel like a failure... there are no two ways around it.... It felt bad... you know.... British middle class guy.... career guy.... It didn't feel good.... Everything I'd sort of built up felt under threat suddenly and now I couldn't protect my family from it.... I had to tell them..... (P3 : 52)

...and to the predicted emotional reactions of "others" (fear of change, disappointment, loss and anxieties founded on tangible problems, i.e. financial):

My next thought was for my husband.... My God I've got to tell him... I thought what is he going to say?... (...) but when I got home, his face said everything... (P 5 : 84)

The reactions of others will impact on the CP's reactions either positively or negatively. All participants reported initial supportive interactions with significant others which provided validation and encouraged a heightened sense of self-worth and importantly, relief in the *aftershock*:

And I remember my children coming home and asking me why I was at home... and the little one said to me: Oh that's great! ... and I looked at him... and he said: Well you'll be home.... I'm really pleased about that..... (P10 : 44)

Then it was sort of off my chest a little bit.... (P3 : 72)

The CP may feel a need to distance (or protect) himself from the worries of others:

I just said....look you don't need to ask me how it's going... just leave it with me and I'll sort it out... (...) I asked people to place a lot of trust in me..... X has been really really supportive.... it's been fantastic.....

The CP may actively avoid imparting the news if they predict a negative response:

I haven't told X.... that would just make it 20 times worse.... X is a natural worrier... so the feedback would always be negative.. and I just thought, I don't need that.. (P6 : 114)

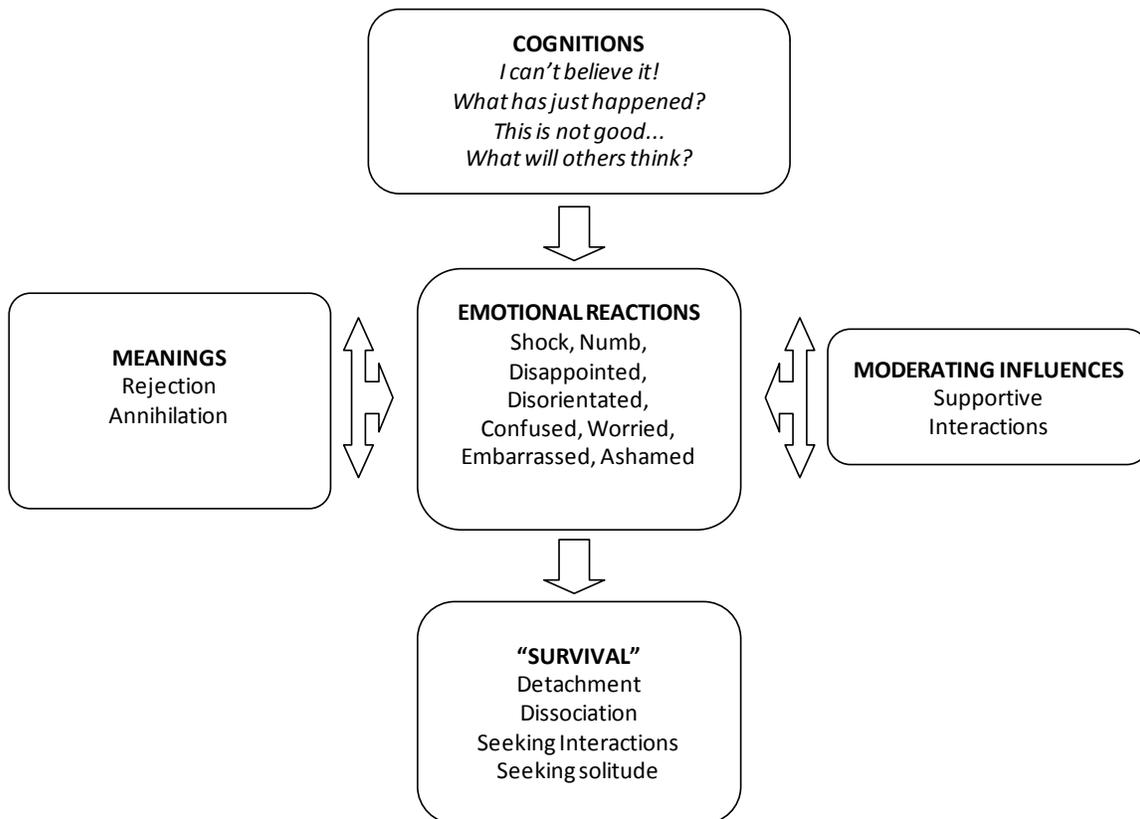


Figure 4 : Summary : Phase 2 : ACTUALITY ▪ AFTERSHOCK ▪

CATEGORY 3 : ADJUSTMENT

“It’s not going to be the same tomorrow... a matter of fact, perhaps forever.”

(P 4 : 110)



Following the 'immediate aftermath' the CP endeavours to *adjust* to what may appear to be a dramatic change in his daily existence and/or his social identity. He may seek to re-claim a sense of mastery and control. If the CP is able to negotiate this phase, he may reach a level of *acceptance* of the *actuality* of the event which will facilitate the transition into the *adaptation* phase. The *adjustment* phase for many of the CP's will coincide with the "at risk" period or the "consultation period"⁸ prior to signing the "compromise agreement"⁹ and formalizing their redundancy. During the "at risk" period the CP may be hopeful that another role will be found internally. This was not the case for any of the participants interviewed:

You are "at risk" of redundancy is the wording that they use... which is a load of rubbish... (P7 : 50)

Accordingly, in order to manage his emotional reactions and the reactions of others in relation to 'the reason why', the CP may *appraise* the reason for his redundancy with a positive bias towards "self". The *appraisal* may precede or coincide with a process of *assimilation* of what has happened before he *assesses* his current and future options.

⁸ During 'consultation' the employer must take into account representations and respond to them with a view to reaching agreement".

⁹ A Compromise Agreement is a legally binding agreement for both employees and employers to an out of Court settlement.

The ADJUSTMENT phase subsumes three sub-categories which describe the process of:

- APPRAISAL : emotional reactions triggered by the meaning of redundancy, prompting 'survival' responses and the influence of the recession on those reactions.
- ASSIMILATION : the gradual process of absorbing the reality of what has happened in different contexts, i.e., returning to collect personal possessions, taking advice or considering whether to challenge the decision and 'managing' the consultation period. Meanings, emotions and 'survival' strategies are described in those contexts and moderating influences of 'support' and 'demographic status' are emphasized.
- ASSESSMENT : describes a process in which the CP evaluates current and future options which may be moderated by financial security. The CP may also reflect on his experience of redundancy.

SUB-CATEGORY 1 : APPRAISAL

The process of *cognitive appraisal* has been described as the way a person construes the significance of a stressful event in his or her own life (Latack et al. 1995; Lazarus and DeLongis, 1984). The *appraisal* process pertains to rationalizing the reason *why* he has been made redundant. Implicit within the process are negative meanings either associated with or attributed to the CP's demise which may trigger a range of negative emotions. The descriptive terms littered throughout the participants' narratives convey the strength of those reactions.

Meaning : Destruction

Many of the CPs will have been directly or indirectly involved in the growth and development of the institutions within which they have held managerial roles. The apparent destruction of their work-related endeavours arising from organizational re-structuring and downsizing may arouse feelings of anger, frustrations and loss:

(...) I grew my team.... what they decided to do was completely re-structure my team and the X team and collapse it all down basically.... (...)cut half of it.... just collapse it all down.... (P1 : 10)

You could see a lot of stuff that I had taken a long time to build... having an axe taken to it for political reasons... (P2 : 8)

Meaning : Injustice

The thought: "It's not fair" may exacerbate angry feelings:

They put the boot into us and they closed us down... (...) ...lot's of the people who were doing really silly things... were kind of bailed out... and kept going... there doesn't seem to be a lot of justice in that... (P9 : 10, 54)

I was sort of constructed out of the door...(...) ... I opened the letter to find some form of 'dummy' PMM¹⁰... (...) I went to see the HR person and said: This is just rubbish.... (P6 : 2, 4)

Meaning : Loss of self-worth

One main effect of redundancy may be a loss of self-worth on a personal and professional level....

It's essentially a body blow to your sense of self worth.... (P6 : 152)

.... exacerbated by perceptions of having no further value to the institution:

They saw me as dispensable.... (P3 : 4)

¹⁰ PMM : Performance Management Measure

Meaning : Rejection

The process of redundancy pertains to willful exclusion by others which may arouse painful emotions:

A similar sort of significant reverse if you like....when I was in the second year at college, I had a very good friend through the first year who was sort of very fashionable and in with the 'in crowd'... and then in the second year we fell out and suddenly a lot of people who I thought were my friends weren't because they were his friends and that was quite painful and quite nasty.... (P2 : 58)

Locating the 'self' pre-redundancy

In order to *manage* emotional reactions arising from those negative meanings, in the *appraisal* the CP may selectively locate himself pre-redundancy in a way in which his senior status, value, achievements and ability are emphasized:

We'd done a lot of good stuff.... My boss in the X resigned and I was asked to take over the global role... what a fantastic opportunity.... (P2 :6)

I had been asked to completely re-architect their trading platform... (P 1 : 10)

I was the top performer on the team at the time.... (P5 : 36)

Indeed, the CP may concede that his 'success' may have been a determining factor in his downfall:

I had four teams that worked for me... I had worked them into such a state that actually their line managers could cope without me... (P 11 : 8)

Political struggles

In the *appraisal*, the CP may assume no personal culpability in his “demise” which he is more likely to view as having stemmed from the global economic recession, related cost-cutting and re-structuring exercises and in many cases, associated ‘political’ struggles:

I think there is always some politics involved..... (P3 : 4)

In the context of a ‘political fight’, the CP may *appraise* himself positively:

I was by far the most popular individual in the department..... (P3 : 4)

...and the ‘enemy’ negatively:

He had a very big ego and arrogance about him..... (P 3: 4)

...and the outcome:

Events have actually borne me out.... that we were right and they were wrong...

(...) it was because of the political internal struggle... (...) and I was left

without a chair when the music stopped effectively..... (P2 : 8, 38)

Moderating Influences

The recession

The process of *appraisal* may be moderated by the affect of the recession in relation to self/other perceptions of stigma. The CP will be able to distance himself from any notion of personal failure:

I just think there was so much of it going on... had I been an isolated case and there was no credit crunch, then you might be looking at yourself a bit more....

(P 7 : 86)

I went to dinner with a few friends last night... (...) everyone mentioned the word “redundancy half a dozen times within two hours...(…) it’s become a part of people’s lives, which it wasn’t really before.... (P4 : 146)

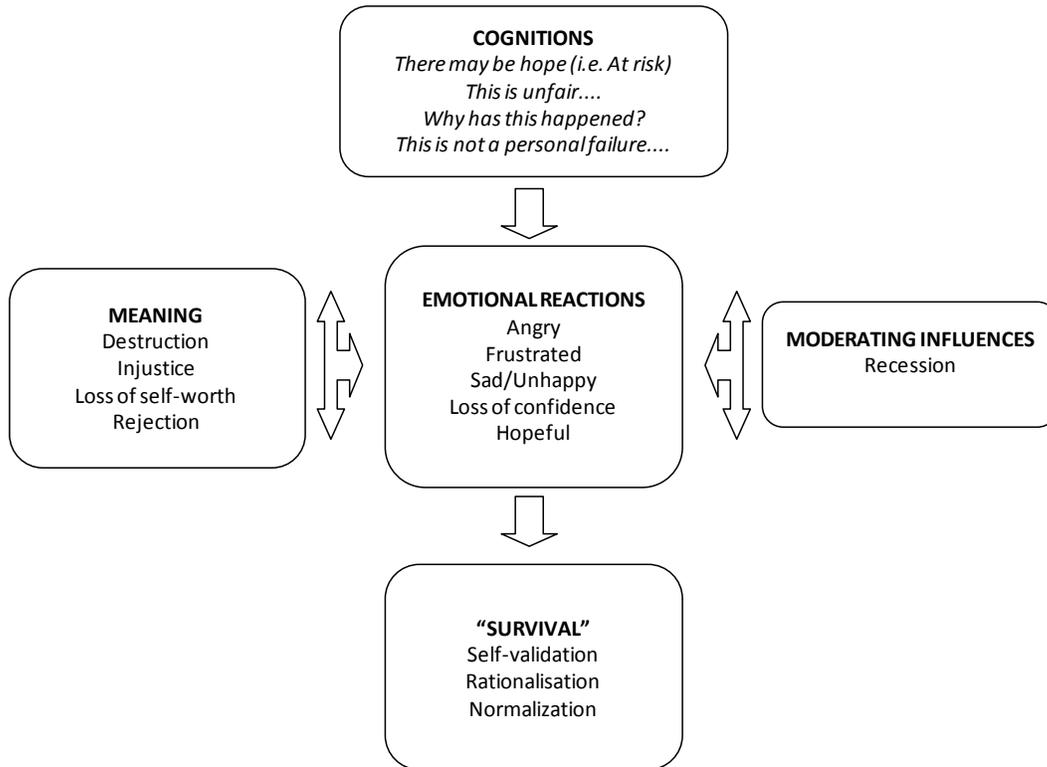


Figure 5 : Summary : Phase 3 : ADJUSTMENT ▪ APPRAISAL ▪

SUB-CATEGORY 2 : ASSIMILATION

“You can’t come to terms with an event of that magnitude all in one go...”
 (P3 : 92)

Repeated references to “surreal”, “dazed”, “strange” across interviews conjure up a process of *assimilation* in which the CP, still shocked and in a state of disbelief, attempts to make rational sense of his new changed world. There may be an initial sense of aimlessness in the absence of a routine coupled with feelings of exhaustion and fatigue not only in relation

to the shock and disbelief emanating from the *actuality* but also stemming from emotional reactions in the *awaiting* phase. The CP may find it difficult to concentrate and focus:

What happens is that you're operating on your physical limits... 70/75 hours a week... the job never lets you go.... You're always thinking about the job and then suddenly (clicks fingers) it's not there... it's strange.... (...) and really not quite sure what to do with yourself... it's sort of making multiple cups of coffee.... I remember having difficulty concentrating on anything....(...) there was one day.... (...) I was fully dressed... I came up from the kitchen to the bedroom and thought: Oh that duvet looks nice.... I got back under the duvet... got my coffee and the F.T. and put on T.V..... it was 'Postman Pat'... and I thought 'fantastic'.... (P 3 : 90)

There may be a pervading sense of relief as the prior stress, pressure and need to perform and achieve has lifted. Accordingly, the *assimilation* phase may feel like a vacation and the CP may give himself permission to relax:

I think for the next two weeks you treat it like a holiday... (...) which is the normal longest time you take for a holiday..... (P 7 : 70)

Returning to collect "my stuff"

For the CP who has been given a later appointment to collect his belongings, the *return* process may serve to facilitate the *assimilation* phase by providing a sense of "closure". Unlike those who have collected their possessions in the *aftershock*, the CP who returns later appears to be more easily able to manage his reactions:

I was certainly not behaving in a depressed of floods of tears kind of thing... (P 1 :47)

The CP may experience feelings of loss not only in relation to “the self” but also in relation to others who have also been made redundant. Empty desks and chairs. Familiar faces missing. Brief conversations with peers and colleagues may provide support and validation:

A whole load of people gathered round.... very senior people... to wish me farewell and good luck... (P3 : 78)

Meaning of redundancy : Stigma

As the CP *assimilates* the reality of what has happened, he may also strive to protect himself from negative emotions (embarrassment or shame) triggered by self/other perceptions of stigma. In the context of the return, he may cognitively appraise his situation with an air of defiance:

Seeing how tough it was starting to get in the office.... (...) I think it was well... where would you prefer to be sat? ...I think I'd prefer to sat where I am... (P1 : 43)

In more generalised contexts, the CP may elect to be secretive:

After being made redundant, ... I wasn't letting people know, I was sort of adjusting to it and then that's what happened.... I came to terms with it and then it was like... I'm not embarrassed any more.... (P1 : 55)

Conversely, the CP may decide to be open...

I called friends who were working or not working... (...)... it was more about... this is it.... this is the fact... I mean there's no point in hiding it... no point of trying to avoid it... (...)... I must just be logical about it.... (P4 : 102, 104)

...or act with *bravado*...

I made damned sure I had a leaving drinks and invited everyone because I thought I'm buggered if I'm slinking off with my tail between my legs. It's not because I'm shit at my job it's because of x, y and z... I'm not going to act ashamed about it.... (...) I guess I'm vain enough to care what other people think of me to a degree..... (P2 : 28, 30)

...which may have required courage:

You know it did require a bit of...you know it wasn't... walking into the leaving drinks... you know... stop outside... take a deep breath..... (P 2 : 94)

The redundant CP may find himself powerless to 'manage' the perceptions of others outside the banking industry....

It was people that worked outside the investment banks that were actually more worried about what it meant.... (...) ...whether it was like a stigma you know... (P10 : 150)

...which might be based on negative media coverage:

It was kind of like: "Greedy sub-prime lenders destroy the generation's dreams..." and kind of like... highly overblown statements.... (P10 : 116)

Talking about a very small percentage of 1%, walk off with these 5 million or 10 million pound bonuses... but it's a great story...(...) so I think if you try and get it into context and try and understand what the media are doing you don't take it personally but you are aware that if you say you are working in an investment bank, then it's right, O.K.... are you sure you want to admit that.... (P3 : 8)

Challenging the decision

Paradoxically, the *assimilation* phase may also be 'facilitated' by the process of deciding whether or not to challenge the redundancy. Such a desire may be founded on perceptions of injustice and related feelings of anger and bitterness:

I was unfairly dismissed because of the way it was carried out.... so how much did I want to fight on that? So all of those decisions at a vulnerable time in your life... no matter how much you want it.... (...)... the company you had worked for all these years were being very unfair... I can't stand unfairness.... I can't stand people being unprofessional..... (P11 : 58)

None of those interviewed proceeded with the "challenge". They appear to have had no option other than to relinquish control and acquiesce to the reality:

I went to see a lawyer and what they told me is that you fight for constructive dismissal..... there's an amount that you get and what the banks do is that they tend to give you an amount near that so you end up just signing and not bothering... so yeah... I thought it was bad the way they do it... but nothing surprises me in that world.... (P7 : 4)

Across interviews, the researcher noted that *acceptance* appears to have been on an intellectual rather than an emotional level. Indeed, most participants appear to have made a conscious decision to "let it go" and move on. In this way, it appears that *acceptance* may arguably be conceived as *acquiescence*. Consequently, residual negative feelings may remain.

The whole of the month was... do I fight it? Do I not fight it? What do I do? Then I signed my compromise agreement... so O.K. done! Let's get on.... (P 5 : 6)

Managing the consultation period

For the majority of CPs, the *assimilation* phase will be marked by the necessity for them to be proactive in the “at risk” period leading up to signing the compromise agreement:

I had to go in and see the HR person a couple of times....she rang me once a week to see if I was O.K.... not sure what that meant...not going to sue them presumably. You engage lawyers to make sure it's all happening properly. This all takes time. There's a lot of e-mail correspondence. A lot of going down to the Post Office... (...) all that sort of stuff. It's only once that's all over that you can start to think about the future.... (P3 : 106)

Moderating Influences

Support : colleagues and peers

As the CP *assimilates* the *actuality* of his redundancy, the reactions of others may take on a heightened significance. Supportive interactions may be comforting, provide validation, increase feelings of self-worth, imbue confidence and diminish perceptions of stigma and shame:

The other thing that happened... that's just come to my mind... (...)... is that you get a flood of phone calls and e-mails of support from the people you were with... some fantastic calls that really underline your worth... (...) ... they are genuinely upset for you... I found that really surprising... you know these are hardened sales people.... you know 'marketing warriors' really.... (...) ... and they don't suffer fools gladly.... (...) so the camaraderie is an awful lot tighter than you would think..... (P3 : 96)

In contrast, the absence of supportive interactions from peers and colleagues may not only be hurtful and disappointing but may also serve to underscore feelings of rejection and loss of self-worth:

One thing you do notice.... (...)... you meet a hell of a lot of people over your working life... and people that were in my team.... and I haven't seen one of those people... not one of them has phoned me up and said: How are you? How's it going? People you've worked with for years... I've touched base with them in the couple of months after...but yeah... you soon realize who your friends are. Everyone say's they're busy... (P7 : 142)

Support : significant others

Supportive interactions from significant others may be critical, particularly in the early stage of *adjustment* and *assimilation*:

Um... having supportive family and friends has probably helped most of all....(...)... X insists I go round for lunch once a week, so she knows I'm O.K.... (P9:120)

Demographic status

Individual differences relating to status may also have bearing on reactions. For example, the CP who lives alone or is experiencing relationship difficulties, may be required to proactively seek external support. The CP who resides with his family, may have ready access to support. He may also have an immediate role to fill which may serve to facilitate emotional equilibrium and a sense of reality in the *assimilation* phase of redundancy:

I thought... Oh I don't have to go in tomorrow morning.... but it's like... well X was: Right, you're going to do the school run!... So it wasn't like there was a vast... you know... a lot of watching Jeremy Kyle in my underpants going on basically.... (P2 : 42)

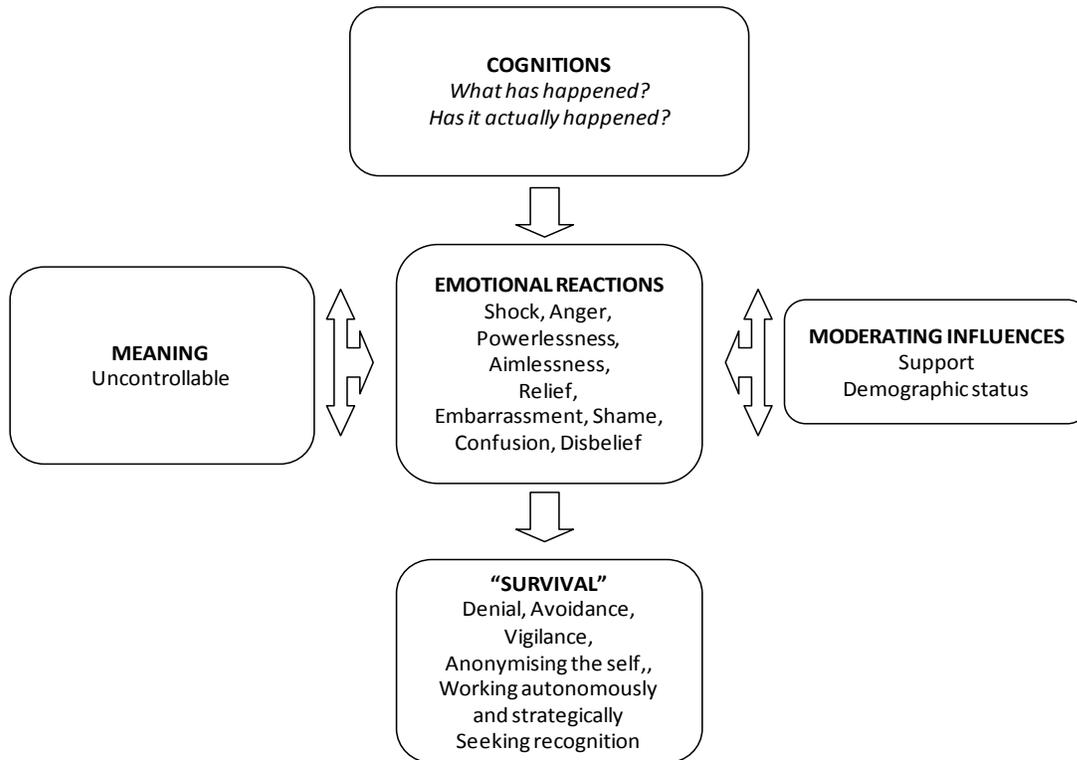


Figure 6 : Summary : Phase 3 : ADJUSTMENT ▪ ASSIMILATION ▪

SUB-CATEGORY 3 : ASSESSMENT

“Suddenly 10,000 things come to mind.... so this is the logic coming back again”

(P 4 : 98)

As the CP gradually *assimilates* the *actuality* and the initial shock subsides, he turns his attention to *assessing* his current situation. Accordingly, the **meanings** he attributes to his new-found status will influence his emotionality in this phase of redundancy:

An opportunity for escape and liberation

Redundancy may mean an escape from pre-event stress....

I felt sort of liberated in a way... because I didn't have to get involved in the shit happening at work any more..... (P1 : 45)

....or liberation with the freedom to make life-choices:

One of the things that I thought about was.... well I have worked solidly in the City for 13/14 years.... Maybe I am feeling a little burned out... let's take some time... (...) ... rather than scrabbling together the two weeks of holiday to go away, why not just go away for a month... so again it was sort of... there's the opportunity to do that.... (P1.51)

I remember in the first week off....(...)... I went into town and went to a free concert... (...)... and went and saw a couple of art exhibitions... I thought this is a bit bloody civilized.... (P 2 : 46)

An opportunity to re-direct, re-assess and take stock

Redundancy may mean the opportunity to engage in a decision-making process in relation to future goals and directions:

A lot of other people who have talked about redundancy... have talked about it as a potential opportunity for a complete career change... so I was thinking... is working in finance... (...)... do I want to continue doing that?... (...) rather than you know that whole life changing... let's become a wine-maker or something.... (...)... that's not for me... I wanted to carry on using the skills I'd learned..... (P1 : 51)

An opportunity for personal and professional development

Redundancy may mean the opportunity for the CP to pursue different avenues. He may seek to establish a new career path aimed towards protecting his autonomy in the future:

And now it's a sense of let's look at life and try to get something positive out of it and try to do something different..... I am nearly X (years) ... I still have a lot I can offer.... (...)... And I am studying to become a X.... (...) ... so that I don't have to answer to someone again... or that someone is me.... (P 5 : 2)

By viewing redundancy as an 'opportunity', a range of positive emotions are engendered including optimism, hopefulness, motivation and a resurgence of 'mastery and control':

...a feeling of optimism.... And you think you can write a book...(laughs).... And you think you can do various things that you never had time to do.... (P10 : 126)

Weighing up the risks

The CP will assess the probability of a swift re-entry into the job market against the prevailing external market conditions:

It was one of the most serious things that had happened in the banking sector since the 1930's....(...)... you know the industry had gone up in a straight line in terms of employment for almost 15 years and surely most of that had to unravel..... (...)... and the anxiety was well.... if another 20% of the workforce had to go in total, how am I going to get employed against that kind of background... (P3 : 112)

My initial thoughts were....well I can get another job and I wanted to do it... (...) ...I don't think it was a pride thing but it was similar to that in the sense that I've got a good CV... I've got a lot of experience... I should be able to get a

job without too much trouble.... And then there was the realization that the jobs weren't there..... (P1 : 5)

Denial or avoidance of the harsh reality of the external conditions may be protective in the *assessment* phase. By perceiving his unemployment as short-term, feelings of anxiety and worry will be minimized:

...who would have thought I wouldn't be working for X months... I'd never foreseen that.... (P9 : 76)

A conscious decision to reconcile to the reality, may relieve feelings of anxiety, pressure and powerlessness:

I thought, the market's going to be horrendous for ages.... (...)... there's nothing I can do about it..... (9 : 78)

Moderating Influences

Financial security

For the majority of CPs interviewed the redundancy package has meant that they are able to exist without an income for a period of time. The length of time will be influenced by the financial settlement received and their individual status (i.e. dependents). This financial 'cushion' may ease feelings of anxiety or desperation in relation to securing another role. Having *assessed* the risks, the CP may reconcile to the situation, mentally prepare for the "long haul" and take action to minimize those risks:

Reality..... we have to hunker down... it will come back again but we have to be real about this... you know we have to cut all those direct debits that are not strictly necessary and all that sort of stuff.... (P3 : 70)

Reflecting on the past

The transition towards *adaptation* and subsequent *action* may be illuminated through a “looking back perspective” and a recognition of changing reactions over time:

I do remember going through a more stoical... ‘Oh well...’ sort of attitude...then more angry... well you know ‘Why’? sort of thing....then you get over that... well you have to get over that otherwise you can’t really start thinking about the future.... (P3 : 92)

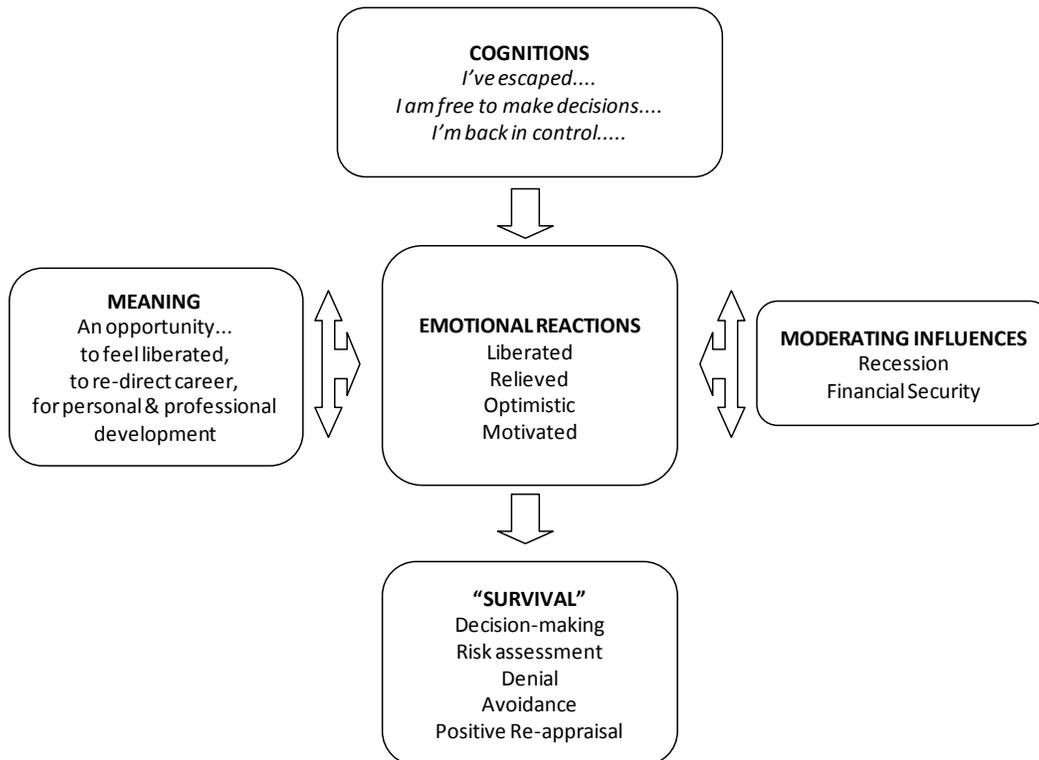


Figure 7 : Summary : Phase 3 : ADJUSTMENT ▪ ASSESSMENT ▪

CATEGORY 4 : ADAPTATION

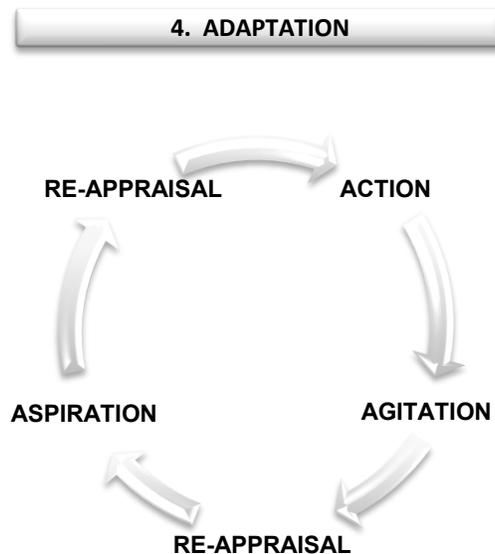


Figure 8 : The ADAPTATION Cycle

As the CP endeavours to negotiate the transition into the *adaptation* phase having *acquiesced* to his predicament, he may take *action* towards the primary goal of securing another role in a difficult job market. Over time the CP may decide to *re-appraise* his situation and *adapt* his course of action accordingly. The *adaptation* phase is characterized by two further phases which are non-sequential yet pervasive. Namely: *agitation* pertaining to continued uncertainty and feelings of powerlessness and *aspiration* whereby the CP mourns the loss of the past and experiences longing in relation to the future. Accordingly, the *adaptation* phase may become a cycle of: *action* → *agitation* → *re-appraisal* → *aspiration* → *action* until the end goal of re-employment is achieved:

- ACTION : describes the process of job searching, utilizing support, experiencing repeated knock-backs triggering more negative emotions and adaptive 'survival' responses. The moderating influence of the recession and support on those reactions.
- AGITATION : describes mounting pressure over time, triggering negative emotions.
- ASPIRATION : describes meanings triggering feelings of loss and longing prompting adaptive 'survival' responses.
- RE-APPRAISAL : describes a process of re-evaluation, re-assessment and adaptive responses moderated by the recession, financial security and demographic status.

SUB-CATEGORY 1 : ACTION

“I”m in job hunting mode.... let’s go for it!” (P6 : 118)

The job search

The CP may embark on a course of positive *action* in which he starts taking calls from head hunters, networking, strategic planning, preparing for interviews and utilizing professional support. Almost all of those interviewed appear to have adopted a positive mental attitude and a solution-focused, goal-oriented approach. The CP may *assess* the highly competitive market and accordingly *adapt* his approach.

I started re-forming a lot of networks and contacts that I had had that perhaps had lapsed... so using things like LinkedIn which is a sort of professional facebook... so I started to build that up and talk to more people on a professional level... (P1: 55)

The mind-set that I think I adopt for interviews... for me anyway, is a really aggressive type of very hyper-alpha approach... saying that job is mine... you can visually see yourself in that job... yes you might lose but you have to go out there believing a 100% you can win... that's the mentality you have to adopt... (P6 : 146)

I am seeing this as a full-time process... (...) ... there's always something I can do today. Always. Whatever it is, an extra phone call... look at that extra thing or talk to an extra person... (P4 : 124)

Utilizing professional support

All participants who were offered professional outplacement support as part of their redundancy settlement, unequivocally valued and embraced the opportunity for personal and professional development. They proactively utilized available support designed to help secure another role including: access to databases, job searches, training courses, group work to improve interview skills and body language and 1:1 individualized support with a consultant:

There's a grounding there... (...) ... it's a good sounding board... they have enough experience to say: Have you thought about this?... Also they are looking at things from a different angle..... you can become pretty myopic... (P10 : 184)

I learned a great deal from them which I never thought I would... meaning I didn't think it would be that useful – it was very useful.... If they want to make anyone redundant... put them through this process... because it helped me a great deal....(...)... it's support... I guess it's emotional support.... (P4 : 136)

The value of the outplacement support also pertains to providing a sense of purpose and a reason for the CP to return to familiar surroundings and interact with others:

I just liked the feel of being out of my flat in an office environment with other people... (P 7 : 84)

The visible demand from others at the outplacement provider's office, may trigger feelings of anxiety in relation to a recognition of how many others are also seeking re-employment:

There were just not enough desks ...(...)... then you hear people picking up the phone and say: I used to work at x and y....and then you realize.... God, there's a lot of people here... (P 7 : 88)

Initial feelings of hopefulness may be swiftly quashed as the prevailing economic climate leads to repeated knock-backs which may trigger a range of negative emotions, including:

Disappointment....

A company would decide to try and hire for a position... get into the process and then decide not to proceed with it... (...) that happened to me a few times... it looked promising....there was a lot of positive feedback coming back... you've got fantastic skills sets and we're very interested in you and then.....it would go absolutely silent.... (P3 : 112)

Intense frustration, irritation...

...and you can tell in your bones that something has gone wrong... and that's frustrating just in the sense that there's nothing you can do and you're sitting waiting for a call and don't get it... and it's like... grrrrr..... (P2 : 18)

Feelings of powerlessness associated with the change in status:

I was interviewing people throughout that time, but obviously it's different sitting on the other side..... (P1 : 8)

Feeling demoralized, decreasing confidence and self-doubt:

I'm good enough for this.... Why am I not getting this one? (P4 : 2)

Surviving the job-searching process

The CP may struggle to *survive* the on-going job-searching process which in a climate of recession is likely to be coloured by a continued lack of success. In order to maintain a sense of mastery and control, the CP may consciously decide to manage his thought processes and emotions through a range of cognitive strategies including:

Avoiding ruminating:

There was for me a conscious.... look I'm not going to let myself get stressed about it... I'm not going to sit and stress and worry about it anymore than is absolutely necessary... because of course you do think about it.... (P2 : 20)

Positive and strategic thinking:

At the end of the day you are competing against lots of other people... (...) ... although I respect them... it is a dog eat dog world (laughs) so you have to be strategic and make sure you put your best foot forward..... (P6 : 62)

Moderating Influence

The Recession

Despite his best efforts to secure another role, the CP is likely to be acutely aware of the detrimental impact of the recession. Moreover, the recession may further exacerbate feelings of powerlessness and vulnerability:

I guess it's more about a loss of control... because of that worldwide recession it's not really up to me... it's up to the mercy of the things around me... (...)... it could be that I could apply for 100 jobs and not get a call.... (P 4 : 118)

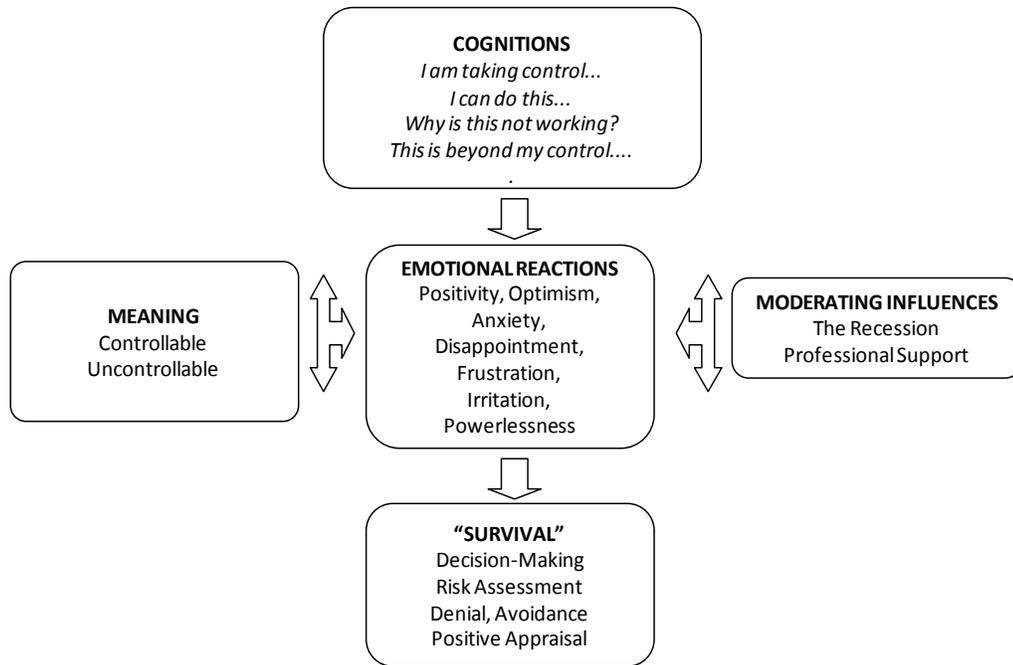


Figure 9 : Summary : Phase 3 : ADJUSTMENT ▪ ACTION ▪

SUB-CATEGORY 2 : AGITATION

The *agitation* phase reflects increasingly negative emotions over time as the CP finds himself unable to achieve his goal of securing another role.

Mounting pressure

As the CP continues to experience uncertainty, feelings of vulnerability, powerlessness, disappointment, pressure, stress, frustration, irritation and anxiety may be exacerbated.

I had... not all the time in the world... (...) ... it was I want to be interviewed and get through the process but basically I ended up having 17 interviews over a period of 3 months... and that was grinding me down... it was increasingly frustrating... and as the interviews went on I was struggling to keep that frustration out of the overall interview process.... (P3 : 59)

The inability to actually get things moving.... you can't make it happen....I tend to face problems head on and I've got a problem I can't do anything about apart from keeping banging away ... (...) ... I'm not allowed to speak to them and ask them what the hold-up is... (P10 : 194)

Everything was happening so slowly... all I was hearing was: We haven't sorted out our 2009 budgets yet... Oh please you know... broken record...(....).... increasingly to me in my mind it was like the yardstick of a year of being out of work so really starting to feel pressure.... (P1 : 59)

Experiencing bad days

The longer the process continues, the CP may feel demoralized and find himself spiraling downwards and experiencing "bad days":

I think the bad days would be something like: "Oh God... it's a bit hopeless isn't it?.... Hopeless meaning you don't know what else you can do to get out of the situation..... (P 4 : 18)

There are days where you don't feel as happy about things as you should do... and the main reason for that is that you don't have human interaction and you don't have a structure of things to do... (...) ... the moment you start retrenching from the outside world... you find yourself.... or I found myself.... not as sure as I could be interacting with people in the outside world.... (6 : 106)

The CP's confidence and self-belief may be waning at a time when he needs to maintain maximum motivation and a firm belief in his abilities:

... the worse thing is... if I get an interview say at the end of this week... If I got that six months ago, that would have been... I was in a much better frame of mind... I was much more confident... the problem is that I am quite a confident person but the longer this process goes on... it starts chipping away.... (P7 : 128)

The CP may be only too aware of the importance of a continued need to demonstrate outer confidence and maintain a positive focus:

The moment you let that slip... or the moment in an interview you show you don't believe in your own self-worth... you know that really comes across to an interviewer and in that moment, he or she has a doubt in their mind about you... so you can't let that happen... you have to have maximum self-belief (P6 : 126)

The CP, who is already doubting himself, may develop a heightened sensitivity to the reactions of others:

When I meet people I haven't seen for a while....So what are you doing? And that's when it's...you say: Well, I'm doing 'this'....but you think: I haven't progressed... you still put yourself under pressure... so I think: Oh Gosh... ten months... what have I done? (P5 : 22)

SUB-CATEGORY 3 : ASPIRATION

“Like a grieving process that takes time to heal in a way...” (P4 : 2)

As the CP continues to *adapt* to redundancy, feelings of longing may surface and/or increase in intensity over time. The narratives of the participants provide insight into a phase of mourning or grieving the past and *aspiring* to re-instate what they have lost in the future.

Meaning : Loss

Across interviews, a strong sense of *loss* is openly conveyed. The CP is missing the City culture and working context which provides intellectual stimulation, mental challenge, a competitive environment, a purpose to the day, financial security and of critical importance, social interactions. The CP may experience feelings of sadness, unhappiness, and isolation:

Missing the world of business and talking about you know... (...)... a higher level of technical knowledge and information and talking at that... at that level....was something I was missing... the sort of higher pace... higher pressured environment... (...)... not having the sort of adult conversation throughout the day has not been great... certainly I.... not that I'm that sort of person... but I could see potentially that's one area that could fuel unhappiness and depression.... (P1 : 67, 75)

You know talking.... I guess sitting round with smart people... right, being honest... being competitive... doing things better than other people... (P2 : 80)

I like work and I like being busy... I don't like looking at clocks and thinking: Is that all the time is?... and when I go and meet people... seeing people piling out of work... and I'm not....and I just think it's that sense of belonging.... (P7 : 134)

Although you kind of think it's nice to have a break... I mean, I'd much rather be working now... (...)... I mean what is the purpose of work? It kind of fills the day doesn't it? It fills your day. It gives you money... it's good to interact with people... (P9 : 100,102)

Surviving the 'bad days'

To counteract increasing negativity, the CP may be swift to take action:

On those bad days, I get a bit depressed sometimes... but the thing is to get yourself out of that situation fast..... (P4 : 18)

Across interviews, there was widespread evidence of action-oriented behaviours and cognitive processes adopted by CPs in the *agitation* and *aspiration* phases. Physical exercise, the creation of social interactions, new routines and a broad range of distractions, i.e. learning a language, baking cakes, resuming a past hobby, working part-time in a pub, charity work, etc., and the job-searching process itself, were recognised by CP's as essential:

(...) ...I just go to the gym to hammer it out... even if I've been in the morning...(...)the exercise makes me feel better..... (...)... so it's self-prescription really to get yourself out of it.... (P10 : 216)

Whatever works for people...I mean for me, I generally drink a few beers...that works for me personally... (...) ...it's more about meeting up with some friends (...) the feeling that I can forget about the whole thing for a period of time.... (P4 : 22)

I think it's important to try and use one's time doing something... I'm doing intensive courses.... (...)... I go to the gym every morning, have X classes, visit my parents, go to my sister's and pick up the kids from school... if people didn't have a routine, I think it would drive you crazy... (P9 : 94)

The job searching process itself may also be acknowledged as a means of keeping proactive and focused:

I'm seeing this as a full-time process ...(...)... there is always something I can do today...(...)... when I wake up in the morning I don't even time to think about what depressed me yesterday...(...)... so I've got myself so occupied that I don't have the time to be emotional.... (P4 : 124, 128)

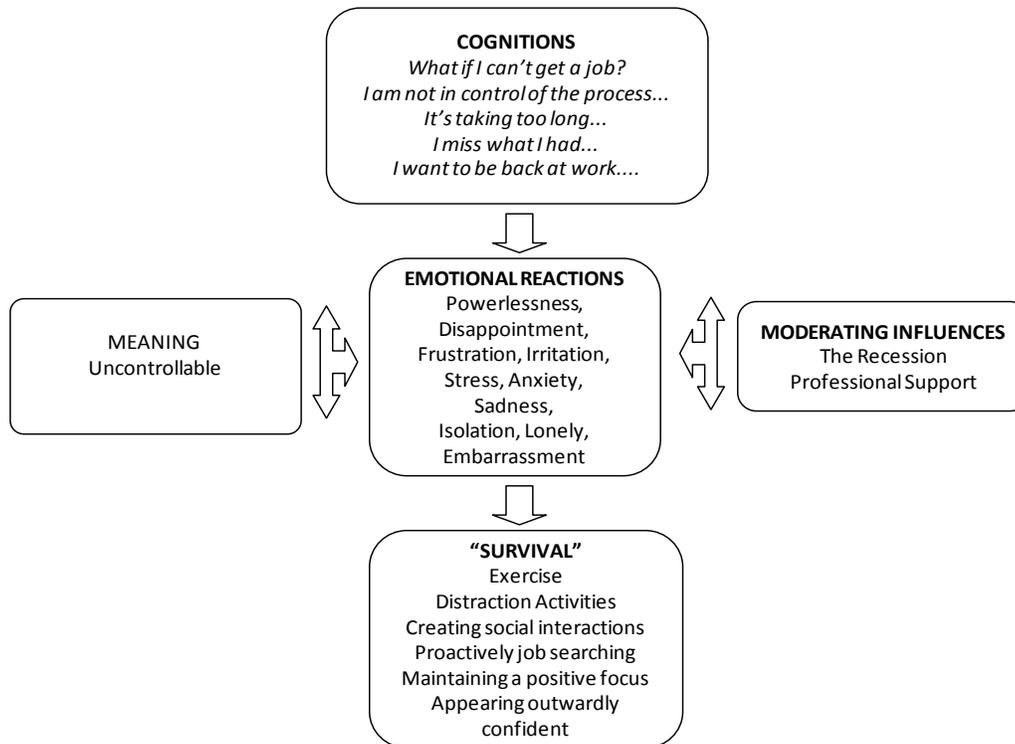


Figure 10 : Summary : Phase 3 : ADJUSTMENT • AGITATION AND ASPIRATION •

SUB-CATEGORY 4 : RE-APPRAISAL

In the context of the continuing recession and difficult job market, the CP may recognize a need to *re-appraise* his situation and *adapt* his focus.

Creating new goals

The CP may decide to re-focus his energy towards a goal which is attainable (i.e. an expedition, re-training, etc.). In this way he may re-claim a sense of *mastery and control* which may trigger more positive emotions:

OK... it was like... I'm hedging my bets here... if I get the 'X' job brilliant... if I don't I'm going to X in the Autumn.... I didn't get the role... so there was a period of excitement and sort of anticipation of you know.... realizing this dream I'd had.... So the frustration went away... (P1 : 59)

The X experience that I've just completed.... that was a fantastic thing to do because it focused me on the future and not on the past.... (...) ... The thing about it was... it was a project... it was looking forward in the sense that there was a goal at the end of it.... (P3 : 2, 110)

I'm trying to turn my time into something positive... and I'm studying to become XI ordered my first study book... I'm enjoying studying.... (P5 : 2)

Re-assessing career options

The CP may *re-appraise* whether it is wise to continue to hold out for the 'right' role:

The need to have something on my C.V. but then also a sort of inner turmoil.. of well... I don't want a stop gap job... (P1 : 59)

Or *re-appraise* alternatives to the finance industry:

Probably you need to do something else... if there aren't any opportunities in banking or finance... I think I will just have to consider doing something else because you reach a point where you need... I would need to do something and I'm getting bored now..... (P9 : 114)

Moderating Influences

The Recession, Financial Security

In the absence of urgency to secure another role, in the *re-appraisal* phase, the CP may decide to relinquish control and reconcile to the situation:

Then Lehman's happened and everything shut down.... that was a bit frustrating... but ultimately we were in the fortunate position not to be under any immediate financial pressures... so well you know... spend some time with the family... let's not worry about it too much. There's no point in getting too stressed. You know I would be far more stressed if I had a job at this point because it's horrible out there.... (P2 : 14)

Demographic Status

Although a CP may *re-appraise* his situation, if he has dependents and/or financial constraints he may determine that it is not feasible to step aside from the primary goal of securing another role:

I could actually go about being more entrepreneurial and working for myself I guess... or seeing if that is feasible...but it does seem very risky (...). You know I'm very mindful of the fact that I have somebody else to think about as well...I wouldn't say that's unhelpful but it changes the way that you.... (P10 : 194)

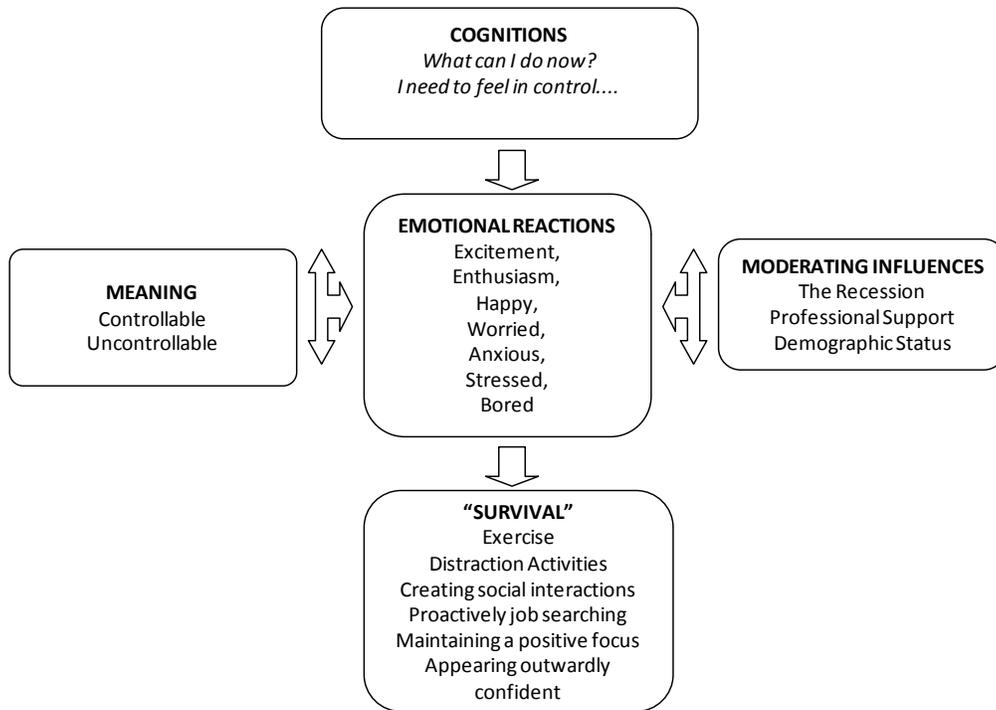


Figure 11 : Summary : Phase 3 : ADJUSTMENT ▪ RE-APPRAISAL ▪

CATEGORY 5 : ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

“Man is not disturbed by events, but by the view he takes of them.”

- Epictetus



The *acknowledgement* phase constitutes a heightened *awareness* of the ‘past’, ‘present’ and ‘future’ ‘self’.

SUB-CATEGORY 1 : AWARENESS

Awareness pertains to a 'looking back' perspective in relation to learning from a positive versus negative experience underpinned by the personal meanings the CP may have attributed to that experience.

The person as a City Professional

“Hardened marketing warriors really....” (P3 : 96)

Across interviews, explicit references to prior senior status, power, capability, value, worth, visibility, expertise and experience were woven into individual narratives. The researcher initially noted that self-descriptions showed some similarity with Personality type 'A' traits and characteristics and the stereotypical definition of the '*alpha*' male/female:

Some people really seem to get a kick out of being really aggressive and just like throwing their weight around and being really hyper alpha.... (P6 : 80)

You are competing against other people who are also talented.... (...)....I'm a very proactive person... it's a strange mixture of being not aggressive... but assertive in the way I do things... (P6 : 68)

There's always the competitive edge for me... (...)... It's just pure competitive and winning at something.... (P2 : 82)

Um... I'm energetic... I don't know... the life and soul of the party... I like the excitement of it... and there's the competitive side....and that goes with the territory I think... (P7 : 158)

For the majority of participants interviewed, an *awareness* that City culture and working context, are well suited to their personalities and interests is *acknowledged*:

It's almost like battery hen farming.... If you look on a trading floor, it's everybody crammed in and they're there for almost twelve hours or whatever and it's a very unpleasant working environment in many ways....(...)...but the rewards can be enormous either financially or in terms of ambition or both. So that's why people put up with a lot to do these jobs... (P 3 : 34, 35)

It's the second you get off the train in the morning....the journey is dreadful but as soon as you get off it's a different environment... as soon as you walk out on to the trading floor, it's a different environment... when you walk into any of the bars in the evening... (...)... there's just that... you don't get that anywhere else (...) I was constantly used to that buzz in the background on the trading floor... (...)... so you get used to that. I think also, the other thing is money because people in the City get more money than they probably do anywhere else and you get used to that as well..... (P7 : 156)

...the sort of person I am....there's always the competitive edge for me... and that.... (...)...um... you know I think I manage by consensus...(...) you know... sitting in a room and brainstorming a problem and knowing and seeing... I like it when.... when someone has had a smart idea..... I don't know... it's incredibly fun. It's fun. It's exciting.....(P 2 : 84)

Despite an *acknowledgement* of the adrenalin-fuelled 'passion' for the work itself, there may also be an *awareness* that in order to 'survive' in such a 'winning' environment, the CP must be perceived to be able to cope with the constant challenges and pressures which underpin the working territory. By default, the CP is required to *manage* his internal and external reactions at all times:

I tend to be pretty calm and collected as a person and I can deal with stress pretty well...(...)... I tend to try very hard to keep my emotions in check and think about things objectively and rationally... but I guess during that process you're internalizing stress... (P 6 : 22, 28)

Notwithstanding the researcher's awareness of the negative psychological consequences of internalizing negative emotions, amongst those interviewed there is 'implicit' *acknowledgement* that they possess inherent qualities which may serve to facilitate the *management of reactions* following redundancy:

You have to be mentally quite tough to deal with the process of redundancy...

(P 6 : 2)

Conversely, there was *awareness* on the part of the researcher that certain traits may serve to exacerbate the need to 'manage' or counteract feelings of failure:

I'm a slight perfectionist in so far as I would wait until I got something right before I did it... and it would affect me if someone criticized it... I would take it personally and then work even harder.... (P10 : 214)

I am quite...sort of like a person who has very high expectations.... (P 6 : 60)

The City Professional as a person

"We are just people.... we're individuals..." (P 4 : 34)

Despite an instinctive drive for success and desire to be perceived as successful by others, the process of redundancy serves to emphasize characteristics or traits which may not necessarily be attributed to the stereotypical 'alpha' type:

X was like your typical alpha male... shouting his head off all the time ...(...)... there are people like that but I don't think it's as common a stereotype as people expect it to be.... (P6 : 84)

Across interviews, participants *acknowledged* a broad range of personal characteristics including genuineness, integrity, resilience, kindness and thoughtfulness in relation to 'the self' and 'other':

It's more important for me to feel that I'm a decent person to know.... (...).... I still like it when I win....(...)... I don't particularly enjoy other people feeling bad about losing or failing... (...)... I think there are a lot of very nice people.... (P10 : 208, 210)

In a world where a lot of it is marketing and half-truths... you get these people on the phone and they are genuinely upset for you... (...)... it really is all geared up to being tough ... (...)... but it's not totally like that... (P3 : 96,98)

Not being defined by work

Over time, redundancy may provide an 'opportunity' for the CP to re-evaluate or crystallize how he defines himself:

I certainly don't feel that I lost my sense of identity....because I was always one of the people that work to live rather than live to work....(...)....so actually losing that role... I didn't feel that it was like losing a piece of me...it was just a job... I would go and find another one... (P1 : 67)

It's confirmed in me the belief that work isn't the be-all and end-all of everything... (P9 : 132)

How do I define myself? Definitely as a person separate to work... and I don't think that's changed..... the one constant which I have is that you have to adapt to change... so you are always changing... you want to adapt and change and improve yourself... (P 6 : 189)

Meaning: Developing a new work/life perspective

From a 'looking back perspective', there may be *acknowledgement* that work was previously the dominant force in the CP's day to day existence:

Probably at the time I couldn't separate myself so well and I did kind of take it home with me. The thing is in these sort of jobs.... you're never 'off' anyway... you get home anywhere between half seven and nine.... (...)... cook dinner, have a glass of wine and then you log on and catch up with e-mails... (...) you know there's that US time thing..... (...)... go to bed... catch up on e-mails then go in to work.... So it's fairly full on and that's all part of it.... (P2 : 66)

Looking ahead, *acknowledgement* pertains to an *awareness* that redundancy may have provided the opportunity for a new work/life perspective:

I have a different work perspective that I didn't have 18 months ago....and I think at the end of the day... it's just a job....(...)... it's difficult to get that perspective when you're in the middle of it because it assumes this all consuming importance because you're there so much of the time....everything bad is amplified..... everything is fantastic or everything is terrible.... And one of the biggest challenges actually....is to maintain an even keel....and maintain a sense of perspective on what you are doing... (...)... because you know... it's just a job... (P 2 : 72)

Meaning: Personal and professional development

For many of the CPs interviewed there is an explicit *acknowledgement* that negotiating the enforced redundancy experience may have engendered a sense of personal growth, development and self-knowledge:

It's all about personal development.... (...).... In some ways it's been a reinvigorating process. It's really been a catalyst for introspection and learning how to be better as a person and better in my job.... (P 6 : 161)

On a personal level I've learned a lot.... (...)... not from a technical point of view but from a personal point of view ...(...)... How I deal with things... (...)... so these are very useful skills that I can utilize or use going forward.... (P 4 : 142)

It's given me the opportunity to discover other aspects about myself...(....).... to take stock of where it is I want to go with my career... (...)... having the space to make that decision...so when I do start again... not having any regrets about it.... (P 1 : 67, 73)

Meaning: Control

Throughout the analysis, the researcher was alerted to a pervasive theme of control which was inextricably woven into the participants' narratives. The CP may experience a heightened awareness of their vulnerability and powerlessness across the entire redundancy experience:

Something I couldn't control right..... (...).... it was out of my hands.... (P 2 : 20)

Across the *adjustment* and *adaptation* phases, the majority of those interviewed have consciously and proactively taken steps towards re-claiming a sense of *mastery and control*:

Gradually as time has progressed, I've taken more and more control of what I've been doing... (P3 : 134)

Over time, the CP may become increasingly *aware* of their vulnerability not only in the moment but also in the future:

What I've come to respect a bit more is that there are things outside of your control... so as much as I want to be the main thing that influences what I do next.... I know there are forces you have to comply with.... or... um.... are going to stop at least the speed or conclusions to your goals.... (P10 : 228)

Anything can happen... so just don't think about it...(....).... if something happens, what can I do right? It's more about I'm not in control of that process... what I can be in control of is my own performance..... (P4 : 144)

Part of what I do is risk management....and so... you know..... the realization that you have to manage these kinds of risks in life... you know you can lose your job... you could become seriously ill... um but not worrying about it too much..... (P 1 : 85)

An overarching *acknowledgement* and *awareness* of the innate drive to achieve autonomy, mastery and control is encapsulated in the words of one of the participants:

First and foremost... I would rather be the master of my own destiny..."
(P 10 : 56)

By *acknowledging* his vulnerability, the CP may begin to release himself from a state of internalized pressure induced by his attempts to "be" in control in an heteronomous situation. Indeed, the CP may achieve emotional equilibrium and re-claim a sense of mastery and control *by virtue of* relinquishing control and reconciling to present and future uncertainty. There is an *awareness* of the applicability of this learning in relation to future employment in particular:

The worse that can happen is that you lose your job... and that's the way you have to look at it.... (P2 : 72)

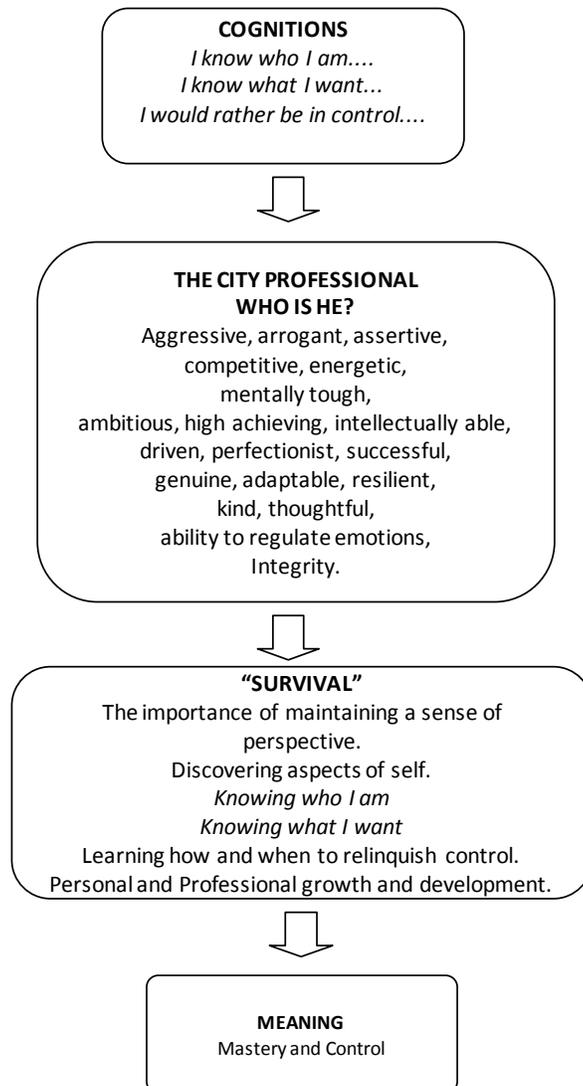


Figure 12 : Summary : Phase 3 : KNOWLEDGEMENT ▪ AWARENESS ▪

SUMMARY

The findings have been organized into five phases of redundancy. For each phase emotional reactions and 'survival' strategies experienced by a cohort of City Professionals have been described. Excerpts have been selected with the aim of illustrating the essence, depth and nature of their redundancy experience as conveyed in their own words. These findings are summarized and discussed in relation to the literature in the following chapter.

REFLEXIVITY

Analysing the data in this study has felt like a "survival of the fittest experience" at times. Feelings of being overwhelmed have related to the sheer volume of the data, the proliferation of codes and categories and paradoxically, the richness of the data itself. In this latter respect, "letting go" of what felt like "pearls" has required some effort and restraint in the writing-up of the findings. On a more positive note, the challenge of delving into the participants' experiences through an analysis of their words has proven to be a thought-provoking and intriguing enterprise. To this end, from the initial microanalysis of the transcripts, I have held in mind Sandelowski's (1994) advice concerning the need to stay close to the data during interpretation and present findings fairly, even though the data may contradict the assumptions and expectations of the researcher. In so doing, I have aimed to do justice to the City Professionals who participated in this study.

Although I have consistently questioned the data throughout the process of analysis, I have been mindful not to de-construct the interviews to a point at which there might have been a risk of losing the essence and meaning of the participants' experiences. In no small way have I felt that the use of a computer programme minimized the risk of this happening through being easily able to shift back and forth between interview transcripts and codes.

Perhaps the greatest challenge has related to knowing how to bring the analysis into a cohesive and inclusive form as so many different themes appeared to be "shouting" to be heard. Over time, the central category of "survival" appeared to encompass the different elements of the participants' experiences but I was still unsure how to present the findings in a way which might be meaningful to Counselling Psychologists. After several days/weeks of ruminating, I realized that 'survival' related to a 'journey' over time commencing with the participants' anticipation of the potential negative event and their reactions and responses to the actuality of the event and from thereon.

The seemingly organic emergence of 'survival' from the data was initially surprising to me. The surprise related to the notion that I had imagined the reactions of the participants would be dominated by feelings of loss and grief. Instead their narratives were permeated with proactive coping responses on a cognitive and behavioural level. Since my clinical and academic client studies were focused on a CBT (Cognitive Behavioural Therapy) way of working at the time of the analysis, I am aware that this may have infiltrated my thinking. In turn, I recognize that this may potentially have influenced the findings.

Essentially, I recognise that my over-riding feeling has been one of admiration towards the participants in relation to their resilience and stoicism in the face of adversity. I have been moved by their determined efforts to maintain dignity and self-control. Moreover, their frankness and openness to vulnerability has been truly humbling. In this vein, the thought that I may be trampling on their dignity by virtue of probing the underlying motivations for their responses to IR (i.e., feelings of shame, rejection, failure and loss of self-worth) has felt discomforting at times. At others, the importance of gaining a deeper understanding of the way in which individuals experience involuntary redundancy has in no small way served to validate this research endeavour and encouraged me to delve further.

CHAPTER 4

DISCUSSION

CHAPTER OVERVIEW

In this section, the original aims of the study will be re-visited. The foundations for the theoretical model will then be explained before introducing a 5-phase trajectory and a conceptualization of Involuntary Redundancy. Following a discussion of the findings in relation to relevant theory and literature, clinical implications and implications for employers will be considered before a discussion of methodological issues and future research directions. The chapter will close with a summary of conclusions to the study.

AIMS OF THE STUDY

This study aimed to provide an holistic exploration of the subjective emotional reactions of City Professionals to their experience of involuntary redundancy during an economic recession. Implicit within this exploration was the aim to understand how the participants perceived they had coped with redundancy. The overarching aim was to produce data and findings which might contribute towards the development of a psychological model of reactions to redundancy.

FOUNDATIONS FOR A THEORETICAL MODEL

Twelve City Professionals who had experienced involuntary redundancy in the 2008/2009 economic recession were interviewed. Grounded theory analysis revealed a concept of "survival" that appeared to be inextricably woven into the participants' narratives. This related to a process in which the participants *reacted* to involuntary redundancy, *interacted* with that experience and *acted* in a quest to re-claim a sense of mastery and control across their experience.

The analysis yielded five core categories denoting the chronological passage of time. These phases subsume eleven sub-categories which describe the *process* of *survival* over time. The process appertains to *emotional reactions* triggered by the *meanings* ascribed to the experience at different stages of the experience, which in turn have prompted a repertoire of "*survival*" *strategies*. The term "strategies" in this context, pertains to coping responses at a cognitive, behavioural and affective level. The findings indicate that the *meanings* and *coping responses* adopted reflect personality characteristics (e.g., high self-esteem) and strong perceptions of *mastery* and *personal control* (e.g., self-efficacy and internal locus of control). Moderating influences on reactions and responses have also been identified (i.e., economic recession, 'timing' of redundancy in relation to the recession, financial resources and support).

INVOLUNTARY REDUNDANCY AS A 5-PHASE TRAJECTORY



In contrast to Latack et al.'s (1995) proposal that job loss pertains to adjustment *after* the fact, the current study proposes that involuntary redundancy forms a continuum based on duration, with the *Awaiting* phase (marked by *anticipatory* negative feelings) at one end and the *Acknowledgement* phase (marked by an *awareness* of feelings) at the other. In this way, involuntary redundancy is conceived as a trajectory that can be broken down into phases denoting process over time. These phases have been organised into a process model which will be explained throughout the discussion (See Fig. 13 below). This is followed by a diagrammatical explanatory summary of the phases and the proposed sequence of *process* within the contextual environment over time (Fig. 14).

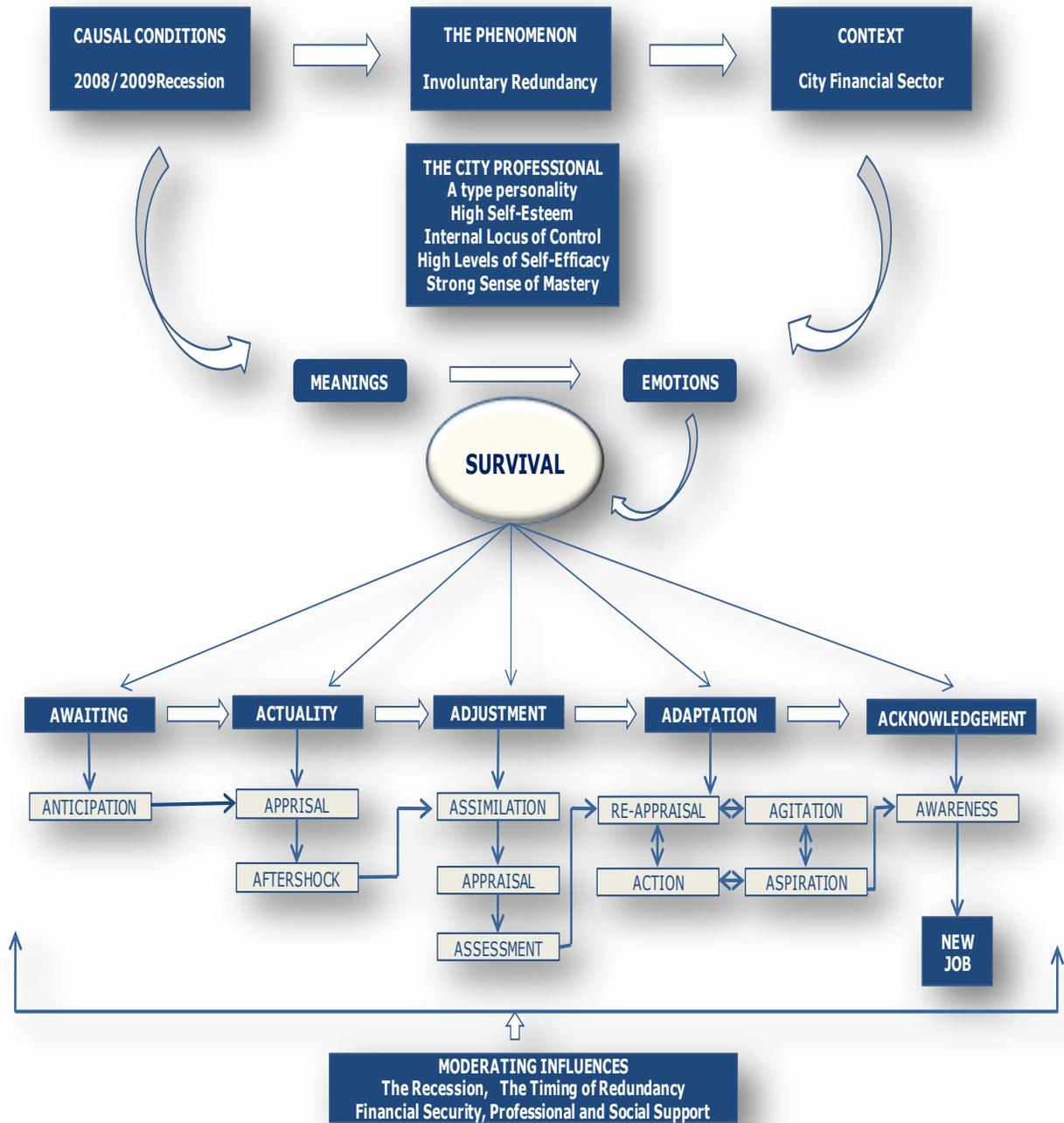


Fig. 13 : A 5 phase trajectory of reactions and responses to Involuntary Redundancy as experienced by City Professionals in a Climate of Recession.

PHASE	PROCESS	CONTEXTUAL ENVIRONMENT
AWAITING	ANTICIPATION	Pre-event uncertainty triggered by recession
ACTUALITY	APPRAISAL	Receiving the news
	AFTERSHOCK	The exit; communicating news to others; the rest of the day
ADJUSTMENT	APPRAISAL	Rationalising the reason why
	ASSIMILATION	Early days at home; returning to collect possessions; a leaving party; challenging the decision; managing the consultation period
	ASSESSMENT	Re-assessing the future; taking stock; decision-making
ADAPTATION	ACTION	Job search activities; utilizing professional support
	AGITATION	Repeated rejections; slow recruitment processes, mounting pressure
	ASPIRATION	Missing the past and longing for the future
	RE-APPRAISAL	Adapting focus; creating new goals and challenges
ACKNOWLEDGEMENT	AWARENESS	Refined sense of self and identity; new work/life perspective; learning for the future; ...TOWARDS MASTERY AND CONTROL

Fig. 14 : A 5 phase trajectory: Contextual Environment

In line with past research, this study has highlighted a strong association between involuntary redundancy and stress reactions and reduced well-being. It is the current view that those reactions are deemed to be cumulative across the involuntary redundancy trajectory. Whilst it would be unrealistic to assume that there might be a “one size fits all” approach to involuntary redundancy, the proposed model which delineates phases may be useful in explaining reactions and responses within the involuntary redundancy process amongst a population *type* and against a particular contextual backcloth (i.e. worldwide recession; high powered, goal-driven working culture and non-working environment). To avoid ambiguity in relation to the *type* of job loss the term “*involuntary*” is emphasised throughout.

CONCEPTUALISATION OF INVOLUNTARY REDUNDANCY

As highlighted by Thoits (1995), three major forms of stressor have been investigated in the stress literature: life events, chronic strains and daily hassles. The current study conceives involuntary redundancy as a stressor which reflects *life events* (requiring major behavioural readjustments within a relatively short period of time) and *chronic strains* (reflecting persistent demands which require readjustments over prolonged periods of time). In line with prior conceptualisations of job insecurity and job loss (i.e., van Vuuren, 1990; DeWitte, 1999; Spera et al., 1994; Sverke et al., 2002; Holmes & Rahe, 1967), involuntary redundancy is herewith conceptualised as a *chronic stressor which generates stress and challenges the psychological resources of an individual*. The current study does not support prior assertions that greater levels of stress or uncertainty are associated with job insecurity pre-event (see Dekker & Shaufeli, 1995; Sverke et al. 2002) although a distinction between pre-event *uncertainty* and post-event *certainty* is acknowledged. Essentially, the current “global” approach posits that the involuntary redundancy trajectory is characterised by feelings of prolonged stressfulness, uncertainty and powerlessness in

relation to future job security (pre- and post-*actuality*) which represent a significant challenge to an individual's perceptions of mastery and personal control.

A THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK FOR THE FINDINGS

Given the current focus on process and phases over time, Lazarus and Folkman's (1984) *Transactional Model of Stress and Coping* has been chosen as a framework for a discussion of the findings. This model is deemed to be well-suited to reactions and responses across involuntary redundancy since it views coping as a dynamic process between the person, the environment and the appraisal, specific not only to the presenting situation but also to the stage of the encounter. Lazarus (1993) has since debated the distinction between trait and process approaches to coping and has posited that coping process models would be far more meaningful and useful if more were known about the persons whose coping thoughts and actions in specific contexts are being studied. In this vein, he has suggested that researchers might consider a combined intra- and inter-individual approach in which coping is viewed in relation to the *trait* concept (representing consistency across diverse conditions) and *process* (emphasising contextual influences and coping inconsistencies). To this end, the current holistic approach has considered the personality traits of the *person*, the *contextual environment* and the *meaning* of IR to the participants across the different phases of the involuntary redundancy trajectory.

THE PERSON

Typically, discussions of research findings commence with a focus on reactions to a situation or event before mapping individual differences/characteristics/psychological resources on to those reactions. Given the current focus on a particular population who have experienced involuntary redundancy in a similar historical, social and working context, this discussion will focus firstly on what has been learned about the sample population and then relate commonalities to reactions and responses. This may be helpful in relation to the

topic under investigation since according to Pearlin and Schooler (1978, p. 13) evidence indicates that it is the psychological characteristics of individuals that enable them to deal effectively (or otherwise) with life-problems over which they have little control.

An awareness of personality characteristics of the target population has been gleaned explicitly and implicitly from the narratives of the participants who have described themselves as: assertive, competitive, energetic, ambitious, high achieving, intellectually able, driven, successful, mentally tough, and in some cases, perfectionist. These qualities appear to be suited to the working culture and environment in which CPs have chosen to pursue their professional careers. Across interviews, the City working context has been described as challenging, pressurised, goal-driven, exciting, 'winning' and intellectually stimulating. The potential for significant financial rewards has been acknowledged as an additional work-related incentive.

The experience of involuntary redundancy also appears to have highlighted traits which might not automatically be attributed to stereotypical *alpha* types including genuineness, integrity, kindness and thoughtfulness. As explained by Friedman (1996), Type A (i.e., *alpha*) behaviours may be expressed in three major ways: *time urgency and impatience* (which causes irritation and exasperation); *free-floating hostility* (which can be triggered by even minor incidents); and *competitiveness* (making individuals oriented towards achievement and causing them to be stressed due to wanting to be the best at whatever they do). Although none of the participants demonstrated such behaviours in the interview context nor proffered self-descriptions which might indicate impatience or free-floating hostility, competitiveness was explicitly acknowledged.

Across the existing job insecurity, 'survivor', job loss and coping literature, researchers have consistently highlighted personality characteristics (i.e., psychological resources)

which have been shown to enhance an individual's ability to cope with stressful life events including high-self-esteem, perceptions of control and mastery. Based on the current findings, it would appear that CPs possess these characteristics. By default this would appear to indicate that they may be advantaged in relation to coping with the stress of involuntary redundancy.

- *Self-Esteem*

According to Brown and Dutton (1995), self-esteem is most importantly related to the regulation of a class of emotional states called feelings of self-worth (i.e., feeling proud and pleased with oneself versus feeling humiliated and ashamed). These authors explain that high self-esteem individuals consistently respond to events in ways that maintain or restore feelings of self-worth, particularly when they confront negative outcomes such as failure in the achievement domain or interpersonal rejection.

Such responses have been noted in the current findings. For example, in an apparent quest to restore self-worth in relation to perceptions of stigma, CPs engaged in a process of *positive re-appraisal* (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). By re-framing the reason for their departure in a way in which their prior personal successes and value were emphasised and blame was attributed to others and/or external conditions, they appear to have been able to distance themselves from the harmful threat of culpability in their own demise. Only one participant appraised the reason for his departure as a direct consequence of having called a 'bad' risk some months earlier which had resulted in a substantial loss to the firm. Wortman (1976) has suggested that attributing responsibility to oneself is a way of asserting control and preserving one's sense of control.

- *Personal Control*

Thompson and Schlehofer (2007) have explained that personal control is the perception that one has the ability, resources or opportunities to get positive outcomes or avoid negative effects through one's own actions. Perceived control has been associated with emotional well-being, reduced physiological impact of stressors, enhanced ability to cope with stress, improved performance and a greater likelihood of making difficult behaviour changes (Thompson & Spacapan, 1991). It is, therefore, generally adaptive to have a sense of control. Thompson & Schlehofer (2007) explain that there are two components to perceived control: locus of control and self-efficacy.

- *Locus of control* as termed by Rotter (1966) describes "internalizers" as individuals who believe that they are masters of their own fate and hence bear personal responsibility for what happens to them. A high internal locus of control has been shown to be associated with greater individual competency and an ability to adapt in the face of life transitions or difficult situations (Pearlin et al., 1981). It would appear that the majority of CPs have risen to the challenge presented and have demonstrably taken personal responsibility for their situation through the employment of problem-focused coping strategies (discussed below). At the same time it is recognised that, for individuals with an internal locus of control, involuntary redundancy is likely to represent a considerable challenge on the basis that external causal conditions have effectively made them "pawns of fate".

- *Self Efficacy* has been defined as "beliefs in one's capabilities to mobilize the motivation, cognitive resources and courses of action needed to meet given situational demands". (Wood & Bandura, 1989, p. 408). Consistent with Bandura's (1994) description of perceived self-efficacy, across the involuntary redundancy

trajectory, CPs appear to have set themselves challenging goals and maintained a strong commitment to them. They have heightened and sustained their efforts in the face of failure and have quickly recovered their sense of efficacy after failures or setbacks. Notwithstanding the considerable challenge presented by the external contextual conditions, CPs appear to have approached the threat of the situation with the belief that they were able to exercise control over their own functioning and over the situation itself. As explained by Bandura (1994), one of the most effective ways of creating a strong sense of efficacy is through mastery experiences.

- *Mastery*

There are several definitions for *mastery*. Pearlin and Schooler (1978, p. 5) describe it as a psychological resource, the extent to which one regards one's life changes as being under one's own control in contrast to being fatalistically ruled. Caplan (1981, p. 413) has described *mastery* as behaviour that reduces emotional arousal, mobilizes the individual's resources and develops new capabilities that lead to his changing his environment or his relation to it, so that he reduces the threat or finds alternate courses of satisfaction for what is lost. As highlighted by Thoits (1995), several studies have shown that a sense of *mastery* directly reduces psychological disturbance and buffers the deleterious effects of stress exposure on physical and mental health.

According to Bandura (1977) a sense of *mastery* arises from past effective performance. Or as explicated by White (1959), prior frustrations have been surmounted and adaptive efforts have come to a successful conclusion. Younger (1991) states that, although *mastery* results in a change in the perception of the self as more efficacious, strong and enduring, the term does not imply that an individual has coped with a stressful experience with ease. Instead it means that in spite of

suffering, anguish and perhaps a number of missteps, the attempt to overcome is eventually successful (p. 82).

It cannot be assumed that all the CPs have negotiated past stressful encounters successfully, however, the findings have illuminated the degree to which participants have demonstrated problem-solving skills, personal efficacy and persistence. In this way, involuntary redundancy as a stressful encounter may potentially constitute a *mastery* experience which in turn may serve to increase perceptions of self as more efficacious, strong and enduring.

In sum, the personality characteristics of CPs appear to be associated with Type A personalities, high-self-esteem and psychological resources including perceptions of control (i.e., internal locus and self-efficacy) and a strong sense of mastery. According to Thoits' (1995), although resources such as these give individuals the confidence or motivation to attempt problem-focused coping in the face of stress, the success or failure of coping efforts may enhance or undermine self-esteem and a sense of mastery respectively. In this vein, repeated failure, rejection and increased urgency to secure another role appears to have left CPs vulnerable to increased levels of mental distress over time as indicated by references to "bad days" or "spiralling downwards".

THE MEANINGS

Lazarus (1993, p. 244) has strongly contested that personal meanings are the most important aspects of psychological stress and that they direct the choice of coping strategy. Accordingly he asserts that to truly understand coping researchers must 'zero in' on the main threat *meanings* of a particular stress situation and how they change over time and across situational contexts. Whilst these threats may sometimes be shared with others, Lazarus further posits that they arise out of the total psychological situation which includes

the person's social and work role in the world and the status of important life goals and beliefs. To this end, the current study has adopted what Lazarus has termed an "appraisal-centred approach" to stress whereby attention has been directed towards *how* involuntary redundancy (i.e., the stressor) has been construed by the target population. In the context of the present study, the terms *meaning* and *appraisal* are used interchangeably.

According to Lazarus and Folkman (1984), two critical processes mediate the person-environment relationship. Firstly, there is the *cognitive appraisal* which is an evaluative process that determines why and to what extent a particular transaction between the person and environment is stressful. The second critical process is *coping* whereby the individual manages the demands of the person-environment relationship and the ensuing emotions generated from the situation.

According to the *Transactional Model*, three *appraisals* make up the process of categorizing an encounter and its significance to an individual's well-being. Firstly, the *primary appraisal* serves as a judgement of the encounter as being irrelevant, benign-positive or stressful. It also relates to the meaning of a demand in terms of whether it represents harm/loss, threat or challenge and whether the demand is perceived as controllable or not. Lazarus (1991) makes a distinction between *harm* and *loss* which refers to negative impacts that have already occurred and *threat* which is focused on the future and emphasises harm or loss that may occur later. *Challenge* results from the degree of confidence that a person feels in mastering demands.

The *secondary appraisal* is a judgement concerning what might be done which serves as an evaluation of the benefits and consequences of a particular coping strategy given the individual's goals and constraints. Finally, the *re-appraisal* is a successive valuation that is based on new information obtained from the environment and/or the person within the

stressful situation. The re-appraisal differs from the primary appraisal only in that it follows an earlier cognitive evaluation. In sum, *primary appraisals* evaluate perceived control of the situation and resources available to the individual whereas *secondary appraisals* guide the use of specific coping strategies. The effectiveness of these coping strategies determines the re-appraisal as well as the individual's psychological adjustment.

The Primary Appraisal

- *Harm/Loss*

Consistent with Jahoda's (1982) model, the current findings have shown a strong association between psychological distress and *harm/loss* appraisals pertaining to the loss of time structure, social contact, collective purpose, status and activity. Added to this list are important financial, social and societal resources as previously noted by De Witte (1999). For the target population, significant harm/loss demands appear to have stemmed directly from the meanings attributed to involuntary redundancy including *stigma* (self/other perceptions and/or general media-oriented negativity); *rejection* (unequivocal and absolute), *destruction* (of past work-related endeavours and successes) and *injustice* (the decision itself).

- *Threat*

Harm has also been shown to be associated with stress of *uncertainty* in relation to threatened future job security across the involuntary redundancy trajectory. The threat also pertains to the loss of the job *per se* which a CP is likely to *appraise* as pivotal to a successful and satisfying professional career which provides a comfortable lifestyle sustained by considerable financial rewards. As highlighted by Greenhalgh and Rosenblatt (1984), subjective threat (i.e., *uncertainty*) is derived from objective threat by means of the individual's perceptual processes which transform environmental data into information used in thought processes. For the

CPs in the *awaiting* phase, *uncertainty* has been founded on objective changes (i.e., the external economic climate and mass redundancies), organizational clues and internal rumours. Following the *actuality* of the event, *uncertainty* has reflected objective changes and also the “unknown” element of how long it might take to secure another role in a job market impacted by a recession.

- *Challenge*

The meaning of involuntary redundancy as a *challenge* has reflected the necessity to actively source and secure another role in a competitive job market. The *challenge* also appertains to the stress associated with adjusting and adapting to a change in daily structure, loss of working identity, a prolonged period of unemployment and coping with perceptions of stigma.

- *Perceptions of Controllability*

As explicated by Furda and Meijman (1992), two factors explain the harmful impact of “uncertainty”, namely *predictability* and *controllability*. In line with past findings, *unpredictability* within the involuntary redundancy experience has been shown to reflect the lack of clarity or certainty about a job in the future. *Uncontrollability* has been shown to reflect feelings of *powerlessness* across the trajectory (i.e., in relation to threatened redundancy, the redundancy decision itself, the process of receiving the message, the exit from the working institution and the continued threat or inability to secure employment).

An example of the process of *primary appraisal* as explained by Lazarus and Folkman (1984) may be described in relation to the *awaiting* phase in which the CP becomes aware of objective changes (i.e. worsening economic climate, mass redundancies, organizational

re-structuring and rumours). The CP may evaluate the objective changes in one of three ways:

- He may decide that the objective changes carry no direct implication for him on the basis of his past and present strong working record, performance ratings, perceived value to the working institution and the fact that his department is thriving (*irrelevant appraisal*). The CP who appraises the potential threat of redundancy in this way, may be seeking to protect himself from harm by *distancing* himself from the potential reality. Only one of the participants in this study appears to have engaged in this form of appraisal. Consequently he appears to have by-passed the negative effects reported by others in the *awaiting* phase.
- He may accept the likelihood of redundancy and appraise the situation positively. For example, involuntary redundancy might signify a welcome release from a stressful/disliked unfulfilling job or provide the opportunity for a career change and/or a substantial financial settlement (*benign-positive appraisal*). Of note is the fact that none of the participants interviewed appraised their redundancy in this way.
- He may recognise the *harm* to himself in relation to increased tension, pressure, stress and anxiety given the *loss* of certainty, predictability and controllability of his own job security. Such distress will also pertain to the *threat* of involuntary redundancy based on significant negative meanings attributed to redundancy including future unpredictability, and uncontrollability together with the *challenge* of securing another role (*stressful appraisal*).

THE COPING PROCESS

Emotional Reactions triggered by Meanings

Lazarus (1991) has suggested that different types of psychological stress demands, based on the way the individual appraises the event, are embedded in specific types of emotional reactions. Lazarus (1993) further posits that emotions are a much richer source of information about overall adaptation than the uni-dimensional concept of stress. To this end, *appraisals* of the significance of the redundancy event have triggered a range of emotional reactions which are largely consistent with the existing literature. In this connection, Borgen and Amundson (1982) proposed that the feelings associated with unemployment are like an "emotional rollercoaster". In the current study, the same term was used by one of the participants to describe the intensity, fluctuation and variation of a range of reactions over time.

Many earlier studies have drawn comparisons between the emotional reactions associated with job insecurity or job loss and stages of grief suggested by Kubler-Ross (1969). In contrast, the findings have failed to show support for a 'typical' pattern of grief as described by others. For example, in the early stages, CPs do not appear to be engaged in a process of grief in relation to the loss of the job *per se*. Rather, their emotionality appears to be predominantly linked to negative appraisals as described. Although it is considered herewith that feelings of grief may have been consciously or unconsciously suppressed in the initial stages, in contrast to grief reactions which generally improve over time, the current findings have shown that reactions to involuntary redundancy appear to have worsened. This can be explained in relation to the cumulative stress of repeated rejections, a lack of control in the selection process and ongoing uncertainty. Moreover, feelings of loss and longing, which may have been suspended in the early stages of redundancy, appear to have surfaced and/or intensified over time.

One further key difference relates to the notion of *acceptance* which is generally viewed as the final phase of a grief cycle. At the time of the interviews, none of the CPs appear to have reached emotional acceptance. Indeed, residual feelings of anger and rejection appear to have lingered across the trajectory. It is for this reason that the term *acquiescence* (i.e., acceptance without protest) has been utilised to describe what appears to have been a conscious, albeit reluctant, decision to relinquish control rather than a belief or some objective level of agreement with the decision and the event itself.

The findings have shown that *acquiescence* as termed in this context, has been aligned to seeming passivity, submissiveness, compliance and withdrawal. Theorists of both helplessness and locus of control tend to interpret such inward behaviours as signs of relinquished perceived control. The current findings would support Younger's (1991, p. 80) assertion that such behaviour may actually be initiated and maintained in an effort to sustain perceptions of control. Moreover, she states that because control is so valued, the quest for it is rarely abandoned. Instead, individuals are likely to shift from one method of striving for control to another.

Essentially, in contrast to the loss of a person (i.e., bereavement, divorce), it appears that involuntary redundancy as an *event* has not been perceived by CPs as permanent or irreplaceable. Rather, reactions and responses appear to have been underscored by an acknowledgement or belief that eventually another job *can* and *will* be restored in time.

A further point of difference between the current findings and earlier stage models relates to the assertion that repeated rejections and an unsuccessful job search lead to feelings of helplessness, an increased willingness to give up and apathy (Amundson & Borgen, 1982; Zawadski & Lazarsfeld, 1935). In this vein, Borgen and Amundson (1987) have hypothesised that individuals may become vulnerable to learned helplessness

(Seligman,1975). On the contrary, it appears that the current findings are more in keeping with Brehm's (1966) reactance theory, which proposes that reactant individuals are less likely to respond with helplessness to a loss of control and more likely to apply themselves in an effort to re-establish control. Indeed, the findings have shown that, rather than moving towards a state of apathy, participants have responded by *re-appraising* the situation and increasing and/or adapting *survival* responses.

Coping Responses triggered by Emotions triggered by Meanings

Lazarus and Folkman (1984) explain that coping may take one of two general forms: problem-focused or emotion-focused. *Problem-focused coping* functions to alter the stressor by either direct action or cognitive re-appraisals. This form of coping tends to be used in conditions which are appraised as amenable to change (i.e., controllable). *Emotion-focused coping* is more likely to occur when an appraisal has been made that nothing can be done to modify the harmful, threatening or challenging environmental conditions (i.e., uncontrollable).

According to Lazarus (1993) little is known about how emotions *shape* coping. Indeed he has suggested that a 'promising' area of research may be to attempt to advance understanding of the functional connections between emotions and coping. To this end, the current findings may be helpful in terms of mapping the *process* between the appraisal, the reactions and the types of coping responses aimed towards managing the emotional state. (See Fig. 15). Concurrently, the proposed 5-phase model may be further explicated.

PHASE AND PROCESS	APPRAISAL/ MEANING	EMOTIONAL REACTIONS	COPING RESPONSE	FUNCTION (AND STYLE) OF THE COPING RESPONSE
AWAITING ANTICIPATION	Unpredictable Uncontrollable	Powerlessness	Direct Action	To re-establish control <i>Behavioural: vigilance, working strategically,, working harder, longer hours, seeking alternative employment</i>
	Stigma Loss of: <i>Financial security professional identity, working structure</i>	Anxiety	Distancing	To reduce symptoms of anxiety <i>Cognitive: detaching emotionally; denial</i>
		Vulnerable: <i>pressurised stressed, loss of morale, de-motivated</i>	Instrumental Support Seeking	To provide self-validation and increase sense of self-worth <i>via colleagues; significant others</i>
		Relief <i>following 'survival'</i>	Self-Control Action	To maintain self/other perceptions of control and effectiveness Increased efforts to diminish future vulnerability and maintain a sense of agency and control
ACTUALITY APPRIASAL	Uncontrollable	Shock <i>Numbness</i>	Self-control	To promote perceptions of control To preserve professional dignity To maintain a sense of self-worth <i>Behaviours: submissive, compliant, outwardly unemotional</i>
	Unjust	Anger	Distancing Confrontative	To maintain a sense of control <i>Cognitive: detachment</i> To re-establish control <i>Venting/externalising feelings</i>
AFTERSHOCK	Uncontrollable	Shock Confused Disorientated	Distancing	To maintain a sense of control <i>Isolating from others</i>
	Rejection	Ashamed	Escape/ Avoidance	To avoid negative reactions of others..... <i>and diminish a sense of shame</i>
		Anxiety	Support Seeking	To allay fears, imbue confidence, Increase self-worth, imbue relief
		Sad	Positive Re-appraisal	IR as an <i>escape</i> imbuing relief

<p>ADJUSTMENT</p> <p>APPRAISAL</p>	<p>Rejection</p> <p>Destruction</p> <p>Injustice</p> <p>Loss: Self-Worth</p>	<p>Sad</p> <p>Frustration</p> <p>Anger</p> <p>Vulnerable</p> <p>Loss of Confidence</p>	<p>Positive Re-Appraisal</p>	<p>To re-establish perceptions of control</p> <p>To manage perceptions of others in relation to stigma</p> <p>To provide self-validation and increase a sense of worth and confidence</p>
<p>ASSIMILATION</p>	<p>Uncontrollable</p> <p>Stigma</p> <p>Rejection</p>	<p>Anger</p> <p>Powerlessness</p> <p>Ashamed</p> <p>Embarrassed</p> <p>Sad</p> <p>Vulnerable</p> <p>Shock, disbelief</p> <p>Aimless, Fatigued</p>	<p>Support Seeking</p> <p>Distancing</p> <p>Positive Re-Appraisal</p> <p>Self-Control</p> <p>Distancing</p> <p>Distancing</p> <p>Positive Re-appraisal</p>	<p>To investigate solutions</p> <p>To externalise feelings</p> <p>To increase a sense of agency</p> <p>To re-establish control</p> <p>To manage perceptions of others</p> <p>To increase a sense of worth and negate shame</p> <p><i>via secrecy or openness (defiance)</i></p> <p>Protecting self from 'loss'</p> <p><i>Cognitively detaching</i></p> <p>IR as an <i>opportunity</i>, imbuing a sense of relief, re-establishing control, an escape from pressure</p>
<p>ASSESSMENT</p>	<p>Uncontrollable</p> <p>Controllable</p>	<p>Reconciled to reality</p> <p>Liberated</p> <p>Optimistic</p> <p>Motivated</p>	<p>Positive Re-appraisal</p> <p>Problem-Solving</p>	<p>IR as an opportunity to re-establish sense of control and autonomy</p> <p>Decision making process providing self-directed sense of empowerment</p> <p><i>Re-evaluation of career options and considering alternatives</i></p>
<p>ADAPTATION</p> <p>ACTION</p>	<p>Controllable</p> <p>Uncontrollable</p>	<p>Optimism</p> <p>Anxiety</p> <p>Powerlessness</p> <p><i>Frustration</i></p> <p>Vulnerable</p> <p><i>Disappointed</i></p> <p><i>Self-Doubt</i></p> <p><i>Waning Confidence</i></p>	<p>Escape-Avoidance</p> <p>Problem Solving</p> <p>Support Seeking</p> <p>Distancing</p>	<p>Detaching from harsh reality imbuing hopefulness</p> <p><i>positive thinking</i></p> <p>Re-establishing control: A plan of action: <i>strategic job search activities;</i></p> <p>Professional: <i>Support relevant to future career</i></p> <p>Significant others: <i>emotional support</i></p> <p>Avoiding ruminating</p>

AGITATION 	Uncontrollable	Powerlessness Vulnerable <i>Frustration</i> <i>Anxiety</i> <i>Low Mood</i> <i>Waning confidence</i>	Problem-Solving Distancing	Establishing control by developing new activities Distracting self by positive thinking and behavioural activation
ASPIRATION 	Uncontrollable Loss Stigma	Sad <i>Isolated</i> <i>Lonely</i> Ashamed	Support Seeking Self-Control	Creating interactions with others: externalising feelings; providing self-validation; shared experiences Protecting self from negative reactions of others
RE-APPRAISAL 	Uncontrollable Controllable	Powerlessness Optimism	Planful Problem Solving	To re-establish control by setting 'self' achievable goals/challenges or considering alternatives
ACKNOWLEDGEMENT AWARENESS	Uncontrollable	Optimism Determined	Positive Re-appraisal Meaning-Focused coping	Creating a new meaning Increasing Self-awareness Refining a sense of 'self' Developing a new perspective An opportunity for self-growth Learning to relinquish control RE-ESTABLISHING PERCEPTIONS OF MASTERY AND CONTROL

Fig. 15 : Mapping the process : the appraisal, the emotions, the responses and shaping of the emotions

An Evaluation of Coping Responses

In line with the existing post-event literature (i.e., Latack et al, 1995; Leana & Feldman, 1988), the current study has shown that individuals high in coping efficacy, internal locus of control, Type-A behaviour patterns and high levels of self-esteem engage in problem-focused strategies. Similarly, the findings support Armstrong-Stassen's (1994) meta-analysis of the pre-event literature, which found that individuals with a strong sense of mastery are likely to engage in control/problem-focused coping. Furthermore, in accordance with an acknowledgement that the same individual may engage multiple coping strategies in response to the same stressor (see Kinicki et al., 2000; Leana & Feldman, 1995), the

majority of CPs have consistently engaged in problem-focused coping in an attempt to alter the stressor (pre- and post-event) and/or emotion-focused coping to manage their emotional reactions to the stressor.

Lazarus (1993) has drawn attention to the way in which coping changes from one time to another in any given stressful encounter across a complex series of stages. In this connection, the current findings have highlighted inconsistencies in the type of coping responses employed across the trajectory. For example, as indicated in Fig. 15 (above), problem-focused coping has not been adopted by CPs in situations perceived to be refractory to change (i.e., throughout the *actuality* phase and up until their engagement in a process of *assessment*).

Returning to the effects of psychological resources, positive core self-evaluations and exaggerated perceptions of control have been found to play an important role in facilitating well-being during unemployment (McKee-Ryan et al., 2005; Latack et al., 1995; Miller & Hoppe, 1994). Paradoxically, the current findings appear to show that the threat to the well-being of CPs may also be negatively aligned to those perceptions. This relates to the significance of the meaning of involuntary redundancy to CPs whereby appraisals of uncontrollability, stigma, rejection and loss (i.e., satisfying professional role, working structure, societal resources) appear to represent a considerable threat to individuals who possess certain traits as identified in CPs. Notwithstanding the acknowledged threat of long-term financial insecurity, the emotional reactions of the participants appear to have been dominated by feelings of powerlessness, frustration, shame, loss of self-worth and sadness. In turn, those reactions have prompted coping responses which appear to have been aimed towards exerting control and protecting self-esteem and public image.

In support of Wanberg's (1997) finding that job seeking activities may be associated with decreased psychological health, the current findings have also shown that repeated rejections and on-going uncertainty appear to have presented a significant challenge and wearing down of the participants' psychological resources as indicated in the *adaptation* phase. In addition, feelings of longing for what they have lost and what they are desirous of achieving also appear to have increased their vulnerability over time. Those feelings may also be considered in relation to Parkes and Weiss's (1983) model of grief which proposed that a stronger attachment to the lost person (in this case the lost job) was found to be associated with a more pronounced reaction to the loss. As described in the findings, the *adaptation* phase is marked by the consistent employment of problem and emotion-focused coping prompted by the CP's self-recognition that he may be "spiralling downwards".

Consistent with Lazarus and Folkman's (1984) use of the term of *emotion-focused* coping, within the stress and coping literature, various authors have described cognitive coping strategies which may be particularly helpful as other coping resources become exhausted or depleted. For example, Latack and Dozier (1986) proposed that when individuals are unable to see a connection between efforts and outcome, *challenge appraisals* may be used to re-appraise a stressful experience as potentially growth producing and beneficial. In a similar vein, Park and Folkman (1997) conceptualized *meaning-focused coping* as a form of coping which does not attempt to change or alleviate the stressful event. Instead it involves changing the appraisal of the situation to be more consistent with an individual's goals and beliefs. For example, *meaning focused coping* may involve making an attribution for a stressful event more benign by identifying opportunities for growth from the event. All these types of coping may be considered to be characteristic of the *acknowledgement* phase as indicated in the findings.

INTRODUCING A THEORY OF MASTERY

Although the *acknowledgement* phase has been positioned at the end of the involuntary redundancy trajectory, it is recognised that a process of *awareness* may permeate the trajectory across and within different phases. Notwithstanding the opportunity provided for participants to articulate their thoughts in the interview, it appears that the *acknowledgement* phase has constituted an *awareness* of past, present and future *self* for all. In this connection, the findings have also been considered in relation to a *theory of mastery* used by Younger (1991) to explain how individuals who experience illness or other stressful health conditions may emerge, not demoralized and vulnerable but healthy and possibly stronger. It is the view of the current researcher that this theory may have applicability to the experiences of CPs who have consistently sought to re-gain a sense of mastery and control across the involuntary redundancy trajectory.

According to Younger (1991), *mastery* is a human response to difficult or stressful circumstances in which competency, control and dominion have been gained over the experience of stress. Younger explains that core to the *mastery* process are four conceptual elements (i.e. *certainty*, *change*, *acceptance* and *growth*). The first concept *certainty* involves having assigned causes for the event and an understanding of the significance of the event and what it symbolizes about one's life. In this vein, CPs appear to have achieved *certainty* through a process of positive appraisal post-*actuality*. *Understanding* appears to have been gleaned through harm/loss/threat appraisals which have been underscored by significant meanings to CPs. According to the theory, *certainty* enables an individual to plan, make decisions and know their direction. Not achieving *certainty* results in a state of continued doubt, an inability to reconcile the "old me" with the "new me", the inability to reconcile one's view of circumstances with that of others and an inability to make decisions for change or to accept circumstances and move on (Younger, 1991, p. 84).

The second concept, *change*, entails reducing the impact of a stressor by effective problem-solving, decision-making and action. It involves exercising primary control and influence on the environment. In both respects the CPs' responses to involuntary redundancy appear to be consistent with the concept of *change* as utilised in the theory of mastery. As noted by Younger, when the situation permits change but the individual does not enact it, a reduced sense of personal ineffectiveness and self-evaluation may in turn reduce self-esteem.

The third concept, *acceptance*, involves admitting that crucial aspects of an event cannot be changed, suffering the impact of that realization, giving up any hopeless causes and expectations in the situation, being predominantly free of longing for what has been lost, changing the self rather than the event, re-investing in new goals and relationships and finding alternate sources of satisfaction for what is lost. Although a discrepancy has been acknowledged between the terms *acceptance* and *acquiescence* in relation to the event *per se*, the findings indicate that, by the *acknowledgement* phase, the majority of CPs have reached a level of *acceptance* as conceptualised in the *theory of mastery*.

The fourth concept, *growth*, pertains to the possession of new skills or strategies developed in the situation that are likely to become available for use in future crises, having meaning and a purpose to living that transcend the difficulty of the experience and participating in appropriate forward movement. Again, there appears to be a goodness-of-fit with the theory of mastery in relation to the *acknowledgement* phase whereby CPs appear to have achieved a refined sense of 'self' and identity, a new work/life perspective and a recognition of personal and professional growth. Younger explains that through a process of growth an individual may have more knowledge of life, self and others. Moreover, the 'self' may be perceived as more efficacious, stronger and more enduring. Essentially, this theory recognises that growth often occurs in situations of novelty and stress, developmental

transitions, threats to self and loss of previously comfortable ways. Growth is, therefore, the mastery of a life transition (p. 86).

With relevance to perceptions of control, Younger (p. 81) explains that the shock of discovering one's personal vulnerability may be replaced by a decrease in the need to believe in one's invulnerability and by an acceptance of life on those terms, without abandoning the opportunity to exert personal influence on events. Such learning appears to have been core to the *acknowledgement* phase for the majority of CPs. It is considered herewith that this learning may have an adaptive value in relation to sustaining an individual's ability to maintain efforts up until the end goal of another job has been achieved.

MODERATING INFLUENCES ON REACTIONS AND RESPONSES

In contrast to the existing literature, the current study has not sought to determine the potential impacts of age or gender on reactions or responses to involuntary redundancy. Indeed, it is noted herewith that past research has consistently produced confounding results in relation to these variables. Instead, the current holistic approach has sought to emphasise commonalities within the target population. To this end, the potential influence of *personality factors*, the *type* of job loss (involuntary) and *contextual factors* (the City working culture) have been embedded in the discussion thus far. Additional moderating influences have been indicated in the findings as follows:

- *The Recession*

Across the involuntary redundancy trajectory, reactions and responses have been shown to be inexorably linked to the external market conditions and a hitherto unprecedented redundancy phenomenon within the banking sector. As a consequence, the recession appears to have exacerbated feelings of powerlessness and uncertainty in relation to job

security (pre-event) and securing another role (post-event) in a competitive job market. Paradoxically, the scale of the problem appears to have diminished negative reactions founded on perceptions of stigma and personal failure.

- *Timing of involuntary redundancy*

Although the impact of 'timing' does not appear to have been considered in relation to economic conditions in the previous literature, the current study has shown that CPs who experienced involuntary redundancy at the beginning of the recession have embarked on the job search with heightened levels of optimism and positivity. This is explained in relation to the fact that they could not have predicted the degree to which the market would deteriorate. On the other hand, being one of the first appears to have reflected exaggerated perceptions of stigma. Those experiencing redundancy in the later rounds, however, appear to have been subjected to prolonged levels of anxiety and stress. Feelings of loss in relation to the departure of others appear to have been tempered by a sense of relief following *survival*.

- *Financial Resources*

As noted by Gowan et al., (1999), financial resources insulate individuals from the most immediate negative effects of job loss. In this vein, almost all participants acknowledged that the financial terms of their redundancy compromise agreements would allow them a period of time in which they would be able to sustain their lifestyles without a regular income. It seems reasonable to assume, therefore, that the absence of financial strain may have diminished levels of harm/loss/threat demands at the outset. Similarly, the reduced sense of urgency to look for a job appears to have insulated CPs from the negative effects of a job market impacted by a recession. Indeed, CPs appear to have been able to take a step back and reconsider alternatives and options not only at the outset but later on in the process of *re-appraisal*. Moreover, financial resources also appear to have eased the

pressure on CPs to accept any job offered or settle for a lower quality job. Financial strain has consistently been identified as a critical mediator in the relationship between unemployment and depression, anxiety and a negative outlook on life (see Price et al., 2002; Vinokur & Schul, 1997). Although this finding has not explicitly been upheld in the current research, it is acknowledged that the combined effects of continued uncertainty and the potential for financial resources to become exhausted may have increased the possibility of more serious mental health concerns arising over time.

- *Professional Support*

The current study has highlighted the seemingly undisputed positive effects of professional outplacement support which has been offered by the majority of employers as part of the redundancy compromise agreement. Such support appears to have provided entirely relevant assistance aimed towards securing another role. The combined effect of being able to access an office environment in a familiar context (i.e., The City; a purposeful activity aimed towards a clearly defined end-goal, and 1:1 support from a consultant appear to have eased initial feelings of isolation and a seeming loss of purpose as CPs have endeavoured to adjust to the change in their daily existence.

- *Social Support*

Consistent with prior literature, the current findings have indicated that the negative effects of IR have been buffered by social support. In this vein, support from colleagues appears to be linked to an increased sense of self-worth and value. In contrast the absence of support from professional colleagues has exacerbated feelings of rejection triggered by involuntary redundancy. It can only be speculated why there may have been “availability” or an “absence of” support from colleagues. This may have reflected the internal atmosphere of individual institutions reflecting the morale, stress or anxiety levels of remaining employees. Notwithstanding differences in demographic status (i.e., married,

single, in a relationship, dependents) all those interviewed have shown a willingness and desire to engage in instrumental support seeking. Across interviews, support has been accessed either from significant others, friends and/or colleagues. Such interactions appear to have been helpful to CPs in maintaining their self-esteem and well-being. Participants with younger families appear to have been especially advantaged in being provided purposeful activity and an immediate role to fill.

IMPLICATIONS FOR COUNSELLORS

The current study has shown that involuntary redundancy has a profound effect on individuals even though they possess personality traits and psychological resources which are known to be adaptive in stressful situations. In a climate of recession, individuals may find themselves having to cope with prolonged periods of job insecurity both pre- and post event which may deplete their coping resources and leave them vulnerable to more serious mental health issues.

Their vulnerability may be triggered by prolonged stress, anxiety and direct-action coping behaviours pre-event, which, as noted by Dekker and Schaufeli (1995), may lead to a wearing out of resources and "burn-out". Accordingly, individuals may find it difficult to motivate themselves and adopt coping responses following the shock of the event. This may have a knock-on effect in terms of diminishing their capacity to engage in a decision-making process in relation to the future, including job search activities. In turn, feelings of failure and loss of self-worth may be exacerbated. Over an extended period of time, diminished confidence and self-worth prompted by repeated rejections and unsuccessful job searching efforts may not only increase the potential for negative self-perceptions to develop but also prove detrimental to the job search process itself.

The identification of issues beyond those triggered by involuntary redundancy which might predispose an individual to decreased mental health issues will also need to be considered, for example, relationship problems (pre-existing or triggered by redundancy). Therapists may also need to remain alert to descriptions of somatic complaints in the absence of, or ambivalence towards, the expression of emotion. For individuals who possess personality traits as described, ambivalence may stem from heightened levels of sensitivity in placing themselves in a situation in which their pride, competence, self-worth and confidence may come under scrutiny. As noted by Trachel et al., (2010), the potential costs of self-disclosure may threaten self-esteem or trigger emotions of shame or insecurity. Indeed, perceptions of stigma in relation to an association with mental illness and/or possible connotations of failure may actively deter some individuals from seeking psychological therapy in the first place. It will be essential that clinicians aim to establish a climate in which equality, mutuality and a genuine collaboration is emphasised from the outset. In this way potential negative perceptions of therapy may be swiftly assuaged.

Therapists may also be required to penetrate beyond what has been termed the *presentational self* (Mearns and Cooper, 2005) which a CP is likely to use in interactions with other people. As explained by Mearns and Thorne (2007, p. 63), these everyday portrayals are skilfully sculpted by individuals in order to present a face that fits the social context and also presents themselves in a way that they want to be seen within that context. For the CP such portrayals may have a distinct *survival* value not only in the City working culture but also in relation to adapting to involuntary redundancy. Such portrayals may, however, potentially exacerbate already diminished well-being through the suppression or internalisation of negative emotions. Indeed, portrayals may be ingrained and habitual. Moreover, they may be founded on lower levels of self-esteem and perceptions of control and mastery than might be readily assumed. In the counselling

context, a therapist will need to remain mindful of the notion that the CP may still be hiding behind portrayals of self in a continued quest for *survival*.

IMPLICATIONS FOR EMPLOYERS

It is considered herewith that employers must acknowledge their responsibility in ensuring that a departing employee's well-being is protected as far as possible. To this end, an increased awareness amongst employers of the deleterious effects of involuntary redundancy as described in this research may be informative. Furthermore, employers may be encouraged to explore ways in which an individual's sense of autonomy and self-worth may be protected when implementing redundancy. Essentially there is an onus on employers to consider the individual as an *individual*. In this vein, the following recommendations for employers are suggested for consideration.

In accordance with past research (see Campbell, 1999), the current study has shown that negative reactions based on uncertainty, unpredictability and uncontrollability are exacerbated in the *awaiting* phase due to an apparent absence of communication within the organisation. In a climate of recession, those reactions are likely to be heightened. It is suggested that a "*forum for employees*" may go some way towards providing as fair and open an approach as possible. The aim would be to disseminate information (at regular intervals) concerning the likelihood or otherwise of redundancies and provide a detailed explanation as to how they would be operationalised. By clarifying standardised procedures from the outset, it is suggested that individuals may be less likely to perceive involuntary redundancy as "personally" intended but rather as a formalised professional procedure.

The importance of incorporating a "personalised" element into the process must also be recognised. In this connection, the findings have shown that individuals are likely to benefit from being given a choice in the manner of their departure (i.e., either an immediate

departure or within a specified time frame). By explaining available options in the forum, individuals may be afforded the opportunity to consider in advance how they would choose to manage their departure, which may be difficult in the immediacy of receiving the communication.

In addition to a forum, employers might consider releasing a document to all employees, outlining redundancy procedures and describing all available options and resources. In this connection it is suggested that, in certain circumstances (i.e., a major economic downturn and a redundancy phenomenon), organisations might consider engaging the services of a Counselling Psychologist who would be privately accessible to employees. Contact details could be included in the proposed document.

Following on from involuntary redundancy, the findings have indicated that the provision of support via an Outplacement Provider, appears to have been of immeasurable value to the participants. It is further suggested that psychological therapy constitute part of the redundancy settlement. Moreover, since diminished well-being has been shown to increase over prolonged periods of unemployment, there should be an extended time frame for the use of therapy sessions (e.g., two years).

METHODOLOGICAL CONSIDERATIONS

This research has sought to shed light on the experiences of CPs in relation to involuntary redundancy in the 2008/2009 recession. The finding that involuntary redundancy is associated with psychological distress replicates the existing pre- and post-event literature. The topic has been approached from an inclusive perspective in relation to the entire experience (pre- and post-event) and a 'homogenous' sample. Homogeneity in this context, relates to individuals who have held professional roles in a similar working environment and who have experienced a similar stressful event in a similar social and

historical context. In this way, the issue of generalisability in relation to the findings must be considered.

In contrast to quantitative studies which ensure generalisability through recruitment of representative samples, the predictive ability of the model which emerges from grounded theory analysis relates to the concept of "explanatory power". The explanatory power of the model is increased through extensive theoretical sampling which attempts to maximise the variations and conditions discovered within the data. In the current study, due to difficulties in recruiting sufficient participants at the outset, theoretical sampling was limited in the early stages of the analysis. For example, following the first two interviews, the researcher aimed to interview a third participant who had not already secured a job. Given the slow start in recruitment, she was not in a position to refuse a third volunteer who had also secured another role at the time of the interview. The researcher also sought to engage equal numbers of male and female participants in order to de-emphasise an exploration which might be perceived to be gender-specific. In the event, only four female participants came forward.

Notwithstanding the potential for the data collection to have become static or rigid given the limited accessibility to a "choice" of participants, it is felt that the analysis was an iterative process and that the data analysis did drive the data collection. In this vein, the richness of the data from the initial interview allowed the early identification of codes which were subsequently elaborated and developed throughout the process of data collection. Accordingly, it is felt that a sample of twelve participants allowed for sufficient saturation of categories as advocated by Strauss and Corbin (1990). Furthermore, a grounded theory approach allowed the experiences of a broad cross-section of participants (i.e., in age, gender and demographic status) to be explored in depth. It is also felt that the

methodology used was not only appropriate to the research questions but was also able to provide a strong sense of face validity grounded in the individuals' experiences.

The richness and quality of the data reflected the participants' willingness to relate their experiences to the researcher. Indeed, there was a fluidity and frankness to their accounts. At times, participants became visibly emotional but, as noted by the researcher, in most cases self-control responses were swiftly adopted (i.e., jocularity). Follow-up interviews were not offered nor requested since the researcher was mindful not to exert additional pressure on the participants. In hindsight, participants should perhaps have been given the option to meet the researcher on a second occasion. This may not only have provided the opportunity for further reflection and clarification but participants may have appreciated another opportunity to process their experiences.

With relevance to "follow-up", all participants were forwarded a copy of their interview transcript and comments were invited. Those who replied expressed their interest in viewing the findings once completed. Accordingly, all participants were forwarded a copy of Chapter 3 and their comments were invited. At the time of writing, five replies have been received. Of those, only one has read the results. The remaining four "look forward" to reading them when they can "find the time". The researcher can only speculate reasons for a seeming lack of interest. This may be explained in relation to the fact that participants may have felt disinclined towards re-visiting the involuntary redundancy experience. It is possible that they may not have wished to align themselves to overt descriptions of personality traits and/or perceptions of stigma and rejection which appear on the opening pages. On the other hand, by virtue of having re-entered the working world, they may simply have limited surplus time.

In relation to the validity of the data analysis, colleagues were approached and invited to comment on interpretations of the data. In this way, inter-rater reliability was provided via their concurrence with the progression of the analysis. In hindsight, it might have been revealing to have asked colleagues to code a section of a transcript without providing a copy of the codes used by the researcher.

One particular strength of this study relates to the identification of negative cases which have served to elaborate and refine the developing theory. Such negative cases have served to highlight potential negative and positive effects on reactions and responses at different stages and changing contexts across the involuntary redundancy trajectory.

One potential limitation of the findings concerns differences in relation to the length of time participants had been unemployed at the time of the interviews. In this connection, the researcher did not seek to determine differences in reactions and responses according to the duration of the post-redundancy period. Indeed by virtue of emphasising commonalities a recognition of potential variances appears to have been ignored. Greater consistency might have been achieved if all participants had been interviewed at a fixed point (i.e., six months since involuntary redundancy), however this is unlikely to have precluded variation either within individuals or across the trajectory.

With relevance to retrospective accounts, Corbin and Strauss' (2008, p. 171) suggestion that it is difficult for an individual to evaluate an experience when he is living it has been noted. According to these authors, it is only through looking back that individuals can put their actions and experiences into perspective. In this connection, three of the twelve participants had secured new roles at the time of the research interview and, although they were still 'officially' engaged in the redundancy process, the inherent deleterious effects associated with *uncertainty* had been eliminated. Notwithstanding the potential effects of

variance in perspective it is considered herewith that a strength of this study relates to the fact that all participants were unemployed at the time of their interviews. In this way, the data has encapsulated recent memories where details have been neither omitted nor forgotten. At the same time, the duration of time since the experience has allowed for a fulsome exploration and identification of changes in reactions and responses over time.

FUTURE DIRECTIONS

This study has opened up areas for further exploration. For example, a study investigating experiences of involuntary redundancy at a time of economic stability might shed further light on the current findings. A consideration of the impact of involuntary redundancy on a re-employed individual might also be revealing. For example, in relation to their attachment to their new role and/or employing institution, their feelings of job security, their ability to maintain a protective level of detachment from their work and importantly, whether their increased *awareness* as highlighted in the *acknowledgement* phase (i.e. personal and professional growth, work/life perspective, etc.) has been sustained. By interviewing employees who have returned to work, a truly retrospective account of their experience of involuntary redundancy would be ensured.

Given that the current study has highlighted the way in which personality traits and characteristics have influenced reactions and responses to involuntary redundancy, it might also be interesting to explore how "similar" individuals experience other stressful events such as divorce, bereavement or a diagnosis of terminal illness.

A further promising area of research might be a study of the *vicarious* experiences of significant others in relation to involuntary redundancy. Such research may be revealing in relation to providing an objective, and by default, subjective view of how the individual who has experienced involuntary redundancy firsthand has reacted and responded. Such an

investigation may serve to highlight the ways in which those who are unable to exert control over the experience may also be adversely affected. The potential impact of involuntary redundancy on relationships may also be elucidated.

Of considerable worth to the counselling profession might be a qualitative exploration of the perspectives of CPs (and other professionals) in relation to psychological therapy, for example, why they have sought this type of support, what they found helpful/unhelpful, what might be improved and what was the perceived outcome. By virtue of the findings, as discussed, this might be a challenging research endeavour.

CONCLUSION

The current study has focused on a population who have chosen to pursue professional careers in a high-powered, goal-driven and pressurised working environment. Notwithstanding a recognition of diversity in backgrounds amongst those who work in the City Financial sector, it would appear that many CPs share similar psychological traits and characteristics which are well-suited to such a working context. Accordingly, as highlighted in this study, they appear to be similarly challenged when confronted with involuntary redundancy in the way they think, react and respond to the experience. Given that the phenomenon of involuntary redundancy seems set to continue, it is hoped that the proposed 5-phase trajectory of involuntary redundancy as experienced by CPs may be informative both to clinical practitioners and employers. Although these phases may not be uniform or sequential for all, it is suggested that they may be viewed as representative of *how* a CP or others who possess similar traits and strong perceptions of mastery and control, may experience redundancy over time. By default, it is also suggested that insight may also be gleaned into the potential vulnerabilities of individuals similarly affected by involuntary redundancy who may not possess personality characteristics as indicated in this study.

In the final analysis, the sentiments of one of the participants would appear to encapsulate the underlying motivation towards a will to *survive* the distressing effects of involuntary redundancy:

"First and foremost, I would rather be master of my own destiny....."

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Appendix (i)

Professional Doctorate in Counselling Psychology
City University

PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET

RESEARCHER
GENEVIEVE SOLOMOU

You are being invited to take part in a research study. Before you decide whether to take part, it is important that you understand why the research is being carried out, what it involves and why you have been approached. Please read the following information carefully and feel free to ask the researcher about anything that you have read or anything else you would like explained.

THE STUDY:

As the current financial crisis deepens, the current spate of redundancies occurring in the U.K. financial sector seems set to soar. We realise that for those individuals affected, redundancy can involve a number of issues. In this connection, the aim of this research study is to gain insight and understanding into what these issues may be and to identify a range of reactions to mandatory job loss in a climate of recession. Through exploring the unique experiences of those individuals who elect to participate, this study will hope to produce data and findings which may contribute to the development of a psychological model of reactions and coping with the stress of redundancy. Furthermore, it is hoped that the findings may serve to educate and increase awareness amongst employers in relation to appropriate measures which should be adhered to when implementing redundancy.

PARTICIPATION:

You are being invited to participate in this study on the basis that you have personal experience of working in the City environment and that you have also experienced involuntary redundancy. Your reflections of that experience will greatly enhance and inform the findings from this research study.

INVOLVEMENT:

If you decide to take part in this study, you will be asked to sign a consent form and complete a short questionnaire (*demographic information*). The researcher will then interview you. The interview will take place in an agreed location which is easily accessible to you. It will be just you and the researcher in the room and you can decide when would be the most convenient time for you to meet. You will only be asked to give one interview,

which will be tape-recorded. The length of the interview may vary from person to person but it should not take any longer than one and a half hours maximum (*including questionnaire; briefing and de-briefing*). You will be offered the option to read through the transcript of the interview (*once completed*). The findings of the study will also be provided once these are available.

COMMITMENT:

Taking part in this study is entirely voluntary. It is up to you whether you take part or not. If you decide not to take part or if you should choose to withdraw at any stage, you will not be required to give a reason. During the interview, you can choose not to answer any of the questions. You may also end the interview at any point, again without giving a reason.

ANONYMITY:

Apart from the researcher and anyone else you may choose to inform, no-one else will know that you have participated in the study. All identifying markers will be removed from the transcription of the interview. Your signed consent form will be held in a secure place by the researcher.

CONFIDENTIALITY:

The study is completely confidential. Your name will not be used or attached to any information you give. Your interview will be assigned a number and a false name will be used in any write-up of the findings. Only the researcher will have access to the recording of the interview and it will be destroyed at the end of the study.

RISK:

It is not expected that you will be harmed in any way by taking part in this study. If you believe you have been harmed due to someone's negligence, then you may have grounds for a legal action but you should be aware that there are no special compensation arrangements in place. Regardless of this, any complaint concerning any aspect of the way you have been approached or treated during the course of this study may be directed to the researcher's supervisor, Dr. Susan Strauss at City University: e-mail address Susan.Strauss.1@city.ac.uk.

THE RESEARCHER:

The researcher, Genevieve Solomou, is currently completing her Professional Doctorate in Counselling Psychology at City University, London. She has successfully fulfilled the requirements of the MSc component of the programme and is a Graduate Member of the British Psychological Society. She has been working as a specialist Visiting Lecturer on the BSc in Psychology at the University of Westminster, London for a number of years. She has an avid interest in the theory and practice of psychology and has gained valuable clinical and counselling experience whilst working as a bereavement counsellor with Cruse Bereavement

Care. She continues to gain extensive experience as a trainee Counselling Psychologist within a GP surgery in inner city London where she has developed skills and expertise for the treatment of a wide variety of psychological and mental health problems. She has recently started working with the Priory Trust on a Condition Management Programme which offers group psycho-education and support to job-seeking individuals. She has also completed a six month placement with City Psychology Group, an independent group practice of chartered psychologists who provide psychological counselling and coaching to key executives and blue chip organisations in the City of London where she has gained firsthand experience in treating conditions that result from the pressures and demands of daily life, working with individuals, couples and key executives. She is also about to take up a clinical placement at the Harley Street Cancer Centre.

If you would like to find out any more information about this study or make an appointment to participate, Genevieve's contact details are as follows:

Mobile No. [REDACTED]

E-mail address: [REDACTED]

Thank you for taking the time to read this information sheet.

Appendix (ii)

Professional Doctorate in Counselling Psychology
CITY UNIVERSITY LONDON

Research Supervised by Dr. Susan Strauss (e-mail: [REDACTED])

PRE-INTERVIEW QUESTIONNAIRE A QUALITATIVE EXPLORATION OF REACTIONS TO MANDATORY REDUNDANCY

Please UNDERLINE as appropriate:

Gender: Male / Female

Age: 30-34 35-39 40-45 46-50 51-55 56-60 61-65

Status: Single / Married / In a relationship / Other
 Living alone / Living with partner / Living with friend(s)

Dependents: Children? How many Age(s)
 Other? Who?

Educational/Professional Qualifications?

Position held pre-redundancy?

Length of time in organisation prior to redundancy?

How long since redundancy?

Is this your first experience of redundancy? Yes / No

Redundancy package?

Financial: Good / Acceptable / Bad / Unacceptable
Support Offered: Good / Acceptable / Bad / Unacceptable

Currently in employment? Yes / No

Appendix (iii)

Professional Doctorate in Counselling Psychology
City University

INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

RESEARCHER
GENEVIEVE SOLOMOU

General.....

1. In the broadest sense possible, how would you describe your experience of redundancy?
2. What do you feel was the reason for your redundancy?
3. Overall how would you describe the way you have coped with your redundancy?
4. What has redundancy meant to you personally?

Pre-redundancy.....

5. More specifically, how would you describe the period leading up to your redundancy?
Prompt: work-load; relationship with colleagues; your own feelings at the time?

The day of redundancy.....

6. Can you describe exactly how you were made redundant?
Prompt: when/where/ who by?
7. How would you describe your relationship with the person who made you redundant?
8. How would you describe your reaction to the news at the time?
Prompt: How did you feel? How do you think you may have outwardly reacted?
9. Can you describe what happened then?
Prompt: How were you feeling at the time?
10. What happened from then on for the remainder of that day?
Prompt: What did you do? Where did you go? Who were you with?

11. Can you describe any feelings or reactions you were experiencing throughout the course of that day?
Prompt: What thoughts were going through your mind?
12. When you went to bed that night, can you remember how you were feeling or what you were thinking?
Prompt: Were you alone? Who was with you? Did that have any effect on how you felt?

The next day.....

13. When you woke the next day what was your reaction to what had happened the day before?
Prompt: Did you feel differently / the same?
14. How did you spend that day?
15. If you were to compare those feelings to an earlier time or situation in your life when you experienced similar reactions or feelings in relation to something that happened, what might that have been?
Prompt: A memorable experience? Can you give me an example of what was happening then?

Over time.....

16. Can you describe how your reactions to redundancy developed over time?
Prompt: Did they change / become stronger / more severe / less severe?
17. What did you find most difficult during the early days following your redundancy? *Prompt: In what way?*
18. Was there anything you found easier?
Prompt: And in what way?
19. What did you find most difficult as time went on?
20. How did you spend your time in the early days and then as time went on?

Support.....

21. In retrospect, what helped you most following your redundancy?
22. What did you find unhelpful?
Prompt : What might have been different.....
23. If you look back to the day you were made redundant, what do you think could have happened differently which might have affected your reactions to what happened?
24. In hindsight, is there anything you think you could have done differently either at the time or since then?

Overall.....

- 25. How has being made redundant affected the way you define yourself?**
- 26. What influence (if any) has redundancy had on your attitudes to the future?
*Prompt: on a personal level / in relation to work?***

Finally....

- 28. Is there anything I haven't asked you but which you feel might be relevant?**

Appendix (iv)

Ethics Release Form for Psychology Research Projects

All trainees planning to undertake any research activity in the Department of Psychology are required to complete this Ethics Release Form and to submit it to their Research Supervisor, **together with their research proposal**, prior to commencing their research work. If you are proposing multiple studies within your research project, you are required to submit a separate ethical release form for each study.

This form should be completed in the context of the following information:

- An understanding of ethical considerations is central to planning and conducting research.
- Approval to carry out research by the Department of Psychology does not exempt you from Ethics Committee approval from institutions within which you may be planning to conduct the research, e.g.: Hospitals, NHS Trusts, HM Prisons Service, etc.
- The published ethical guidelines of the British Psychological Society (2004) Guidelines for minimum standards of ethical approval in psychological research (BPS: Leicester) should be referred to when planning your research.
- **Trainees are not permitted to begin their research work until approval has been received and this form has been signed by 2 members of Department of Psychology staff.**

Section A: To be completed by the student

Please indicate the degree that the proposed research project pertains to:

BSc MPhil MSc PhD DPsych N/a

Please answer all of the following questions, circling yes or no where appropriate:

1. Title of project

A qualitative exploration of reactions to mandatory redundancy amongst City professionals in a Climate of Recession.

2. Name of student researcher (please include contact address and telephone number)

Genevieve Solomou. 36 Aylmer Road, London N2 0BX. Mob: 07880 793605.

3. Name of research supervisor

Dr. Susan Strauss

4. Is a research proposal appended to this ethics release form? **Yes** No

5. Does the research involve the use of human subjects/participants? **Yes** No

If yes,

10 - 12

a. Approximately how many are planned to be involved? -----

Via Charities; City-based independent Psychology Practices (i.e. City Psychology Group); Out-placement Agencies (i.e. PENNA Plc); Other sources (i.e. "snowballing sampling").

b. How will you recruit them? -----

**Males and females ("professionals")
Previously employed in the City and Square Mile
Will all have experienced mandatory redundancy
Aged 30 and above
Born and educated in the U.K.**

c. What are your recruitment criteria? -----

(Please append your recruitment material/advertisement/flyer)

d. Will the research involve the participation of minors (under 16 years of age) or those unable to give informed consent? **Yes** **No**

e. If yes, will signed parental/carer consent be obtained? **Yes** **N/A**

6. What will be required of each subject/participant (e.g. time commitment, task/activity)? *(If psychometric instruments are to be employed, please state who will be supervising their use and their relevant qualification).*

**To complete a short questionnaire relating to demographic data. To participate in a

semi-structured interview (approx. 1 hr).**

7. Is there any risk of physical or psychological harm to the subjects/participants?

Yes (possible) No
If yes, **It is anticipated that risks would be minimal but**
participants **will be provided with a list of resources should they**
require **additional support and/or counselling following de-**
briefing.

a. Please detail the possible harm? -----

Their personal experiences will be of immense value to the findings. It is hoped that the interview may allow
participants to **process and reflect on their experience in a helpful as**
opposed to **negative way. The findings will contribute to the**
development of **a psychological model which may be applied in clinical**
settings **and in a work context when redundancies are being**
implemented.

b. How can this be justified? -----

8. Will all subjects/participants receive an information sheet describing the aims, procedure and possible risks of the research, as well as providing researcher and supervisor contact details?
Yes No

(Please append the information sheet which should be written in terms which are accessible to your subjects/participants) attached (Appendix iii)

9. Will any person's treatment/care be in any way compromised if they choose not to participate in the research?
Yes No

10. Will all subjects/participants be required to sign a consent form, stating that they fully understand the purpose, procedure and possible risks of the research?
Yes No

(Please append the informed consent form which should be written in terms which are accessible to your subjects/participants and/or their parents/carers) attached (Appendix iv)

11. What records will you be keeping of your subjects/participants? (e.g. research notes, computer records, tape/video recordings)?
Contact details; completed demographic questionnaires; digital recording of interviews; transcriptions of interviews; research notes during analysis.

12. What provision will there be for the safe-keeping of these records? -----
All records (as above) will be stored on personal computer (at home address) – password sensitive.

13. What will happen to the records at the end of the project? -----
All records (as above) will be destroyed.

14. How will you protect the anonymity of the subjects/participants? -----
All identifying markers will be removed from questionnaires; transcripts and recordings.

15. What provision for post research de-brief or psychological support will be available should subjects/participants require?

Participants will be presented with a card providing researcher contact details. They will be invited to contact researcher at any time following interview for additional de-briefing, in person if required. They will be provided with a resource list detailing possible support options (Appendix (v)

(Please append any de-brief information sheets or resource lists detailing possible support options)

If you have circled an item in bold print, please provide further explanation here:

N/A

Signature of student researcher

[Redacted Signature]

Date 2/04/09

Section B: To be completed by the research supervisor

Please mark the appropriate box below:

- Ethical approval granted
- Refer to the Department of Psychology Research Committee
- Refer to the University Senate Research Committee

Signature

[Redacted Signature]

Date 3 Apr 09

Section C: To be completed by the 2nd Department of Psychology staff member *(Please read this ethics release form fully and pay particular attention to any answers on the form where bold items have been circled and any relevant appendices.)*

I agree with the decision of the research supervisor as indicated above

Signature

[Redacted Signature]

Date 221519

Appendix (v)

Professional Doctorate in Counselling Psychology : City University

CONSENT FORM

RESEARCHER : GENEVIEVE SOLOMOU

Please read the following statements and sign below:

1. I have read and understand the information sheet.
2. I have had the opportunity to ask questions and have received sufficient information in order to be able to make an informed consent.
3. I understand that this research is being carried out as part of a Doctoral requirement at City University under the direct supervision of Dr. Susan Strauss (e-mail address Susan.Strauss.1@city.ac.uk).
4. I understand that ethical approval has been granted by the Senate Research Ethics Committee at City University and that this study is being conducted within the University's own research guidelines and also within the British Psychological Society's Guidelines.
5. My participation is voluntary and confidential and I am free to withdraw at any time, without giving my reason. In this case, any material collected will be destroyed immediately.
6. I understand that any recording made of the interview will be destroyed at the end of the research.
7. I understand that the research will be written up and may be published but that any publication resulting from this research will not identify me in any way.
8. I agree to take part in the above study.

Participant:

Name: Signature:
Tel No: Date:

Researcher:

I confirm that I agree to comply with the above statements and that I am signing on behalf of anyone else involved in the research process, including my Supervisor and Examiners.

Name: Signature:
Date:.....

Appendix (vi)

Professional Doctorate in Counselling Psychology
City University

RESOURCES FOR PARTICIPANTS

RESEARCHER
GENEVIEVE SOLOMOU

This is a selection of resources where help and support is available should it be required:-

- **City Psychology Group**
Independent Practice of Psychologists:
contact@city-psychology.co.uk
Tel: 0845 0177838
- **Stand to Reason**
City Based Charity
info@standtoreason.org.uk
- **PENNA Plc**
Integrated solutions: Career Transition; Coaching; Recruitment
corporate@penna.com
0800 238 1715
- **THE SAMARITANS**
46 Marshall Street, London W1
0207 734 2800 / 08457 909090
jo@samaritans.org

Appendix (vii) : EXAMPLES OF MEMOS

Title A CLIMATE OF FEAR : (Later AWAITING)

EMOTIONS: Unhappiness/Stress/Pressure/Fear/Anxiety

PROTECTIVE : Avoidance; Seeking Support; Mental Preparation; Vigilance; "Bunker Type of Mentality"

Note: X is looking back to the time leading up to his redundancy. His perceptions at the time relate to a time of fear and uncertainty. He tells me he was unhappy and was secretly looking for another job but did not want to have that choice made for him. He was trying to remain autonomous in a situation which had become heteronomous - the global recession and economic downturn were impacting on him personally at work.

External market conditions together with internal activity and signs that job cuts might be imminent were affecting everyone. The idea that your "area" or department might be targeted for cost-cutting or restructuring affected the way people were working. People (City Professionals) whose job it was to take risks and make important decisions every day were becoming cautious and afraid, no-one wanted to stand out from the crowd - a sense of anonymising the self in order to survive. Everyone looking for consensus. X uses the term "A state of paralysis" - no-one doing anything, therefore, becoming ineffective and making „self“ susceptible to redundancy. EMOTIONAL REACTIONS relating to nervousness, fear, tension, stress, pressure. Feeling a lack of recognition (LOSS OF WORTH) Not wanting to be "stabbed in the back" so PROTECTIVE STRATEGIES becoming vigilant; selfish (working autonomously) less helpful, calculating. Mentally preparing self for imminence of change by acknowledging the threat although not feeling directly threatened - seeing the self as infallible (Note: Identity?) There is a tangible air of threat but AVOIDANCE of feeling under direct threat may have been a protective strategy. Only looking out for self - a "bunker type of mentality." Working long hours and finding things tough and feeling unhappy. X had already started to look for a job secretly - looking for a way out or escaping. LOSS of enjoyment. **How bad was he starting to feel on a personal level and how much more did he think he could take? What would need to have happened for things to improve? How long had things been like this and was there such a dramatic change as a direct result of the economic downturn? What was it like before the recession given that the City is well known for being goal driven tough environment to work in?** At this point he has no autonomy - no power to change the situation. X is aware of a potential threat - the threat of being made redundant - what does that mean to him? The meaning of it pertains to his emotions and attitudes to what is happening around him. His perception of the risk causes him to take action - mental preparation for possible outcome. He is trying to SURVIVE in a Climate of Fear.

Title POLITICAL FIGHTS (Later AWAITING)

X describes the "enormous political fight" which resulted in his being made redundant. The fight meant that he lost his pre-existing role so he was left just doing "bits and pieces". The impact of the recession meant that the firm was in chaos and that redundancies would be happening and that he would be one of those - so he knew - it wasn't a secret and was all out in the open. He talks about the "fight" in detail. He was promoted to a good role (a fantastic opportunity) - a new guy came in with a very different view (appalling/aggressive individual) - clear dislike - not going to work so X is eased out on the basis that he will hand things over and then re-locate internally. So recession – and no new role. A big wave of redundancies coming so he was naturally going to have to be one of those. He accepts that he LOST the fight. A battle which he didn't survive. Political reasons causing massive frustration - previous efforts being destroyed/destroyed. Loss of power/control/autonomy to change things - had to detach. Tried to look for new role - nearly got one then the recession takes over and no jobs anywhere (false hopes). So two reasons for redundancy - recession and political internal struggle. "Left without a chair....". Later on in the interview X reflects on what he could have done differently - built up relationships with senior guys on the business side so there wasn't a gap for someone to move into. I get a strong sense of "Survival of the Fittest" - a climate in which you have to be strategic to survive. A very competitive game where people (good people) can get knocked down. An environment in which it isn't enough to be doing a good job, you have to be playing a very strategic game. X did his best but lost. A strong sense of each man

out for himself. Very difficult to get the support needed. Very frustrating – why? A complete loss of control and power to change what is happening. A heteronomous „no-win“ situation. X actively seeks support within the firm - vents his emotions (coping). Goes on to describe how stressful it was then - long hours - work and sleep and loss of enjoyment.

Title "MARCHING ORDERS" (Later ACTUALITY)

Very very quick. Putting two and two together - CEO arrives - in the office then Global HR person - then the call. He was third. Those two first - quick thoughts - one of those was unexpected - so he (and they) had been calculating who would go - never thinking at that point that it would be all of them. So shock - no point in doing anything – no time to think - no power, control or autonomy in that situation - helpless - about to receive a judgement - so protective - detachment - it's not about me - this is happening to me. So getting the call - protective - humour with the other guys "before the execution" - not a pleasant situation - coping strategy but "can't really remember" - this really highlights the shock in that moment. Nothing personal - doesn't know the person - so possible feelings of being unrecognised but paradoxically this may be more helpful in terms of self-esteem, worth, value - makes it more clinical - it is not about you - it is separate to you. The scripted message again. His first thought is to ask if it is performance driven. Seeking reassurance. This negates loss of pride in professional ability and standing. Comes out and shakes hands with everyone and leaves. Key points: Quick. Sharp Shock. No time to think. Self-preservation kicks in quickly : Is it about me? Suggests fallibility beneath tough City Professional exterior. This is the way I want to be seen - professional identity is very important. Important to be seen as successful and capable both now and in the future. Intrinsic part of self. High Self-esteem but protecting that - vulnerable. Not to be viewed as a failure. Key Point: That self perception of failure - must keep this in mind.

Title COLLECTING PERSONAL POSSESSIONS (Later AFTERSHOCK)

X goes straight back to his desk - shakes hands with everyone, packs his bag and leaves. He was given the choice to go back later to collect his things. So he has taken a cab home. He just wanted to get out at that point - needed time. Shocked and feeling numb. The only protective strategy - escape – safeguarding his emotions - remove himself. He went back at a later date with colleagues to collect his things and I didn't ask him what that was like. (Note: need to ask others). But he has a choice. This makes it a little more personal - the fact that he has chosen not to take his things with him really demonstrates that he was incapable of thinking in an organised way about what he needed to do - he felt "empty" - lost - "It's like the world had stopped...." - very evocative. The element of choice safeguards the individual in some way - gives them a feeling of autonomy - self-respect - pride.

Title IMMEDIATE AND EARLY DAYS (Later ADJUSTMENT : *Assessment*)

X reflects back on a feeling of liberation in those early days. He had become free to start looking for another job openly - not having to sneak around to do something he wanted to do anyway. Protective: Defiance (being paid too) and regaining a sense of autonomy. This highlights how "miserable and unhappy" he had been. He wanted to move anyway which lessens the impact of enforced redundancy. Immediate thoughts (the day after) turn to weighing up options - there is now an opportunity to look at the bigger picture of the future and assess whether he does want to continue in the same field or explore other avenues. Through this thought process, he realises that even though others have moved on to something totally different - that is not for him. He wants to use the skills that he has. In this sense enforced redundancy has meant an opportunity to re-evaluate what he does want. It has created a caveat to choose what he wants. X feels well placed to find another job easily at this stage – positive thinking and self-appraisal. He describes this period as a time of *adjustment* (to change in ?) but hindered by feelings of embarrassment and shame – what will others think – what does redundancy mean? I'm not good enough? So "self" in relation to "others" and "world". Once he has adjusted and sees the situation as a positive – negative feelings are negated and he is able to be open. So that's the first decision. The next..... immediate.... taking time out - recognising the need for a break - a holiday - X

recognises that he was feeling "a little burned out" - this tells us how stressful the pre-redundancy period was - so another opportunity - the time to take a longer break - another positive. So coming through a difficult experience but shifting the focus to seeing it as a positive (protective). He also seeks support (protective) - talks to his wife but "if I hadn't been talking to X I would certainly have needed to be talking to somebody else about it". X (briefly) that it was difficult to talk to peers who were still in work at the outset but (defiant and self-belief) - I can get another job and that is what I want - I am good (at 45) - I've got a good CV, experience etc. - immediate sense of being proactive (behaviour) networking; but some embarrassment too - how come this has happened to me. So yes a recession and cut-backs - but he was in the first round - so a period of adjustment to that - also being at risk - maybe something will come up internally - but then it becomes formalised - acceptance at that point - reconciling to the reality and time to see it as an opportunity and be open about it.

Key Points:

Feeling : Stigma - yes some embarrassment in the early days - may be more to do with being in the first wave of redundancies so the element of "recession" isn't quite so dominant. Dented pride and a need to be perceived as successful and not a failure. Loss of worth and value.

Behaviour: Withdraws from peers initially. The shock is not so great that he is not able to then focuses on decision-making. Decision made and then becomes proactive very quickly. Solution focuses - a holiday to ease stress levels and networking to find new employment.

Protective: Defiance. Shift in focus - redundancy is an opportunity. Seeks support.

Cognitions: Still the thought of Why me? Relates to inner sense of worth which is being challenged by what has happened.

Title AS TIME GOES ON (Later ADAPTATION)

X allows himself some time off (a holiday) but talks about "bad depressed days" - he consciously decides to stay positive and keep himself busy and occupied. He draws on his positive approach to life in general. The bad days feel a bit hopeless in terms of no control to get out of the situation - it's never been this way - usually hard efforts yield results but not now because of the job market - you have to try 3 times as hard (may feel like this) so feeling a bit depressed. To distract himself beer works - getting out and socialising. Provides a welcome relief from thinking about it - avoidance - protective - doing this interview - wanting to be able to help someone else one day - being proactive. On bad days feeling demoralized and frustrated - recognising a need to be active and proactive - job searching a full time process (seeing it that way - creating a new job) keeping occupied. Learning to "handle emotions" not allowing things to get him down - pushing negative thoughts away (avoidance/distraction) a positive focus. In some ways able to reflect that things are improving - less bad days due to "survival" strategies - getting up, getting on, keeping occupied "I dont have the time to be emotional. "I try to do something to distract me" (132) - to help relax and alleviate stress. So for X its not exercise - something else - volunteering, booking a trip.... etc keeping busy and focused. Reconciling to long-haul - being realistic.... managing emotions.... treat it as a problem or an issue - just like any other day - so "normalising". Try to accept the reality and deal with it.

Key Points:

Emotions: depression; hopelessness; demoralized; stressed

Protective: Reconciling; Distraction; Keeping occupied; normalising

Behaviour: Keeping occupied, busy, seeking social interactions, setting tasks

Cognitive: Shifting from negative to positive thoughts; accepting reality.

Code LOCATING THE SELF : The City Professional as a person (Later ACKNOWLEDGEMENT)

(67) For X being **part of being able to come to terms with redundancy** was the thought that *I certainly don't feel that I lost my sense of identity.....* there appears to have been an over-riding knowledge that he was working to live rather than working to live *I didn't feel that it was like losing a piece of me.....* X tells me that he has always felt a person first and foremost - the CP cloak was a part of him - it enshrouded him and he operated within that guise when at work - but he is telling me that his identity was based on a sense of self - as a human being.... work was a means to an end. Not forgetting that he has wanted to get back to work because fundamentally he needs to work to live. He has also described wanting to return to work (choice) - to use his work skills... so something he likes and misses and preferred option but feeling that either at work or not, his identity is not CP but as a human being. He has perhaps a reinforced sense of self having gone through the redundancy experience. He knows more clearly what he wants - has made decisions at the outset and has missed work and wants to back there but it is not fundamentally integral to his sense of identity. Is he being completely honest here? Perhaps he knows that work is uncertain, you can be made redundant - nothing is certain....

(83) Again X reiterates that he already knew it before but his job didn't define him as a person... the period of redundancy has reinforced that he is not defined by what it is that he does. *I am defined by me as a person.... the fact that I am not working its "almost" irrelevant, I'm still me with my skills and experience... I wouldn't say its my core or my backbone....*

X states that *you have to mentally quite tough to deal with the process....* He is telling me that he is tough-minded - do you have to be to be a CP? (22) *I tend to be pretty calm and collected person and I can deal with stress pretty well...* This is the person who can be a CP.... He tends to keep his emotions in check and think about things objectively and rationally..... this is also the person as a CP... put a memo in there. (60) X describes himself as a person who has *high expectations....* he expects the best from himself in order to achieve what he perceives to be "the best" (142) X describes himself as a self-motivated person who likes to do things himself... (he prefers to be autonomous and in control...) See memo on personal and professional development... (154) - *I've always been a high achieving student....* X is relating his emotions in this experience to a past experience... the "norm" is being a high achiever... this leads him to a career in a city.... it is not "normal" for him to have to deal with failure... how does he go through that process?

(156) *a characteristic of people who strive to succeed.... I was Captain of the rugby team....a leader, a winner.... I'm really a go getter kind of person... I dont think about things like that... you just have to be really objective and really go for it....*

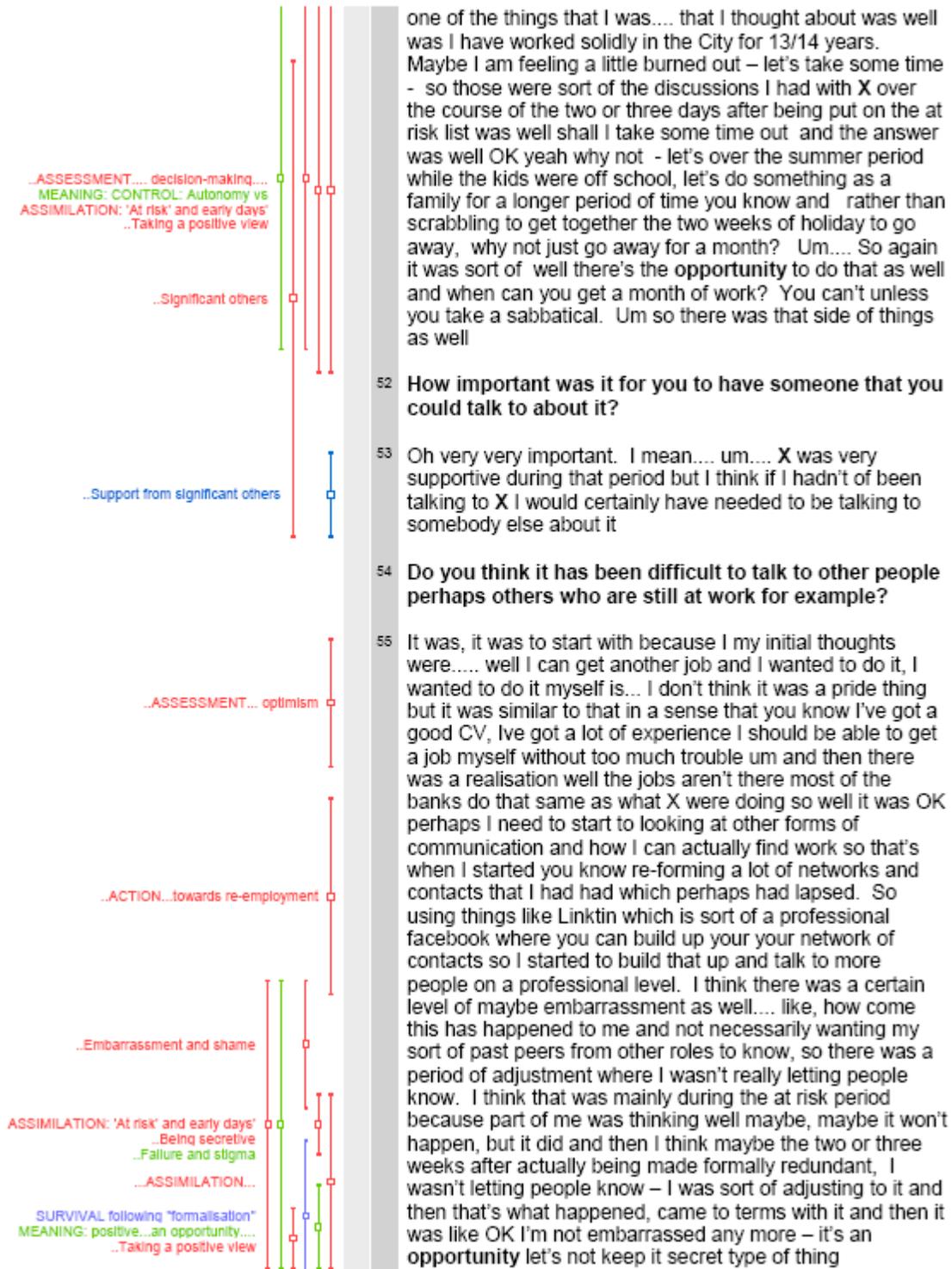
(228) I ask X how he feels about work in the future now... *it's almost like you feel that you've got a chance to try and define something.... what I've come to respect a bit more is the fact that there are things outside of your control (ACKNOWLEDGEMENT).... as much as I want to be the main thing that influences what I do next, I know there are forces that you have to comply with... or that are going to stop at the least the speed or conclusion to your goals... that you've reached your goals....*

(238) X feels that this break has allowed him to get a better perspective... he thinks he will be better equipped to deal with the stress of another job in the city....the role he wants is going to be different but he reflects that it might bring something else that's stressful.... I persist with wanting to find out why he thinks he's better equipped now.....*In the sense I know what I hated about.... I know what button to press in me.... I know how situations affected me negatively.....* he admits that the financial buffer is a great help.... *but one thing that I've learned about myself.... if I'm worried about something I will worry about it, but if I believe it's out of my control, it's like having some compartmentalisation in my mind about the box that this particular concern goes in... I think I'm much better at that than I was when I was in the firing line at work.....*

Appendix (viii) : Example of Open Coding

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Deciding to take a break Recognising an opportunity Seeing the possibility Recognising the opportunity Acknowledging the benefits Acknowledging personal benefits 	<p>well shall I take some time out and the answer was well OK yeah why not - let's over the summer period while the kids were off school, let's do something as a family for a longer period of time you know and rather than scrabbling to get together the two weeks of holiday to go away, why not just go away for a month? Um.... So again it was sort of well there's the opportunity to do that as well and when can you get a month of work? You can't unless you take a sabbatical. Um so there was that side of things as well</p>
	<p>52 How important was it for you to have someone that you could talk to about it?</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Recognising value of support Recognising need for support 	<p>53 Oh very very important. I mean.... um.... X was very supportive during that period but I think if I hadn't of been talking to X I would certainly have needed to be talking to somebody else about it</p>
	<p>54 Do you think it has been difficult to talk to other people perhaps others who are still at work for example?</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Initial secrecy Seeing it as short-term Seeing r as a short-term situation Acknowledging harsh reality Taking stock Seeking solutions Deciding on plan of action Networking Networking Being embarrassed Avoiding peers knowing Initial secrecy Hoping while "at risk" Being secretive Adjusting to reality Accepting reality 	<p>55 It was, it was to start with because I my initial thoughts were..... well I can get another job and I wanted to do it, I wanted to do it myself is... I don't think it was a pride thing but it was similar to that in a sense that you know I've got a good CV, I've got a lot of experience I should be able to get a job myself without too much trouble um and then there was a realisation well the jobs aren't there most of the banks do that same as what MG were doing so well it was OK perhaps I need to start to looking at other forms of communication and how I can actually find work so that's when I started you know re-forming a lot of networks and contacts that I had had which perhaps had lapsed. So using things like Linktin which is sort of a professional facebook where you can build up your your network of contacts so I started to build that up and talk to more people on a professional level. I think there was a certain level of maybe embarrassment as well.... like, how come this has happened to me and not necessarily wanting my sort of past peers from other roles to know, so there was a period of adjustment where I wasn't really letting people know. I think that was mainly during the at risk period because part of me was thinking well maybe, maybe it won't happen, but it did and then I think maybe the two or three weeks after actually being made formally redundant, I wasn't letting people know - I was sort of adjusting to it and then that's what happened, came to terms with it and then it was like OK I'm not embarrassed any more - it's an opportunity let's not keep it secret type of thing</p>

Appendix (x) : Example of Category Development



Appendix (xi) : Negative Case Analysis : Boxes 5 - 10

Box: 5

Excerpt from research diary: Negative Case Analysis

In contrast to all the other participants, P. 2 knew exactly what was happening: “ *I was under no illusions so it wasn't a shock when it came... I had plenty of time to get used to the idea....*”. Background: P2 has „lost“ a political fight. He has agreed with management that he will re-locate to another role internally. For 7/8 months he has no real role and is doing “bits and pieces”. Context: The recession dramatically worsens and he knows there are going to be mass internal redundancies: *the firm was in chaos.... I knew that the axe was falling.... (6,26) It became very obvious to me that as a big wave of redundancies was coming that it wasn't sustainable to keep me on....*” He acknowledges the inevitability and rationalizes his situation: *What's the worst that can happen? You get fired and then you get a big pay off and then you get another job for more money.... (16)*. By putting a positive spin on his situation, he is protecting himself. P2 finds out that he will be on the list five days in advance...*my management were open with me... I was open with them...* P2 is prepared for the news and is told in person by his boss. The shock is diminished. He has had time to mentally prepare unlike others where: “*everything has been quite peachy and then suddenly you're called in and there's that meeting....*”. P2 requests that he be allowed time to “*wind things up*”. Management agree and he leaves in his own time three weeks later. P2 is not a typical case. He knew when, what and how it would happen. He has a heightened sense of mastery and control in the manner of his departure.

Box : 6

Excerpt from research diary : Negative Case Analysis

P 6 is the only participant to have gone immediately into what he terms “*survival mode*” despite his “*surprise and shock*” at having received a call from one of the meeting rooms on a Monday morning. In reply to a direct question at (5) P 6 confirms that he had absolutely no idea that it was going to happen to him.... but when he see the extension flash (*just seeing the room number*) he recognises what it means because he's seen it happen so many times before. He knows that after a visit to HR, he will be exited out the building and will only be allowed to return at a later agreed time (usually a Sunday evening), to collect his personal belongings. So a shock but an immediate survival reaction. He gathers all his things quickly, moves to a remote desk in the building and e-mails all of his personal information home... burns the rest on to a fob.... gathers two cupboards worth of gym stuff and locates it under a colleague's desk... tells a few people... then returns to his desk a few hours later and is waiting with his jacket and rucksack packed when his boss appears and asks him where he has been.

Note: What does this tell me? Despite the shock, the CP is able to control/manage his reactions in the moment. Furthermore, an instinctive drive to achieve *mastery and control* of his situation by *appraising* the likely outcome/problem, *assessing* the alternatives and then taking *action* appears to have been enhanced by having become one of the later rounds of redundancy. P 6 has witnessed six rounds of cuts in 18 months. His experience has allowed him to prepare for his departure in a way that others in the earlier rounds have not.

Note: Despite the implicit individual uniqueness of each participant, it seems there are commonalities in their instinctive responses to problems. Are these reactions and behaviours typical of “alpha” male/females? Is there another explanation? Personality trait? Control? Coping?

Box : 7**Excerpt from research diary : Negative Case Analysis**

In contrast to all the other participants, P1 is at home, in bed (off sick) when he receives the call. When the phone rings, he is totally unprepared for a call which will advise him that he has lost his job. It is an „anonymous“ voice (a senior MD in Europe) someone he has never spoken to before. P1 says it was obvious that there was a third party on the phone and that the caller was reading from a script. The shock is total. Hard to assimilate in the moment. P1 asks whether he is expected back in the office. The response: „No“. He asks what he should do about his „stuff“. He is advised that he should contact HR and make an appointment. Effectively, his last day at work was the day before he went „off sick“. Although P1 rationalises that: *“they obviously wanted to do the communications of the at risk people all at once....”* at the end of the interview he tells me that receiving the message in that way was *“probably the most unhappy part of the entire experience.... they weren’t considering me as a person.”* (79). His vulnerability, powerlessness is absolute. A depersonalising experience likely to diminish feelings of self-worth or value. How might the nature of his *appraisal* impact on his later reactions?

Box: 8**Excerpt from research diary : Negative Case Analysis**

Only one participant thus far has challenged the decision to make him redundant during the actual *appraisal*. P5 told me that he didn’t see his redundancy coming *“even once”* although later in the interview he recalls having considered the implications of the worsening economic climate some months earlier. Since that time, the team had been performing well – indeed he was the *“best performing”* member on the team. They had been working incredibly hard for months – more so since his boss had decided to take a sabbatical due to stress. In the lift on the way up to the meeting room he tries to gather his thoughts. He is thinking that he will want to draw their attention to the previous successful months. Following the standardised message, the HR person has asked if he would like to say anything and he proceeds to tell them how dissatisfied he is with the decision....that it is *“incredible”* and that he cannot believe that they are cutting one person from the desk.... The response is to hand him the „customary“ envelope and direct him to HR. As P5 describes the *appraisal*, I hear his anger. The shock is total. He has been totally unprepared and reacts instinctively.

Later note: P5 was the only CP to react in this way although others subsequently attempted to challenge the decision via lawyers.

Having analysed twelve interviews, the futility of P5 challenging the decision appears evident. The CP is powerless to change a decision which has been made. He has no control in a situation in which he is subject to the will of another.

P5 has seemingly bypassed the process of *anticipation* in the *awaiting* phase and this appears to have impacted on his reactions in the *appraisal*.

Researcher note.... “forewarned is forearmed...”

Box: 9**Excerpt from research diary: Negative Case Analysis**

P6 tells me that “*technically speaking I wasn’t made redundant... I was actually fired.*” He *appraises* being laid off in this way and I want to find out why? He explains that some months earlier he had made a “*long bet*” when he thought the markets would go up but “*the markets went down in a very catastrophic fashion*” (the risk went against him and he lost the firm a lot of money). He stresses the point that in the position he held... “*you have to be really honest with yourself about things that happen and the decisions you make.*” Even though he wasn’t made redundant until several months later, he sees this as the main reason for his redundancy (he had been „marked”). He sees this as: “*Worse than redundancy from a psychological point of view... with redundancy you can rationalise that the company is going through tough times and you’ve pulled the short straw.. you’re still good at your job but you know somebody has to go and you’ve been chosen for whatever reason so you shouldn’t take it personally .*”

Note: Yet it’s difficult not to take it personally... and this is why all participants have actively *appraised* their redundancy in a way in which they have locate themselves as victims of the recession or restructuring or a political fight which they lost – *unfairly*. P6 refers to a different kind of rationalisation process when you’re being fired for something which is basically your fault... you still have to justify to yourself that you have strong characteristics and that people are very keen to employ you..... P6 goes on to say that it was still a shock when it happened since he was the “*best performing manager at the time*” (validation).

Note: All participants have *appraised* their individual redundancy in a way in which they have been able to pinpoint a reason “*why*” – it is not a personal failing... it relates to external conditions.... need to examine “*Locus of Control*”.....

P6 has appraised his redundancy in this way. He then *accepts* the reason why from his chosen perspective and then moves forwards.

Box: 10

Excerpt from research diary : Negative case analysis

When P8 says that something is holding him back..(from taking action).... he stops and hesitates and I ask him to clarify.... he states: "*confidence... the confidence you gain at work... achieving... meeting targets on a day to day basis...(...)... the feeling that I don't know where I'm going....*". The shock of having to make a decision after having been in the same institution for X years feels overwhelming. The decision to take time off at the outset has back-fired in the sense that as time passes, not knowing which direction to follow *...it hasn't dawned on me.. you know thinking I would really like to do this....* (or feeling able to make a decision). He has "reluctantly" visited the Outplacement Service twice and hasn't attended any interviews. His confidence is waning over time. P8's laughter does not disguise his hesitation..... he is avoiding taking action and by „avoiding“ the problem, he is maintaining it – very CBT!. Unlike the others, P8 has not negotiated the *assessment* phase.... and is not taking *action*. He has become „stuck“ and is unable to move forwards. He is unable to achieve a sense of mastery and control... he is finding it difficult to manage his reactions and “survive”...

Note: Later in the interview, P8 acknowledges that it should have been „*a great opportunity to take a step back and re-evaluate*“ but a year on, the pressure of not having a „plan“ has triggered feelings of failure. As P8 becomes openly emotional, the interview is concluded.

SECTION C

Relinquishing Control

A CBT approach to Cancer and Emetophobia

A Combined Client Study and Process Report

**The Professional Practice Component of this thesis has been
removed for confidentiality purposes.**

**It can be consulted by Psychology researchers on application at
the Library of City, University of London.**

SECTION D

**“Mandatory” vs. “Voluntary”:
What role does personal therapy play
in the personal and professional development
of a therapist?**

Keywords: *Personal therapy, personal development, professional development, counsellor, therapist*

Introduction:

In 1995 the Division of Counselling Psychology (DCoP) was established and Counselling Psychology achieved full professional status within the British Psychological Society (BPS). Since then the on-going development and growth of Counselling Psychology as a discipline has been guided by two overarching concerns. Firstly, *empirical research*, which is viewed as being vital in terms of protecting and enhancing the future of the profession. Secondly, *personal development work in training* is recognised as being vital in relation to effective therapeutic practice across the spectrum of theoretical orientations. There is a clear inter-relatedness between these two concerns in the sense that on-going research which informs theory and practice is also serving to inform a framework of personal development in the training of therapists.

With relevance to personal development and training, the BPS, the HCP (Health Professions Council), the British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy (BACP) have proposed that 40 hours of personal therapy (PT) is a mandatory requirement for Counselling Psychologists aiming to achieve chartered status and 74 of the 75 member organizations (excepting the behavioural and cognitive section) of the United Kingdom Council for Psychotherapy (UKCP) also require it. The BACP (2003) suggest that this element of the accreditation process is important for two main reasons. Firstly, since counselling involves the use of the self, a degree of self-awareness is viewed as essential in relation to being able to separate personal issues from those relating to the counselling situation. Secondly, PT can help to reduce blind spots that could potentially lead to unethical practice. As posited by Donati and Watts (2005), an emphasis on personal development work in training is founded on the belief that a therapist needs to attain a

significant degree of psychological health and awareness in order to be able to help another person to do the same.

Historically, the rationale for PT for therapists can be traced back to early psychoanalysis. In 1937, Freud wrote; "Every analyst ought periodically to enter analysis once more, at intervals of say, five years, and without any feeling of shame in doing so (p. 267). Since that time, Freud's early ideas have been endorsed and elaborated on by others. For example, Garfield and Bergin (1971, p. 251), proposed that PT leads to the "improved emotional and mental functioning of the psychotherapist and that 'healthier' or less disturbed therapists are able to secure greater positive change in their clients."

More recently, Atkinson (2006) has drawn attention to the increasing convergence of opinion among therapists from different professional backgrounds and of different theoretical traditions that reflection on personal experience in PT, is a key process in therapist training. Reasons cited include, increased effectiveness in use of skills, development of ability to use the self in therapy, linked with enrichment of the ability to relate authentically with one's clients and guarding against pernicious intervention through increasing self-awareness and experience of being in the client position (BACP, 2002a; Barnet-Levy, Lee, Travers, Pohlman & Hamernik, 2003; Heron, 2001; Strozier & Stacey, 2001).

Notwithstanding the apparent benefits as described, it remains a matter of debate as to whether it should be necessary to enforce PT for therapists in training. Based on research emanating from the U.S. where PT is not a mandatory requirement, Norcross and Guy, (2005) found that approximately three-quarters of mental health professionals reported having undergone PT and typically on several occasions. A major review of international studies conducted by Orlinsky, Ronnestad, Willutki, Wiseman and Botermans, 2005, also

produced similar results. As posited by Norcross and Guy (2005), it would appear to be the case, that for the majority of professionals, PT is viewed not only as an essential part of formative training but also as part of the practitioner's on-going maturation and regenerative development.

Given a substantial weight of evidence to suggest that therapists are more than prepared to undergo PT voluntarily, the question arises as to whether it is even necessary to make it a mandatory requirement? In this connection, Mearns, Dryden, McLeod and Thorne, (1998, p. 83) have called for greater specificity regarding the aims of PT and a stronger evidential basis to support its' costly requirement for trainees. Indeed, Bor, Watts and Parker (1997), argue that the financial implications of PT cannot be ignored since many students face considerable debts as a consequence of having to pay for personal psychological counselling in addition to tuition fees and supervision of practical work with clients. From a trainee therapist's viewpoint therefore, Macran, Stiles and Smith (1999) contest that if trainees are required to embark on PT they need to know its benefits and be confident that the cost is justified.

In the past decade and since the introduction of the mandatory requirement of PT, a number of U.K. based studies have sought to explore the role of PT in the personal and professional development of therapists from the individual perspectives of either newly qualified or experienced therapists across a broad spectrum of theoretical orientations. It is these studies, which are the focus of the current review. An important phenomenological study conducted in Israel, where PT is "strongly recommended" for all therapists has also been included.

As a base-line "measure" a review of the role of PT for therapists undertaken by Macran and Shapiro in 1998, may effectively serve to provide a backcloth to the more recent

exploratory investigations. Up until that point, the authors acknowledge that the majority of the literature on PT for therapists emanated from the USA and that the type of therapy investigated, was almost invariably quantitative and psychodynamic in orientation, an approach which “recommends” PT for therapists in training. These authors grouped work in this area into surveys of therapists’ opinions and experiences and naturalistic studies that compared client outcomes obtained by therapists who either had or had not had therapy.

Macran and Shapiro concluded that none of the studies reviewed had been able to effectively demonstrate that receipt of PT nor length of time in PT positively related to client outcomes or indeed, better therapists. They did, however, find some evidence to show that most therapists feel they have benefited professionally and personally from PT, that therapists who have received PT are more active in their interactions with clients and more aware of counter-transference situations and that PT has a positive effect on the development of empathy. Ultimately, Macran and Shapiro, (1998, p. 22) argue that a major inadequacy of research in this area relates to the fact that it has tended to focus on client outcome with very little explicit referral to any models or theories of how PT might impact on therapists and their clients. They propose, therefore, that one way of developing such a model would be to gain a systematic and detailed knowledge of how therapists feel that PT has influenced their work.

Rationale for the current review:

In 1996, Roth and Fonagy posed the question: “What works and for whom?” Since PT is generally recognised as playing an integral if not mandatory role in the personal development of counsellors and therapists in the U.K., it seems wholly relevant that researchers should seek to determine whether “it works” and “for whom?” In this vein, Roth and Fonagy’s question appears to have laid the foundations for research undertaken during the past ten years. Their idea to develop a model of how PT affects personal and

professional development has been acknowledged as a more productive alternative to a narrow focus on the question of whether there is an association between a therapist's engagement in PT and better patient outcomes.

A clarification of concepts :

For the purposes of this review, it must be acknowledged that within the personal development literature, attempts have been made to address discrepancies in the conceptualisation of some of the key terms with the aim of reducing a confusion of aims and a subsequent use of inappropriate methods in the training of counsellors. With particular relevance to the terms "personal" and "professional" development, Johns (1996) suggested that even though these terms may be separated for semantic or training purposes, each, inextricably contains the other. Drawing on ideas proposed by Wilkins (1996), Skovholt and Ronnestad (1996) proposed a concept of "professional individuation" in which the relationship between the personal and professional dimensions of counsellor development is described as being complex, reciprocal and constantly changing over time."

More terminology :

The term "therapy" relates to a broad spectrum of interventions and approaches and the "therapist" is the individual who conducts the therapy. Since this review is concerned with PT across a variety of disciplines, the terms "therapist", "counsellor" "counselling", "psychotherapy" and "therapy" are used interchangeably.

THE REVIEW

For a table describing the studies reviewed and their findings, see Appendix (I). Given the degree of inter-relatedness and overlap between the quantitative results and the various "themes", "domains" or "categories" elicited within the qualitative studies, the key findings

have been synthesised under two broad headings:- “Mandatory vs. Voluntary” and “Experiential Learning”.

Mandatory vs. Voluntary:

With specific relevance to the on-going debate as to whether PT should be mandatory or voluntary for therapists in training, Williams, Coyle and Lyons (1999) found that an overwhelming majority (88%) of the 115 chartered psychologists who took part in their survey, reported that PT should be obligatory for trainees. Even those who reported negative effects (27%) agreed that PT should be a mandatory part of training although there was widespread recognition of the “heavy financial burden” on trainees. All respondents had undertaken PT but for the majority it was not a mandatory requirement. Despite the positive vote, therefore, the authors acknowledge that the distinction between voluntary and mandatory may not be meaningful since the effects appear to be complex and reflective of the fact that most of the sample in their study indicated that they had PT for both reasons.

Two qualitative studies based on the experiences of trainee and qualified counselling psychologists who had all undertaken mandatory personal therapy (MPT), found that even without a presenting problem, PT was viewed as an important component of their training and a positive experience culminating in a range of outcomes in terms of their professional development (Murphy, 2005; Grimmer & Tribe, 2001). These findings broadly support previous studies (Macran & Shapiro, 1998; Mackey & Mackey, 1994; Norcross, Strausser-Kirkland & Missar, 1988), which as suggested by the authors, may not surprising since much of this past research was based on psychodynamically oriented participants whose PT is viewed as “core” to learning therapeutic practice.

In relation to the timing of MPT in training, however, there appear to be conflicting views. For example, in Wiseman and Shefler's (2001) study, participants viewed it as essential in the initial stages when the trainee is more vulnerable and least self-confident. In Williams et al.'s, (1999) survey however, only 15% of respondents voted for locating it at the beginning of training. This latter result is significant in relation to previous findings which suggest that PT can have a negative effect on client work as the trainee's emotional distress may be increased (Mackaskill, 1988), or that PT for inexperienced trainees may actually be anti-therapeutic for clients (Greenberg & Staller, 1981). DePree and Beala's (1990) proposal that there should be an early "forum" for trainees to discuss the relevance and aims of PT, is endorsed by Williams et al.'s, (1999) finding that even though only 22% of the respondents had had a forum to explore the aims of therapy, 70% of them found it helpful.

The idea that PT should not only be mandatory but a "more stringent requirement" whereby trainees should be in PT before, throughout and beyond training (Williams et al., 1999), is upheld by those who suggest that even though PT might not be a guarantee for producing ethical counsellors, it might be useful to extend it beyond 40 hours (Murphy, 2005); that it is critical in terms of keeping therapists "fit to practice" (Grimmer & Tribe, 2001) and it should not be "once only" but should be a part of life (Wiseman & Shefler, 2001).

The most recent study and one which can be seen to have effectively thrown new light onto this debate was undertaken by Risz and Target in 2007b. Through IPA analysis, the authors identified the Master-theme that "Personal therapy is integral to training" reflecting the participants' views that PT is crucial whatever theoretical orientation trainees are using, since they are not training to be "technicians" in a particular model but are being trained to become therapists. However, all participants in Risz and Target's study expressed

ambivalence towards the mandatory aspect of PT, suggesting that professional insistence on PT could paradoxically create a resistance to thinking in trainees. Furthermore, insisting on inclusion of PT in training is no guarantee of the integrity of the experience. Risz and Target's suggestion that "very reflective" individuals might be able to do much of the "work" themselves, raises the importance of exploring individual differences in the participants whose views lie at the heart of the findings.

Experiential Learning:

With a shift away from attempts to measure the relationship between PT and client outcome, the current research focus is on experiential learning and its' effects on personal and professional development. Past research has shown that most therapists feel that they have benefited from the experience of PT, both personally and professionally (Macran & Shapiro, 1998), but relatively little emphasis has been placed on understanding exactly what it is that they believe has been learned. The predominantly exploratory nature of the current research taken together with findings from self-report questionnaires, has served to pin-point a range of key areas of learning which are deemed to be "specific" to the process of PT.

Learning about therapy

A wide range of reasons which may serve to reinforce a rationale for PT for therapists in training have emerged from the recent literature. PT is seen as providing:- the means to learn about therapy (Williams et al., 1999); an understanding of the centrality of the therapeutic relationship to psychological change and a rite of passage into the professional role (Grimmer & Tribe, 2001; Murphy, 2005); a way of clarifying motivations about becoming a therapist; gaining a deeper understanding of process issues, models and techniques through experiencing them, not just reading about them (Macran et al., 1999) and knowing how it feels to be challenged, how it can feel after therapy and how frightening

it can be to go to a therapist (Daw & Joseph, 2007). Ultimately, according to Risz & Target (2008b) PT is seen as an emotional experience as distinct from intellectual or academic understanding, or as a process of "internal" as opposed to "cerebral" learning (Macran et al., 1999).

Learning about the self

In Wiseman and Shefler's (2001) theme:- "Importance of therapy for therapists – past and current attitudes", participants described the process of PT as a "personal journey into the self" whereby PT is viewed as having a strong impact on the development of a secure sense of professional self-identity, instrumental in getting to know all aspects of the self, facilitating in enabling therapists to make peace with parts of the self which he/she may be uncomfortable with and providing a greater sense of professional confidence and a sense of self-worth.

This aspect of self-learning is found to recur across studies. For example, Murphy (2005) has identified a core category of "Re-affirming who I am". For Daw (2007), PT provides a good way to grow personally, to develop a better understanding of internal processes and it may be facilitating in relation to personal change. These sentiments are further amplified in Risz and Target's (2008b) Master Theme: "PT establishes self-other boundaries" whereby participants reported becoming aware of, tolerating and reflecting on different aspects of "self" so that previously unknown or unwanted parts of the self became seen, amplified and given substance and significance first by the therapist and then by the participants, thereby promoting a sense of wholeness. The idea of being seen in the eyes of the therapist was described as a "reflecting lens" through which participants became able to see and accept parts of themselves. Participants did acknowledge, however, that this process of being scrutinized by the therapist's invading eye, could be very difficult, and almost embarrassing.

A dominant theme for the majority of participants across studies, relates to the way in which PT has enabled them to separate their own issues from those of their clients. As noted by Grimmer & Tribe (2001), this might be expected to make them able to make better use of the self in the therapeutic relationship and less likely to behave in an unethical way. Within the *reflexivity* phase of Murphy's (2005) four-phase model, all participants agreed that presentation of personal issues was something they became aware of during training and their professional work and that PT was a useful way to work through this unresolved material. The importance of PT in relation to working on personal issues, training issues and being able to more clearly distinguish their own issues from those of their clients is endorsed by others (Macran et al, 1999; Risz & Target, 2008a).

The idea that developing reflexivity is essential to good practice and can be developed through being in the role of the client, is also a recurring theme across studies. However, as noted in Risz and Target's (2008b) Master Theme, *the significance of self-reflexivity*, almost all participants spoke spontaneously about their awareness of a reflective element in themselves, present in many cases from early childhood stemming from an overriding, often quite conscious awareness of the desire to understand and make sense of early relationships.

Learning to be a therapist

The notion of a paradox also arises in relation to the way in which PT is viewed by practitioners as contributing to professional development although Grimmer and Tribe (2001) suggest that at the same time there is no agreed observable positive effect on client outcomes. From the studies reviewed, however, it becomes clear that experiential learning is viewed by the participants as being closely associated with enhanced professional skills and awareness. This also links to the findings in Macran and Shapiro's (1998) review in

which some evidence was found that PT has a positive effect on those qualities most often cited as constructive to patient change, such as empathy, warmth and genuineness.

According to Murphy (2005), the development of empathy is described as a key step in the emergence of self-awareness. On the other hand, Macran and Shapiro (1998) suggest that based on the evidence, the idea that empathy can only be learned from PT is debatable. The current literature offers a little added insight to further the debate. Wiseman and Shefler (2001) found that participants who reported having started training with a basic capacity to be empathic, found that this development was emphasised through PT or had enabled them to increase their capacity to be empathic. Furthermore, as noted by Risz and Target, (2008b), the experience of being seen and acknowledged by their personal therapist, appeared to be the template by which they became able to understand and empathically identify with the experiences and problems of their clients.

The experiential learning process was also seen as a means of enabling participants to be authentic and spontaneous with clients (Wiseman & Shefler, 2001) and to be their real selves with clients rather than having to conceal themselves behind the role or label of therapist/counsellor (Macran et al., 1999). In addition, participants found that their experience of PT had helped them in terms of learning to feel the needs of the client moment to moment, not trying to interpret, to place more emphasis on interaction and less on trying to be competent (Wiseman & Shefler, 2001); enhancing their use of reflection, transference and counter-transference (Grimmer & Tribe, 2001; Macran et al., 1999). In Risz and Target's (2008b) study, participants reported that PT had endowed them with an inner confidence, an emotional strength or robustness which in some cases buffered them against the on-going difficulties of therapeutic work. Or in other words, a sense of emotional resilience which translated into a professional resilience.

Learning from the therapist

A dominant theme across studies, related to the participants' belief that their personal therapist had been an important role model and extremely influential in their professional development. Interestingly, in Williams et al.'s, (1999) survey, the majority of respondents saw themselves as more diverse, eclectic or integrative than their therapists, citing more than twice the number of theoretical orientations and combinations of models for themselves. This finding suggests that the trend for counselling psychology in the U.K. is moving towards an integrated approach as is already the case in the U.S. where it has been adopted by more psychologists than any one single orientation (Dryden & Norcross, 1990). In relation to the choice of therapist, 83% of participants reported having chosen a therapist in a similar or slightly older age group and were as likely to choose a female as a male, regardless of their own gender.

A broad range of positive learning experiences arising from the notion of the therapist as a professional role model have been reported throughout the literature. For example, participants reported using their therapist as a role model deliberately in relation to visualizing how their therapist would tackle a difficult situation. Moreover, they would consciously model or imitate techniques, gestures and behaviours that their own therapist used with them (Macran et al., 1999), including not only minor mannerisms but more substantial aspects (Wiseman & Shefler, 2001), imitating but also discarding various aspects of their therapist's techniques and behaviours and paradoxically making the decision not to engage in behaviours they had seemed to find helpful or meaningful (Risz & Target, 2008a).

The therapist as a role model also relates to a broad spectrum of experiential learning based on the therapist being in the role of the patient. This theme has appearing consistently across findings. For example, learning the power of summarising and reflecting,

being better able to tolerate ambivalence, maintaining boundaries, discovering their own limits and boundaries, developing a more equal relationship with clients, not sticking religiously to rules about what a therapist should or should not do, learning how to hold back from jumping in to help, being able to make better judgments about the speed and depth at which to work with clients, knowing when to push a client and when to hold back and using their own individuality to gain a closer relationship with clients (Daw, 2007; Murphy, 2001; Grimmer & Tribe, 2001; Macran et al, 1999).

The idea of learning what not to do is also seen as part of the learning process in terms of gaining firsthand experience of actions that are either not helpful or are upsetting. For example, Macran et al., (1999) found that being misunderstood by their own therapist, prompted trainees to be more careful about what was said to their own clients or alerted them to the need to apologise when things went wrong. Participants in Murphy's (2001) study highlighted the importance of learning what is or is not useful as an intervention. In a similar vein, demonstrating a lack of flexibility over boundaries, a lack of impartiality, making negative judgments, being intrusive or probing, adopting an interrogatory style, adopting a professional role rather than human, were highlighted by participants in Grimmer and Tribe's (2001) study.

In Wiseman and Shefler's (2001) *therapist as a patient* theme, the therapist was described as "a good mother" who would provide support and help the patient to fly away and grow towards independence, from imitation and identification towards individuation. This theme of "parenting" has also been taken up by Risz and Target (2008a), whose participants expressed an intensity of attachment to the therapist who they described as their "analytic mother and father" and referred to "being *in* this child" rather than "as if". All participants either explicitly or implicitly were aware of a level of emotional intensity within the therapeutic relationship. Finally, many participants in Williams et al.'s (1999) study reported

having had more than one therapist, which was suggested as useful because each one could provide a different role model or perspective, thereby enabling more flexibility in their practice.

Summary of the findings:

Overall, the findings from these studies have much in common with those identified by Macran and Shapiro based on their 1998 review in relation to the participants' belief that they have benefited personally and professionally from the experience of PT. In addition PT has had a positive effect on those qualities most often cited as constructive to patient change, such as empathy, warmth and genuineness. In terms of what these studies have been able to add to the literature, the following points constitute a broad summary:-

- Many in the profession would argue in favour of the "mandatory" requirement of PT, with some advocating more than 40 hours both "before, during and beyond" training.
- Those arguing against, suggest that insisting on inclusion of PT in training is no guarantee of the integrity of the experience and could paradoxically create a resistance to thinking in trainees.
- Those arguing against, suggest that PT should not be undertaken at the very beginning of training and there should be an initial "forum" to explain the meaning of PT in terms of personal and professional development.
- There is a suggestion that "very reflective" individuals may be able to do much of the "work" themselves.
- The idea that empathy can only be learned from PT is debatable.
- A distinction has emerged between dealing with personal issues in PT and using it as a medium for learning about therapy.

- PT is seen as integral to learning about the self and being able to separate “own” issues from those of the clients.
- The significance of self-reflexivity and its’ relationship to early childhood experiences is recognised.
- PT can endow therapists with emotional resilience which can translate into professional resilience.
- The personal therapist provides an important professional role model in terms of learning what to do and what not to do.
- The participant’s attachment to the therapist is significant.

Discussion

The debate as to whether PT should be mandatory or voluntary, seems set to continue. Across studies there is a clear consensus that PT leads to a broad range of positive outcomes for participants in terms of their personal and professional development although it should be noted that not all participants experience the same outcomes nor to the same extent. Nevertheless, on the basis that past research has been unable to demonstrate a direct association between PT and client outcome (Norcross, 1998; Macran & Shapiro, 1998), the current findings may be instrumental in explaining how PT influences professional development which, by default, can only be deemed to be of benefit to clients in clinical practice.

Only two of the qualitative studies reviewed (Murphy 2005; Grimmer & Tribe, 2001), based their findings on trainee or recently graduated counselling psychologists, who expressed the view that by setting a “standard” of 40 hours, PT became a clearly defined part of the training curriculum. On the basis that trainees are unlikely to have a clear concept of certain key terms used in the context of PT, at the start of their training, however, Murphy

(2005) has tentatively proposed a four-phase model as one way of viewing the process of PT in which some of these terms are used but in a way that is understandable and easy to relate to for the novice trainee. This highlights the importance of a forum in which the relevance and aims of PT are explained at the outset in order to give trainees a chance to become familiar with the various aspects of PT. Indeed, in Williams et al.'s, (1999) survey, a large percentage of those who had had a forum in the early stages of their training, reported having found it helpful.

Williams et al.'s, (1999) survey has also served to reflect a lack of clarity throughout the literature in relation to knowledge about the participants. For example, a clear distinction between mandatory and voluntary cannot be assumed in their findings since most of the sample indicated that they had had PT for both reasons. Since this factor may have had a confounding effect on all the questions asked, the question arises as to whether participants could have been screened at the outset into those who either had or had not entered PT voluntarily. This highlights the lack of any control or comparison studies throughout the literature, which could potentially have served to add greater meaning to the findings.

Nevertheless, there is a basic uniformity across studies in relation to the fact that all participants in all of the studies had experience of PT, either during training or since, with many returning to PT at different stages in their career. On the other hand, it appears to be the case that no attempt has been made to record the numbers of therapists who made a decision to opt out of PT, to gauge their reasons for doing so nor to ascertain how they believe this may have affected their personal or professional development. In Daw's (2007) survey for example, the most frequently stated reason for engaging in PT was to manage personal distress, yet none of the studies have made any attempt to learn more about the personal issues of the participants. If for example, personal issues relate to the course itself, this may have relevance in terms of highlighting potential modifications to training.

Alternatively, if personal issues relate to external problems, it would be helpful to know whether these have arisen independently or as an indirect result of training.

In this connection, many of the authors allude in their discussions to the question of whether the perceived effectiveness of PT in relation to professional development may not be acquired by other, less financially and emotionally taxing means. In this connection, supervision is frequently cited as being comparable to PT in terms of facilitating development in training, however, there is a common assumption that supervision is responsible for the therapist's professional development while PT is responsible for personal development as noted by Wiseman and Shefler (2001). Williams et al., (1999) suggest that on the basis of a clear distinction between dealing with personal issues and learning about therapy in PT, and given the "complex" and "reciprocal" nature of the relationship between the two terms (Skovholt & Ronnestad, 1996), it could be argued that good supervision could realistically meet the needs of trainees and to some degree have the same effects as PT for trainees who do not have a presenting problem.

With particular relevance to the qualitative studies and notwithstanding the commonalities in experiential themes, it could be argued that rather than producing any form of conclusive evidence, the analysis of the data has provided little more than insightful interpretations to the perspectives of individual therapists in relation to the way in which they believe PT has impacted on their personal and professional lives. The work of Risz and Target (2008a; 2008b), can be seen to have incorporated a "unique" element to their research, however, whereby an attempt has been made to link their findings to social, psychological and developmental literature. The authors' use of existing theory has lent itself to a more detailed explication of the data and represents a shift away from a simple description and categorisation of salient themes. It is not clear from the data excerpts, however, how

much was revealed by the participants about their childhood experiences and to what extent the authors have been able to theorise to the extent that they have.

In brief, significance is placed on the early attachment experiences that have emerged from participants' accounts, whereby a lack of mirroring or empathy may partly have been the emotional backdrop to their decision to enter a profession in which they might feel they could receive the emotional mirroring they had not sufficiently received in childhood. The authors' also relate this to Storr's (1979) argument that therapists are often attracted to the profession due to an early sensitivity to the feelings of others which may be due to the child's anxiety not to distress one or another depressed parent.

In relation to the assertion that reflective" individuals might be able to do much of the "work" themselves, Risz and Target have related this idea to Fonagy and Target's (1996) concept of mentalization in which two modes of relating characteristics in a young child are identified. The first, "psychic equivalence" relates to the developmental task of a child to connect a mentalizing or a reflective stance. For this to occur, a facilitating environment must be experienced by a child in which their thoughts and feelings expressed in play are linked to external reality through being represented in the "watching caregiver's" mind which are then reflected back to the child.

With relevance to the mandatory requirement in training, Risz and Target, (2007a) suggest that the "pretend mode" relates to the possibility that rather than allowing PT to become a dangerous and potentially overwhelming experience which might serve to challenge safety, power and boundaries, participants may effectively be engaging in a pretend experience in which an inauthentic and diluted encounter is being provided. Based on this theory, the process of undergoing PT can be seen to have no legitimate implications for future clinical

work. By making PT obligatory, therefore, the suggestion that it may be impossible to ensure the integrity of the experience, could be seen to be valid.

Methodological limitations:

Throughout the current literature, the researchers have paid rigorous attention to methodology, data analysis and sampling. With relevance to the approaches employed in the data analysis, it must be recognised that any conclusions drawn must be considered tentative given the self-report nature of the quantitative results and the interpretative quality of the qualitative studies.

Overall, in terms of limitations, these mostly centre on issues relating to the participants themselves. For example, in line with most survey-based research, the studies which have employed a quantitative approach have suffered from typically low response rates (Daw and Joseph, 2007; Williams et al, 1999). As a result, the extent to which these findings can be generalised to the UK population of therapeutic practitioners remains unclear. In addition the findings are likely to be based on a biased sample of therapists who have volunteered to participate on the basis of their own positive experience of PT. This notion of positive bias is also relevant in relation to the qualitative studies which reflect the views of very small samples whose motivation to participate may also be based on a desire to show positive support for their chosen profession.

Overall, there appears to be a marked tendency across studies to have played down any negative experiences of PT except in cases where there is learning to be gained from negative experience. Indeed in Murphy's (2005) study, even though not all the participants experienced the same processes to the same degree or intensity, they did all report experiencing them to some extent. This may have arisen due to the interactive element of the group interview whereby participants may have been inclined to agree with the

perspectives voiced by others. Conversely the *group* factor may have led to restricted disclosure in terms of discussing more personal aspects of their experiences of PT due to the presence of others .

It has been argued that a shortcoming of most studies on therapist development is their focus on the period of graduate training (Bernard & Goodyear, 1998 cited in Wiseman & Shefler, 2001). On the other hand, the views of trainee and recently qualified participants may be of particular significance in the sense of reflecting current experience as opposed to the perspectives of experienced therapists whose recollections may have diminished over time and taken on a subjective quality. In this connection, the multiple case study approach adopted by Macran et al., (1999) can be seen to have been conducive in terms of enriching the participant's accounts of their PT experiences.

In relation to the accuracy of the participants' narratives, the potential for participants to exercise caution and to offer a censored or safe version of their experience to the interviewer should also be acknowledged (Risz & Target, 2008a; Grimmer & Tribe, 2001). Notwithstanding these and other confounding variables, i.e. homogeneity of participants or otherwise, the participants' own psychological health, the quality of their training, etc., it should be acknowledged that participants may not even be conscious of all the process involved in their PT nor to its' effects on their personal or professional development which Macran et al., suggest could be attributed to other influences.

Reflexivity:

As posited by Daw and Joseph (2007), with relevance to the qualitative studies, the nature and interpretations of the data must be considered tentative and limited by the context of the work, including the researcher's own biases. In all of the studies reviewed, the position of the researcher may be viewed as relevant whereby they were either on the same course

as the participants or were practising Counselling and Clinical Psychologists and Psychotherapists from a range of theoretical orientations. Many of the researchers acknowledge that PT has played an important role in their own training and in their personal and professional development. In this connection, Risz and Target (2007b) have highlighted the potential for a collusive relationship to arise in relation to the potential legitimising and perpetuating the professional party line with regards to PT.

Conclusions and future directions:

These studies have served to reinforce a wide and varied range of positive benefits of PT in terms of the personal and professional development of therapists which are largely consistent with past findings. On the other hand it should be acknowledged that there is a notable absence of comparison literature focusing on the perspectives of those whose experiences of PT were negative. Future research in this area might be informative in terms of providing a more balanced overview. Overall, the idea that PT should be a "recommended" part of training is undisputed. On the basis of the current findings, however, the question as to whether it should be mandatory for all remains. With specific relevance to the inherent differences within the trainee population itself, it is crucial that uniformity should not be assumed by training institutions nor by the governing bodies who specify "one size fits all" standards. Instead the uniqueness of each trainee embarking on their journey into the profession, should be emphasised, embraced and acknowledged.

It is suggested that future research should attempt to encapsulate the essence of each trainee's individuality in relation to their past experience and current needs. In this connection, there appears to be a gap in the research whereby as yet little is known about those individuals who are choosing to enter the profession. It is suggested that studies aiming to investigate specific elements of training, might benefit from learning more about their participants with specific relevance to increasing an understanding of why they have

chosen to enter the profession. Furthermore, by exploring the individual differences, commonalities and past experiences of participants and by relating these where applicable to existing psychological theory, there may be the potential for a far greater depth of meaning to arise in relation to the findings.

In terms of being able to validate aims or criteria on which to base a firm argument in support of mandatory PT, however, based on the idea that PT is somehow special and an experience not to be too closely examined, articulated or measured, Risz and Target (2008b) have suggested that attempts to produce conclusive evidence may be an impossible task. This also raises another largely unexplored area of enquiry, relating to the marked lack of attention placed on monitoring or gauging professional development in action. As highlighted in this review, PT has its role to play. Supervision is also crucial, although it is also bound within the realms of self-report by participants who may be anxious to appear competent. Might not supervision also entail evaluations of video segments of therapy sessions for example? Might taped segments not be regularly included in personal development group discussions? It is critical that future research should aim to explore all possible avenues in relation to maximising the professional development of therapists, particularly in their formative years of training and practice.

Ultimately, in the absence of any supporting evidence to the contrary, it seems fair to conclude, that those who have not undertaken PT at any point in their training or since, do not necessarily make bad therapists. Conversely, there is no concrete evidence to suggest that PT makes for "good" therapists. In the final analysis and with relevance to the enforcement of PT, as suggested by one participant in Wiseman and Shefler's (2001) study, "perhaps PT should not be forced but instead should be a recommendation in the spirit of what it means to treat people".

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Appendix (1) : Studies and Findings Reviewed

STUDY	ANALYSIS	SAMPLES	RESEARCHER	FINDINGS
Williams, Coyle & Lyons (1999) U.K.	Quant.	84 chartered Counselling Psychologists		89% in favour of mandatory PT. Majority rated outcome and process positive. 27% reported some negative effects. Distinction found between dealing with personal issues and learning about therapy.
Grimmer & Tribe (2001) U.K.	Qual. Grounded Theory (Glaser & Strauss, 1967)	7 trainee 7 graduate (M & F) Psychodynamic Person-centred CBT	Graduate From same MSc	4 categories and 3 processes: Reflection on being in role of client. Socialisation experiences. Support for emerging professional. Interactions between personal & Prof. Dev. Processes: reflexivity; validational; Normalization.
Murphy (2001)	Qual. Grounded Theory	5 trainees M & F	Trainee on Same MA Course	Four phase model: Reflexivity, Growth, Authentication and Prolongation phases.
Wiseman & Schlefler (2001) Israel	Qual. Consensual Qualitative Research Strategy (Hill, Thompson & Williams, 1997)	5 experienced Psycho-therapists M & F	Clinical Psychologists	6 Domains: Importance of PT for therapists; Impacts of PT on the professional self; Impacts of PT on one's being in the session; The therapist as patient; Mutual and unique influences of didactic learning, supervision and PT.
Daw & Joseph (2007)	Quant. QUAL Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) (Smith, 1996)	48 qualified Therapists M & F	Psychological Psychotherapists & Psychology Researchers	2/3 had engaged in PT. Reasons: personal distress and personal growth. Value of PT as a form of self-care and personal development. Value in professional practice as a form of experiential learning.
Macran, Stiles, & Smith (1999)	Qual. IPA	7 practicing Therapists M & F	Chartered Counselling and Clinical Psychologists	3 domains: Orienting to the therapist. Orienting to the Client. Listening with the third ear.
Risz & Target (2008a)	Qual. IPA	9 Chartered Counselling Psychologists M& F	Chartered Counselling Psychologists	2 Master Themes: PT establishes self-other boundaries. Significance of self-reflexivity.
Risz & Target (2008b)	Qual. IPA	As above	As above	3 Master Themes: PT provides an arena for intense self-experience. PT provides an arena for professional learning. PT is integral to training.