A JOURNEY THROUGH THE "DESERT" OF UNEMPLOYMENT:
PASTORAL RESPONSES TO PEOPLE "BETWEEN JOBS"

by

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ABSTRACT

In this research project the research participants and I embarked on a journey through the "desert" of unemployment. I was introduced to the research participants at Jacob's Well, a ministry for people "between jobs" The effects of unemployment on a male's identity were explored, as well as the pastoral response of caregivers to people "between jobs". A phenomenological study was undertaken in which interviews with the participants formed the basis of the research. The structured section of the interviews was guided by the research questions, but the largest part of the interviews was about the participants' personal journeys "between jobs." The role of a ministry like Jacob's Well, catering for people "between jobs", was highlighted and recommendations for practical theology and pastoral praxis were made.

Key words:

Unemployment; "Between jobs"; Social construction; Identity; Work-identity; Patriarchy; Protestant Work ethic; Pastoral care; Ecclesiastical response; Hope.

" I declare that A JOURNEY THROUGH THE "DESERT" OF UNEMPLOYMENT: PASTORAL RESPONSES TO PEOPLE "BETWEEN JOBS" is my own work and that all the sources that I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references."

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

1.1.   BACKGROUND

After my own desert experience of sequestration and financial difficulties, I became involved with community projects geared towards unemployment. Oosterlig, a Dutch Reformed church in Pretoria, runs a ministry called Jacob's Well which caters for people who are, as they call it, "between jobs"[1].

On my first visit to Jacob's Well, I had a look at their information pamphlet and it reads:

> Jacob's Well: a support network for people "between jobs", aiming to help potential entrepreneurs to start a sustainable business. Our purpose here is to support one another and to assist people to "dig a new well" for water … Should you need any counselling or only want to talk to a qualified person, you can make an appointment for yourself and/or family members at Coram Deo Pastoral Centre.

During conversations I had with people "between jobs" and the management of Jacob's Well, I realised that there was a need for pastoral care at Jacob's Well. Instead of referring people "between jobs" to Coram Deo, pastoral care and counselling should be offered at Jacob's Well as part of their support network. However, it seems necessary to first gain an understanding of the plight of the unemployed in order to provide effective pastoral care for them. This research could assist Jacob's Well and similar ministries to obtain the necessary insight regarding unemployment. My own experience of sequestration and severe financial difficulties afforded me an opportunity of connecting with these people "between jobs". In order for me to participate, pastorally, in these people's lives, I hoped that doing a phenomenological research project would assist me in trying to understand their experiences.

In my own life I became aware of the resilience of a human being in trying times, and the ability to be victorious over negative circumstances. My own story is a story of hope and may be a source of encouragement to people in difficult circumstances. The boxer Mohammed Ali once made a philosophical remark: "Service to others is the rent we pay for our place here on earth" - that is a summary of the driving force behind my commitment to this research project. I trust that I was able to enrich the lives of these people "between jobs" in a way that was meaningful to them.

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[1] They prefer to use the term "between jobs" instead of the term "unemployed". I am borrowing the term "between jobs" from Jacob's Well. According to Drewery and Winslade (1996:34): "Language is not simply a representation of our thoughts, feelings and lives. It is part of a multi-layered interaction: the words we use influence the ways we think and feel about the world. How we speak is an important determinant of how we can be in the world. So, what we say and how we say it, matters". By using the term "between jobs" instead of "unemployed", the stigma attached to unemployment is challenged.

1.2.   THE INSPIRATION FOR THE STUDY

My husband and I were co-owners of a restaurant business in a country town. Due to the economic recession of 1998, we experienced severe financial difficulties and eventually had to close down the business in July 1999. My husband used to work in a niche market in the medical industry and was subjected to a restraint of trade until January 2001. This prevented him from operating in his field of expertise and his desert experience of being "between jobs" started in July 1999. A sequestration followed in May 2000 and we were faced with the effects of my husband's unemployment. I experienced the crisis my husband faced regarding his identity during this period of being "between jobs".

Inspired by my own story of hope regarding the effects of unemployment, I wanted to embark on a journey with people "between jobs". I became involved with Jacob's Well in my capacity as pastoral counsellor. Jacob's Well hosts a breakfast for people "between jobs" on a Thursday. I attended these breakfasts and came to know the attendants. Because of Jacob's Well's location in a predominantly White eastern suburb of Pretoria, the people who visited this ministry were all White males. I had therapeutic conversations with many of these men and invited three of them to become participants in the research project. They will be introduced in Chapter 3.

Being aware of the constitutive force of discourses, I was guided by Lowe's (1991:45) notion of discourse sensitivity.   I was curious about the constitutive effects of discourses regarding employment, work-identity, patriarchy and the work ethic on a male's identity. Sellers and Kew (2001:73) make the statement: "Men in particular relate their identity with their work. When a man loses his job, there is something of his identity taken away from him, and one of the things unemployment does is bring you face to face with the real you, rather than the imagined you that you are hiding behind." When my husband did not have a job title any more, he started to question himself. The discourse of the work ethic - and specifically the Protestant Work Ethic - told him that, "he who doesn't work, is not allowed to eat". He also expressed feelings of shame and inadequacy at his inability to provide material goods and security for the family. These feelings were influenced by the patriarchal discourse, supporting the role of the husband as breadwinner.

This research is concerned with the constitutive effects of discourses on the male's identity when unemployed. This awareness will be beneficial to individuals in future who would like to provide pastoral care to the unemployed. The caregivers can assist the unemployed to identify the effects of

these discourses on their lives as well as the challenging thereof. The starting point of my journey with men "between jobs" was the following research questions:

1.3.   RESEARCH QUESTIONS

- What is the effect of unemployment on a male's identity?
- How can pastoral care givers respond to people "between jobs"?

1.4.   PRELIMINARY LITERATURE STUDY

Those who are employed in a society are able to participate in the production and services of that society. They have the benefit of earning their money and the freedom to spend it. As long as they are paid adequately, they are able to be, to some considerable extent, self-determining. There is dignity in that. Unemployment is a much feared and very prevalent scenario in South Africa at present. South Africans believe that unemployment is the country's greatest problem. In Opinion '99, a poll conducted by Markinor, Ideas and the SABC, 75% of respondents cited unemployment and lack of job creation as South Africa's main problem, compared with 61% who assigned this place to crime (Pieterse 2001:39).

When people become unemployed for whatever reason, e.g. retrenchments, they are denied participation in the production and services of their society. At the same time they lose a self-determining income and become the recipients of welfare payments and the associated lowly status. They cease to experience the social contacts they had in the workplace and their days become long and pointless as they lose the daily structure the workplace imposed upon their lives.

The loss of dignity is compounded by the guilt of not having a job and by the contempt of others. The pressures of family financial needs and the lure of commercial advertising add to the problem. It is little wonder unemployed people often experience depression with feelings of sadness, self-blame and hopelessness. Consequently many people in those situations present problems to pastoral therapists that in fact are the "symptoms of poverty". These may include psychosomatic illnesses, marital stress and parenting problems. However, the meaning placed on their experience of events often does not include a political analysis of poverty. It is important to consider the socio-political context of poverty as well, and not just the individual.

All pastoral care takes place in a specific social and political context, and its ideas and practices either question or affirm the values and structure of that order. Pastoral therapists have a choice whether they will act in ignorance and prejudice, or simply by default, to oppose necessary social change (Pattison 1993:90-91).

According to Waldegrave (1990:23), unemployment cannot be dealt with as a "clinical problem" only, regardless of the employment context. If the "clinical problem" is dealt with in isolation, presentations of the "clinical problem" such as a pervading sense of depression and accompanying psychosomatic conditions might recede for the time being. The meaning that gave rise to the persistent feelings of self-blame, sadness and hopelessness, however still remains. This approach towards working only with the effects of unemployment perpetuates the destructive and false myth that unemployed people are the architects of their own destiny. It fails to address the "victim" nature of unemployment where the economies of today are deregulating and businesses are restructuring. In most Western countries, regardless of whether all unemployed were highly motivated, well groomed and relatively skilled, there just wouldn't be the jobs available for those wanting them. High levels of unemployment have been structured into the economy (Waldegrave 1990:24).

Unemployment requires information and understanding of the social context out of which the problems arise. "Blame" is removed by introducing a more informed analysis of why a person is unemployed. Meanings of self-failure recede, and praise and recognition for the survival strength of the victims are encouraged. The economic and political structures that create policies that lead to the current lack of employment, are identified. Currently there are organisations of unemployed people and advocacy groups which are working to change these policies. This information allows people to choose to work against their economic plight (Waldegrave 1990:24). Jacob's Well is an example of such a project.

Antczak (1999:447-460) identifies the financial, personal, social and spiritual traumas associated with job loss, and recommends pastoral and prophetic responses to this reality. Pastoral care givers are called to recognise and understand the grief associated with job loss. They are called to provide compassion, support and understanding to individuals struggling to regain perspective and rebuild their lives.

Smyth (1994:45) describes the pain of joblessness. Joblessness undermines three basic human needs: self-respect, the need to be productive and the need for community. It can be a tremendously debilitating experience. It means a drop in income, loss of self-esteem and identity, and strains in

marital and family relationships. All of this is exacerbated by social isolation from relatives, former friends and workmates and the wider community. For many, long-term unemployment means a spiralling down from optimism through shock, anger, denial and depression to eventual apathy. It can result in alienation, powerlessness, unemployables and empty time (Smyth 1994:46).

According to Kew (2001:73) there is shame related to job loss, though in reality there may be no reasons for it. Rather, it's the "great tsunami of the economy that goes lurching on, and people are caught up in the tidal wave". Sometimes it is not your fault, but you are still caught up in it. And if you are caught up in it, then other people are going to be as well, and you can provide support for one another, as well as being open in the way that you handle the situation.

Unemployment needs to be understood from the perspective of the value of employment, or, in other words, the value of work. Work is a way in which an individual's identity shapes the progress of humankind. It is a social activity that helps us to recognise our need for one another and our common humanity. It is also a way in which we can play our individual, modest part in that immense web of human collaboration in God's continuing act of creation (Le 2003:18). Unemployment takes from people the right to live as human beings and has them living under various pressures: the pressure to obtain and retain employment, the pressure to escape from poverty and the pressure to keep happiness in the family (Le 2003:23).

Lovette (1997:18) argues that ministry begins with understanding. Only after the exiled prophet Ezekiel had sat for seven days where the people sat, would he speak. He had to understand their plight before he could help them (Ezek. 3:15). Similarly, the church can stand with those who face job termination and career change, only if it understands something of the dynamics of this hard place. Without understanding the effects of unemployment, the Church cannot assist the unemployed. This research was important because it enabled me to gain understanding of the experiences of people "between jobs." Recommendations for pastoral care to the unemployed could be offered to Jacob's Well and similar ministries.

1.5.   RESEARCH APPROACH

The research approach is concerned with the type of study I conducted in order to answer the research questions.

1.5.1.   Qualitative approach to research

I preferred a qualitative approach to research for the purpose of this study. According to Fouché and Delport (2002:79), the qualitative paradigm stems from an anti-positivistic, interpretative approach, is idiographic and thus holistic in nature, and aims mainly to understand social life and the meaning that people attach to everyday life. The qualitative research paradigm in its broadest sense refers to research that elicits participant accounts of meaning, experience or perceptions. It also produces descriptive data in the participant's own written or spoken words. It thus involves identifying the participant's beliefs and values that underlie the phenomena. The qualitative researcher is therefore concerned with understanding rather than explanation, and naturalistic observation rather than controlled measurement (Fouché & Delport 2002:80). Hence, the emphasis in this study is on the meanings generated by the participants who shared their experiences of their journeys "between jobs".

1.5.2.   Phenomenological research

Creswell (1998:16) regards a phenomenological study as a study that describes the meaning that experiences of a phenomenon, topic or concept has for various individuals. Eventually the researcher using this approach reduces the experiences to a central meaning, and the product of the research is a description of the meaning of the experience being studied.

Fouché (2005:273) argues that in order to capture the essence of the experience being studied, the researcher should be able to enter the participant's "life world" or "life setting" and place her-/himself in the shoes of the participant This is mainly done by naturalistic methods of study, analysing the interaction and conversations that the researcher has with the participants. Researchers using this strategy of interpretive enquiry will mainly use participant observation and interviews as methods of data collection. Multiple individuals who have experienced the particular phenomena must be identified. Data is systematically collected and meanings, themes and general descriptions of the experience analysed within a specific context.

Potter (1996:43) describes a phenomenological study as "an attempt by the researcher to get inside the mind of the participant to understand what the participant sees and believes". This understanding leads the researcher to explain how the participants construct reality and why the participants behave the way they do.

According to Morris (1977:10-12), in a phenomenological study the focus is on "the very commonplace, common sense, unclarified, taken-for-granted features of the world in which we pass our everyday lives". The task of the researcher is to reconstruct the ways in which human beings go about this interpreting in their daily lives. Secondly, a phenomenological study attempts to understand human behaviour from the participant's (person being studied) own frame of reference as to how the world is experienced. It requires the researcher to go into the perspective of the participant. The entire description of the social action is then from the view of the participant, as if the researcher were a camera. Thirdly, the focus is on meaning: "The phenomena of phenomenology are not the facts of experience, but the meaning". Fourthly, the phenomenon is examined without any preconceived notions in the form of assumptions or a priori expectations. Lastly, researchers in a phenomenological study avoid reducing complex reality to a few variables.

Leedy and Ormrod (2005:139) regard a phenomenological study as a study that attempts to understand people's perceptions, perspectives and understandings of a particular situation. Thus, this research approach attempts to answer the question: "What is it like to experience such and such? The phenomenological study undertaken for this research project attempts to answer the question: "What is the experience of unemployment like ?" (See section 1.3). In some cases (such as my own) the researcher has had personal experience related to the phenomenon in question and wants to gain a better understanding of the experiences of others. By looking at multiple perspectives on the same situation, the researcher can then make some generalisations of what something is like from an insider's perspective.

1.5.3 Research process

1.5.3.1 Research participants

Once the research questions had been formulated, I needed "to consider where to observe, whom to observe and what to observe" (Burgess 1982:76). As I was using a qualitative research approach, the most appropriate sampling strategy was nonprobabilistic – the most common form of which is called purposeful sampling. Patton (1990:169) argues that "the logic and power of purposeful sampling lies in selecting information-rich cases for study in depth. Information-rich cases are those from which one can learn a great deal about issues of central importance to the purpose of the research". Because

of my involvement as a pastoral therapist at Jacob's Well, a ministry for people "between jobs", I had many conversations with unemployed males. I was of the opinion that these men had firsthand personal experience of unemployment, and would therefore be able to give a rich description of their experiences of being "between jobs". I invited three of them to become part of the research process. Patton (1990:186) recommends specifying a minimum sample size "based on expected reasonable coverage of the phenomenon given the purpose of the study."

1.5.3.2 Data gathering

For the purpose of this research project, I made use of interviews to gather the relevant data. Qualitative data consists of "direct quotations from people about their experiences, opinions, feelings and knowledge" obtained through interviews and "detailed descriptions of people's activities, behaviours, actions" recorded in observations; as well as "excerpts, quotations, or entire passages" extracted from various types of documents (Patton 1990:10). Interviewing is "a common means of collecting qualitative data" (Merriam 1998:71). The main purpose of an interview is to obtain a special kind of information. The researcher wants to find out what is "in and on someone else's mind" (Patton 1990:278).

The most common way of deciding which type of interview to use is by determining the amount of structure desired (Merriam 1998:72). Less structured formats assume that individual respondents define the world in unique ways. The questions thus need to be more open-ended. A less structured alternative is the semi-structured interview.

I decided to make use of semi-structured interviews because this format allowed me "to respond to the situation at hand, to the emerging worldview of the participants and to new ideas on the topic" (Merriam 1998:74). This type of interview is a mix of more and less structured questions. Usually, specific information is desired from all the respondents, in which case there is a highly structured section to the interview. However, the largest part of the interview is guided by a list of questions or issues to be explored, and neither the exact wording nor the order of the questions is determined ahead of time (Merriam 1998:74). The structured section of the interviews was guided by the research questions, but the largest part of the interviews was about the participants' personal journeys "between jobs".

1.5.3.3 Data analysis

With the consent of the participants, I made use of a tape recorder during the interviews. I carefully transcribed the data on the tape recordings. The central task during data analysis was to identify common themes in the three men's descriptions of their experiences. I took the following steps as described by Leedy and Ormrod (2005:140):

- I identified statements that related to the topic of the effects of unemployment.
- I grouped the statements into categories that reflected the various aspects of the phenomenon as it was experienced.
- I considered the various ways in which different people experienced the phenomenon.
- I used the various meanings identified to develop an overall description of the phenomenon as the participants have experienced it.

In order to achieve transparency in my research, I needed to disclose the discourses in which I positioned myself as researcher.

1.6 DISCURSIVE POSITIONING

In this section I introduce the discursive positioning that formed the broad conceptual context for my research.

1.6.1. Social construction discourse

I positioned myself within the social construction discourse. The social construction discourse is concerned with "explicating the process by which people come to describe, explain or otherwise account for the world (including themselves) in which they live" (Gergen 1985:266). It approaches knowledge from the perspective of the social process through which it is created. Knowledge is not viewed as the objective reflection or representation of an external reality, but as the social construction of people in their attempt to live together in this world (Freedman & Combs 1996:16). It is through the "daily interactions between people in the course of social life that our versions of knowledge become fabricated" (Burr 1995:4).

The main premise of the social construction discourse is that the beliefs, values, institutions, customs, labels, laws, division of labour and the like that make up our social realities, are constructed by the members of a culture as they interact with one another from generation to generation and from day to

day. This knowledge is represented by the discourses that circulate in a given society. That is, societies construct the "lenses" (discourses) through which their members interpret the world (Freedman & Combs 1996:16). The social construction discourse is particularly interested in discourses that have taken on a normative standard within a culture, against which people are measured and judged. According to the proposed aims of this study, the influence of socially constructed discourses regarding employment, work-identity, patriarchy, the Protestant Work Ethic and the revised work ethic were explored (see chapter 3, section 3.3)

I have a concern and passion for people in need, which has been the driving force behind my involvement with Jacob's Well. In response to the needs of the unemployed, I identify strongly with the contextual approach to practical theology.

1.6.2. Contextual approach to practical theology

Contextual theology claims to be an epistemological break from traditional theologies and is concerned with social transformation. I identify strongly with some of the features of contextual theology as described by Bosch (1991:424):

- A refusal to endorse the world as static, as something that only has to be explained, but rather as something that has to be changed
- A commitment as the first act of theology and then especially commitment to the poor and marginalised
- A notion that theology (spirituality) can only be done *with* those who suffer
- An emphasis on doing theology, since doing is more important than knowing or speaking

The contextual approach will assist a practical theologian who is concerned with the unemployed, because this approach attempts to change the plight of the unemployed. The contextual approach situates the lived experiences of Christians within the wider context of church and society and seeks to analyse these relationships critically. In this analysis it also takes seriously the perspectives of those who are marginalised and oppressed. Sermons on Sundays regarding unemployment are not sufficient. The unemployed must be assisted in their emotional as well as physical needs. Unemployed people experience marginalisation, and the contextual approach is committed to the poor and marginalised. Concerned with transforming unjust social practices, a contextual approach to practical theology sheds insight into understanding how practical theology can respond to the unemployment issues.

Since I have become involved with Jacob's Well, I have realised that there is a desperate need for practical theology at grass-roots level. The needs of people must be addressed by the church. It must be done in a practical way. The church cannot only proclaim the Gospel. Theology cannot only be practiced in a church set-up. The community is in need of a theology which is "doing" spirituality. The church must become Jesus' hands and feet. The contextual approach to practical theology advocates the practicing of theology with a view of changing a situation or society. This is exactly what is needed to uplift society today. Transformation of our society through care of the disadvantaged and marginalised (in a physical as well as emotional sense), can be achieved. According to Pattison (1993:90), "all pastoral care takes place in a specific social and political context and its ideas either question or affirm the values and structure of that order". Pastoral conversations with people "between jobs" also involved talking about the social and political context that contributed towards their desert experiences. By talking about the social and political context, the unemployed are made aware of outside factors that contributed to their plight. The "blame" of unemployment is thus removed and attributed to the downscaling of employment.

My preferred approach to practical theology, as discussed above, connects with the participatory approach to pastoral care and counselling. Both approaches emphasise the "doing" of spirituality and as such guided me on the research journey.

1.6.3. Participatory approach to pastoral care and counselling

According to Kotzé and Kotzé (2001:7), the participatory approach to pastoral care and counselling entails "doing spirituality – not to care *for* but to care *with* people who are in need of care". Care givers and care receivers construct care socially and intersubjectively. "It is a participatory process in which therapists collaborate with people in challenging oppressive discourses and negotiating ways of living in an ethical and ecological accountable way" (Kotzé & Kotzé 2001:8).

The participatory approach to pastoral care and counselling calls for sensitivity to the suffering of marginalised people in general, but especially for sensitivity to the practical consequences that theological perspectives and belief practices might have. Pastoral counsellors need to be conscious of the theological commitments that guide them in their ministries, a theology that is "sensitive to and in dialogue with the lived experience of people must hold a central place in the work of pastoral counselling" (Neuger 2001:56). The primary issue in this approach is to care *with* and not just *for* those in need of care.

A "social conscience" is an intricate part of this approach. Pattison (1993:90) cites Selby's comments on the importance for pastoral care to take cognisance of the practices of the broader society that assists the problem story a client brings to therapy:

> To presume to care for other human beings without taking into account the social and political causes of whatever it is they may be experiencing is to confirm them in their distress while pretending to offer healing.

Pastoral care givers involved with the unemployed should thus have a holistic approach in their response to the people "between jobs". This connects with Sheppard's (1997:11) notion that "[a]ttempts to make people whole and preaching the Gospel, without simultaneously organising the structures of the society so that you do not have massive unemployment, is missing the boat entirely". One of the research questions deals with the response of pastoral care givers to people "between jobs" as discussed in Chapter 4 (section 4.3). As a result of major socio-political changes in South Africa since 1994, the discourse of employment has changed dramatically. For example, the introduction of affirmative action has had a negative impact on White men, and the converse on Black men.

The main focus of the participatory approach is the inclusion of "theologies of people" and a letting go of the primacy of a "theology from above" or "about" other; in this approach theology is "with others". This research could assist pastoral care givers in doing theology "with others". In response to the theodic crisis the unemployed person often encounters, the pastoral care giver can assist the person "between jobs" to make a link between her/his plight and spirituality. My research entailed journeying "with" people on the desert road "between jobs" and thus resonates with contextual practical theology's position of doing theology "with others". In my dealings with people in need of care, I've realised the importance of doing "with" and not doing "for". I have a passion for people with emotional and physical needs and identify strongly with the "social conscience" aspect of the participatory approach to pastoral care and counselling.

During my journey with people on the desert road "between jobs," I strived at all times to negotiate ethical practices in the process.

1.7 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS IN DOING RESEARCH

In qualitative studies, ethical dilemmas are likely to emerge with regard to the collection of data and in the analysis of findings. Overlaying both the collection of data and the analysis of findings is the researcher-participant relationship (Merriam 1998:213). In this respect I was guided by Anderson's (1997:105) notion of a therapist's position as a philosophical stance. "When a therapist invites and allows a client to collaborate, responsibility becomes shared. When a therapist takes this philosophical stance, the dualism and hierarchy between a client and a therapist collapse, and responsibility and accountability are shared". I applied this principle to the researcher-participant relationship as discussed in the next paragraph.

The standard data collection techniques of interviewing and observation in qualitative research present their own ethical dilemmas. As Stake (1994:244) observes: "Qualitative researchers are guests in the private spaces of the world. Their manners should be good and their code of ethics strict". Interviewing carries with it both risks and benefits to the informants. Respondents may feel their privacy has been invaded, they may be embarrassed by certain questions, and they may tell things they had never intended to reveal. Patton (1990:354) points out that the interviewer's task is "first and foremost to gather data, not change people". Patton recommends being able to make referrals to resources for assistance in dealing with problems that may surface during an interview. In a different context I was also their therapist. I made a commitment to journey with them on a therapeutic level and did not have to refer them to another therapist.

According to Merriam (1998:216), analysing data may present other ethical problems. Since the researcher is the primary instrument for data collection, data has been filtered through her/his particular theoretical position and biases. Deciding what is important – what should or should not be attended to when collecting and analysing data – is up to the investigator. Opportunities thus exist for excluding data contradictory to the investigator's views. Sometimes these biases are not readily apparent to the researcher. Diener and Crandall (1978:162) offer sound advice: "There is simply no ethical alternative to being as nonbiased, accurate and honest as is humanly possible in all phases of research. In planning, conducting, analyzing and reporting her/his work, the researcher should strive for accuracy and biases that cannot be controlled should be discussed in the written report". I reflect on this in Chapter 5 (section 5.5).

An overview of the research journey, outline of the content and context of the research project follows.

1.8. CHAPTER OUTLINE

Chapter 1 defines the research questions, research approach and discursive positioning.

Chapter 2 focuses on the social construction of work and unemployment.

Chapter 3 explores the dominant themes which were identified during the data analysis process.

Chapter 4 focuses on the pastoral care for people "between jobs".

Chapter 5 reflects on the research journey.

CHAPTER 2: SOCIAL CONSTRUCTION OF WORK AND UNEMPLOYMENT

WORK

I ask no odds of any man,
I am not one that follies sway
I am the source of my rewards,
I do my work each day.

The fruit of trees, the grain of fields,
Wherever use and beauty lurk -
The good of all the world belongs
To him who does his work.

It matters not if rich or poor,
This is the future's great command,
Who does not work shall cease to eat;
Upon this rock I stand.

Though work bring naught of power nor wealth
Spare me from want of common needs,
And give a share of manly health,
A few good friends of honest deeds;
And till death's peaceful slumber nears
A life of undishonored years.

Max Ehrmann, The Desiderata of Happiness

One may ask if the preceding poem is a true reflection of the way people perceive work. I believe that the clue can be found in the way people socially construct meaning – in this instance, the meaning of work.

The social construction discourse is concerned with "explicating the process by which people come to describe, explain or otherwise account for the world (including themselves) in which they live" (Gergen 1985:266). Social constructionism approaches knowledge from the perspective of the social

process through which it is created. Knowledge is not viewed as the objective reflection or representation of an external world (Freedman & Combs 1996:16). The knowledge/meaning of work is thus also socially constructed, for it is through the "daily interactions between people in the course of social life that our versions of knowledge become fabricated" (Burr 1995:4).

We make sense of our lives "in the context of our social history, shaping stories about the groups we belong to and about how we came to be who, how, and where we are. Such stories constitute something of our identity; these stories are the background context that gives the possibility of coherence to our lives" (Drewery & Winslade 1996:34).

There is always a broader social context that constitutes or shapes the stories of our lives, that influences the interpretations and meaning we give to our experiences. This broader social context, or discourse, is a network of statements, practices and institutional structures that share common values. Foucault refers to discourse as a "regime of truth", which should be understood as "a system of ordered procedures for the production, regulation, distribution, and operation of statements… [it] is linked in a circular relation with systems of power which produce and sustain it, and to effects of power which it induces and which extends it" (Rabinow 1984:74).

These beliefs, ideas and practices of the culture in which we live, or "taken-for-granted realities and practices" (White 1991:27), play a major part in the meanings we make of our lives. Discourses "powerfully shape a person's choices about what life events can be storied and how they should be storied" (Freedman & Combs 1996:43). Discourses are perceived as "truths" or "common sense", influencing our understanding of the way life is or should be (Gerkin 1991:54).

People work for a wide variety of reasons – many because they have to in order to survive, other to supplement their income, to seek satisfaction, to express their creativity or to serve the community. The discourses on work furthermore have an influence on people's stories about work and their related experiences to work.

The prevalent discourse concerning the purpose of work is to produce something of value which meets some human want or need. Yet the activity of work also has psychological, social and spiritual significance in its own right. In our Western society work has been constructed as something that can be seen as part of human nature, fundamental to the way in which our identities, both individual and collective, are built up: "Work, and the social relationships of working, are on a par with other kinds of innate social behaviour like language or morality or family life" (Sheppard 1997:70). There

are, however, different discourses that influence one's perception of work and consequently one's identity as a worker and as a member of society.

Within Western society where a capitalist discourse enjoys dominant status, having a job can be a benefit to workers in at least two ways. It gives a worker money - and therefore dignity - in a society where money counts. It also gives an identity, a role as a worker, and therefore dignity in a society where one's worth is measured by one's work (Broman, Hamilton & Hoffman 2001:70). The question of capitalism's effect on culture assumes increasingly more importance. The market system can be an effective means of economic growth, but can, in the process, cause people to think that ultimate meaning is found in the accumulation of more goods. The overwhelming consumerism of Western societies is testimony to the fact that the material success of capitalism encourages attitudes that can be harmful. One such attitude is the treatment of workers as simply costs or productive inputs, without recognition of their humanity (Hill 1994:38).

Capitalism often operates on the premise that the employer owns the work of people (since work is a means of production), while an alternative discourse such as socialism operates on the premise that society owns work. The social construction of work in a capitalist society would conform to the tenets of individualism, while the social construction of work in a socialist society would conform to one or another variation of communitarianism (Hill 1994:35-37).

Erasmus (1992:1) looks at the meaning of work for the human being. Work is extremely important because it provides personal identity to a man/woman as citizen of a country, as member of a family, as contributor to the community and to the economic system. Work regulates a person's time and lifestyle. It satisfies the need to be valuable and the need for personal development, which contributes to a positive self-image.

The value of work is socially constructed by the members of a society through their daily interactions. Work is fundamentally "a social activity that helps us to recognize our need for one another and our common humanity" (Le 2003:18). Within our Western society, the value of work cannot be underestimated for both the individual and society as a whole. Work, whether it is paid or voluntary, sustains and enhances life. Very few individuals or families are able to be self-sufficient. Since the days of Paleolithic hunters, human beings have cooperated to provide life's necessities (Bourke 1997:281).

Even though work is a necessity for humans to survive, the nature and context of work have profoundly changed over the years. In post-apartheid South Africa, where gender and racial discrimination is challenged by a new constitution, the conditions for employment and work contexts have radically changed.

2.1. THE CHANGING NATURE AND MEANINGS OF WORK

I would like to reflect on the changing nature and meanings of work – discourses that have changed and as a result our changed perception of work. We live in a time of profound economic and social change which influences the nature of work. In this section I will explore these economic and social changes and the impact thereof.

New technology is rapidly changing the nature of work. Before long, the storage and transformation of information in any form will become almost cost free, and so will be its communication to any place in the world. Sophisticated machines are taking over whole areas of human work (Sheppard 1997:13-18). Human labour thus becomes obsolete and people working in the field of information technology have become unemployed.

The supply of labour has also changed dramatically. Women as well as men now expect to take part in paid work. The sharp distinction in gender roles, which came about with the industrial revolution, is being eroded. Women are often trying to fulfill two roles at once – the role of motherhood as well as that of career woman. Meanwhile, men are increasingly withdrawing from the labour force - especially those who lose their jobs in middle age and have little prospect of finding another (Sheppard 1997:19-23).

Economic life everywhere has become more competitive, both within countries and in the world as a whole. In the sectors of an advanced economy, which engage in international trade, there is no real alternative to pursuing competitiveness and higher productivity. The market system does not encourage the Christian virtues of compassion and generosity, neither does it promote social justice (Sheppard 1997:24-30).

From the above discussion we realise that the nature of work has changed. There was a time when employment was considered a long-term arrangement, but unfortunately the realities prove otherwise. A constantly changing economy, technological advance and globalisation all contribute to

a constantly changing employment map (Sheppard 1997:21-22). Even the most secure and senior jobs are no longer secure – redundancy can come to anyone, anywhere and at any time.

For many South Africans, life either began or ended with the general election on 27 April 1994. The implementation of affirmative action is producing a lot of controversy. In South Africa the prospective beneficiaries of affirmative action policies are not by definition minorities, but rather a majority which was denied equal treatment in the past by the racially biased institutionalised systems of colonialism and apartheid (Fobanjong 2001:162). Thus, from the outset, developing a policy to correct these past wrongs by redirecting programmes to benefit groups that were a numerical majority, was not only going to be controversial, it was going to be threatening to the White minority. The implementation of any programmes that provided White people with no benefits or protections, was going to render them an invisible minority (Fobanjong 2001:163).

Affirmative action can be conceptualised as firstly, "fair equality of opportunity" or secondly, as "preferential hiring". When conceptualised as "fair equality of opportunity", the programme would direct resources at providing training and education to the historically deprived. This makes it possible for the disadvantaged to learn the skills that will enable them to compete on merit with historically advantaged groups. The second model of affirmative action provides for preferential hiring which implies that the norms of equal opportunity are breached, and preference is given to groups with lower levels of qualifications. This is the model of affirmative action that appears to produce the most controversy. Opponents of the programme argue that not only does it lead to a lowering of standards, it promotes reverse discrimination. Disadvantaged groups, on the other hand, argue that preferential hiring could degenerate into tokenism, and therefore bear a guaranteed prescription for failure (Fobanjong 2001:163).

It thus becomes clear how the meanings of work are socially constructed by current discourses circulating in a given society. Post-apartheid South Africa daily faces discourses of gender and racial equality and, as such, these discourses influence the nature and conditions of work. However, until recently, South Africa, like many other Western societies, has been predominantly Christian-orientated. Religious discourses thus also influence the meaning of work.

This research project was done within the structures of Jacob's Well, a ministry for people "between jobs". As Jacob's Well is run by Oosterlig Dutch Reformed Church, I would like to reflect on the influence of the Protestant religious discourse on a Christian's perception of work ethics.

Calvin's ideas of Christian work ethics gave birth to the Protestant Work Ethic. The Protestant Work Ethic (PWE) taught that the individual believer has a vocation to serve God in the world – in all spheres of human existence – lending a new dignity and meaning to the everyday world. Work was thus seen as an activity by which Christians could deepen their faith. To do anything for God - and to do it well - was a proper response to God. No occupation, no calling, is too mean or lowly to be graced by the presence of God. Work is thus an act of praise - it glorifies God, it serves the common good and it is something through which human creativity can express itself (McGrath 1999:31-35).

The above-mentioned discussion on the PWE resonates with Catherwood's (1983:22-25) views regarding the PWE: that attitude and application give it meaning. Christians do not work simply to make money or to pay the bills. They work because it is part of the divine order that they should work. Not only must Christians work, but also they must work as if for God, and they must work wholeheartedly. Christians are called to use their talents to the full and to work with all their might, to win the race of life as if there were only one price and they must obtain it.

Barlow (1975:1108-1111) argues that the Protestant era has ended and therefore the PWE is subjected to a test of integrity. Churches must do more than realise that the classical work ethic of Protestantism is all the more grimly irrelevant at a time when forces in the economy have rendered ambition, good working habits, thrift and the like almost totally unrewarding for millions of people.

Those who have been aware of poverty have been trying for many years to awaken the churches to this incongruity between Protestant teaching and real life. An even more difficult task is ahead of the church as it faces the additional compelling need to announce that self-doubt, humiliation and defeat, once interpreted as weaknesses, are now to be understood as strengths. It will be a test of the churches' integrity as people of the Cross to expect of them that they now live like, with and for the destitute people of the world.

Will there ever be enough jobs to go round? New technology brings prosperity to many people, but for many others it means redundancy and unemployment. As the world economy becomes more and more competitive, some people are giving up hope that they will ever work again (Sheppard 1997:29-30). If working brings a person some measure of economic, social, psychological and spatial security, then to find oneself unemployed means being faced with a whole range of problems which, combined, affect the unemployed economically, socially, psychologically and spiritually at the same time.

2.2.   UNEMPLOYMENT IN SOUTH AFRICA

"Unemployment is a grave form of economic injustice in our time" (Beukes 1999:356). Through work or employment, economic benefits such as income, money, food and healthcare are distributed in society. If cyclic unemployment becomes structural unemployment, where many people are unemployed and stay unemployed for a long time, then something has gone wrong in society. Then people are not being cared for. The result is structured or systemic economic injustice. In such a society, people have no way of caring for themselves and no way of protecting themselves, because the basic manner in which society should meet basic needs is non-existent. Basic economic benefits are not being distributed to a large part of society because unemployed people lack the means of obtaining an income (Beukes 1999:356-357).

Unemployment is a massive and rapidly growing problem in the world as a whole, and in South Africa in particular. The consequences of unemployment have assumed proportions comparable to those of a whole series of hurricanes sweeping across the country (Nürnberger 1991:28).

Lundahl and Petersson (2004:734-735) argue that unemployment is clearly associated with poverty. Whether or not a household includes a person with a wage income largely determines whether it falls under the poverty line. Variation in wage income is the most important reason for current income differences in South Africa today. As long as employment does not increase, it will be difficult to rid South African society of class differences. It is impossible to isolate crime from conditions in the labour market. It appears almost as if the difficulties of entering the labour market and, in worst case scenario, unemployment, have led the young to believe that honesty does not pay. Of course, people have different degrees of moral objections to engaging in crime, but, all things being equal, the proportion of criminals in the population is likely to increase when labour market conditions worsen (Lundahl & Petersson 2004:730-731).

Unemployment means that the human potential of a section of the population is not utilised for securing its survival and well-being. Some members need to be supported by other members. That again implies that the society as a whole is less prosperous than it could be. Some of its manpower and training is being wasted. Modern technology often replaces human labour. The people who become unemployed as a result of this, might be highly educated, trained and skilled. Unemployment causes this manpower and training to become redundant. Large-scale unemployment means deprivation of the society as a whole (Nürnberger 1991:32).

Human beings should be able to survive and prosper. Survival largely depends on one's capacity to "make a living" through work, unless one is cared for by one's family, welfare institutions or the State (Nürnberger 1991:32). Unfortunately, the work ethic in Africa has always been at a low ebb and could be an impediment to getting things done. It also accounts for widespread starvation in many parts of the world because a basic principle is at stake here: if a person does not work, then he/she does not deserve to eat. This is primarily due to a socialistic philosophy, which discourages initiative and makes people heavily dependent on the government for more and more public goods and services (Hilliard 1995:16).

South Africans have been oppressed for more than forty years because the market economy was put to the service of a regime which supported racism. The market economy provided neither freedom nor consumer goods for all South Africans. Rather it exploited Black, Asian and Coloured South Africans in order to pile up profits and privileges for white South Africans and their businesses. The lessons of communism and of the South African type of capitalism will have to be learned, namely, that no small group of individuals can be permitted to define the common good (Williams 1995:770-773).

In modern Western contexts especially, persons are only considered to be worthy members of the community if they are seen to work for their living or make an active contribution to the overall welfare of the community. Those who do not, are considered to be "social parasites, both in their own eyes and in the eyes of the public. To be considered a parasite implies contempt (Nürnberger 1991:33). It is therefore also important to consider what the effects of unemployment are on an individual's experience of her-/himself and on life in general. Unemployment is "the great tsunami of the economy that goes lurching on, and people are caught up in the tidal wave" (Kew 2001:73). Unemployment affects the individual as well as the community as a whole.

2.3. THE EFFECTS OF UNEMPLOYMENT

Each day thousands of people face the involuntary loss of jobs through no fault of their own. It can be difficult to understand the effects of unemployment unless one can enter into some of the experiences. My research was thus also concerned with providing opportunities for the participants to reflect on the effects of unemployment on their lives, which I will discuss in chapter 3.

2.3.1. On the individual

The experience of unemployment can have a variety of effects on the individual. It also appears that some of these effects may occur together, possibly as symptoms that comprise a syndrome. In fact, counsellors have reported as widespread among unemployed workers an "unemployment syndrome" that is characterised by a lack of confidence and low self-esteem (Kaufman 1982:46). Although unemployment impacts on the individual's family, friends, former co-workers and the community, the loss is borne most directly by the individual. The individual faces many challenges and effects of unemployment and in the following sections I will discuss some of the effects of unemployment on the life-world of the individual.

2.3.1.1. *Psychological*

The drastic reduction in status and prestige following unemployment and the failure to find work can affect the individual's self-esteem (Kaufman 1982:27). A loss of self-esteem also appears to be associated with self-blame and depression. The depression the unemployed person suffers from, consists of self-blame for the past (for losing his/her job), feelings of losing control in the present state of unemployment, and no hope for the future (of finding employment again). Studies reveal that individuals who fail to achieve their aspirations evaluate themselves as inferior and are likely to report feelings of guilt, shame or depression (Kaufman 1982:31).

A sense of failure leads the unemployed person to face very real other psychological problems like experiences of worthlessness, feelings of being isolated from society and anxiety for the future (Le 2003:16). Unemployment creates an open-ended situation from which there is no escape until another job is found. Because the unemployed person has no idea when that will happen, anxiety can grow with each passing day. If the anxiety is not identified and addressed, it can paralyse the unemployed person and frustrate the job search (Riehle 2001:43-44). Unemployment can also create frustration and anger that can lead to violence, substance abuse and sometimes even suicide (Le 2003:16).

Psychological effects are closely related to the religious dimension. The experience of being rejected by one's fellow human beings often translates into the feeling of being rejected by God (Nürnberger 1991:32). Some people, when thrown out of work, cave in spiritually on themselves – turning it all against themselves, rather than moving on to the next step of finding suitable employment (Kew 2001:73). When a person faces unemployment, there is often a need for deeper spirituality and for reflection about God's presence at this time of pain and trial. Unemployment might also create an opportunity to ask: "Is God at work here? Does God have a vocation for me?" This can be a time

for intense discernment of God's calling and one's vocational response. Losing a job opens one up to new possibilities and options and to remember again that God has something for one to do (Lewis 1993:664-678).

2.3.1.2. *Financial/Material*

Unemployed people themselves are those who have to bear directly the sufferings and burdens caused by unemployment. Unemployment takes from them the right of having the income that they need in order to live. Hourly wages or salary and benefits (health, life and disability insurance, paid holidays) are gone.

In returning the employee identification card that granted a role, rights and access privilege to facilities, the person becomes a corporate nonentity (Mitchell & Anderson 1983:37). Like others, they have the same basic human needs: food, clothing and adequate housing. They also need the same services for themselves and their families: health, education and recreation. But they have to reduce these very necessities because of their situation of unemployment (Le 2003:15).

2.3.1.3. *Relational*

When individuals are abruptly barred from the workplace, they lose daily face-to-face contact with others who often share work, goals and extracurricular interests. Former colleagues may never even say goodbye. When contact is maintained, talk about the company or department may be strained or limited as proprietary information, opinions and insight can no longer be shared (Mitchell & Anderson 1983:38). Friends may also be unable to fill the gaps. Unemployed workers may feel ashamed, embarrassed or envious in the presence of employed friends, and may withdraw from their company (Mitchell & Anderson 1983:39).

2.3.1.4. *Systemic*

For the individual who has become unemployed, the loss of system and routine can be frightening and disorienting. Each day is like the last, with no place to go, no appointments to keep, no rules or regulations to follow, no company standards to keep, and no deadlines to meet. The individual can feel lost, with no defining surroundings, schedules or context (Kew 2001:73). Attempts to move into new contexts, such as family cook or cleaner, may be silently resented or rejected outright, emphasising feelings of uselessness and failure. The unemployed individual may feel increasingly isolated as the normal psychological and social interdependencies engaged in on the job are now painfully exposed (Mitchell & Anderson 1983:44-45).

2.3.1.5.   *Physical*

According to Kaufman (1982:31), unemployment has been shown to increase stress and stress-related health problems. The unemployed person may suffer from somatic symptoms of headaches, insomnia, loss of appetite, weight loss, fatigue, dizziness and indigestion. The unemployed are also subjected to increased risk of serious illness, including heart disease, ulcers, and psychological problems. Many turn to drugs or increase their alcohol and tobacco consumption (Mitchell & Anderson 1983:46).

The above-mentioned effects of unemployment on the individual raises the question: "What is the link between work and identity?" Having a job can be a benefit to workers in at least two ways. It gives them money - and therefore dignity - in a society where money counts. And it gives them an identity, a role as a worker, and therefore dignity in a society where one's worth is measured by one's work (Broman, Hamilton & Hoffman 2001:70).

Our self-image is largely defined by our work. Often the first question asked after being introduced, is: "What do you do?" Generally, the reply states a job title and place of employment. In contemporary society, we rarely define ourselves by our familial relationships, values, beliefs or avocations. Job loss strips the individual of this identity.

Individuals experiencing role loss may feel disoriented, powerless, or uncertain of how they are expected to behave. These feelings may make them feel that it is justifiable to lie, to deceive, to make promises they have no intention of keeping. Upon meeting an acquaintance, for example, unemployed individuals may simply assume their old roles, use their old titles and employers in the exchange of personal information, and even promise to use their influence for some cause. Sadly, individuals may lie to family and themselves about the true state of their being (Mitchell & Anderson 1983:42-43).

Involuntary unemployment forces the individual into serious re-evaluation of self-definition, failure and success, and, accordingly, hopes and dreams for the future. The individual has to formulate new plans, choose a new path and create new possibilities for her-/himself (Mitchell & Anderson 1983:41). Unemployment does not only affect individuals, but has a profound effect on their families as well.

2.3.2 On the family

Beyond unemployment's effect on the individual, the stress of unemployment may have an impact on the whole family. Immediate family members often struggle with their adjustment to a reduced income and perhaps a permanently lowered status and standard of living (Mitchell & Anderson 1983:40).

According to Broman, Hamilton and Hoffman (2001:77-78), financial hardship is likely to pervade and poison the emotional climate of the home like few other issues. Workers who suffer from financial hardship also suffer from – or inflict – conflict with loved ones. The higher the level of hardship experienced, the higher the level of conflict. This stress created by a life crisis like unemployment, has been found to be an important factor predisposing parents to child abuse (Kaufman 1982:50). Spouses are also more likely to be neglected or abused and many families split apart (Mitchell & Anderson 1983:40).

Kaufman (1982:60) states that one of the greatest impacts of unemployment on the family is that of role changes for husband and wife. Gender role stereotypes, built on the patriarchal discourse, dictate the respective roles of the spouses. Patriarchy is "the institutionalization of male dominance over women in general" (Pease 1997:79). Within this discourse a husband is regarded as the "head of the family". According to traditional gender roles, "the male has the responsibility of the economic provider. He must perform, achieve and compete in the outside world of work. His partner's traditional area of responsibility lies within the family – nurture and take care of domestic duties" (Jenkins 1990:39). Furthermore, the dominant masculinity discourse harbours a dichotomy of expectations of what it is to be a man. Men are expected to be powerful, successful and able to take control, while simultaneously they need to be caring and understanding partners and fathers in families (McLean, Carey & White 1996:19).

Evidence suggests that married men do not gain status from their partner's employment status. Thus an unemployed married man cannot easily recede behind the status of an employed wife. For men, masculinity may be a concept linked intricately with having a job. When a man becomes unemployed, his masculine identity as a breadwinner, or being economically independent, is threatened. Moreover, for married men the threat of stigma resulting from shifts in authority within the family may also exist. When a man's status as a worker and provider for the household is taken from him, then the source of many of his privileges is also threatened and his position may be challenged by other family members (McFadyen 1995:241).

Another consequence of unemployment, for men, is the loss of the father's authority, especially among teenage children. Older children tend to view their fathers as failures and are highly frustrated by the effects the loss of their father's income have on their own needs and interests. Younger children are less affected than teenagers and may enjoy their father's presence at home. Children may be forced to change schools or may perform poorly in school, exhibit excess absenteeism, or become hostile to others (Riehle 1991:49-52).

2.3.3. Socially

As a social event, unemployment affects the life of the community as a whole. The pressures imposed on those who are out of work impact on everyone in the community. Unemployment is, therefore, a major factor in increased family breakdown, homelessness, street kids, drug usage, alcoholism, violence and other crimes (Le 2003:15).

When people become unemployed, they might lose their houses, modes of transport and, therefore, their independence. The unemployed thus increasingly become a burden to the community they live in. In addition to taking away the opportunities of providing for their own well-being, unemployment deprives people of opportunities to contribute to society. Le (2003:16) states that by losing the right to build society, tensions are created between the unemployed and others, often leaving the unemployed person isolated and unsupported. This might create frustration and anger that can lead to violence, substance abuse and even sometimes to suicide.

The widespread feelings of shame and stigma from unemployment lead the unemployed to isolate themselves socially to protect their self-image (Kaufman 1982:34). Professionals appear much more likely than other workers to seek such protection by avoiding social contacts. Since the evaluation of others is important to the self-image of the professional, that image can be protected by avoiding others through social isolation, or by diminishing the importance of their evaluation (Kaufman 1982:35).

When people become unemployed, they experience a loss; the resulting grief must be recognised and mourned in order for them to become whole again (Antczak 1999:448).

2.4.   GRIEF ASSOCIATED WITH JOB LOSS

Involuntary job loss can be experienced as a very real death, as is implied in the violent language that describes the event. The individual may be "sacked", "canned", "cut", "severed", "terminated" or simply "fired" (Antczak 1999:448).

Within a social construction discourse, language is viewed as that through which reality is created. It is in language that societies construct their views of reality. Speaking is thus not neutral or passive. Every time we speak, we create reality - we share words and thus legitimate the distinctions that those words bring forth (Freedman & Combs 1996:28-29). The above-mentioned expressions, such as "cut", "terminated" or "fired", thus constitute reality to the unemployed person, and words such as "terminated" and "sacked" constitute the reality of loss. As with physical death, euphemisms are often used by employers to disguise or lessen the reality. Workers may "lose a job", be "laid-off", "unassigned" or "de-selected"; faceless and nameless positions and corporations are "downsized" or "restructured". However, according to Antczak (1999:448), these expressions do nothing to lessen the pain. This connects with Drewery and Winslade's (1996: 34) notion that language is not simply a representation of our thoughts, feelings and lives. Language is part of a multi-layered interaction: the words we use influence the ways we think and feel about the world.

As in other types of loss, the grief that is experienced with job loss is individual and may vary according to whether the loss was anticipated or sudden, the length of time in the company or position, the individual's personal values and beliefs, and personal investment in work and contentment in the job at the time of lay off (Antczak 1999:449). The unemployed person is going through the whole cycle of grief, because when a job is lost, the person has to let go of what might have been. So there is some inner dying that goes on, and there is the anger that accompanies the question: "Why me?" The unemployed person has to deal with the whole array of questions that have to be dealt with when a loved one is lost (Kew 2001:73).

Antczak (1999:454) states that those who have experienced job loss compare the loss, grieving, and subsequent job search to "an emotional roller coaster". When the first rumours circulate or notice is actually given, individuals often experience denial, numbness, shock and a sense of unreality. There may be confusion, disorientation or bewilderment and the individual is drained of energy (Mitchell & Anderson 1983:62).

Individuals often experience anger which may be directed at God, at family members and friends, or at themselves. Anger may last for a few days or for many months. Although it may lessen with time, the anger may never completely disappear. The individual may also experience emptiness - a sense of self-depletion and purposelessness.

The unemployed may have no motivation, experience unbelievable boredom and believe they have no reason to get out of bed in the morning. Other emotions experienced by the unemployed person might be loneliness, ignorance, uselessness and isolation (Antczak 1999:455).

It is important for the pastoral counsellor, chaplain or congregational minister to understand the grief that affects so many individuals suffering from involuntary job loss, to reflect upon the loss theologically and to support those who are experiencing this trauma. The grief must be addressed if the individual is to heal (Antczak 1999:456). Pastoral care can assist the individual "between jobs" to deal with all these above-mentioned issues, because pastoral care "focuses on the ordinary lives of Church members". It seeks to stimulate people to fulfill their potential in all areas (De Jongh van Arkel 2000:33), thus also during the period of being unemployed. The faith community can play a significant role in this healing process, as will be discussed in Chapter 4.

2.5 CHAPTER SUMMARY

This chapter has explored the social construction of work, the effects of unemployment and the grief associated with job loss.

In the next chapter the dominant themes which were identified during the data analysis process, will be discussed.

CHAPTER 3: DOMINANT THEMES IDENTIFIED AND DISCOURSES INVOLVED

3.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter focuses on the dominant themes which were identified during the data-analysis process. The discourses of work-identity, patriarchy, the Protestant Work Ethic (PWE), the revised work ethic as well as the effects of unemployment on the individual's sense of self, are considered. In conclusion, there is a discussion on the reaffirmation of identity.

3.2 INTRODUCING THE PARTICIPANTS

Henry is a 59-year-old male. He is married with five children. In 1974 Henry took over the farming business from his father. Financial difficulties forced him to sell the farm in 1982 and the family moved to Pretoria. Henry has no formal academic qualifications and he started working in the insurance industry. He did a couple of different jobs over the years and opened his own second-hand car dealership in 1990. The business experienced many ups and downs and eventually led to Henry's sequestration in 1995. Henry's desert experience with unemployment started after his sequestration. Due to the fact that he had no formal academic qualifications, he drifted in and out of temporary employment and lengthy periods of unemployment over the last 11 years.

Milton is a 58-year-old male. He is in a second marriage and the couple has three children between them. Milton was the managing director of a pharmaceutical company for 12 years until 1990, when he took a retrenchment package. He bought a distributorship for Duracell batteries, which he lost in 1996 due to Duracell's decision to opt for direct representation in South Africa. Milton then opened an advertising agency and was so successful that he decided to take in a partner. In 2000 the partner disappeared to Germany with a lot of money from the business. This forced Milton to close the company in 2001. Since then he has not been successful in finding full-time employment and has experienced times of unemployment in-between temporary jobs.

Dick is a 34 year old male. He is married with three children. Dick was employed by the South African Police Service until 2001, when he became medically unfit due to depression. He then worked in the insurance industry for three years, but could not cope with the stressful environment and decided to resign in 2004. Since then Dick has been unemployed.

I heard cries of desperation during my first encounters with these clients. All of them were on a desert road "between jobs". Being unemployed made them feel unworthy, inadequate and incompetent. Milton described his experience of being "between jobs" as follows: "I've always looked at my job, you know, as who I am. When you lose your job it's like, if I don't have a job anymore, who am I now?"

Henry shared with me how unemployment robbed him of his self-image and confidence: "I'm feeling naked, as if I've been stripped of my dignity. People respect you less, they treat you like a charity case."

Dick commented on his experience of unemployment: "I'm feeling so vulnerable. When you're unemployed, you feel less of a man!"

These men were struggling with feelings of being deprived of their identities. Their identities were intertwined with their jobs. Since they lost their jobs, it has become increasingly difficult to answer the question: "Who am I?" This is the important question of identity.

3.3 DISCOURSES THAT INFLUENCE THE EXPERIENCE OF UNEMPLOYMENT

3.3.1 The discourse of work-identity

Our identity, or sometimes called our self-concept, is crucial for positioning ourselves in life. It is the centre of how we view others and the world (Goud & Arkoff 1998:1). The question of identity "Who am I?", gives rise to more questions in the following poem on Identity:

Who am I? What am I? Where am I?
No one can answer these questions –
Why have I been so afraid to try?
I know if I look it's all there to see:

So I opened one small door to look inside
And from out of that door a small voice cried,
"Have you come to set me free?"
It scared me a bit – should I close the door?
No, I had to find out whose voice had cried,
Should I step inside and ask the voice to say more?

31

Perhaps if I took just one small glance inside –
So I peered through the door, but all was dim;
Could I summon the courage to step within-
And find the voice before its echo died?

- Anonymous

Who am I? We may define ourselves primarily by roles such as occupation, marital status or organisational membership. We may define ourselves by individual qualities such as how we think, believe or feel. The confidence I have in my identity will vary. Sometimes there will be a strong sense of who I am and where I am going in life. Then there are times of questioning and doubt about who this person is inside my skin. Identity changes can occur rapidly or gradually. Some identity changes are forced upon a person, while others are natural developmental shifts, and still others are the product of deliberate effort (Goud & Arkoff 1998:2). Gergen (1991:139) states "[O]ne's identity is continually emergent, reformed and re-directed as one moves through the sea of ever-changing relationships. In the case of 'who am I?' it is a teeming world of provisional possibilities." Gergen's research suggests that we are considerably affected by the situations in which we find ourselves – the self we are in one situation may be very different from the self we are in another. Different environments may prompt different thoughts and feelings about ourselves and therefore different behaviours (Goud & Arkoff 1998:11).

According to Drewery and Winslade (1996:34), we make sense of our lives in the context of our social history, shaping stories about the groups we belong to and about how we came to be who, how, and where we are. Such stories constitute something of our identity; they are the background context that gives the possibility of coherence to our lives. Within the work discourse, one's identity is constructed by the occupation, job title, position and social status.

Discourses are the frameworks we use to make sense of the world, and they structure our relations with one another. Discourses offer us positions in patterns of relationships with other people. It is possible to hold more than one position within the same discourse. In the case of the work discourse, one can have the position of manager, colleague, friend and mentor at the same time. All these discursive positionings shape the individual's work-identity. When individuals lose their jobs, it is a threat to their identity because of the loss of those work-related roles that constituted their identity. Their work-identity is thus intact while employed, but when the job is lost, individuals become marginalised by that same work discourse and this also becomes a threat to their identity.

Consider the scene at a social gathering. Perhaps a trifle uncomfortable, perhaps wishing we were home with a good book, we do our best to befriend a stranger. Inevitably we ask or hear the question: "And what do you do?". It's the traditional ice-breaker, the inquiry everybody seems to expect. In recent times, with the dilemma of unemployment, there has been talk of whether or not one should ask this question. Yet, if we do not, we are accused of assuming that the other person does not work or does not define her-/himself in terms of work. It is clear that our jobs and careers remain critically important in our assessment of others and ourselves. Curiously, a person's job is so essential to her/his identity and self-conception, one almost never thinks about it (Cottle 2001:10).

The centrality of work in the lives of many people reduces their ability to find meaning in anything else (Beder 2000:267). This statement is illustrated by Milton's expression regarding work. "There's only two worlds for me: either you work every day in a normal nine-to-five job with a couple weeks' vacation, or you're dead! There's no in-between… working is breathing. It's something you don't think about; you must do it and it keeps you alive. When you stop, you die!"

Acknowledging the impact that the centrality of work plays in people's lives, as well as the lived reality of many people being in-between work, we perhaps need to find new ways of judging and valuing each other, which are not dependent on work and income. The search for social status is an important determinant of people's behaviour, and most excess consumption is driven by it. The discourse of materialism, which is so prevalent in contemporary society, is feeding into this dilemma. The question is: can enough people see through the conditioning that we are subject to and recognise that it is detrimental to our future? (Beder 2000:270).

The way we see ourselves - our identity - is strongly influenced by how others see us. In the context of this discussion, the following statement by Gilbert and Cooper, social psychological theorists (quoted in Amundson 1994:98) is apposite: "our self-conceptions hinge upon others' conceptions of us. In jointly constructing social reality, people mutually determine each other's identities – we become, in a sense, what others believe us to be."

The establishment of identity is influenced by a mutual interchange, a negotiation process, whereby personal identity is established through ongoing interaction with others. During this process the individual strikes two bargains - one with the world and one with her-/himself (Amundson 1994:98). The actual content of others' opinions seems to be less relevant to identity formation than how these opinions are perceived. Our perspectives and beliefs about a particular person or situation tend to

influence heavily how we approach and evaluate the world around us. To fully appreciate and understand the identity negotiation process, it is important to keep in mind the perspective of the person (Amundson 1994:99).

Work is essential to an individual's self-concept, as a source of values and structure in life. It is widely assumed in our society that individuals' work is an integral part of their identity. If work is crucial to the concept which individuals have of themselves, it will also be crucial to their relationships with others, because the ways in which individuals relates to others in their overt behaviour depend largely on how they see and feel about themselves (Kelvin 1981:2).

Milton comments on the importance of work and its role in the construction of one's identity: "When I was the managing director of a company, I had a certain image, people looked up to me, my opinions were respected. Now that I'm unemployed, I've lost my presence. I'm a non-entity."

An occupation is a socially recognised set of work activities. It therefore implies a place in the social division of labour (Kelvin 1981:3). Paid work has become essential for defining a person's individual identity. When asked who they are, most people identify themselves by their occupation "I am an engineer", or "I am a secretary", or, lack of paid occupation: "I am unemployed" or even "I am retired" (Gini & Sullivan 1989:124). In earlier times, when most people were farmers, occupation did not differentiate one person from another. Today, occupation is more likely to say something special about people and who they are. It says something about skills and inclinations. It has become a basis on which a person can build an identity (Beder 2000:115).

For most of us the primary source of self-worth and sense of self is our work. In work we come both to know ourselves and orient ourselves to the external world. Work allows us to establish a coherent web of expectations of the rhythm, direction and definition of our lives (Gini & Sullivan 1989:23). Pascarella (1984:17) states that for some people work has practically been their only source of identity and companionship. Dulling as their tasks may be, they have prided themselves in doing the best they know how, because the workplace has been not just a place to be, but a community. A paid job has become a "badge of membership in the bigger society and an almost indispensable symbol of self-worth." (Gini & Sullivan 1989:86). The higher up on the occupational scale people are, the more likely they are to identify with their occupation and be self-motivated.

Dick expressed his feelings of a "lost identity" in the following words: "What identity can I have as a house-husband? What value do I add to the world? I've become a nobody!" Dick's expression

connects with the preceding paragraph, because he felt that being a house husband was not recognised by society as an occupation.

The irony is that at a time when most of the population in industrialised countries can conceive of no identity outside of work, corporations have been dramatically reducing their workforces, retrenching layers of management who had expected lifetime employment with their companies, and destroying the job security that had once formed the basis of employee loyalty. Millions of people around the world are finding themselves without identity and purpose (Beder 2000:127). If individuals' identities are determined by their jobs, what happens to them when they become unemployed? According to Zelinksky (1997:41), "We have learned to define ourselves by our jobs. There is something seriously wrong with this: if we think we are what we do for a living, we have lost most of our character". To be unemployed places one outside the accepted, taken-for-granted system. It puts in question one's capacity to carry responsibility for oneself, let alone for one's dependents (Kelvin 1981:3).

What then does the unemployed man do? He cannot allow himself to be perceived as a victim, although many would label him as such (and treat him as if he were), for this too, would be "unmanly". He thus finds himself lost, literally in a no-man's land (Cottle 2001:197). Being "between jobs" means he cannot consider himself a man and he is faced with the overwhelming question: "Am I a man or a mouse?" The discourse of patriarchy plays a central role in an attempt to answer this question.

3.3.2 The discourse of patriarchy

Patriarchy is a discourse winding back as far as we can trace history. Patriarchy is the "institutionalization of male dominance over women and children in the family and the extension of male dominance over women in general" (Dench 1996:7). The inequalities between men and women and the pattern of social relations, combined with men's dominance in the world of work, in the public sphere, in politics, and culture, are what is usually meant by the term patriarchy. Originally this term had a much more specific meaning – referring to the rule of the patriarch or head of the family. Today it is more generally used to denote all the powers and privileges men enjoy as a group, in relation to women (Edley & Wetherell 1995:121). According to traditional gender roles, the male has the responsibility of the economic provider. He must perform, achieve and compete in the outside world of work. His partner's traditional areas of responsibility lie within the family – to nurture and take care of domestic duties (Jenkins 1990:39).

The role of the "good provider" was invented in the nineteenth century. To be a man one had to be not only a provider, but a good provider. The good provider had to achieve, to win, to succeed, to dominate. He was a bread "winner". He had to show strength, inventiveness, endurance – a whole range of traits henceforth defined as exclusively "masculine". Men were judged as men by the level of living they provided. They were judged by the myth that endows a money-making man with sexiness and virility, and is based on men's dominance, strength and ability to provide for and care for "his" woman (Bernard 1994:152). Many of those beliefs based on the "good–provider" role are still prevalent in our society today.

While he had been working, Milton's identity had been reinforced by his ability to provide. Losing his job had been a major blow to his image of himself as the "good provider". In his own words: "I want the best for my family. I can go without for myself, but not for my family. Unemployment lowers your standard of living. You have got to buy food that's not really top quality, you can't buy luxuries. You have got to cut back and you may possibly go into debt."

Work holds a variety of meanings for a man, and hence constitutes a variety of roles in his definition of self. The essential role would seem to be that of support: it is the job that enables a man to earn his living, which in turn allows him to support his family (Edley & Wetherell, 1995:120). Traditionally, even the lowliest workers have been afforded a measure of respect for being workers, particularly if they were males supporting a family. Their self-sacrifice was seen as a laudable effort to provide their families with opportunities and a standard of living that would have seemed impossible a few decades earlier. Breadwinners had a respected place in the family, made a recognised contribution to society and had their masculinity affirmed (Gini & Sullivan 1989:125).

Identity and sense of mastery and competence are normally sustained in valued social roles as provider, spouse and parent within the family. Job loss disrupts these roles and the sense of personal identity and mastery they provide. Job loss introduces new and pressing agendas into the family that can disrupt previously stable household role allocations and relationships. When role reallocation due to job loss involves shifts in authority and status in the family, the resulting shift in power dynamics can lead to conflicts that threaten the stability of the couple's relationship (Price, Friedland & Vinokur 1998:309).

Henry's story represents one of the more complex aspects of men's unemployment, namely the exchange with one's wife of the traditional male and female roles. Nothing hit him harder, however, than the pain of his financial dependence on his wife. It was not only that she worked regular hours,

or even out-earned him, it was his dependence on her as the financial provider of the household that really got the better of him. Inequality in a relationship was one thing, but dependence on a woman was infantilising. It brought him back to childhood and it became intolerable. He described this experience in the following words: "I mean if the money's coming in, it doesn't really matter who earns it, these days, but I was brought up differently. My mum had to work part-time, but the main job was my dad's. This is the difference: the main job at the moment is my wife's and I can't bear it any more! There may be somebody else my age who's got different views, but I can't really accept that it is normal to do as I'm doing at the moment. How can I be dependent on my wife financially? I'm supposed to be the financial pillar of the household!"

Penfold (1985:276) asks the question regarding the involuntary house-husband: "Is this a recipe for disaster?" Beset already by financial pressures, the involuntary house-husband is in double jeopardy, emotionally. He suffers not only from the psychological effects of unemployment, but also from traditional sex role expectations. These expectations add to his anxiety and self-blame and fuel the bitter resentment of the wife as the reluctant breadwinner. Most men expect to provide most of the income for the family. Despite some liberalisation of attitudes and involvement in parenting, a man's identity and sense of efficacy are still linked more closely to career achievement than to family relationships. Thus, becoming unemployed is a shattering blow.

Dick confirmed the statement made by Penfold (1985:276) regarding the involuntary house-husband in his description of being "Mr house-husband:" "Being a house-husband doesn't count. You don't leave home, you don't get vacations, you don't get paid. So it doesn't count for work. Not working destroys a man, because not working means he can't be a man. I'm not a father, I'm not a husband, I'm not a bachelor, I'm not even a common labourer. I've become a kid, a sexless kid. Not working? I can't believe what it would be like. It's like not having your arms or legs!"

Job loss and economic hardships can also place strains on parent-child relationships. These strains not only undermine the parent's sense of identity and mastery in the parental role, but often increase the likelihood of parental irritability, conflictual interactions between parent and child, harsh punishment, family violence and child abuse (Price, Friedland & Vinokur 1998:309).

Men experience a demand within themselves to provide everything they can for their children. They fear that their children would be disadvantaged if they have to go without an activity or product that they want. "Men experience family stresses about how much the kids need and want. The fathers feel like failures because they can't give all of those things" (Dench 1996:45). All the participants

shared with me feelings of inadequacy because, due to financial strain, they could not provide for the children's physical needs in the way they did before.

Henry told me about the financial needs of his children: "Two of my children are still at varsity and the youngest one is in matric. We had to get student loans for them at our bank and my wife had to stand surety. I'm the father and I couldn't even do that for them because of my sequestration in 1995."

Dick summed up his financial predicament regarding his children's physical needs: "My older son wants to take judo lessons, but we can't afford it because of my unemployment. The twins are still in nursery school and that's costing a fortune nowadays. We just don't have money to pay for any extras regarding extramural activities for the kids and it makes me so sad. I want to give them everything I didn't have as a child!"

As Christians, the research participants' experience of being "between jobs" was also influenced by a Bible verse which I'm quoting from the Amplified Bible, 11 Thess. 3:10 "For while we were yet with you, we gave you this rule and charge: If anyone will not work, neither let him eat." The virtue of work is central to the PWE.

3.3.3   The discourse of the Protestant work ethic (PWE)

In the context of this discussion, the following by W. Oates is apposite: "The so-called PWE can be summarised as follows: a universal taboo is placed on idleness, and industriousness is considered a religious ideal; waste is a vice, and frugality a virtue; complacency and failure are outlawed, and ambition and success are taken as sure signs of God's favour; the universal sign of sin is poverty, and the crowning sign of God's favour is wealth" (quoted by Furnham 1990:13).

At the heart of the PWE is the belief that God achieves things through the labour of the human being and that work is a means of discipline, a prescription against sexual temptation and religious doubt, and a moral necessity – the purpose of life. Laziness and idleness – any condition of worklessness – must therefore be a source of evil and the failure to impose discipline (Beder 2000:96). Because the virtue of hard work is so central to the PWE, it is no surprise that, in general, people who endorse the PWE are unsympathetic to those out of work, or at least attempt to distinguish between the deserving and undeserving poor (McGrath 1999:34).

How do PWE beliefs and other work-related beliefs affect the beliefs and behaviours of the unemployed? According to Furnham (1990:183), unemployed people with strong PWE beliefs would become more depressed and anxious than unemployed people who did not believe in the ethic. Unemployed people with strong PWE beliefs would participate more frequently in a greater range of non-work (but work-like or work-substitute) activities than people who did not believe in the PWE. Furnham (1990:184) also hypothesises that unemployed people with strong PWE beliefs would persevere with more effort over a longer period to get a job, than unemployed people who did not believe in the PWE.

Dick commented on his view of the PWE: "The Bible states that he/she who doesn't work, can't eat. There is a Bible verse stating that, I don't know which verse. God doesn't want us to sit around. It feels to me as if people in church are staring at me. I actually don't want to go to church anymore."

Henry serves as an elder in the church and shared his feelings on the PWE with me: "I always thought unemployed people exploit the goodness of the church system. Now I've become a charity case myself. God forbids that I have to ask the church for assistance! God expects us to earn our living; one can't become a beggar."

The emphasis on work as a religious calling was gradually superseded by a materialistic quest for social mobility and material success. That has led to a new definition of the work ethic.

3.3.4   The discourse of the revised work ethic
Siegel (1983:28) defines the work ethic as "a value or belief (or a set of values and beliefs) concerning the place of work in one's life that either serves as a conscious guide to conduct or is simply implied in manifested attitudes and behaviour."

With the rise of capitalism, work came to be valued according to its productivity and wealth-creating potential. Wealth, as the supposed fruits of hard work, became an indicator of a person's worth and determined one's social standing. The success-oriented work ethic encouraged ambition, hard work, self-reliance, and self-discipline and held out the promise that such effort would be materially rewarded. Rather than emphasising religious virtues, the revised work ethic focused on character (Beder 2000:32).

Throughout the evolution of the work ethic, hard work has been associated with good character and virtue. Work has become the central feature of most people's lives, the sources of their self-identity,

income, status and the respect others give them. It gives them purpose and provides them with social relations and a structure to their day. And, just as important as being a motivator for work, the work ethic with its associated beliefs of individual responsibility and fair reward for hard work, has legitimised the social structure of inequalities. It has been the lens through which social inequalities have been viewed. It says that those who are poor deserve to be so because they lack a work ethic; those who are rich also deserve to be so because they have worked harder and taken better advantage of opportunities which are available to everyone (Beder 2000:260-265).

However, Barbash (1983:256) argues that the presence of large-scale unemployment acts to undermine the credibility of the system of which the work ethic is a part. A work ethic makes sense only if there is work. "It's hard to get people to be productive when all they see around them is layoffs. They figure the more we produce, the less they'll need us (Barbash 1983:257).

Milton shared his disillusionment with the principles the work ethic subscribes to: "I've been a hard worker all my life, I've been in a top position in a company, but now since I've become unemployed, I've lost the respect of society. Work has been so important in my life, everything revolved around my job. What's the meaning of a work ethic without jobs for people?"

To Dick the work ethic became a mockery: "How can you believe in a work ethic if you are a house-husband? What value do I add to society? I can't even find a job where I can apply the beliefs of the work ethic!"

One can ask the question: "Is job loss equal to identity loss?" In an attempt to answer this question, we will look at the reality of being "between jobs".

3.4 THE REALITY OF BEING UNEMPLOYED

To be unemployed is to feel different, looked-down-upon, ineffective and excluded from the normal patterns of life of normal people. In losing their jobs, unemployed individuals loses much of their sense of belonging to society. In effect, they lose not only their occupation, but also much of their social identity (Kelvin 1981:4). To ensure that there is no desirable social identity outside of employment, the unemployed are stigmatised. They tend to be portrayed in the media as either frauds, hopeless cases or lazy bludgers who are living it up at the taxpayers' expense. The unemployed are depicted as remaining so as a result of their lack of worth and motivation rather than as a consequence of corporations sacking large numbers of workers or other social factors that cause

people to remain unemployed. As a result of their jobless status they are subject to a range of economic and social discriminations, including stigmatisation, economic and social invisibility, stereotyping, denial of authority and exclusion from the job market (Beder 2000:161).

Milton reflected on his experience at the commercial bank where he's been a customer for many years: "I've always been treated as a respected customer by my bank, especially during the years when I was the managing director of a company and also when I had a successful advertising agency. Since the last time I've been in full-time employment, my bank is treating me as if I've lost my credibility and value as a customer. What happened to my value as a human being?"

Dick commented on his social invisibility as "Mr house-husband": "Society doesn't value the role I fulfill in my household. The fact that I do all the domestic chores, including cooking, and also act as chauffeur for the children, add up to nothing. I don't create an income and that makes me invisible in the eyes of society."

Henry described his "reality" of feeling ineffective and looked-down-upon: "I've attended a social function at my wife's work. She's a lecturer at a University. I have no academic qualifications and not even a job title at present, so it felt to me as if my opinions weren't valued, as if I was looked-down-upon!"

Price, Friedland and Vinokur (1998:310) argue that job loss may also influence an individual's sense of personal and social identity, because unemployment is a stigmatised social status. Though some jobs are low in status, few are as stigmatised as unemployment. The fact that unemployment status represents a form of "spoiled identity" is nicely illustrated by the fact that job losers will often construct an alternative work identity such as "consultant" or "student" rather than describe themselves as unemployed. This is an example of how the language we use constitutes our world and beliefs. "It is in language that societies construct their views of reality" (Freedman & Combs 1996:28). Thus the different terms people "between jobs" use to describe themselves, create different realities for them, as well as influencing other people's perception of them. This tactic avoids the erosion of self-esteem and demoralisation often associated with socially devalued roles and status. More highly educated and affluent job losers suffer more from the loss of identity than from the loss of material resources. On the other hand, less affluent and less well educated job losers suffer more from the increases in financial strain associated with unemployment.

The personal identity aspects of job loss, including the inability to maintain a clear sense of personal identity, lost feelings of control and mastery, and a stigmatised status, may involve different social and psychological mechanisms. For those who have to accept a less prestigious job, stigma may be difficult to overcome. Loss of income and status may lead to a devaluing of work and career goals to maintain a sense of identity. Still other people may cope with threats to personal identity by reframing their sense of self, pursuing a simpler life, retiring and seeking other sources of life satisfaction (Price, Friedland & Vinokur 1998:311).

Unemployment has the potential to literally destroy people. The premise of a man's mental representation of his own being is predicated on his work and career. This representation commences its formation early in childhood when he is asked the question: "What are you going to be when you grow up?" (Cottle 2001:191). This soul-destroying aspect of unemployment is illustrated by the expressions of Henry and Dick. In Henry's words: "I'm deteriorating, I feel it happening. I'm watching myself deteriorating. I could write a book on what unemployment does to people, how it eats them up worse than cancer." Dick expressed himself as follows: "You can always be a failure with a job. But when you go for months without anything to do, it drives you mad. It's like I'm being starved. I've lost any drive I ever had. I don't know, really, if I could hold a job any more. I might be too afraid they'd be testing me and take the job away the first time I made a mistake. I can't eat, or sleep, there's no love, no sex, no touching!"

Job loss involves the loss of a social role. Because roles are used to construct the self, the loss of the central role of a worker represents a major challenge to a person's identity (Price, Friedland & Vinokur 1998:308). Ezzy (1993:43) argues that job loss is a form of status passage that directly disrupts an individual's attempt to sustain consistent and positive self-images and therefore increases the risk of mental problems. Price, Friedland and Vinokur (1998:308) agree with Ezzy's statement regarding the image of job loss as a status passage. Viewing job loss in this way highlights that job loss marks the beginning of a transition cycle or passage from one position in the life course to another.

The transition presents challenges to a person's identity by making it more difficult to sustain consistent self-evaluations. Furthermore, because multiple life domains are interrelated, role loss in one domain has radiating effects on other domains. Thus, loss of an occupational role also presents identity challenges to the individual in her/his role as a spouse, parent or friend. Dick explained to me how the loss of his occupational role challenged his role as a father: "My teenager son is challenging my authority as his father all the time since I've become 'Mr house-husband'.I think he's

ashamed of the fact that I'm staying at home while his mother is working. The twins aren't a problem. I think they enjoy the time I have to spend with them. But then, they are only five years old, so they don't understand the dynamics of the fact that I'm unemployed."

Job loss may also present a challenge to identity and self-esteem by altering an individual's network of friendships and social support. The loss of a job may result in the loss of a primary source of contact with friends. Since friendships often arise and are maintained by proximity, the bonds of friendship are more difficult to maintain when people are no longer employed by the same organisation. Over time, the frequency of contact with friends from the previous job decreases. There is some evidence that loss of friendship networks can erode mental health (Price, Friedland & Vinokur 1998:308).

Milton described how he experienced the effects of the loss of his occupational role in their social circle: "It is as if our friends are avoiding me, as if they are embarrassed to see me. Maybe they think I might want to borrow money from them. I've lost most of my friends since I've become unemployed. Have I become a different person now that I'm unemployed? Don't I add value to people's lives any more?" Studies by Amundson and Borgen (1987:97-106) of the dynamics of unemployment have clearly illustrated how an emotional roller-coaster often follows job loss. In this period of emotional turmoil, self-confidence is lowered, followed by a rapid drain of energy. The overall impact on identity is considerable.

The experiences of people "between jobs" confirm the considerable influence of others on identity. Within this context, the opinions of family members, friends, colleagues, employers and employment counsellors contribute to a sense of well-being or decline (Amundson & Borgen 1987:102). However resilient or self-assured an individual may be, losing a job or remaining unemployed can seriously undermine her/his self-esteem and sense of personal continuity and may be reinforced by further rebuttals from unsympathetic employers or insensitive acquaintances. Over time these changes in self-esteem can lead an individual to see her-/himself as being of lesser value as a person – a second-class citizen (Kates, Greiff & Hagen 1990:182).

Henry's sequestration in 1995 was a major blow to his self-esteem. He used the metaphor "rudderless ship" to describe his personal experience of the undermining of his sense of personal continuity. In his own words: "I was like a rudderless ship on the ocean of life. The financial storms were overwhelming at times. I often wondered if I would ever get to a safe harbour."

There is often a tendency for those who lose their jobs to blame themselves – usually unnecessarily – for what has taken place, portraying in an ever-worsening light their role in the unfolding of events over which they may have had no control. Milton shared with me how he often blamed himself for his ignorance regarding his business partner's embezzlement of money and disappearance to Germany: "I always prided myself on my discernment regarding people's behaviour. How could my partner deceive me like that? How can I trust people again?" This self-blame promotes a further personal devaluation at a time when the individual may already be feeling unwanted by, or different from, the rest of the community. For those whose jobs helped to define their identity, job loss may lead to a crisis of identity and changes in self-image (Kates, Greiff & Hagen 1990:185).

During my interviews with Milton, Henry and Dick, we explored the effects of these discourses on their lives. According to Freedman and Combs (1996:43), discourses "powerfully shape a person's choices about what life events can be storied and how they should be storied." The discourses of work-identity, patriarchy, the PWE and revised work ethic were prevalent in the lives of these men. The facet of their lives that was most affected by being "between jobs" was their sense of self.

3.5 SENSE OF SELF

According to White (2002:31), the phenomenon of failure has grown exponentially over recent decades. The sense of personal failure has never been more freely available to us and has never been more willingly dispensed as it is in these contemporary times. In my discussion about the discourse of work-identity (See 3.3.1) it became clear that work is essential to an individual's self concept, as a source of values and of structure to life. Thus, unemployment leads to a sense of personal failure.

Society confirms these feelings of personal failure by stigmatising the unemployed, portraying them in the media as either frauds, hopeless cases or lazy bludgers who are living it up at the taxpayers' expense (See 3.3). When these negative identity conclusions are more enduring, people experience them to be quite capturing of their lives. "Such conclusions are often found to be paralysing of action in regard to the predicaments of people's lives and can contribute to a strong sense of one's life being held in suspense, of one's life being frozen in time" (White 2002:31).

Unemployment had a detrimental effect on the research participants' sense of self. Unemployment robbed them of their self-image and confidence. Milton described his overall feelings about himself during the times of unemployment with an analogy of a decaying tree: "When you have a trunk that is starting to rot because it is not being properly nourished in the ground or isn't getting enough

sunlight or other essentials, as sure as night follows day, the branches start to be less healthy. The whole structure starts to go. My life seems like it was starting to rot just like that tree …"

Henry used the Octopus metaphor to describe the effects that unemployment had on his sense of self: "Unemployment is like an octopus with tentacles encroaching on all the facets of my life: my sense of self, my marriage, my relationship with my kids and my household. I'm losing control, I'm getting suffocated!"

Some of Dick's common self-talk, which contributed to his diminishing sense of self, went like this: "There's something innately wrong with me! Wham bam, am I still a man? The only thing I'm good for is being a house-husband, there is this constant battle within me, as to which part of me is going to win – the part that likes me or the part that thinks I'm good for nothing!"

In my interviews with the research participants, I recognised speech habits, which corresponded with Madigan's (2003:44-55) discussion on internalised injurious speech habits that contribute to the existence and maintenance of problems in people's lives as well as their sense of self. According to Madigan (2003:44), we partake in a ritual of ongoing internalised conversations with ourselves as a way of measuring ourselves against the external world, and trying to determine if we fit in, if we are acceptable and if we are normal.

This dialogue might become an internalised injurious speech habit when it evokes a difficult emotional experience and influences a reputation of ourselves as problematic in certain situations. The recognition of these injurious speech habits assisted me in gaining understanding of the phenomenon of being "between jobs", and the major impact it had on these people's sense of self. Reflecting back on the conversations I had with the participants, I have identified the following injurious speech habits:

3.5.1. Self-surveillance/audience

Problem conversations incorporate and engage our internalised self-surveillance process (looking, monitoring and judging the self) and bind this together with a dialogic audience of support (the thought that the "other" is looking, monitoring and judging us.) (Madigan 2003:47).

Henry told me how he experienced self-surveillance: "My wife is presently in the process of obtaining a doctorate. I don't have any academic qualifications, but my training in the School of Life

gets no recognition. I feel so incompetent when I compare myself with my wife. Her family is also very judgmental, they always make comments about my lack of academic qualifications.   My brother-in-law told me that I'm not his sister's equal."

According to White (2002:43), the dramatic growth of the phenomenon of personal failure is associated with the rise of a distinctly modern version of power that establishes an effective system of social control through what can be referred to as "normalising judgment". Modern systems of power encourage people to actively participate in the judgment of their own and other's lives, according to socially constructed norms. In our society it is the norm for men to be employed. This can be illustrated in the lives of married couples. The wife can still be at home and be a housewife, but if the husband becomes the house-husband because of unemployment, this phenomenon is frowned upon. The normalising judgment of people's lives has been made possible through the development of a whole new technology of power that employs various schemes and continuums of normality/abnormality, tables of performance, scales for the ranking of every human expression imaginable, and formulae for the ranking of persons in relation to each other (White 2002:43). When a person becomes unemployed, she/he loses the basis for this so-called ranking. In response to this, people are induced to work to close the gap between those locations and the ideals for personhood that are produced by socially constructed norms.

These ideals for personhood are represented by all of those contemporary norms about what it means to be a "real" or "authentic" person (White 2002:44). In this instance the contemporary norm of what it means to be a "real" person, is to be employed. All three the participants expressed feelings of "not measuring up" to people's expectations. Their unemployed status deprived them of their human dignity.

3.5.2. Illegitimacy

The habit of illegitimacy speaks to a person's experience of feeling a lack of connection, visibility and belonging in everyday life (Madigan 2003:49). People "between jobs" see themselves as less-than-worthy citizens. They feel they are illegitimate, unworthy and fraudulent. These feelings are often especially experienced when job interviews were unsuccessful.

Dick expressed his feelings of illegitimacy: "I've become the house-husband. I've got no workplace to go to. Being unemployed makes me feel unworthy. I don't have an income and I am dependent on my wife financially. I can't even go to the pub without asking her for money!"

3.5.3. Negative imagination/Invidious comparison

Negativity produces a shallow description of the fullness of lived personhood, leaving out experiences of survival, love and connection. Negative imagination produces a constant "worst case scenario of events". Negativity effects invidious comparison, as it will always compare a person "down" and treat her/him as a second-class citizen. No matter what the circumstances or story, the person is left with the feeling that she/he does not quite measure up to specified standards (Madigan 2003:51). The unemployed are portrayed in the media as remaining so as a result of their lack of worth and motivation. As a result of their jobless status they are subject to a range of economic and social discriminations, including stigmatisation, economic and social invisibility, denial of authority and exclusion from the job market (Beder 2000:161). This feeds into negative imagination because the unemployed are compared "down" and treated as second-class citizens.

Milton shared his experience of invidious comparison: "I feel so insignificant when I come across previous colleagues. They are all materially successful people and I don't even have a job. I've lost everything in life that spells success: the image, the luxurious house, the expensive German car". The positive stories in Milton's life, for example, being a good husband and father, became invisible to him due to negativity and comparison.

3.5.4. Hopelessness

Hopelessness is a surrender to the belief that all hopeful experience outside the problem frame is meaningless. Hopelessness inspires a sad paralysis of belief and performance. It directs a person towards a "dead end" view of her/his life and reduces the lived experience into a small and limiting picture (Madigan 2003:53). Hopelessness is prevalent in the unemployed person's life due to the lack of income, the high rate of unemployment and uncertainty about the future.

Henry's feelings of hopelessness were expressed as follows: "I went through a sequestration in 1995. Do you know what it's like when the sheriff arrives at your front door, the humiliation when your house is auctioned, the shame when the bank repossesses your vehicles? It's now ten years later and I don't know if I will ever recover financially!"

Milton shared his experience of hopelessness: "I'm 58 years old and can't find permanent employment. They say I'm too old! Why can't they give me credit for my expertise, my experience, the fact that I've been the managing director of a company for twelve years? Does all of that add up to nothing?"

Dick described his intense feelings of hopelessness: "I just want to give up on life! I'm 34 years old and not good enough for anything. I can't even face myself in the mirror any more!"

Hopelessness gives rise to feelings of helplessness. According to Cottle (2001:196), men are thrown back on their feelings of helplessness and fright, emotions that can be neither felt nor expressed if one is to remain true to one's traditional masculine identifications. Expressing anxiety about unemployment would be "unmanly". Unemployment hurls a man back on the very themes with which he felt uncomfortable as a child: dependency, sadness, fright, the need to be cared for; only now he is unable to express any of these sentiments and needs. To do so would be to once again become the boy.

In an attempt to counteract the detrimental effect of unemployment on the research participants' sense of self, we were committed to find ways of reaffirming their identities.

3.6. REAFFIRMING IDENTITY

Job loss marks an interruption in the natural process of reaffirming identity that is essential to maintaining mental health. These identity interruptions are stressful and the key to preventing their negative consequences is to allow a new identity to be affirmed. If people are able to negotiate new identities that are satisfactory, the negative effects of job loss may be minimised (Price, Friedland & Vinokur 1998:126).

Richardson (2004:96) argues that, regardless of how you become unemployed, your public label or persona has changed. Not being able to lean on a job or occupation for identity, can be frightening to professionals who have relied on a title, position or company name to define or shape their image. What happens when you no longer have the prestigious title or company name to drop? It is important for people "between jobs" to realise that, when they were asked to return the company garage key and parking pass, their employers didn't require them to leave behind their experience, skills, talents, contacts, decision-making ability, track record, accomplishments, professionalism, ethics or creativity. Nothing about them has changed, except that they're now in the job market and available, only they have a new direction and new choices to make.

In terms of negotiating identity, it is obvious that for many people who are "between jobs", the end result of the negotiation might be negative. Many unemployed people find it extremely difficult to understand that they are inherently still exactly the people they were before they lost their jobs. As

much as they try to see the possibilities of discovering undeveloped gifts and talents in themselves, they just can't move forward. And yet, at a point when everything seems hopeless, many people rise up and begin a process of renewal, a form of re-negotiation. This resilience of the human spirit is commendable and seems to reflect a strong inner drive for survival.

3.7 CHAPTER SUMMARY

This chapter focused on the discourses of work-identity, patriarchy, the PWE, the revised work ethic and the effects of unemployment on the individual's sense of self. In conclusion, there was a discussion on the reaffirmation of identity.

Pastoral care for the unemployed is important because it can assist people "between jobs" to make a link between their predicament and spirituality.

In the next chapter the focus is on the ecclesiastical response to unemployment and secondly, the pastoral response to unemployment is explored.

CHAPTER 4: PASTORAL CARE FOR PEOPLE "BETWEEN JOBS"

4.1.   INTRODUCTION

In this chapter the church's response to unemployment will be explored as well as the pastoral response, which takes place on a prophetic and pastoral level. I will reflect on Jacob's Well as an example of ecclesiastical and pastoral responses to people "between jobs".

I was introduced to the research participants at Jacob's Well. Jacob's Well is a faith-based organisation. It is self-identified as a "care ministry" and outreach programme of the parent church, Oosterlig Dutch Reformed Church. The ministry's goals are to provide Christian-oriented spiritual support, networking and job searching facilities and computer training for people "between jobs". Although Jacob's Well does not operate as an employment agency, it networks with different employment agencies in Pretoria. People are assisted in the preparation of curriculum vitaes which Jacob's Well networks to the employment agencies via e-mail. Jacob's Well also aims to assist potential entrepreneurs to start sustainable businesses via an incubator system.

Meetings are held weekly, and attendance at these meetings range from 20 to approximately 40 people. The attendees are 80% male, with some 98% of these being White males. Church membership is not a prerequisite for attending meetings and the ministry is interdenominational. The meetings follow a standard format, starting with breakfast, informal chatting and networking prior to the actual meeting. This is followed by a welcome extended to the attendees and an introduction done by one of the tent-maker ministers of the congregation. The meeting is then officially opened by prayer, followed by a discussion introduced by the speaker. Informal round table discussions take place – all these discussions are relevant to the "desert" experience of these people "between jobs". The meeting is closed with a prayer and newcomers are then interviewed individually to ascertain their needs.

4.2.   ECCLESIASTICAL RESPONSE TO UNEMPLOYMENT

4.2.1.   The silence of the faith community

It has become clear that while many churches want to do something about unemployment, they do not always know what to do or how to go about it (Taylor 1987:103).

The typical responses of the church to the problem of unemployment have been, according to Nürnberger (1991:28) as follows:

> [i]ndifference either due to ignorance or to individualized faith, an emphasis on personal virtues and vices such as industriousness and initiative against laziness and lethargy, and –where Christians have become aware of the structural causes of the problem – the useless combination of moral indignation and economic illusion.

Affluent members of congregations may be condescending towards members who are experiencing economic difficulties because of unemployment. These people in need are sometimes made very aware of the charitable responses from the affluent members.

Many of the unemployed are not going to church at all. Studies show that loss of a job is correlated with dropping out of participation with one's faith community (Day 1996:18). It is ironic that during a time of crisis the resources of the congregation are not sought. Perhaps many who have lost their jobs do not feel that their churches speak to their struggle; perhaps the blow to self-esteem makes engagement so painful; perhaps the church is perceived as a place for "winners, not whiners" (Day 1996:19). The research participants confirmed the findings of the abovementioned studies. Milton commented: "I'm feeling too ashamed to attend church. All the churchgoers in my congregation project the image of success. I feel I don't fit in any more".

Henry found the perceived staring at him difficult to handle. In his own words: "It feels to me as if I'm a leper, as if everybody stares at me when I enter church."

Dick expressed his feelings regarding his congregation as follows: "I'm not going to church any more. The people avoid you when you're unemployed, maybe they don't know what to say to you."

In countering those experiences the church could respond differently to the phenomenon of unemployment.

4.2.2. Addressing the faith community

Why should Christians be concerned about unemployment? Nürnberger (1991:31-32) argues that for the Biblical faith, redemption is a comprehensive concept. Suffering is picked up by the redemptive love of God wherever it occurs. This includes the environmental, biological, psychological, spiritual, cultural, social, economic and political dimensions of life. Any reduction of God's redemptive purposes to, let's say, the spiritual or the political spheres of life, is inappropriate. If to be human means to be creative, to be out of work is a major source of suffering, thus a prime target of God's redemptive activity and thus of our redemptive activity.

Vocation (the feeling that one is called to a certain kind of job) is a much more holistic calling in the life of the church and the wider community than being reduced to "employment". So perhaps one of the areas in which clergy can be particularly helpful is to begin to do some preaching and teaching about what vocation truly is. Then we can step back and say: "How do I put my life together as a whole, as a servant of God, as a child of Christ?" (Kew 2001:74). The world of work is often unnaturally divorced from the worshipping life of the congregation. This could easily be remedied by helping Christians to make more connections between their lives from Monday to Friday and their Sunday attendance at church. Work should also be recognised as part of God's world and God's creation. The God we believe in is not simply concerned with a segment of life labelled "spiritual". He cares about the whole of life (Baumohl 1997:22).

Beukes (1999:365) argues that there is much that the church can do regarding pastoral care and counselling of people who are "caught up in the nightmarish storm of the world of the unemployed". The assistance which the church can give includes not only counselling, but also reality- and society-focused sermons that highlight the problem of the world of work today. Preaching Biblical moral ethics and values, where money is not equated with success or status in life, is also part of the answer. Another possibility is the joining of hands between rich and poor, for example "twinning" congregations where a so-called rich congregation twins up with the sister congregation from a local poor community. The church can also try to influence the business world to take up positions congruent with the ethical direction the church is pointing to on issues of job creation and employment policies (Beukes 1999:366).

Even before job loss occurs, pastoral ministers and their parish communities must be sure to recognise and respect people for who they are and not only for what they do or what material support they can provide for the community. Pastoral ministers need to remind people of their gifts – and not

just in the context of service to the parish community. Individuals should be encouraged to define themselves in terms of their values, personal qualities (such as faithfulness, humour, generosity), their interests, their accomplishments and personal relationships, and not only in terms of their work or possessions (Antczak 1999:457). If a person defines her-/himself in terms of the above-mentioned attributes, being "between jobs" would be a different experience. If the individual's identity is not only determined by her/his job (job title, status, etc.), unemployment would not be experienced as such an identity crisis.

After a lay off has occurred, the church community can provide emotional support and evidence of their love and care. The unemployed person needs a sense of belonging, of being accepted, of being loved and of being needed all for oneself and not for what one can do (Antczak 1999:458). Beukes (1999:367) suggests that the church could create a small ecumenical standing committee on unemployment as a specific way of beginning to come to terms with the problems of unemployment. Such a committee should focus on unemployment, job creation and related issues. It is time that churches stand together on the injustice of unemployment in a world of plenty. Much can be done – "not by pointing fingers at others, but by working together, walking forward as churches, in the right direction – along with the unemployed and with the Lord of creation, who is their champion."

As indicated in Chapter 1, I position myself in the contextual approach to practical theology. The contextual approach situates the lived experiences of Christians within the wider context of church and society and seeks to analyse those relationships critically. In this analysis, is also takes seriously the perspectives of those who are marginalised and oppressed (Cochrane et al 1991:26-54). The contextual approach seeks to develop an empowering, life-affirming and hopeful spirituality that is responsive to human suffering (Cochrane et al 1991:78-80).

According to Bosch (1991:424), one of the features of the contextual approach to practical theology is a commitment as the first act of theology, and then especially commitment to the poor and marginalised. The marginalised in this scenario would be the unemployed.

Other features of the contextual approach are the notion that theology (spirituality) can only be done *with* those who suffer, and also an emphasis on "doing theology" since doing is more important than knowing or speaking. Jacob's Well is an example of "doing theology" in stark contrast to just "speaking theology" from the pulpit on Sundays.

The social question – in this case the marginalisation of people "between jobs" therefore constitutes an important spiritual challenge for practical theology. Theological reflection should find its point of departure in the existing praxis, in its efforts towards improving concrete conditions in society and the church. Brueggemann (1978:13) refers to a "prophetic ministry" which is "to nurture, nourish, and evoke a consciousness and perception alternative to the consciousness and perception of the dominant culture around us."

The preceding paragraph connects with Beukes' (1999:361-362) statement that the church must rethink its role. The church has to do that for which it exists, namely to point the direction for society in a prophetic manner in today's world. How is prophetic ministry to be embodied in the life of the church, and especially the local congregation? Before the prophetic word can be uttered with any authority, the community of faith and its prophets need to exercise self-criticism, engage in careful analysis of the situation which needs to be addressed, and discern what the Biblical message is which needs to be proclaimed here and now (Cochrane et al 1991:86).

The Kairos Document notes: "[t]he first task of a prophetic theology for our times would be an attempt at social analysis" (Cochrane et al 1991:18). Social analysis of unemployment examines causes and consequences of this phenomenon. Social analysis "helps make sense of experiences by putting them into a broader picture and drawing connections between them" (Cochrane et al 1991:18). In accordance with social analysis, the church should also encourage its members to take sides in the struggle for justice. Thus, secondly, "the church itself is called to be prophetic in word and in deed, and in the Biblical tradition this is firmly linked with the public struggle for justice" (Cochrane et al 1991:85). As an example of "public struggle for justice", these churches which have opposed apartheid through the years have adopted a prophetic stance as churches. In the same way the church must adopt a prophetic stance regarding unemployment in South Africa.

Beukes (1999:362) states that the church's roles are also to highlight the injustice which society perpetuates, especially economic injustice regarding unemployment. According to Waldegrave (1990:23), unemployment cannot be dealt with as a "clinical problem" only, regardless of the employment context. If the "clinical problem" is dealt with in isolation, presentations of the "clinical problem" such as the pervading sense of depression and its accompanying psychosomatic conditions, for example, might recede for the time being. The meaning that gave rise to the persistent feelings of self-blame, sadness and hopelessness, however, still remain. The effects of this phenomenon in the lives of the participants were discussed in chapter 3.

In the context of unemployment, the church has invoked a number of social teachings to protect the rights of unemployed people. John Paul II, in discussing the fundamental right of everyone to work, has pointed out that:

> We must direct our attention to a fundamental issue: the question of finding work, or in other words, the issue of suitable employment for all who are capable of it. The opposite of a just and right situation in this field is unemployment, that is to say the lack of work for those who are capable of it. It can be a question of general unemployment in certain sectors of work. The role of the agents included under the title of indirect employer is to act against unemployment, which in all cases is an evil, and which, when it reaches a certain level, can become a real social disaster. (quoted by Le 2003:20)

Through these social teachings, the church seeks to achieve its mission. The church, equipped to be a witness to God's love and grace for all human beings, is called to render its witness through a variety of gifts and in manifold situations. Through its social teachings and defending the rights of the unemployed, the church indeed "speaks on behalf of those who are disadvantaged, distressed, whose voices are not heard because of their powerless situation" (Usher 1993:180). Through its teaching the church is seeking to bring to public conversation moral values, in which all social arrangement must be such as to enhance the human dignity of individuals. It has the vision of a society in which each person has the right to share in the common good and the duty to contribute to it – a society in which government must act to ensure that everyone has education, a society in which justice must be enacted in a spirit of love to build a community marked by authentic solidarity (Le 2003:21).

The church can stand with those who face job termination and career change or those who have lost their jobs already, only if it understands something "of the dynamics of this hard place" (Lovette 1997:19). This research could assist the church to achieve understanding of the dynamics of unemployment. The church, as a sign of God's love and a sign of the Kingdom of God for the world, is imparting this love through its listening to the cries of the unemployed, the oppressed and the poor.

In challenging society as a whole to transform itself along the basic principles of the Kingdom – justice, peace, community love and human rights – the church is making efforts to open up the everyday world to the ultimate, the Kingdom of God (Le 2003:21). Concerned with transforming unjust social practices, a contextual approach to practical theology sheds insight into understanding how practical theology can respond to the unemployment issues.

Because of the silence of the faith community, the unemployed person is faced with the dilemma of finding a connection between her/his plight and spirituality.

4.2.3. A journey from a theodic crisis or disorientation to a new theodic orientation

Adding to the dilemma of the unemployed is the fact that pastors and the faith community could easily consider them as "wrongdoers" when they are unable to connect their suffering with their belief in God (Ikeler 1990:239). The effect of this interpretation of the Christian belief system is that people "between jobs" are alienated from the faith community.

Brueggemann (1984) introduces a notion that I think reflects well on the observation made by Ikeler (1990). Brueggemann (1984:11) suggests that Christian piety and spirituality are romantic and unreal in their positiveness: "As children of the Enlightenment we have censored and selected around the voice of darkness and disorientation, seeking to go from strength to strength, from victory to victory. But such a way … is a lie in terms of our experience". This selective and romantic tendency is reinforced by liturgical practice in the church which makes use only of "positive and 'nice' psalms that support the polite hermeneutic of the church" (Brueggemann 1984:16) and to keep the psalms "within the confines of conventional spirituality" (Brueggemann 1984:168). I would argue that not only worship, but also many philosophical tenets within Christianity, in practice, have become rather romantic: the important issue has become to do the "right" thing and not the struggle to make sense of an extremely confusing world.

Perhaps this "romantic" and "positive" view of Christianity makes sense in the absence of suffering and hardship. However, when suffering and hardship befall us – when we are confronted with unemployment – we are hurled into theodic crisis and disorientation. When we are confused and do not know how to connect our suffering to our belief in God, we are in a theodic crisis (Brueggemann 1984; Louw 1983). Louw (1983:54) suggests four examples of theodic crisis:

- God wants to prevent evil, but cannot (then God is a God of love, but not almighty)
- God has the power to prevent evil, but does not want to (then God is almighty, but not a God of love)
- God has neither the power, nor the will to prevent evil (then God is neither almighty nor a God of love)
- God has the power to prevent evil, but She/He wills suffering (then God is the author of sin)

The agony of this situation drives us to find a new orientation regarding our spirituality. Unfortunately, "the pastoral guidance which people receive in their search for a new orientation frequently turns them back – as Job's friends hoped to do for Job – toward the standard orientation: bad deeds bring suffering; God imposes suffering as punishment for sins" (Ikeler 1990:240).

Adding to the theodic crisis of the unemployed, are the ideas offered by prosperity theology proclaiming that "the atonement of Christ guarantees for all Christians divine healing for good health, the riches of the world if we follow certain principles, and a life of happiness without unnecessary sufferings" (Kim 1996:14). This view is sometimes called the "slot-machine religion … You can have anything you want – you just name it and claim it; then it's yours" (Kim 1996:18). However if your faith is not "real" enough, or you have any doubt, consequently you will not receive it. "If there is any failure [in this case, not finding a job], it is your fault" (Kim 1996:18) ... One's own fault, either because one's faith is not real or one has sinned. If we declare or imply that sinning is the only source of suffering or hardship, if we take this as the "correct assessment of reality, we hinder Job-like persons who are searching for an alternative theodic orientation, a new theodic orientation" (Ikeler 1990:240).

As an alternative response to suffering from that of the prosperity theology, Brueggemann (1984) suggests that the Psalms invite us to a more honest facing of the darkness, for even in the darkness there is One to address, One Who is in the darkness but is not simply part of the darkness. "Because this One has promised to be in the darkness with us, we find the darkness strangely transformed, not by the power of easy light, but by the power of relentless solidarity". Louw (1983:55) also offers a new theodic orientation – that God is in our suffering. However, we are not to reverse this by saying suffering is in God. Henry found such a new orientation when he commented: "I blamed God initially for my predicament. But I can look back now and see how God was always present and how He helped me."

Jacob's Well assists people "between jobs" to come to this new theodic orientation that "God is in our suffering". The weekly discussions always focus on the presence and assistance of God during the "desert" experience of unemployment. Jacob's Well offers an oasis in this desert where the people "between jobs" share their experiences. The realisation that God has not forsaken them, offers hope and encouragement to them.

If God is "in our suffering", it could have certain implications on how we interpret pastoral care as response to the suffering. Jacob's Well, functioning as a support group for people "between jobs",

redefined unemployment as an opportunity in two different ways: either as an opportunity for change and accomplishment, or an opportunity to realise God's plan. And while not all unemployed people have come to define their displacement as a positive occasion (at least not immediately, nor uniformly across the duration of unemployment), support group participation has allowed the unemployed to better realise job loss as an opening for some new direction in life or a new job opportunity.

Within the context of the faith-based support group the redefinition of unemployment as a positive opportunity often takes the form of recognising one's job displacement as part of an omniscient God's larger design (e.g. by thinking: "Perhaps God didn't want me to have that job"). Seen in this light, job displacement was more readily understood, meaningful and had a positive purpose for those in question. For people who came to see their job displacements as intended by God, an additional question often arose of, "Who am I, then, to question God's will?" Suffering was not alleviated, but material suffering, specifically caused by job loss, was seen as willed by God to free them from materialism. People between jobs were thus able to deflect self-blame and rationalise away potential threats to self by seeing their unemployment as scripted by God, rather than due to their own lack of ability or competence.

The unemployed people who were part of a support group were better able to address a lost sense of control and to reframe their unemployment situation as one of a challenge. God-oriented interpretations of job displacement connect with Ruether's (1983:24) themes that are central to the liberating prophetic tradition, namely, of God's defence and vindication of the oppressed as well as the vision of a new age to come.

As discussed in this section, we are in a theodic crisis when we are confused and do not know how to connect our suffering to our belief in God. By means of the above-mentioned, God-oriented interpretations of job displacement, people "between jobs" can journey from a theodic crisis to a new theodic orientation.

According to Dick, there was a lot of value in attending Jacob's Well and hearing the religious message delivered there: "I do think it helps when I hear 'God has a plan for me, God has a purpose for me'. I need to find out what God has in mind for me. I must use this period of being unemployed as an opportunity to find something more meaningful".

Dick's participation in this faith-based group allowed him to see his job loss as an opportunity for finding more meaningful work. The messages of hope delivered at Jacob's Well allowed job seekers to give positive meaning to their actions and made them feel as if they were "heading in the right direction" or "doing the right thing" i.e. making progress.

At the same time, such opportunities were not limited to simply realising God's plan for oneself, but could also be seen as a matter of using this period of being "between jobs" as a test of one's religious faith and motto as a good, moral person. Henry clarified this point as he explained how Jacob's Well typically contextualised job loss and people's job-finding efforts within a Christian frame of reference. In his words: "So, in many cases this ministry, Jacob's Well, allows people to experience their unemployment – their trial – in the context of the Christian faith. It's all very relevant. We know that everyone will eventually find a job in some way, shape or form. Everyone's gonna get employed somewhere, somehow. But the objective really is to come out of it stronger in your faith, better and not bitter."

These positive messages, heard regularly in the weekly meetings at Jacob's Well, allowed the group members to see value in their efforts to find employment and they found comfort in the realisation that being "between jobs" was ultimately temporary. In addition, they came to see unemployment as a problem to be solved or a test of certain capabilities, whether the outcome was finding a replacement job or coming to realise oneself as a stronger Christian or better person.

These above-mentioned statements made by the participants seem to be contradictory to the principles of the Protestant Work Ethic (PWE) to which all of the participants subscribed. In Chapter 3, section 3.3.3 and 3.3.4, examples were given of comments made by the participants regarding the PWE as well as their disillusionment with the revised work ethic. I explored this seeming contradiction with the participants. All of them commented that although they felt "he who doesn't work, can't eat", they also realised that being unemployed wasn't by choice, but by force. The only solace they could find during their desert experience of being "between jobs" was their faith in God. This faith and the conviction that God would provide jobs for them were illustrated in their various statements.

Participation in this faith-based support group at Jacob's Well enabled people "between jobs" to redefine their job losses in more palatable ways, particularly by drawing on and benefiting from the various resources found there. Jacob's Well connects with the contextual approach to practical

theology, because this ministry also seeks to develop an empowering, life-affirming and hopeful spirituality that is responsive to human suffering.

4.3.   A PILGRIM ON THE JOURNEY

According to Neuger (2001:195), the pastoral and the prophetic "always belong together in the ethics of ministry. Without that tension the pastoral can become too individualised and uncritically accepting, and the prophetic can become harsh and disconnected from the real lives of people".

Pastoral counselling for the unemployed is often a "casualty service, seeking to repair damage already inflicted" (Taylor 1987:104). It is true that this may be just "an ambulance service while the battle continues to maim and kill. But when you are wounded and dying, you will not despise the services of the ambulance" (Baumohl 1997:43). This "ambulance service" is also important although it is only treating the "symptoms" of unemployment. A prophetic service would attempt to challenge the "causes" (social discourses) of unemployment.

Pastoral counselling is different from other forms of counselling. "It is different because of its context. It is not just counselling, but pastoral. Historically and functionally it forms a part of ministry and is a kind of ministry" (De Jongh van Arkel 2000:111). The pastor or pastoral counsellor is the one who accompanies the pilgrim on the journey from theodic darkness to theodic light, offering unwavering solidarity. Thus we do not merely "help them solve their problems but, through the power of God's Spirit, we let God's light fall on their situation anew. And then change not just the problem but possibly also the self and the context" (De Jongh van Arkel 2000:181).

The pastoral task demands a theological re-evaluation of "work" more appropriate to a time when full employment is no longer the norm. A theological re-evaluation of work can assist the unemployed to move from a theodic crisis to a new theodic orientation because the "blame" of unemployment is removed from the individual and attributed to the downscaling of employment.

"Attempts to make people whole and preaching the gospel without simultaneously organising the structures of the society so that you do not have massive unemployment, is missing the boat entirely." (Sheppard 1997:11) This connects with Pattison's (1993:90-91) ideas that "all pastoral care takes place in a specific social and political context and its [pastoral care's] ideas and practices either question or affirm the values and structure of that order". Furthermore, he comments that "[p]astoral care should be regarded as directly subversive of the social and political order in which it is situated

insofar as that order is oppressive and dehumanising. Pastoral care will then be "a choice between acting with insight and effectiveness on the environment, or acting in ignorance and prejudice, or, simply by default, to oppose necessary social change" (Pattison 1993:91). Pastoral care should be concerned with "the radical progressive formation of the behaviour and conscience of the church fellowship as it exercises its corporate responsibility in being a holy servant people" (Pattison 1993:92).

According to Neuger (2001:57), "all people have an operational theology that guides the formation of their value systems and their sense of purpose in life". Pastoral counsellors need to be conscious of the theological commitments that guide them in their ministries; a theology that is "sensitive to and in dialogue with the lived experience of people must hold a central place in the work of pastoral counselling" (Neuger 2001:56). I experience God as a loving father and a caring friend. I strive to gain understanding of my own life in the light of my faith – to bring life and faith together in a spirituality of wholeness (Rossouw 1993:899). I've experienced God's presence, love and care during my husband's ordeal of being "between jobs" and my faith was the anchor in my life. My story is a story of hope and based on my own experience of the effects of unemployment, I could offer compassion and understanding to people "between jobs".

The caring role of the pastoral counsellor is of prime importance when people "between jobs" suffer from loss of identity, anxiety, strained relationships and meaninglessness (Taylor 1987:111). These effects were discussed in Chapter 2, section 2.3. Furthermore, when people become unemployed, some of them might experience grief; they are mourning the loss of a job. According to Lewis (1993:667), these people must be assisted to deal with the loss intellectually, emotionally and spiritually. During this grief counselling process, people "between jobs" often ask many questions regarding their spirituality: "Is God at work here? Does God have a vocation for me? Where is God leading me in this? Is God still interested in me, hasn't She/He forgotten about me?"

In conversations with people "between jobs" the pastoral care giver can be guided by Griffith's (1995:124) suggestions on opening a space for God-talk which is not limited by either proscriptive constraints – "that this God-talk is not to be spoken of here" neither by prescriptive constraints – "that God can and should be spoken of here, but only in a certain way." Unemployed people need space to ask questions regarding God without feeling guilty about it. Milton asked the following questions: "Has God forgotten about me? It feels as if my prayers bounce back from the ceiling, as if my prayers don't reach God's ears". Henry shared his initial questioning of God's presence: "I've always had a close relationship with God. Why don't I experience His presence in my life now that I

need it more than ever before?" A context needs to be created by the pastoral care giver, to allow the client to express experiences such as the above expressions.

Pastoral care givers working with the unemployed could adopt the role of the pilgrim's companion. Although available to give encouragement, the pastoral care giver should not "designate the road. The pilgrim's companion follows the pilgrim, discreetly from a distance" (Ikeler 1990:243). In the capacity of the pilgrim's companion, pastoral care givers could make use of the participatory approach to pastoral counselling.

4.3.1. **Participatory pastoral counselling**

Becoming aware of unemployed people's need for pastoral care is defined by Cochrane, De Gruchy and Peterson (1991:17) as the "moment of insertion":

> The moment of insertion locates our pastoral responses in the lived experience of individuals and communities. What people are feeling, what they are undergoing, how they perceive this, how they are responding – these are the experiences that constitute the primary data of the context.

Rumbold (1986:54) states "[p]astoral care is concerned with the meaning of human experience. Its task is not to deliver answers or interpretations so much as to assist in uncovering them". The pastoral care giver can assist the unemployed person in finding meaning in her/his "desert" experience of being "between jobs". This can be achieved by exploring with the unemployed the effects of unemployment, the uncovering of the prevalent discourses and the challenging thereof.

As a pilgrim's companion, the pastoral caregiver should be committed to a participatory way of *doing* spirituality, pastoral care and counselling. Being committed to participatory ethical care provokes the urgency "not to care *for* but to care *with* people who are in need of care" (Kotzé & Kotzé 2001:7). Care becomes a social practice where care givers and care receivers socially and inter-subjectively construct care. The pastoral care giver de-centres her-/himself but not in a way that she/he becomes neutral and non-directive. This connects with Anderson's (1997: 95) choice to designate a therapist's position as a philosophical stance. A philosophical stance entails that the expertise of client and therapist combine and merge. A client brings expertise in the area of content; a therapist brings expertise in the area of process. The care giver and care receiver thus become conversational partners. As a participatory companion she/he collaboratively negotiates alternative ways of being and doing. The pastoral care giver also assists the care receivers in uncovering the meanings that are relevant to them in their lives (Rumbold 1986:54).

This commitment to care *with* people, beckons a pastoral caregiver to negotiate ways of "doing hope" with those who are unemployed. In this regard Weingarten (2000 b:402) states: "Hope is something we do with others.Hope is too important – its effects on body and soul too significant to be left to individuals alone. Hope must be the responsibility of the community". It is important to keep hope alive when working with the unemployed as they are facing a great deal of hopelessness, especially regarding their unemployed status, their finances and the exceptionally high level of unemployment in South Africa.

No one can live without having some hope. But what is hope? In its most general sense, hope means anticipation of the future. By hope an individual lives in the future; and this belongs to the character of life as a human (Brunner, 1960:37).

People "between jobs" are placed in hopeless social positions and it is in this instance that a theology of hope becomes prevalent.

4.3.2. Theology of hope

Several authors provide definitions of "hope". Rumbold (1986:59) states "[i]n everyday language hope refers to an idea, a vision or a wish concerning the future, an expectation of something which is desired". Grant (1985:85) writes that "… hope combats the conditions of crisis, and it empowers and sets one's mind free to God's promises. Hope presents opportunities for spiritual growth." Ackermann (1992:67) refers to hope as follows: "Hope is to refuse to accept despair or defeat. Hope is resistance. It actively resists the void of hopelessness by embracing suffering, knowing that suffering produces endurance … it refuses to accept defeat."

During the conversations with the research participants it became clear that they had many struggles holding onto hope while they were on the "desert" road "between jobs". The participants' feelings of hopelessness were shared in section 3.5.4. For pastoral care to be relevant to the context of unemployed people a pastoral counsellor will have to explore with the care receivers their experiences of hope in this "desert" phase of their lives. In this regard, a theology of hope could be a response to care receivers' experiences of hopelessness.

According to Van den Blink (1995:205), it is important for people to discover their self-worth and have hope rekindled after having experienced hopelessness. I agree with Van den Blink, because I realised what the effects of unemployment were on the participants' sense of self. (See section 3.5)

As a response to the sense of hopelessness, I find the following argument of Lester (1995:24) in connection with unemployment applicable. If we want to understand ourselves, we have to remember our temporality and that in the present moment of being unemployed, "we are surrounded by time past and time future." Lester's ideas connect with Drewery and Winslade's (1996:47) social constructionist theory that "who we are is a constantly changing reality – a dynamic process inside us." The unemployed person can hold on to past identity constructions that could still be negotiated outside the context of employment, for example, her/his identity as friend or sibling.

Lester (1995) argues furthermore that pastoral care and counselling with people who experience hopelessness should include helping them evaluate their "stance towards each dimension of time." A pastoral theology of hope emphasises temporality, that past and future are part of our very being. Lester (1995:22) states:

> Hope is rooted in the past because we remember the mighty acts of God and our personal encounters with the transcendent. Hope is empowered from the future from where it receives its vision. Finally, hope is active in the present as it energizes and motivates us to live so that "God's will be done on earth as it is in heaven.

This quote from Lester can foster hope in the person "between jobs" because its ideas confirm that God is in control of our lives in totality: past, present and future. He is omnipresent and if our hope is in Him, He will never let us down.

Cochrane, De Gruchy and Peterson (1991:82) argue that "Christian spirituality is about keeping such hope alive even in situations which are, humanly-speaking, hopeless. Hope is another way of saying we believe in the God of righteousness and justice. To lose hope is to lose faith in God. It is of utmost importance for unemployed people to cling to hope in their seemingly hopeless situation of being "between jobs."

For Ackermann (1992:67) "[h]ope means moving beyond doubt and anger". The traumatic experience of being "between jobs" has to be transformed into a hopeful future because "[h]ope is capable of freeing one from the clutches of despair or hopelessness. The power of hope gives people freedom to describe their possibilities" (Grant 1985:90).

I shared with the research participants how the phrase "this, too, will pass" kept hope alive in my life. Ackermann (1992:66) states that hope is linked to faith and faith involves action: "While acknowledging the realism of disappointment, brokenness, of anger and despair, to hope means to engage hour by hour with life in such a way that our deeds express that which we hope for."

Pastoral counselling can assist people "between jobs" to make the link between hope and faith. Pastoral care givers can make use of Heb.11:1 to enable the unemployed to make the connection. I quote from the Amplified Bible: "Now faith is the assurance of the things we hope for, being the proof of things we do not see and the conviction of their reality."

Hope cannot be achieved alone. Hope pushes us towards relationships because "it is trusting of others and thrives on intimacy and mutual love" (Lester 1995:95). When people "between jobs" become part of a support group for the unemployed, strong relationships are often formed out of their shared experiences. When people in the group find employment, hope is engendered in the remaining members.

In conclusion, Jesus said: "The poor you will always have with you." I guess that goes for the unemployed too. When the Son of Man returns, He will say to the righteous: "Whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of Mine, you did it for Me" (Matt. 25:40). Doesn't this statement elevate involvement with people "between jobs" to another plane?

4.4 CHAPTER SUMMARY

This chapter dealt with the pastoral care for people "between jobs". Firstly, the focus was on the ecclesiastical response to unemployment, and secondly, the pastoral response to unemployment was explored.
In the next chapter I will reflect on the research journey.

CHAPTER 5: REFLECTIONS ON THE RESEARCH JOURNEY

5.1.   INTRODUCTION

In this final chapter I adopt a reflective position by looking back on the research journey as a whole and on the research questions. I also reflect on possible implications and suggestions for practical theology and pastoral therapy.

This research project was a journey through the "desert" of unemployment. At the end of this journey I want to quote a poem, "The Pathway of Pain" by Helen Steiner Rice. This poem was presented at Jacob's Well by Henry. The message conveyed by this poem inspired many people "between jobs" and assisted in making the "desert" journey more bearable.

The Pathway of Pain
If my days were untroubled
And my heart always light
Would I seek that fair land where there is no night?
If I never grew weary with the weight of my load
Would I search for God's Peace
At the end of the road;
If I never knew sickness and never felt pain
Would I reach for a hand to help and sustain;
If I walked not with sorrow and I lived without loss
Would my soul seek sweet solace
At the foot of the cross;
If all I desired was mine day by day
Would I kneel before God and earnestly pray;
If God sent no "Winter" to freeze me with fear
Would I yearn for the warmth
Of "Spring" every year;

I ask myself this and the answer is plain-

If my life were all pleasure and I never knew pain
I'd seek God less often and need Him much less,
For God's sought more often in time of distress,
And no one knows God or sees Him as plain
As those who have met Him
On "The Pathway of Pain".

Helen Steiner Rice

The people at Jacob's Well related their journey through the "desert" of unemployment to the "pathway of pain" described in this poem. Many of them commented that they would never have come to know God so intimately if they had not been exposed to the pain of unemployment. The "Winter" in the poem, was seen as the period of being "between jobs".

When the research participants and I embarked on the research journey, it was my sincere wish that the "pathway of pain" would lead to an oasis in the "desert" of unemployment. In the next section the research journey will be discussed.

5.2.   THE JOURNEY THROUGH THE "DESERT" OF UNEMPLOYMENT

Chapter 1 focused on the inspiration to the study and curiosities were identified about the constitutive effects of discourses regarding employment, work-identity, patriarchy, the Protestant Work Ethic and the revised work ethic on a male's identity. The starting point of the journey through the "desert" of unemployment was the research questions:

- What is the effect of unemployment on a male's identity?
- How can pastoral care givers respond to people "between jobs"?

Data was obtained through interviews with people "between jobs". The central task during data analysis was to identify common themes in the three research participants' descriptions of their experiences of being "between jobs".

Chapter 2 explored the social construction of work, the effects of unemployment and the grief associated with job loss.

In chapter 3 I focused on the dominant themes which were identified during the data analysis process. These themes were the discourses of work-identity, patriarchy, the Protestant Work Ethic and the revised work ethic. The effects of these discourses on the experience of unemployment and the effects of this phenomenon on the male's identity were explored.

Chapter 4 had a look at pastoral care for people "between jobs". Firstly, I focused on the ecclesiastical response to unemployment and secondly, the pastoral response to unemployment was explored.

The starting point of the journey through the "desert" of unemployment was the research questions.

5.3   REFLECTIONS ON THE RESEARCH QUESTIONS

This section will reflect on the two research questions:

- What is the effect of unemployment on a male's identity?
- How can pastoral care givers respond to people "between jobs"?

5.3.1   The effects of unemployment on a male's identity

The first research question was the following: What is the effect of unemployment on a male's identity?

Chapter 3 explored the above-mentioned question. The participants' descriptions of being unemployed were quoted in section 3.2. All of them were struggling with feelings of being deprived of their preferred identities. Since they had lost their jobs, it became increasingly difficult to answer the question: "Who am I?" This is the important question when confronted with identity politics.

The discourses that influenced the participants' experiences of unemployment were identified, namely, the discourses of work-identity, patriarchy, the Protestant Work Ethic (PWE) and the revised work ethic. In section 3.3.1, I discussed the discourse of work-identity and the effects thereof on the participants' identity constructions. In this section it was argued that for most of us the primary source of self-worth and sense of self is work. It became clear that work is essential to an individual's self-concept, as a source of values and of structure to life. In this section I explored the dilemma of what happens to the individual when he becomes unemployed, within a dominant employment discourse that determines an individual's identity. To be unemployed places one outside

the accepted, taken-for-granted system. It puts in question one's capacity to carry responsibility for oneself, let alone for one's dependents. The question was then asked: "What then does the unemployed man do?" He cannot allow himself to be perceived as a victim, although many would label him as such (and treat him as if he were), for this too, would be "unmanly". He thus finds himself lost, literally in a no man's land. Being "between jobs" means he cannot consider himself a man and he is faced with the overwhelming question: "Am I a man or a mouse?" The discourse of patriarchy plays a central role in an attempt to answer this question.

Section 3.3.2. looked at the effects of the discourse of patriarchy on the male's identity. This section explored the phenomenon that one's identity and sense of mastery and competence are normally sustained in valued social roles as provider, spouse and parent within the family. According to traditional gender roles, the male has the responsibility of the economic provider – he must perform, achieve and compete in the outside world of work. The masculine role of the "good provider" comes into play. The good provider has to achieve, to win, to succeed, and to dominate. He is a bread "winner". Milton's identity had been reinforced by his ability to provide. Job loss disrupted this role and the sense of personal identity and mastery provided by this role. Henry's story represented one of the more complex aspects of men's unemployment namely the exchange with one's wife of the traditional male and female roles as financial provider for the family. Dick's story demonstrated the destructive role of the involuntary house-husband. The participants' experience of the strains on parent-child relationships caused by economic hardships, were also discussed.

In section 3.3.3 and 3.3.4 the focus was on the discourses of the PWE and the revised work ethic on an unemployed person's identity constructions. The question: "How do PWE beliefs and other work-related beliefs affect the beliefs and behaviours of the unemployed?" was addressed. The participants' views on the PWE as well as the revised work ethic were reflected on. All of them struggled with the notion "he who doesn't work, can't eat" Section 3.3 was concluded by asking the question: "Is job loss equal to identity loss?"

In an attempt to answer this question, the reality of being "between jobs" was explored in section 3.4. The phenomenon of being unemployed was depicted in the participants' expressions of their individual experiences of being "between jobs". The argument was used that job loss may also influence an individual's sense of personal and social identity because unemployment is a stigmatised social status. The fact that unemployment status represents a form of "spoiled identity" is nicely illustrated by the fact that job losers will often conruct an alternative work identity such as "consultant" or "student" rather than describe themselves as unemployed. This is an example of how

the language we use constitutes our world and beliefs. Job loss involves the loss of a social role. Because roles are used to construct the self, the loss of a central role as a worker represents a major challenge to a person's identity. The participants' experiences regarding this phenomenon were also quoted in section 3.4.

Section 3.5 focused on the effect of unemployment on an individual's sense of self. Unemployment robbed them of their self-image and confidence. Their descriptions of the diminishing sense of self were quoted in this section. Injurious speech habits were identified and the recognition of those speech habits assisted me in gaining understanding of the phenomenon of being "between jobs" and the major impact it had on the participants' sense of self. The injurious speech habits were discussed in section 3.5 and also the participants' use of these habits.

5.3.2 Pastoral responses to unemployment

The second research question was addressed in Chapter 4. This research concern was expressed as follows:

- How can pastoral caregivers respond to people "between jobs?"

In section 4.2 the ecclesiastical response to unemployment was explored. Section 4.2.1. focussed on the silence of the faith community. According to studies mentioned in this section many of the unemployed are not going to church at all. The research participants confirmed the findings of those studies in their comments quoted.

Section 4.2.2. addressed the faith community. The question was asked: "Why should Christians be concerned about unemployment?" The world of work is often unnaturally divorced from the worshipping life of the congregation. Helping Christians to make more connections between their lives from Monday to Friday and their Sunday attendance at church could easily remedy this. Work should also be recognised as part of God's world and God's creation. The God we believe in is not simply concerned with a segment of life labelled "spiritual". He cares about the whole of life. The assistance the church can give includes not only counselling, but also reality- and society-focused sermons that highlight the problem of the world of work today. Preaching Biblical moral ethics and values, where money is not equated with success or status in life, is also part of the answer.

In this section it was also argued that the church can stand with those who face job termination and career change or those who have lost their jobs already, only if the church understands something of

the dynamics of unemployment. This research could assist the church to achieve understanding of this phenomenon.

Because of the silence of the faith community, the unemployed person is faced with the dilemma of finding a connection between her/his plight and spirituality. Section 4.2.3 explored the journey from a theodic crisis or disorientation to a new theodic orientation. When suffering and hardship befall us – when we are confronted with unemployment – we are hurled into theodic crisis and disorientation. Adding to the dilemma of the unemployed is the fact that pastors and the faith community could easily consider them as "wrongdoers" when they are unable to connect their suffering with their belief in God. The effect of this interpretation of the Christian belief system is that people "between jobs" are alienated from the faith community. This section also illustrated how Jacob's Well assists people "between jobs" to come to a new theodic orientation that "God is in our suffering".

In section 4.3 the person "between jobs" was described as a pilgrim on the journey. The pastor or pastoral counsellor is the one who accompanies the pilgrim on the journey from theodic darkness to theodic light. The pastoral task demands a theological re-evaluation of work more appropriate to a time when full employment is no longer the norm. A theological re-evaluation of work can assist the unemployed to move from a theodic crisis to a new theodic orientation because the "blame" of unemployment is removed from the individual and attributed to the downscaling of employment. It was also argued in this section that pastoral counsellors need to be conscious of the theological commitments that guide them in their ministries. A theology that is sensitive to and in dialogue with the lived experience of people must hold a central place in the work of pastoral counselling. Awareness of these theological commitments will minimise preconceived opinions regarding unemployment as well as prejudices against the unemployed.

In the capacity of the pilgrim's companion, pastoral care givers could make use of the participatory approach to pastoral counselling. This approach was discussed in section 4.3.1. The pastoral care giver can assist the unemployed person in finding meaning in her/his "desert" experience of being "between jobs". This can be achieved by, for example, exploring with the unemployed person the effects of unemployment, the uncovering of the prevalent discourses and the challenging of the effect thereof on the individual's identity constructions. As a pilgrim's companion, the pastoral care giver should be committed to a participatory way of *doing* spirituality, pastoral care and counselling. This commitment to care *with* people, beckons a pastoral care giver to negotiate ways of *doing hope* with the unemployed. Section 4.3.2. focussed on a theology of hope. During the conversations with the research participants it became clear that they have had many struggles holding onto hope while they

were on the "desert" road "between jobs". A theology of hope could be a response to a care receiver's experience of hopelessness.

Hope cannot be achieved alone. Hope pushes us towards relationships. When people "between jobs" become part of a support group for the unemployed, strong relationships are often formed out of their shared experiences. When people in the group find employment, hope is engendered in the remaining members. Based on the experience I gained at Jacob's Well, the next section deals with practical guidelines for pastoral care of the unemployed.

5.4. IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR PRACTICAL THEOLOGY AND PASTORAL CARE PRACTICES

In this section recommendations will be made to ministries catering for people "between jobs".

5.4.1. Practical implications for pastoral care practices

Sellers and Kew (2001:73) make the following statement: "Men in particular relate their identity with their work. When a man loses his job, there is something of his identity taken away from him, and one of the things unemployment does is bring you face to face with the real you rather than the imagined you that you are hiding behind."

The above-mentioned statement was explored and confirmed in this research project. If people use their jobs as the main vehicle to create an identity, they will be in considerable difficulty when they find themselves facing unemployment. What is needed is new constructions for identity that are based on personal capacities and attitudes rather than on a traditional working relationship. This change in perspective provides inner strength and increases the capacity to cope with job loss and the stresses of finding employment. The pastoral care giver can assist people "between jobs" to establish self-worth apart from the work role and to re-affirm their identities. In section 3.6 the focus is on this re-affirming of identity.

The stigma of being "unemployed" is also challenged by using the term "between jobs". The term "between jobs" creates a different reality to the unemployed, as well as influencing other people's perception of them. This tactic avoids the erosion of self-esteem and demoralisation often associated with socially devalued roles and status.. Thus, as discussed in section 1.1, the words we use influence the way we think and feel about the world. How we speak is an important determinant of how we can

be in the world. We need be sensitive in our use of language; what we say and how we say it, matters.

5.4.2. Recommendations for practical theology

It has become clear that while many churches want to do something about unemployment, they do not always know what to do or how to go about it. The following suggestions can be a way of "doing" pastoral care with the unemployed:

- Keep unemployment and people affected by unemployment "visible". Make use of a notice board dedicated to unemployment issues in the church building. Employment opportunities as well as available skills can be advertised on this board. A dedicated page for unemployment issues should also be created on the congregation's website.

- Encourage churchgoers to explore work and work-related problems within church settings. Cell groups could have regular discussions concerning the workplace and related problems, for example, victimisation, discrimination or sexual harassment.

- Regularly include prayers of intercession for work-related issues, including unemployment and those having to face the prospect of making people redundant. Have an annual focus on the issues of unemployment. It could be done by celebrating "Unemployment Sunday" annually.

- Set up a support system for those who are having problems at work or are facing redundancy or unemployment. Train a group of volunteers to run such a support system, using where possible those who have had experience of redundancy and unemployment, or retired people with a concern for the issues of unemployment.   Make it widely known in the church and the local community.

- Set up a centre for the unemployed in part of your church premises. Develop a programme of activities that enable those out of work to share their skills and to retain some confidence in their abilities. Look for partnerships in the local community to help support and sustain this project. Research and find out how other churches running such a scheme have initiated and organised such projects. Jacob's Well has already opened facilities in many congregations. For information on the Jacob's Well's network, visit the website at http://www.jacobswell.co.za.

- Run a job club where unemployed people can receive help and advice about looking for work. Look for people with training or have people trained to help others with job searching, compiling of curriculum vitaes and job interview techniques.

- Set up a work task group that focuses on all the issues and activities of the church in relation to work and unemployment. This task group must ensure that the church continues to work on these issues in appropriate ways and on different levels.

5.5.   REFLECTION ON MYSELF AS THE RESEARCHER

As I have indicated in the inspiration for the study (see Chapter 1, section 1.2), I have experienced the effects of my husband's unemployment on our lives. I thus had personal experience relating to the phenomenon in question and wanted to gain a better understanding of the experiences of others.

In this regard Leedy and Ormrod (2005: 139) state: "Throughout the data collection process, the researcher suspends any preconceived notions or personal experiences that may unduly influence what the researcher 'hears' the participant saying. Such suspension can be extremely difficult for a researcher who has personally experienced the phenomenon under study. Yet it is essential if the researcher is to gain an understanding of the typical experiences that people have had".

Because of my personal experience of the phenomenon of unemployment, I had to be aware of any preconceived notions in the form of assumptions or a priori expectations in the exploration of the phenomenon. I was guided by Anderson and Goolishian's (1992: 28) notion of a "not-knowing" approach to therapy. "Not knowing" required that my understandings, explanations, and interpretations not be limited by prior experiences or theoretically formed truths and knowledge.

I was deeply touched by the participants' journeys through the "desert" of unemployment. In my capacity as the pilgrim's companion, I hope I have added value to the lives of the research participants.

5.6.   CONCLUSION

At one of the weekly meetings at Jacob's Well, the research participants, together with the other people "between jobs", rephrased Habakuk 3:17-18 in modern terms. I conclude this research reflection with the original as well as the modern version of these Bible passages:

"Though the fig tree does not blossom and there is no fruit on the vines, though the product of the olive fails and the fields yield no food, though the flock is cut off from the fold and there are no cattle in the stalls, Yet I will rejoice in the Lord; I will exult in the victorious God of my salvation!"

"Though the sheriff arrives at the front door and the house is going on auction, though the cars have been repossessed and the electricity is cut, though the grocery cupboard is empty and there is still no prospect of a job, Yet I will rejoice in the Lord; I will exult in the victorious God of my salvation!"

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