Discouraged Workers' Daily Occupations: Exploring Complex Transactions in the
Experience of Unemployment

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ABSTRACT

REBECCA M. ALDRICH: Discouraged Workers' Daily Occupations: Exploring Complex
Transactions in the Experience of Unemployment
(Under the direction of Dr. Virginia A. Dickie)

This dissertation reports findings from a 10-month collaborative ethnographic study of discouraged workers in rural North Carolina. Methods including semi-structured and unstructured interviews, participant observation, and the Occupational Questionnaire were used to explore elements surrounding the daily occupations and situations of five discouraged workers. Findings address the formal classification, categorization, and conceptualization of 'discouraged workers' within the labor force; the idea of 'routine' as both a concept and concrete foundation for discouraged workers' occupations; and the extraordinary and multi-faceted nature of occupational possibilities in situations of long-term unemployment. These findings are discussed in light of cultural frameworks surrounding the opposition of 'crisis' and 'everyday' experience, and are couched in a Deweyan understanding of remaking tense situations. Conclusions include the need to incorporate experiential understandings when collecting data on discouraged workers; rethinking routine as an actively negotiated process that affects occupational engagement; and expanding ideas about what occupations are possible in experiences of long-term unemployment. Future lines of research related to well-being, social service processes, and discourse analysis are also discussed.

Dedication: To my brother, Aaron, who continues to shape my interests and endeavors.

Thanks for all that you do, and for the example you set.

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Chapter 1. Introduction

This dissertation details a 10-month ethnographic study of discouraged workers' daily occupations in rural North Carolina. More than that, however, this dissertation narrates an uncovering and understanding of situations through which people on society's periphery inhabit daily life. It charts the planning and execution of a study focused on transactional relations, speaking as much to the process of research as it does to the findings that emerged from that process. It reveals how everyday action connects cultural conceptions of time use, pragmatic issues of resource expenditure, and particular sociohistorical conditions, all of which influence the self-perceptions and social judgments that play into notions of well-being. This introduction weaves together these many threads, creating a tapestry illustrative of the topical hues that can color a study of occupation.

Why this study, in this discipline, at this time?

In his book *In Praise of Slowness*, Carl Honoré (2004) wrote about contemporary society's frenetic pace and the cultural movements that have begun to rebel against it. Clarifying the nature of these rebellions, Honoré noted that "the Slow philosophy can be summed up in a single word: balance. . . Seek to live at what musicians call the *tempo giusto*—the right speed" (p. 15). Declarations of improved well-being accompany the Slow philosophy, its founders linking myriad health problems to people doing too much too quickly in everyday life. Like the Slow philosophy that Honoré described, scholarship on occupation extols balance, rhythm, and routine as harbingers of well-being amidst the hectic demands of modern living (cf. Christiansen & Matuska, 2006; Clark, Parham, Carlson,

Frank, Jackson, Pierce et al., 1990; Johnson, 1986; Meyer, 1922/1977; Reilly, 1962; Westhorp, 2003; Yerxa, 1998), particularly with reference to the occupation of work (cf. Eklund, Erlandsson, & Leufstadius, 2010; Harvey-Krefting, 1985; Matuska & Christiansen, 2008). Collectively, these writings imply that *choosing* to slow down work commitments in the name of balance is a morally acceptable and preferable course of action: in seeking the *tempo giusto*, people are praised for keeping workaholism at bay and filling their time with other balance-inducing activities.

Similar to concerns about the dangers of overworking, a total absence of work is also recognized as a health-threatening state of imbalance. The recent economic recession prompted renewed interest in unemployment and it effect on "categories of experience" (Jahoda, Lazarsfeld, & Zeisel, 1933/2002) related to well-being, evidenced not least by an explosion of popular media stories on the subject (cf. Ashbrook, 2010). Long before this economic crisis, however, scholars recognized unemployment as a detriment to individual and societal health (World Health Organization, 1996) and a social justice concern (Wilcock, 2006). This recognition originated in the Great Depression, when the effects of unemployment first attracted public interest and scholarly study (Ashton, 1986). Research on unemployment covers a range of topics related to physical and psychological health (e.g., Jahoda, Lazarsfeld, & Zeisel, 1933/2002; McKee-Ryan, Song, Wanberg, & Kinicki, 2005), different categories of experience during excess leisure time (e.g., Evans & Haworth, 1991; Passmore, 1998; Pettifer, 1993), and informal economic endeavors (cf. Duneier, 2001; Ferman, 1990; Liebow, 1967; Venkatesh, 2006; Wilson, 1996). A recurrent theme in these studies is the destabilizing effect of unemployment as it pertains to social expectations about how people spend their time: the lack of control discussed in the literature often references

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unemployed people's inability to engage in activities that exercise their skills in a balanced manner.

For these reasons, paid employment enjoys enduring positive attention in scholarship on occupation, while unemployment remains cast in a negative light. However, recent criticisms of the "Big Four" categories of occupation (cf. Jonsson, 2008; Whalley Hammell, 2009a)—'work,' 'rest,' 'play,' and 'sleep,' or derivatives thereof—question generalizations about the effects of work and non-work occupations and experiences on well-being. Critics specifically reference positive features of non-work occupations as proof of the scholarly tunnel vision surrounding paid employment (cf. Whalley Hammell, 2009b). While these critiques do not take aim at accepted views of work's health-promoting features, they suggest the need to understand non-work occupations and experiences as equally multifaceted and potentially positive. Literature supporting the heterogeneous experience of unemployment suggests the need for further exploration into the occupations of non-working individuals (cf. McKee-Ryan, Song, Wanberg, & Kinicki, 2005), which aligns with a broader call to engage in more complex inquiries about occupation in general (cf. Aldrich, 2008; Dickie, 2010; Dickie, Cutchin, & Humphry, 2006; Eakman, 2007; Frauwirth & Fogelberg, 2010).

In answering the dual calls for complex studies of occupation and continued research on unemployment, one particular subset of the unemployed population remains especially worthy of study: so-called 'discouraged' workers, who want to work but have given up looking for employment because they think that they cannot get a job (Castillo, 1998; U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2011a). Although the after effects of the Great Recession of 2009 (Douthat, 2010) reinforce the visibility and timeliness of studying this group, it is significant that discouraged workers have been federally recognized as part of American society since

the 1960s (Castillo, 1998), and yet they remain poorly understood relative to other non-working populations. The unparalleled rise in the number of discouraged workers in the past decade (see Figure 1, U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2011b) serves only to reinforce the injustice of continued ignorance about this societal group, especially in light of the need to better understand experiences of unemployment.

Figure 1. Annual Estimate of Discouraged Workers in the United States, 2000-2010
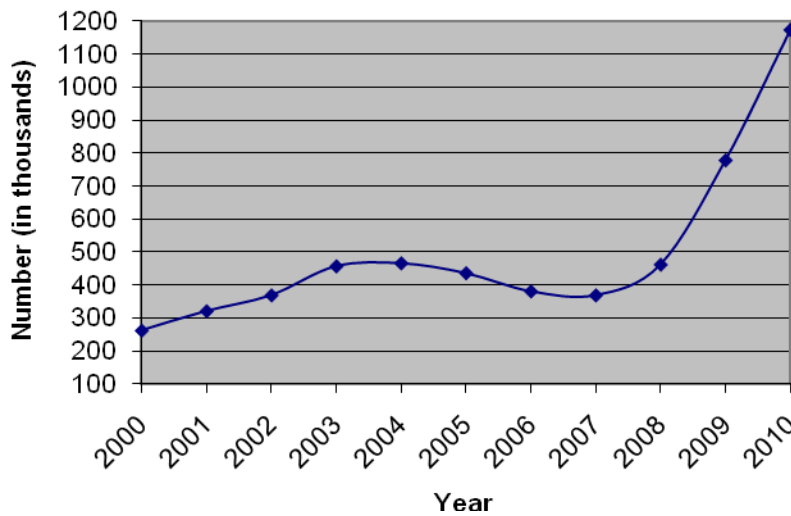
The context of the study detailed herein is thus one of conflicting cultural values: on one side, recent developments in Western societies urge people to "slow down" and seek non-work engagements that provide balance and rhythm; on the other, the emphasis on work as a health-promoting social necessity continues to flourish. The tension between these sociocultural trends stands out more clearly against the backdrop of the recent economic downturn, wherein the American dream seemed to move beyond the reach of millions of people (Seelye, 2009). However, as Dudley (1994) wrote,

> the American dream is more than a statement about limitless opportunity in the land of free enterprise. It is also a story about moral order—about what we owe our families, friends, and communities. Moreover, the success ethic spells out in no

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uncertain terms what society owes us in return for the hard work we do, and we measure the value of what we do in light of these expectations (p. xix).

In a way, the moral order of the American Dream is a statement about how people occupy their time both during and outside work occupations, and valuations of self and others hinge on cultural expectations built upon that order. My study's findings suggest that cultural practices surrounding what occupations people *can* and *should* do are cast into doubt by large-scale economic transformations such as the Great Recession. Along with changing understandings about what activities actually constitute "work," these situational shifts illuminate the complexity of understanding the function of work, or lack thereof, in people's contemporary lives.

The remainder of this chapter reviews general literature about employment, unemployment, and well-being, and explores the topic of discouraged workers in greater detail. Beginning with a discussion of how social values around employment and unemployment developed in the United States, the review examines the relationship of work and well-being and various classifications of unemployed persons and their experiences. Following the literature review, I briefly outline the content of subsequent chapters before returning to the notion of "slowness" vis-à-vis the five discouraged workers who participated in this study. I suggest that the ways discouraged workers spent their "slow time" engaged a dialectic about crisis relative to occupational engagements; yet unlike the praise afforded to members of "slow" movements, the enforced "slowing" of discouraged workers' daily doings invoked entrenched values about idleness and productivity, masking the complexity of discouraged workers' occupations.

<center>**Literature review**</center>

Sociocultural notions of paid employment and individual worth

Paid employment is such a defining feature in Western society that individuals introduce themselves by telling others what they 'do,' and implicit judgments based on the perceived worth of that 'doing' often follow such introductions (Unruh, 2004). The notion that "if you can walk and talk and tie your own shoelaces, well, you should be out there working…and anything short of that, you're…a liability" (Stone, 2003, p.11) reflects the centrality of the 'worker' identity in Western culture. This centrality is the product of a dramatic economic shift in modern society. American industrialization in the 1800s and associated migration to urban centers restructured a formerly agrarian society around the factory workday. This restructuring altered the rhythm and purpose of daily life, and individual worth became predominantly associated with formal employment by the early 1900s (Ashton, 1986; Badger, 2002; Brock, 1988; Wilcock, 2006). The Protestant work ethic (Weber, 2002b), the decline of organized religion and the diaspora of the nuclear family (Durkheim, 1933) further ingrained the importance of employment in Western society.

Judgments about unemployment and individual worth began to garner national attention in America during the Great Depression, when masses of unemployed individuals first became conspicuously idle in day-to-day life (Ashton, 1986). Although job insecurity and 'irregular' employment abounded prior to the Great Depression, the kin and ethnic networks that formerly combated unemployment became ineffective against the diffuse and long-term effects of that recession (Badger, 2002). The resulting recognition of joblessness as a social problem spurred debates about government welfare, its proper beneficiaries, and

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whether paid employment is a *right* or a *privilege* (Badger; Brinkley, 1995; Brock, 1988;

Skocpol, 1990). It also stimulated the development of a science about the labor market

(economics) and the Keynesian model that guided post-Depression American politics. This

model's primary assertions contend that some level of unemployment is natural (Barro, 1997;

Mankiw, 1998) and that full employment is not viable in capitalist societies because of the

need for a labor reserve (Brinkley; Mankiw). However, critics argue that Keynesian theory

"obscures…hidden ideology, values, and policy choices" (Bellin & Miller, 1990, p. 182) by

asserting unemployment as a fixed and necessary property of the economy.

Thus, while social norms often characterize unemployment as a negative reflection of

individual character flaws, competing economic norms view it as a necessary condition for a

capitalist society. These divergent assumptions manifest in mass media reports (cf.

Whiteford, 2001) and scholarly debates that link unemployment either to individual character

flaws or socially constructed barriers (Brock, 1988). Ultimately, Western culture generally

views able-bodied people without paid employment as idle and undeserving persons who

ignore their social responsibilities (Badger, 2002; Brock). Despite de-industrialization and

the shifting nature of work in contemporary society (Jones, 1993; 1998; Toulmin, 1995),

valuations of individual worth vis-à-vis employment continue to pervade social, political, and

personal arenas.

The relationship of paid employment and well-being

As indicated above, paid employment and its absence are charged with assumptions

about individual worth. However, the value attributed to paid employment does not stem

solely from its moral connections; it also comes from the asserted relationship between

employment and well-being (cf. Ellwood, 1979; Petersen & Mortimer, 1979). People's social

participation and attachment to community may hinge partially upon their experience in the

economic sector (Wilensky, 1961). Rates of anxiety and affective disorders are higher for

people who are unemployed (Comino, Harris, Chey, Manicavasagar, Wall, et al., 2003), and

self-esteem, happiness, and general life satisfaction are lower for people who are unemployed

(Evans & Haworth, 1991). While these trends vary by age, sex, social status, and ethnicity

and may result from selection effects (whereby people with poorer psychological profiles are

more likely to be unemployed (Mastekaasa, 1996)), they may also indicate a lack of access to

the health-promoting experiences provided by paid employment (Haworth & Ducker, 1991).

      The qualities of paid employment linked to health and well-being include time

structure, social contact, collective membership, social status, and the opportunity to engage

in meaningful activities (Jahoda, 1982, as cited in Creed & Watson, 2003), as well as

"extrinsic rewards, accomplishment, learning, and altruism" (Tinsley, Hinson, Tinsley, &

Holt, 1993). This contrasts with leisure, which is linked to relaxation, personal enjoyment,

companionship, novelty (Tinsley et al.), increased choice (Jones, 1993; Passmore, 1998;

Pettifer, 1993), and self-sufficiency (Jones). Although concerted leisure activity may provide

some of the psychological benefits attributed to paid employment (Passmore), an inability to

fill the open time created by unemployment may lead to negative psychological effects

(Pettifer). Even when unemployed persons successfully fill their time with non-work

occupations, they score lower on measures of well-being than their employed counterparts

(Evans & Haworth, 1991). This may be related to the level of challenge posed by activities

outside of paid employment (Haworth & Ducker, 1991), personal characteristics (such as

neuroticism, coping resources, coping style, cognitive appraisal, etc.), or an individual's level

of social support (Creed & Watson, 2003; McKee-Ryan et al., 2005).

Although paid employment may have some unique health-promoting qualities, responses to unemployment and access to those qualities through other activities are heterogeneous (Cullen & Hodgetts, 2001; Jakobsen, 2004; McKee-Ryan et al., 2005). While the work-leisure relationship dominates the literature, research that explores non-leisure activities may further explain this heterogeneity. The sociological literature focuses heavily on activities in the informal and social economies, the former of which uses money as a medium of exchange and the latter of which operates via bartering or the trading of services (Ferman, 1990). None of the activities in either sphere are recorded in economic measurements, but

> taken as a whole they may become important both in the provision of goods and services that are unavailable or difficult to obtain through the regular economy and in the distribution of products produced in the regular economy (Ferman, p. 12).

People who are unemployed may participate in a variety of informal or social activities in lieu of paid employment. Understanding the situations that influence people's *choice of* and *engagement in* such activities may illuminate why individuals in similar situations respond differently to long-term unemployment.

Distinctions in the experience of unemployment: 'Discouraged' workers

People's level of attachment to the formal economy may also influence their participation in particular activities during unemployment. According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (2011a), not all persons without paid employment are classified as 'unemployed.' To be unemployed, an individual must actively look for work in the formal sector; otherwise, he or she is 'not in the labor force' and is not included in unemployment statistics (Mankiw, 1998). Of those who are not in the labor force, a further distinction separates people based on their reasons for not seeking paid employment. If childcare,

transportation, family responsibilities, illness/disability, or education/training are cited as reasons, people are considered 'nondiscouraged' workers; conversely, if personal characteristics or market factors are cited as reasons, people are classified as 'discouraged' workers who are marginally attached to the labor force (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2011a). The crucial distinction between discouraged and nondiscouraged workers is that discouraged workers would accept a job in the formal economy if offered one (Castillo, 1998).

If paid employment is viewed as a savior from idleness and as a vehicle for community, social engagement, daily structure, and meaningful activity, its absence is fraught with myriad concerns about well-being and societal roles. These concerns are especially poignant for discouraged workers, who represent "unused human resources" (Castillo, 1998) that virtually vanish from public radars:

> Gone from the unemployment lines and unemployment agencies, most likely no longer receiving unemployment benefits, most of these people disappear from all government lists. In fact, many of them seem to disappear off the face of the earth (Cottle, 2001, p. 4).

Current data (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2011a) indicate that the population of discouraged workers is demographically heterogeneous. Slightly more men than women fall into the discouraged category, and people aged 25-54 years are more represented than individuals 16-24 years or 55 years and older. However, research outside of the Current Population Survey suggests that adults 55 years and older, teenagers, women, and ethic minorities are overrepresented in this group (Buss & Redburn, 1988; Finegan, 1978; Kodrzycki, 2000; Wool, 1978). Discouraged workers may be less likely to have completed high school and more likely to be single than married (Buss & Redburn), and while previous job tenure may not differ across 'marginally attached' workers (Buss & Redburn), future

labor force attachment may be lower for discouraged workers than their 'marginally attached' counterparts (Castillo, 1998). This may be because discouraged workers are not as employable as other workers (Kodrzycki) or because they cannot translate their desire for employment into actual work (Castillo).

While the reported number of discouraged workers may be low when compared to other 'marginally attached' workers (Castillo, 1998; Kodrzycki, 2000), this may be due to methodological difficulties attendant to locating and identifying this population: the Current Population Survey simply measures labor force attachment, while other analyses explain worker discouragement as a function of personal, social, or historical factors. These diverse approaches suggest that people who have withdrawn from the labor force may cause an undercount in employment statistics by as little as 1% (Finegan, 1978), as many as 2 million workers (Schweitzer & Smith, 1974), or as much as twice the official unemployment rate (Farnworth, 1995). These figures likely include individuals who do not fall within the Bureau of Labor Statistics' static category of 'discouraged worker' (Castillo; Schweitzer & Smith), and thus a more dynamic approach to conceptualizing discouraged workers might better reflect both their numbers and experiences (Buss & Redburn, 1988). However, such an approach requires consideration of social and psychological factors that are problematic for quantitatively based research methods (Bjørnstad, 2006; Zippay, 1995).

Much of the literature on discouraged workers explains labor market withdrawal as a function of the economic incentives associated with job searching (Benati, 2001; Bjørnstad, 2006; Schweitzer & Smith, 1974)—that is, whether the cost of utilizing resources to search for work is offset by the relative certainty of gaining employment through those resources. However, this explanation has been difficult to establish empirically (Benati; Bjørnstad;

Schweitzer & Smith). Rather than approach discouraged workers from the vantage of their movement in and out of the labor force, some scholars suggest that research needs to focus on the more dynamic aspects of workers' lives (cf. Zippay, 1995). It remains unclear how discouraged workers subsist in their daily lives (Buss & Redburn, 1988) or how their means of subsistence relates to the many contextual factors that make them who they are. Little research specifically focuses on the daily occupations of discouraged workers; however, many studies focus on the activities of unemployed people (broadly construed). Such studies provide preliminary insight on the possible occupations of discouraged workers across two general categories: studies of unemployed people's economic activities and studies of the experience of unemployment.

Informal and social economic activities of unemployed persons

Although discouraged workers are displaced from the formal economy, they must do *something* with their time, and evaluations of their occupations are subject to the assumption that "a life stripped of any worthwhile occupation is material for a tragedy" (Toulmin, 1995). Zippay's (1995) qualitative study of 11 discouraged workers revealed that household work, hobbies, and idleness often replaced formal work in participants' lives. Based on the broader unemployment literature, it is likely that discouraged workers also utilize social networks as "an essential tool in piecing together a livelihood" (Collins, 1995, p. 44), and these networks may cut across the informal and social economies. These economies usually contain activities similar to those found in the formal economy (albeit on a smaller scale), and discouraged workers might seek recourse in informal economic activities after "a complex set of psychological, social, and economic factors, ranging from a burned-out worker

syndrome to the lack of fair wage employment opportunities" results in the cessation of formal economy job-seeking (Ferman, 1990, p. 130).

The activities that constitute the informal and social economies are often valued in the formal economy. While "many activities in the [informal] economy are so commonplace, so taken for granted, that we trivialize them" (Smith, 1989, p. 305), "many non-work preoccupations are remarkable not because they are so different from what we ordinarily call work, but precisely because they so closely resemble its traditional rhythms and reaffirm its cardinal values" (Vallas, 1990, p. 350). The importance of these activities is well documented in the literature. Venkatesh's (2006) study of the underground economy in Southside Chicago revealed that informal and social economic activities actually "wove together the social fabric" of the neighborhood (p. 5), despite the fact that the activities were often poorly integrated. Duneier's (2001) study of sidewalk magazine and book vendors in New York characterized vendors' activities as a function of personal abilities as well as cultural expectations about what it means to be self-sufficient. Barber's (1992) study of workers in Glace Bay also illuminated a relationship between formal and informal economic activities and workers' goals of maintaining community and combating marginalization.

These studies show that "we need not only to ask what activities are called 'work' and how their economic value is computed in that setting; we need also to know which forms of work are, in that setting, thought to be socially worthy and personally fulfilling" (Wallman, 1979, p. 2). Wallman suggested that research should study "what work *apart from a job* is necessary to livelihood" (p. 5) (emphasis in original), and she broadly defined work as "the performance of necessary tasks and the production of necessary values—moral as well as economic" (p. 7). Activities found in the social economy (cf. Halperin, 1990; Stack,

1970) may constitute occupations that produce necessary values for community members, including watching others' children for free (Newman, 1999) or giving advice to younger generations (Duneier, 2001). Despite their everyday and non-monetary nature, these occupations may provide people a sense of purpose in the absence of formal employment, and they underscore that "[making] sure that those who have no chance of being employed on material production are still gainfully occupied, not left at a loose end or dismissed as worthless. . . is in all our interests" (Toulmin, 1995, p. 57).

Studies of the experience of unemployment

As indicated in the literature, much of what discouraged workers might do is a function of their personal skills interacting with their surrounding conditions. Ferman, Berndt, and Henry (1993) wrote that "'off-the-books' jobs [have been] found to combine commercialism and emotional and psychological rewards that [are] qualitatively different from dead-end jobs of the market economy" (p. viii). This suggests that evaluations of non-work occupations should be directly related to people's experiences of long-term unemployment in their particular contexts (Engbersen, Schuyt, Timmer, & van Waarden, 1993). Cottle (2001) noted that "we must honor. . . the *experience* of long-term unemployment in the same way that traditionally we have honored hard-earned statistics on unemployment" (p. 6) (emphasis in original). Cottle's call to action is especially moving with respect to discouraged workers, who do not even receive the recognition afforded by inclusion in unemployment statistics. It is even more significant that the literature displays a total lack of experiential or ethnographic studies of discouraged workers in the face of repeated calls for such understandings about this group (cf. Buss & Redburn, 1988; Zippay, 1998).

According to the literature, the experience of unemployment is inherently tied to the opportunity to engage in occupation. The men whose voices fill Cottle's (2001) book suggest that the lack of opportunity to *do* is heavily associated with social de-valuation:

> Steady and rewarding work allows a man to feel he has a personal as well as social value. Underemployment means he has low, even minimal value. Unemployment means the absence of value, again, personal as well as social, and no promise of any sort of reward in the immediate future (p. 226).

Despite the prevalence of similar views in the unemployment literature, research also indicates that a lack of formal employment does not always result in such negative consequences (cf. Engbersen et al., 1993). Some individuals reframe their unemployment as a vehicle for other opportunities, such as the chance to assume greater responsibilities in their personal lives (Cullen & Hodgetts, 2001). Many people emphasize increased control and satisfaction gained through informal economic activities, despite the poverty and homelessness fostered by a lack of formal employment (Duneier, 2001). The ability to use personal skills may determine whether informal economic activities relate to negative psychological effects (Farnworth, 1995) and social devaluation, and non-work occupations may provide opportunities for learning and autonomy that are absent in the formal economic domain (Dickie, 1996; 2003).

Summary of the literature review and definition of unit of analysis

Discouraged workers' experiences of unemployment likely relate to what they *do*, which hinges on *who they are* as socially-situated individuals. The literature contains a paucity of information on discouraged workers and reveals the need for a more complex view that embeds workers in specific cultural and historical formations (Calagione & Nugent, 1992). This gap in knowledge suggests that we must ask, "What are the underlying factors that give rise to these [daily] activities, and are they underpinned by work values resembling

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the work ethic identified with the conventional world of work?" (Ferman, 1993, p. 21).

Furthermore, it shows that "we should try to open a space for problems of value and

resistance to the dominant ideologies of capitalism to be reapprehended" through studies of

workers (Calagione & Nugent, p. 8). Occupational science is well-suited to meeting these

needs through its diverse aims and flexible unit of analysis, namely occupation.

Defined as chunks of activity named in the lexicon of the culture (Yerxa, Clark,

Frank, Jackson, & Parham et al., 1990), the ordinary and familiar things that people do every

day (Clark, Parham, Carlson, Frank, & Jackson et al., 1991), and "all the things people need,

have, or want to do" (Wilcock, 2006), 'occupations' reference basic human activity (not just

'work') on a variety of analytic levels (Clark et al.). Occupation is alternately characterized

as specific, personally constructed, nonrepeatable, and contextual (Pierce, 2001); goal-

directed and socially sanctioned (Yerxa et al.); consciously orchestrated by humans who have

a drive for mastery over the environment (Clark et al.); individualized and symbolic (Clark et

al.; Yerxa et al.); culturally embedded (Hocking, 2000); and a relational action based on the

coordination of habit, context, and creativity that is always in process (Cutchin, Aldrich,

Bailliard, & Coppola, 2008). Despite relative fluidity in the definition of occupation, research

on occupation claims to consider the economic, social, political, environmental, and

individual factors that affect occupational engagement and the values conferred upon it

(Whiteford, 2003). Hence, a study of discouraged workers' daily occupations must consider

multiple planes of analysis and examine the form, function, and meaning (Clark et al.) of

occupations within the context of workers' lives (Dickie, Cutchin, & Humphry, 2006).

Goode and Maskovsky (2001) noted that the problem of addressing a hidden population lies

not in its "invisibility but in the terms on which [it is] permitted to be visible in the public

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discourse" (p. 2); the occupational science perspective holds great potential to increase discouraged workers' visibility by promoting a greater understanding of their experiences through a focus on occupation.

Outline of remaining chapters

Put simply, my aim with this study was to fill some of the gaps apparent in the literature on discouraged workers. In particular, I wanted to adopt theoretical and methodological stances to augment quantitative, demographically-focused studies of discouraged workers. In the next chapter, I discuss my use of Deweyan philosophy as a theoretical orientation for these aims, showing how the Deweyan perspective both fit extant needs in the literature and grounded specific research questions and methodologies. Adopting a Deweyan orientation influenced my description of the study situation in Chapter 3, which summarizes environmental, sociocultural, and economic influences on discouraged workers' situations at the international, national, regional, and local levels. Chapter 3 includes specific information about the town in which my study occurred—Horizon Mills, North Carolina (a pseudonym)—and introduces the five discouraged workers who shared their lives with me over the course of my study. Chapter 4 explains my collaborative ethnographic methodology (Lassiter, 2005), focusing particularly on how that methodology shifted according to discouraged workers' in-flux situations in Horizon Mills. I describe my findings in chapters 5 through 7, which problematize the definition and measurement of discouraged workers; illuminate difficulties with conceptions of daily routine; and summarize discouraged workers' daily rounds of occupations. Chapter 8 contains my focused analysis of my findings, synthesizing the notions of tension and negotiation as they play out in the cultural juxtaposition of crisis and 'everyday' experience. Chapter 9 discusses the limitations and

future directions for my research, and the final chapter summarizes the conclusions reached through this study.

"Slowness" and discouraged workers: Framing my ethnographic inquiry

To say that this study examined the occupations that filled discouraged workers' days only superficially communicates what I discovered during my time in Horizon Mills. In light of wider economic and cultural factors, this research is better understood as an exploration of the experience of externally imposed "slowness," something quite different from the "slow" movements heralded by Honoré (2004). Framed by the notion of "slow time" that characterizes periods of unemployment in manufacturing-based towns such as Horizon Mills, my findings suggest that "slowing down" is neither universally beneficial nor detrimental, and its effects depend on people's abilities to negotiate and coordinate with a complexity of situational factors. My findings demonstrate that the occupations that accompany enforced "slowness" invite a host of social and moral judgments about how people spend their time— judgments that do not attend to conscious attempts to "slow down" in middle and upper class Western society. As people who are marginalized in government statistics and made socially peripheral through their disengagement with the formal economy, discouraged workers occupy a place of tension that illuminates continuing concerns about work, well-being, and daily occupation. Through a better understanding of discouraged workers' "slow time" in Horizon Mills, North Carolina, we can begin to free discouraged workers and their occupations from the bonds of their 'disappeared' social status (Pang, Lang, & Chiu, 2005).

Chapter 2. Framing the Study: A Deweyan Approach to Research on Discouraged Workers

As demonstrated in the introduction, research to-date has insufficiently addressed the heterogeneity and complexity of discouraged workers' experiences (Benati, 2001; Bjørnstad, 2006; Buss & Redburn, 1988; Zippay, 1995). Although determining demographic and labor characteristics of this group is important, it is just as essential to examine broader elements and qualities of discouraged workers' lives (Cottle, 2001; Ferman, Berndt, & Henry, 1993). However, knowing "who discouraged workers are, [and] how they got that way" (Buss & Redburn, 1988, p. 7) requires a more comprehensive grounding than is employed in existing studies. Most research invokes theories such as learned helplessness to explain discouraged workers' labor force status or work ethic (cf. Bjørnstad, 2006; Kodrzycki, 2000; Zippay, 1995); yet, this restricted focus leaves many other aspects of discouraged workers' lives unspecified. The narrow application of discouraged worker research to-date suggests the need for a new theoretical framework that privileges a wider range of phenomena. The pragmatist philosophy of John Dewey offers such a foundation (Aldrich & Callanan, 2011), addressing the complexity of human experience (Aldrich, 2008) and occupation (Cutchin, Aldrich, Bailliard, & Coppola, 2008) via a relational, socially situated perspective (Dickie, Cutchin, & Humphry, 2006). This chapter introduces the Deweyan perspective and elaborates how it informed and shaped my study.

Dewey's idea of transaction provides an anchor for applying his philosophical perspective. Transaction specifically references the ongoing *processes* that coordinate the

situations through which individuals live (Dewey & Bentley, 1949/1976). More than a discrete concept, the idea of transaction instantiates Dewey's overall metaphysics. It denotes a holistic perspective of the "ever-present and always changing interpenetration of humans and their world" (Dickie et al., 2006, p. 88), emphasizing the *relationships* of situational elements and the significance of those relationships for larger experience. The idea of transaction is multifunctional for scholarly inquiry, serving to frame both units of analysis and interpretations of research results. For instance, a study may aim to outline the multiple elements of a particular transaction, or it may employ special attention to transactional relations during its analysis. However, grasping the value of transaction depends on how well the concept is connected to Dewey's corpus of work. Couched within Dewey's metaphysics and his beliefs about the purpose of philosophy, the idea of transaction offers a sound yet flexible theoretical structure for studying discouraged workers. It suggests both appropriate research questions and methods to answer those questions, naturally meeting needs expressed in the discouraged worker literature. The brief overview of Dewey's philosophy presented in the next section prefaces a more concrete application in the subsequent chapter, which utilizes a Deweyan perspective to describe the study situation. Likewise, theorization of study findings in later chapters further extrapolates Deweyan concepts relative to discouraged workers' occupations. Therefore, this chapter functions to broadly locate my research not as a study of discouraged workers' *occupations in context*, but as a study of discouraged workers' *situations* and the occupations that comprise transactional *responses* to them.

Philosophical orientation, concepts, and assumptions

Dewey (1925/2000) defined metaphysics as "cognizance of the generic traits of existence" (p. 51). Rather than seeing metaphysics as an armchair philosophical endeavor, Dewey viewed metaphysics as grounded in the experience of everyday phenomena. He believed that many philosophical problems—most notably, a tendency to divide experience into discrete categories—stemmed from a non-empirical approach to defining the world. In line with this belief, Cutchin (2008) argued that Dewey's metaphysics emphasized the holism, continuity, contingency, and sociality of experience in a way that set Dewey apart from other philosophers. Instead of separating the world into neat theoretical classifications, Dewey aimed to holistically represent the interconnections that he experienced in everyday life. A basic explanation of the beliefs underlying his approach is crucial for comprehending Dewey's more particular concepts. Although Dewey did not favor the separation of metaphysics into discussions of ontology and epistemology, it is helpful to introduce his ideas in relation to *being* as a foundation for his approach to *knowing*. Hence, this section addresses existential implications of Dewey's metaphysics before detailing their relevance to how we learn about experience.

Relations, continuity, and contingency

Dewey (1952/2003) fundamentally opposed the use of dualisms (such as subject/object or person/environment) to describe experience. While he acknowledged the analytical need to treat experiential elements separately, he (unlike classical philosophers such as Plato) argued that this analytical separation did not imply separation in reality. Rather, Dewey (1925/2000) claimed that elements of experience are never independent "of a *relation* to others, the relation or law being the constancy among variations" (emphasis in

original) (p. 146). All aspects of experience are literally *part* of one another in Dewey's view, and his perspective demands that ontologies of experience eschew dualistic frameworks in favor of relational ones. The difference between relational and dualistic frameworks at first appears to be a mere matter of emphasis: the former focuses on the connections between elements of experience, while the latter focuses on the elements themselves. However, the significance of this emphasis connotes of a view of experience that goes beyond semantic nuances. Put simply, Dewey's relational perspective holds that the world is first and foremost a matter of relations, and dichotomous descriptors should be reserved for discussion purposes only. Dewey's commitment to the primacy of relations framed experience as "a nexus of active relations which is not only continuous with the world but with the past, the present, and the future" (Cutchin, 2008, p. 1559). Elements of experience are related not only to one another but also to their past and future instantiations, based on the continuity of time. For Dewey, relations and continuity were incontrovertible facts that commanded a holistic philosophy of being. Yet, his emphasis on relations and continuity did not imply a view of experience as wholly stable; rather, Dewey (1925/2000) suggested that "we live in a world which is an impressive and irresistible mixture of sufficiencies, tight completeness, order, recurrences which make possible prediction and control, and singularities, ambiguities, uncertain possibilities, processes going on to consequences as yet indeterminate" (p. 47). According to Dewey, the balance of continuity and contingency (or uncertainty) in experience made life whole, and his metaphysics reflected the dedicated view that "incompleteness and precariousness [e.g., contingency]. . . must be given footing of the same rank as the finished and fixed" in ontological descriptions (p. 51).

Organic unity, the "live creature" in association, and growth

Dewey's stance on the relational, continuous, and contingent nature of experience bore directly upon his view of the human being. As an integral part of its world, Dewey (1925/2000) wrote, "a living organism [a human] and its life processes involve a world or nature temporally and spatially 'external' to itself but 'internal' to its functions" (p. 278). Here, Dewey denoted an *organic unity* of humans and their environment that portrayed each as fundamentally constituted and changed through relations with the other. He further explained that "living as an empirical affair is not something which goes on below the skin-surface of an organism: it is always an inclusive affair involving connection, interaction of what is within the organic body and what lies outside in space and time" (Dewey, 1925/2000, p. 282). Dewey thus conceived humans to be "live creatures" who exist *through* their environments in experience (Kestenbaum, 1977). Apart from the physical elements of the world, Dewey (1922/2008) also asserted that humans exist in relation with the associated living that structures society. People develop capacities and habits through their connection and communication with others, such that "it is not an ethical 'ought' that conduct *should* be social. It *is* social, whether bad or good" (emphasis in original) (Dewey, 1922/2008, p. 5). The sociality of humans provided further evidence of the "constantly emerging relations that bind person and world" (Cutchin, 2008, p. 1562), and Dewey believed that "one might as well study an organism in complete detachment from its [physical and social] environment as try to study an electric clock on the wall in disregard of the wire leading to it" (Dewey & Bentley, 1949/1976, p. 139). Humans, their environments, and their relations are subject to the continuity and contingency of experience and in fact are driven by it. Dewey believed that these experiential facts were key to human growth, which he characterized as "the

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continual flowering and actualizing of possibilities" in a person's life (Boisvert, 1998, p. 59).

Rather than connoting mere physical or psychological development, Dewey's notion of

growth seized upon the relational nature of experience and humans' organic unity with their

environment, linking growth directly to humans' sociality (Boisvert) because human

capacities emerge from their associated living (Campbell, 1998; Cutchin et al., 2008; Dewey,

1922/2008).

Adequacy to experience and knowledge of uncertain "qualitative wholes"

Dewey's relational ontology predicated his view of the origin, focus, and function of

knowledge. Dewey argued that philosophical (or theoretical) knowledge should pass an

"adequacy to experience" test (Pappas, 2008): he believed that it should start from, criticize,

and apply back to experience (Boisvert, 2007) with the ultimate goal of ameliorating societal

problems (Campbell, 1995; Dewey 1925/2000; Stuhr, 2003). Aside from its clearly political

message, Dewey's conviction also communicated a particular link between knowledge and

experience. Dewey (1925/2000) suggested that multiple forms of knowledge secondarily

emerge from experience (Campbell, 1995; Garrison & Watson, 2005) because people

primarily and pre-reflectively "experience qualitative wholes" (Cutchin & Dickie, in press, p.

16) as they live. It is these qualitative wholes that knowledge aims to describe. Dewey

(1925/2000) rejected the notion that absolute knowledge exists outside experience, arguing

instead that "knowledge is an affair of *making* sure, not of grasping antecedently given

sureties" (emphasis in original) (p. 154). In other words, knowledge of experience is *created*

through the process of experiencing qualitative wholes, and it serves as a tool for critiquing

or improving the primary experience that gives rise to it. Dewey thus believed that

"experience contains the means for its own evaluation" (Campbell, 1995, p. 7) because

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experience generates the theories that are later formed into knowledge; as a consequence, he contended that theoretical explanations must "deal with life as it is experienced" (Cutchin & Dickie, in press) because improving experience is the ultimate function of knowledge.

Dewey argued that natural features of the world provide an important background for knowledge (Gouinlock, 1972) because they contribute to the wholeness of experience. Consequently, ignoring or manipulating natural features to streamline theories reduces the value, accuracy, and completeness of theories' intended explanations. In Dewey's (1925/2000) view, part of accurately theorizing experience entails addressing life's inherent contingency or uncertainty. Instead of glossing over uncertainty or treating it as a confounding variable (Boisvert, 2007), Dewey (1925/2000; 1929/2005) viewed uncertainty as a positive and inexorable part of how humans make sense of their experience. Dewey (1929/2005) argued that people mostly function without difficulty, thanks to the organic unity that characterizes humans' relations with their environment. Because person and environment are never fully separate, the two elements must coordinate to guarantee human function across situations (Cutchin et al., 2008). When the coordination of person and environment promotes human function, people experience their qualitative wholes pre-reflectively and habitually; however, when a situation—or an instance of the person-environment relationship (Cutchin et al.)—lacks coordination and becomes overwhelmingly uncertain, the resulting dysfunction prompts people to reflect upon their experiences (Gouinlock, 1972). These problematic or indeterminate situations (Hickman, 1998) are the basis of human engagement in the world, inviting conscious reflection about solutions that will reconstruct and re-coordinate situations (Campbell, 1995; Fesmire, 2003; Hickman; Stuhr, 2003). Thus, although uncertainty is a source of situational tension and dysfunction, it

is also a source of growth as people re-coordinate their situations. The actualization of human capacities and possibilities rests upon people's abilities to learn from their dysfunctional relationships with their environments. Under a Deweyan perspective, then, knowledge must recognize uncertainty's influence on human functioning and growth in order to be "adequate" to experience.

Action and transaction

These ideas—that knowledge derives from and must adequately represent uncertain, organic experience—create a particular framework for understanding human action. Rather than painting people as autonomous beings who act based upon absolute knowledge, a Deweyan perspective emphasizes that people habitually learn from and coordinate with their uncertain environments (Kestenbaum, 1977). Dewey (1922/2008) viewed all human action (including thought or inquiry) as a function of habits, or dispositions toward responses to situations. Internalized as people develop in society, habits remain subconscious until they stop promoting person-environment coordination, at which point inquiry arises and knowledge emerges (Dewey, 1922/2008). Through the everyday process of exercising habits, humans develop understandings about their situations: people discover that "the possibility of being in a situation rests upon the possibility of having habits" (Kestenbaum, 1977, p. 19) because habits and the world solicit mutual responses. The continuity of experience over time allows people to utilize both habits and their knowledge of past habit dysfunction to foster coordination with their environments (Kestenbaum, 1977). Human behavior cannot be considered a mere response to stimuli in this view because action is part of humans' serial, habitual, and ongoing adjustment to their situations (Campbell, 1995, p. 37). Consequently,

knowledge must frame human action as a social product of the relations, habits, and inquiries that constitute life's organic unity.

The concept of transaction encapsulates Dewey's many metaphysical ideas about experience and knowledge (Garrison, 2001). Stated simply, transaction describes the co-constitutive, relational nature of action (Dewey & Bentley, 1949/1976) in a way that transcends dualistic conceptions like self-action or inter-action (Cutchin, 2004a; Dickie et al., 2006). It defines humans' "activity of engagement with the world" (Sullivan, 2002, p. 209) as a contingent, ever-changing process rooted in coordinated habits and flexible, cultivated inquiry, "such that no one of its constituents can be adequately specified as fact apart from the specification of other constituents" (Dewey & Bentley, 1949/1976, p. 137). A theoretical framework based on this idea foregrounds the entirety of a studied situation, defining experience as a cumulative process of person-environment transactions (Campbell, 1995) and the elements that enter into them. Such a theoretical basis directs scholars away from focusing on either person *or* environment, reorienting their attention to the organic unity and *co-creation of person and environment through action*. It suggests that understanding particular transactions reveals information about people's experienced wholes (Dewey, 1925/2000), through a focus on how transactional "elements actually co-constitute one another through their mutual relationship" (Aldrich, 2008, p. 151). Via habit, people carry their individual pasts, their social connections, and the many elements of their situations into their ever-changing transactions; in turn, each transaction is a particular manifestation of the elements that influence individuals' wider lives. Drawing understandings of situations from transactions thus constitutes a form of "natural empiricism," in which experiential knowledge

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reflects the contingency, co-constitution, and coordination of human engagement with the world (Pappas, 2008).

Based on his metaphysics, Dewey's natural empirical approach aimed to realistically map knowledge to the complexity of experience (Boisvert, 1998; Pappas, 2008). In taking this approach, action cannot be understood from the vantage of the individual alone; it must involve attending to the many people, places, and situational elements with which an individual transacts. More generally, assuming a Deweyan orientation as a basis for scholarly research grounds the need for open, complex, and flexible inquiries about transactions that are shaped by experience rather than only by *a priori* assumptions. Given the complete absence of such inquiries relative to discouraged workers, the Deweyan perspective thus offers great promise: as explained in the next section, it suggests questions and methods that are steeped in experience, which may promote novel understandings of this poorly conceptualized population.

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Influence on approach to the problem

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Collapsed into a compact form, four assumptions based on Dewey's metaphysics situate transaction as a frame for studying discouraged workers: a) knowledge is created and changed through experience (Boisvert, 2007; Dewey, 1925/2000); b) separating knowledge and experience does not mirror the organic unity of reality (Dewey, 1925/2000); c) uncertainty is essential to the transactions of experience (Dewey, 1929/2005), and d) inquiry about transactions yields knowledge about humans' whole "circuit of living" (Campbell, 1995). A theoretical framework built on these assumptions holds that people do not act *in* environments but rather *through* situations, and asserts that accounts of experience require firsthand knowledge of situationally-constitutive transactions. Basing my study around these

assumptions resulted from a confluence of personal, disciplinary, and practical needs, a discussion of which begins this section.

Personally, I found Dewey's philosophy to be resonant long before I chose to study discouraged workers. I had struggled with positivist and associated quantitative notions like the error term, which appeared restricted in their ability to directly account for unanticipated phenomena. I had similarly come to question the utility of solely interview-based qualitative research, which also seemed to provide incomplete snapshots of experience. In general, my concern as a developing scholar was to do research that grappled directly with the complexity of life, and Dewey's emphasis on organic unity seemed suited to that aim. As I developed my general ideas about research, scholars of occupation were already examining Dewey's philosophy as a solution to the discipline's overemphasis on the individual's role in behavior (Clark, 2006; Cutchin, 2004a; Cutchin & Dickie, in press; Dickie et al., 2006; Hocking, 2009). I agreed with those scholars' critiques that understanding how "humans are most true to their humanity when engaged in occupation" (Clark, Parham, Carlson, Frank, & Jackson et al., 1991) required attending to phenomena outside the individual (Whiteford, 2003; Yerxa, Clark, Frank, Jackson, & Parham et al., 1990), and I began to evaluate potential theoretical frameworks on that basis. However, in exploring theoretical approaches that included non-individual phenomena, I remained unconvinced by their discrete categorizations of occupational engagement. For instance, after a careful comparison of complexity theory with the Deweyan perspective (Aldrich, 2008), I determined that the latter's focus on uncertainty and its basis in human action was more "adequate to experience" than applying a framework originally based on discrete mechanical systems. Similarly, although scholars of occupation routinely employ phenomenological approaches, I felt that these approaches perpetuated the

same overemphasis on the individual that generated increasing discontent in the discipline (cf. Iwama, 2006).

With specific reference to my study, the more (or less) I discovered while reviewing the literature on discouraged workers, the more I realized that a study of their lives necessitated attention to the whole of their experiences. As discussed previously, studies of discouraged workers have attended largely to individual phenomena, overlooking many other elements that influence discouraged workers' situations. In light of the restricted information made available through extant research, an occupation-focused, Deweyan-based study of discouraged workers seemed to introduce a new unit of analysis and a much-needed holistic perspective to existing literature. In addition, upon closer reflection, the Deweyan perspective actually appeared to *justify* studying discouraged workers from an occupational science vantage. Given a definition of occupation as a relational transaction (Cutchin et al., 2008; Dickie et al., 2006), studying what discouraged workers *do* every day seemed poised to reveal information about their situations that was not accessible through the typical scholarly focus on employment-related behavior.

Given the potential of an occupation-focused inquiry to generate new knowledge about discouraged workers, I looked to Dewey's philosophy to guide my development of research questions. Dewey's view of knowledge suggested that my research questions should not be based on my own *a priori* assumptions: very little information exists to ground such assumptions about discouraged workers, and what information does exist lacks the experiential basis that makes such assumptions reflective of reality. As the first step in a new vein of research, my study needed to cast a wide net to determine which elements and relations of discouraged workers' situations were salient for future inquiry. This initially

justified exploratory, occupation-focused questions for my study, and that justification was augmented by Dewey's view of uncertainty, which suggests that inquiries should be open to modification based on knowledge that arises in experience. The Deweyan perspective thus required my questions to be fixed enough to define an area of inquiry, open enough to not delimit potential data sources and topics, and flexible enough to address situational elements that were unpredictable *a priori*.

Based on my own discomfort with other research approaches, the gaps in the discouraged worker literature, and the natural alignment of Deweyan orientation with these concerns, I ultimately structured three broad questions about discouraged workers that neither prematurely circumscribed their experiences nor strayed from the needs of existing scholarship. Those questions were:

a. What occupations do discouraged workers engage in during their tenure of unemployment?
b. What value do they assign to these occupations, and what function do these occupations serve?
c. How do discouraged workers' daily occupations fit with activities in the formal, informal, and social economies of their geographic region?

Exploratory and descriptive in nature, these questions created a foundation for uncovering and examining numerous facets of discouraged workers' experiences.

The first question focused my inquiry on the daily doings of this population, allowing me to eschew the more prevalent emphasis on discouraged workers' employment issues. While its concern with occupation hailed primarily from my disciplinary home, this question was also shaped by the Deweyan idea that people's transactions say something about their experience in the world. Privileging the relation between discouraged workers' occupations (or, transactions) and their particular situations, this question also set the stage for

understanding the distinctiveness of discouraged workers' experiences relative to those of other unemployed people who continue to search for work.

Similarly open in nature, the second question gave guidelines to my inquiry without restricting my study to particular elements of discouraged workers' situations. Social, economic, and political aspects of life all enter into the valuation and purpose of occupation, and different occupational engagements emphasize different relations of these elements; thus this second question aimed to move me from a basic understanding of individual discouraged workers' occupations to a view of those occupations in the context of workers' associated living. In other words, it aimed to situate discouraged workers as people whose actions play out through particular contexts that shape and are shaped by the workers themselves.

The third research question extended the second question's trajectory, engaging the literature's focus on employment while also providing a new course relative to that focus. None of these questions concerned *particular* occupations or situational elements, in recognition of ever-present uncertainty and the multiplicity of reality, but they created a space for more specifically understanding the ways in which discouraged workers coordinate (or fail to coordinate) with their situations through occupation.

As a set, these questions evidenced a Deweyan perspective through their attention to the experience-knowledge relation, the organic unity of person and environment, the uncertainty of life, and the manifestation of habitual coordination in particular transactions. The questions' holistic and experiential focus not only aligned with Dewey's natural empiricism, but they also addressed needs that were apparent in existing scholarship. In short, they aimed to gather more detailed information about "who discouraged workers are, how they got that way" (Buss & Redburn, 1988, p.7), and how workers' occupational

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pursuits evidenced elements of their larger situations. In the next section, I discuss the natural

fit of a Deweyan theoretical framework and my research questions to ethnographic

methodology, illuminating the importance of *experiencing with* to derive "adequate"

knowledge of discouraged workers' experiences.

Influence on approach to methods

For any study, research methods must "offer the best chance to obtain useful

answers" (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004, p. 18). For a Deweyan-based study, fitting

method to experience is not only significant; it is a *requirement*. Dewey's writings on

education (cf. Dewey, 1899/2001) reinforced his belief in natural empiricism, but even when

paired with his description of the inquiry process, they did not prescribe a specific method for

investigating experience. Dewey's metaphysics—which suggested that multiple forms of

knowledge emerge from uncertain, contingent experience—implied support for diverse forms

of data collection, so long as they yielded answers to problems in experience (Johnson &

Onwuegbuzie). However, Dewey's metaphysics and natural empiricism also praised methods

that could manage the complexity of experience.

Ethnographic methodology seemed especially aligned with a Deweyan orientation.

As I began to formulate my study, the weaknesses of the discouraged worker literature

provided even further support for the use of ethnographic methods. Buss and Redburn (1988)

argued that discouraged workers' heterogeneity rendered predictive models and methods

inadequate for fully capturing the processes with which workers engage, and Zippay (1995)

underscored the need for non-quantitative investigations of discouraged workers'

experiences. While I did not dismiss existing quantitative information about discouraged

workers as irrelevant, the Deweyan emphasis on experience and multiplicity framed

ethnographic methods as particularly primed to address insufficiencies in the literature about discouraged workers.

In general, ethnographic methodology is suited for research about the multiple systems of experience that surround an ill-defined population like discouraged workers (LeCompte & Schensul, 1999; Singer, 1999). To achieve understandings about these systems of experience, ethnography situates the scene of study "as a knowable, fully-probed micro-world with reference to an encompassing macro-world" (Marcus, 1988, p. 33) via sustained participant observation. Although ethnography also entails the use of interviews and supports other data collection tools such as focus groups, the method's emphasis on *experiencing* life *with* research participants is foundational, and it directly aligns with Dewey's natural empiricism (Bailliard, Aldrich, & Dickie, in process). Using ethnographic methods to study discouraged workers finds backing in the same justifications that generated my research questions. Ethnographic research is an emergent endeavor wherein the "planning process is begun but not completed before the researcher enters the field" (Whyte, 1984, p. 35). Although a skeletal framework for the study may exist prior to beginning research, it is not until the researcher enters the field that the study fully takes form. Complementing the broad, flexible nature of my research questions, this method promised to accommodate experience as it unfolded, while also providing structure and rigor to the research process (Schwandt, 2007; Whyte). The emergent nature of ethnographic research thus appeared able to manage the complexity, heterogeneity, and uncertainty of discouraged workers' experiences without circumscribing the range of phenomena that might enter my study.

Further support for an ethnographic study of discouraged workers lay in the method's commitment to critique, for which Dewey also advocated passionately. Ethnography

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critiques our society and the assumptions inherent in it (Marcus & Fischer, 1986), although it has not traditionally critiqued the larger problems within which ethnographic worlds are embedded (Marcus, 1986). Ethnography's promise as a critical endeavor stems from the reciprocal involvement of researcher and participant in the research process (LeCompte & Schensul, 1999): the joining of 'insider' and 'outsider' perspectives creates a space for revealing and reflecting upon problems in experience that may otherwise remain tacit. The researcher-participant relationship that grounds critical ethnographic endeavors is enhanced by a collaborative approach to ethnography (Lassiter, 2005), in which participants are viewed as *consultants* and are invited to shape the research process at multiple levels. This approach represents an attempt to redress power, control, and moral responsibility (Clifford, 1983; Lawless, 1992; Marcus & Clifford, 1986) to the research process, but it also echoes the Deweyan dedication to ameliorating problems in experience. Knowledge that is apprehended through experiencing problematic situations is only useful insofar as it rectifies those situations; consequently, a malleable and collaborative research method that privileges consultants' perspectives stands the best chance of generating knowledge to re-coordinate problematic situations.

Dewey's philosophical assertions paved a path for using ethnographic methodology to study discouraged workers. Not only did his emphasis on experiential knowledge seem to fill a gap in the knowledgebase about this group, but his "adequacy to experience" requirement (Boisvert, 2007) also offered support for a method focused on critiquing and bettering society. The holism and thick description that defines ethnography echoes Dewey's commitment to capturing the complexity of experience. Similarly, the ethnographic emphasis

on *experiencing with* fits naturally with Dewey's suggestion that the "circuit of living" (Campbell, 1995) is knowable via direct experience of people's transactions.

Conclusion

Buss and Redburn (1988) claimed that the problem with the circumscribed research on discouraged workers is that "while [discouraged workers'] official job statuses may vary from day to day, the factors that limit their prospects of finding and holding good jobs do not change" (p. 69). Because the theories and methods employed in discouraged worker research typically restrict scholarly focus and application, a great deal about the larger role of such factors in discouraged workers' situations remains unknown. While the literature denotes a need for more holistic and complex inquiries, only employment-related behaviors have been theorized as responses to discouraged workers' situations. As detailed above, a research framework based on Dewey's philosophy supports both questions and methods that meet the needs of current scholarship on discouraged workers. These questions and methods acknowledge the need for experiential knowledge of discouraged workers' transactions to discern salient elements of discouraged workers' situations. Likewise, the structured flexibility of these questions and methods recognizes the uncertainty of experience and the possibilities for growth and change that stem from it.

While a Deweyan theoretical orientation usefully framed my study to meet the needs of the discouraged worker literature, it is not without difficulties. Dewey did not clearly describe the boundaries of situations and transactions (Garrison, 2001), and the interpenetrating influences that characterize transactions remain difficult to model graphically (Aldrich, 2008; Cutchin & Dickie, in press; Dickie et al., 2006). Despite these limitations, however, the Deweyan perspective justified questions and methods that

foregrounded the interconnected individual, social, political, and economic influences on

discouraged workers' daily occupations. Through the several assertions and concept of

transaction explained in this chapter, this perspective offered a useful foundation for

understanding discouraged workers' relation with their environments.

Chapter 3. Situating the Study

In this chapter, I describe the study situation that I encountered from July 2009 through April 2010. This description responds to calls for a more complex account of discouraged workers' experiences than is contained in the literature (Benati, 2001; Bjørnstad, 2006; Buss & Redburn, 1988; Cottle, 2001; Ferman, Berndt, & Henry, 1993; Zippay, 1995). It applies a framework based on philosopher John Dewey's concept of transaction, which, as illustrated in the previous chapter, has garnered increasing attention in scholarship on occupation (cf. Aldrich, 2008; Cutchin, Aldrich, Bailliard, & Coppola, 2008; Dickie, Cutchin, & Humphry, 2006). In this framework, a *situation* is more than a mere setting or context: it is an instance of the person-environment relationship that stimulates occupation (Cutchin et al., 2008). What people do is a function of the many situations with which they transact. The dynamic person-environment relationship that forms a situation includes (but is not limited to) physical, social, cultural, and economic elements, and descriptions of a situation must account for these elements and their relationships at both micro and macro levels (Shaw & Rudman, 2009). Situations have qualities, or aspects, that are more or less salient depending on their relationship to other qualities of that situation. Qualities can be shared across situations and influence multiple situational elements (Cutchin, 2004b). Whereas people are in many situations over time, particular situations offer significant foundations for experience by virtue of their most salient qualities. Thus, Cutchin (2004a) argues, "situations become the crux of an inquiry into experience and its meaning" (p. 305), and "occupational scientists should incorporate the situation as part of any study of

occupational experiences" (Cutchin & Dickie, in press, p. 14). Although this chapter

describes elements of national, state, local, and individual transactions in separate sections, it

aims to emphasize the *relationships* among those elements that constituted the larger study

situation. Framed by a summary of national, state, and county socioeconomic climates

between July 2009 and April 2010, I offer an in-depth description of the town in which this

study occurred. I follow that description with concise character portraits of the five

discouraged workers who became key consultants[1] for this study. I conclude by depicting

different situational sets to emphasize the relationship between micro and macro elements of

each discouraged worker's transactions. Together, these situational sets formed the larger

study situation, and will be progressively developed in subsequent chapters.

The "Great Recession": National, state, and county climates

In July 2009, the U.S. faced an array of political and economic upheavals. The

country had Democratic leadership for the first time in nearly a decade, and North Carolina

voted as a "blue state" for the first time since the Carter presidency (Seelye, 2008). However,

six months into Barack Obama's first term, some Americans were beginning to lose faith in

the President's ability to foster "hope and change" (Montopoli, 2009). In the midst of

ongoing housing and banking crises, the country also grappled with heated political divisions

over healthcare reform and joblessness. During this "Great Recession" (Douthat, 2010),

popular media frequently reported on the plight of unemployment (cf. Carter, Cox, Quealy,

& Schoenfeld, 2009), which hovered close to 10% nationally (U.S. Bureau of Labor

Statistics, 2010a). By September 2009, one-third of unemployed persons had been out of

work for more than 26 weeks, prompting an extension of unemployment benefits to

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[1] This term refers to people who are traditionally called research "participants." It will be more fully explained
in the next chapter, which discusses methods.

unprecedented durations (Dougherty, 2009). As shown in Figure 2, North Carolina's

unemployment rate during this period exceeded national levels by 0.2% to 2.1% (U.S.

Bureau of Labor Statistics), and the county in which the study occurred had 0.6% to 3.1%

higher unemployment than the U.S. average (Employment Securities Commission of North

Carolina, 2010).

Figure 2. National, State, and County Unemployment Rate (%), July 2009-April 2010
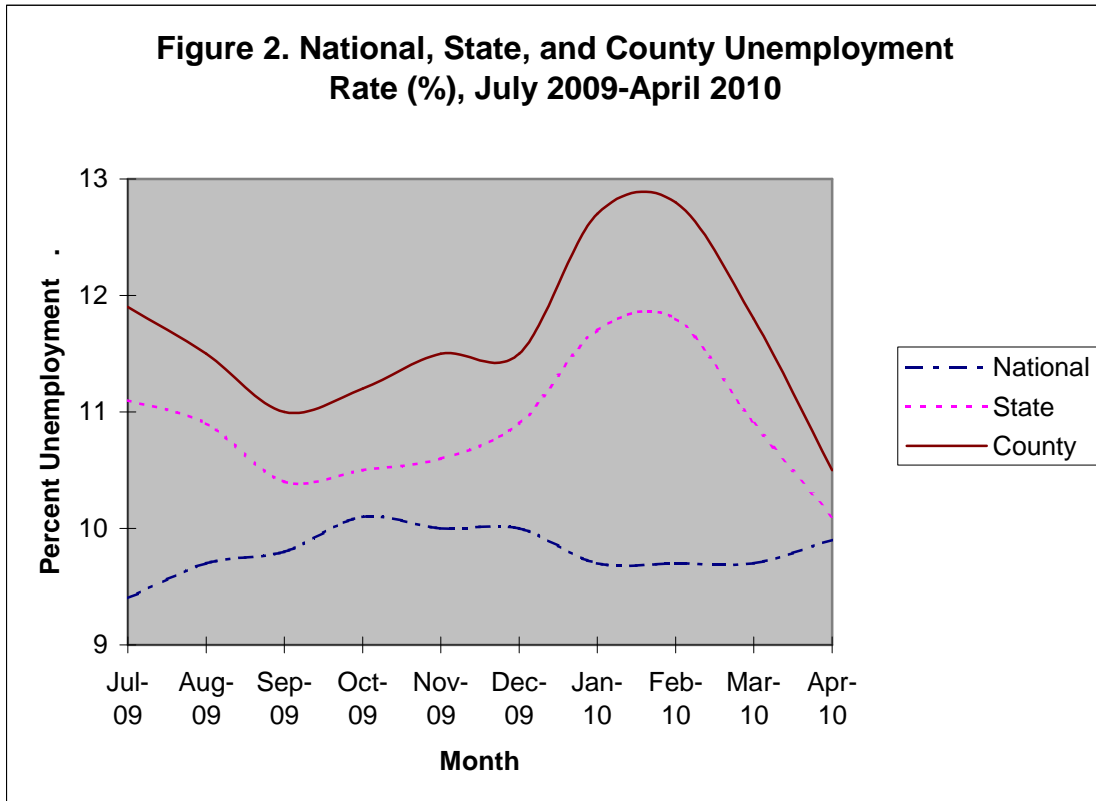
Figures 3 and 4 show positive trends in the number of discouraged workers at the national

(U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2010b) and state (Employment Securities Commission of

North Carolina, 2009-2010) levels throughout the study, peaking at 1,197,000 and 30,083

persons, respectively.

Figure 3. Number of Discouraged Workers in the U.S (in thousands), July 2009-April 2010
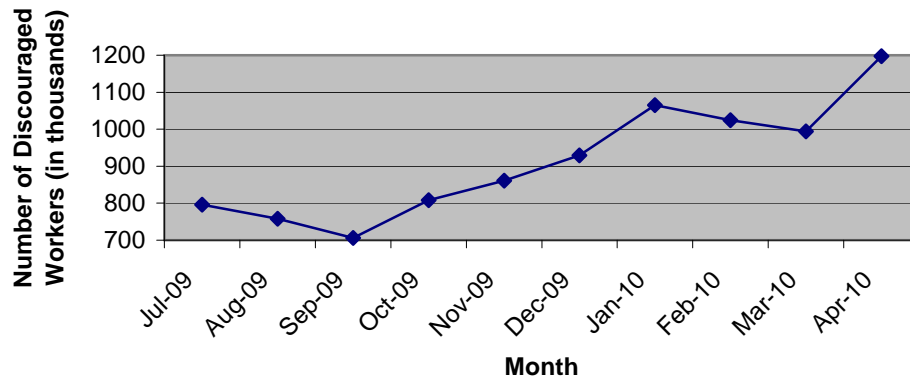
Figure 4. Number of Discouraged Workers in North Carolina (in thousands), July 2009-April 2010
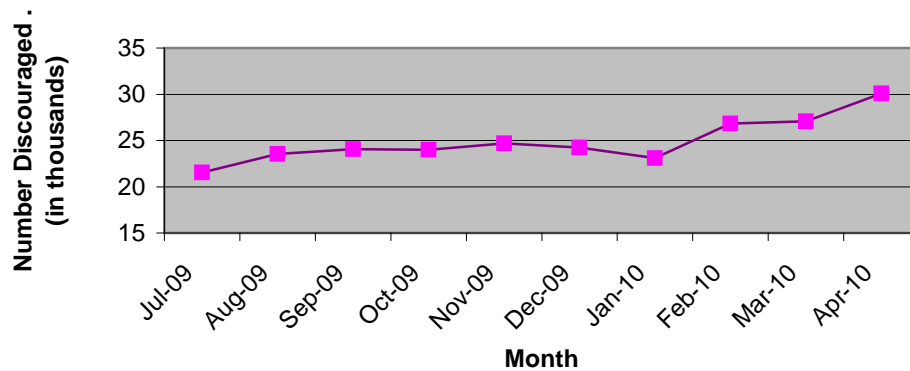
News programs began to report the end of the recession as early as September 2009 (cf. Robb, 2009), but the above figures show that national, state, and county economic problems increased rather than decreased throughout the study.

These economic climates evidenced broader changes in the U.S. and world markets, one of which was particularly relevant to the study situation. Enacted 15 years prior, the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) had become associated with declines in the manufacturing industry and the loss of U.S. jobs to foreign lands (Office of the United States Trade Representative, 2008). For the American South, this and other historical

developments ended the region's "comparative advantage as a haven for low-wage industries" (Peacock, Watson, & Matthews, 2005, p. 2) and drastically shifted ingrained ways of life as a result. North Carolina's involvement in the manufacturing industry—once a major economic force in the predominantly rural state (North Carolina Rural Center, 2010)— had dwindled to 11% of the state's total economy by the time of this study (North Carolina Employment Securities Commission, 2010); however, several regions in North Carolina continued to struggle with the effects of manufacturing declines, and the state often lagged behind national indicators of economic recovery. As shown in Figure 5 (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2010c), the average term of unemployment in the United States generally increased and eventually spiked in the context of these economic changes.

Figure 5. Average Weeks Unemployed, 2000-2010.
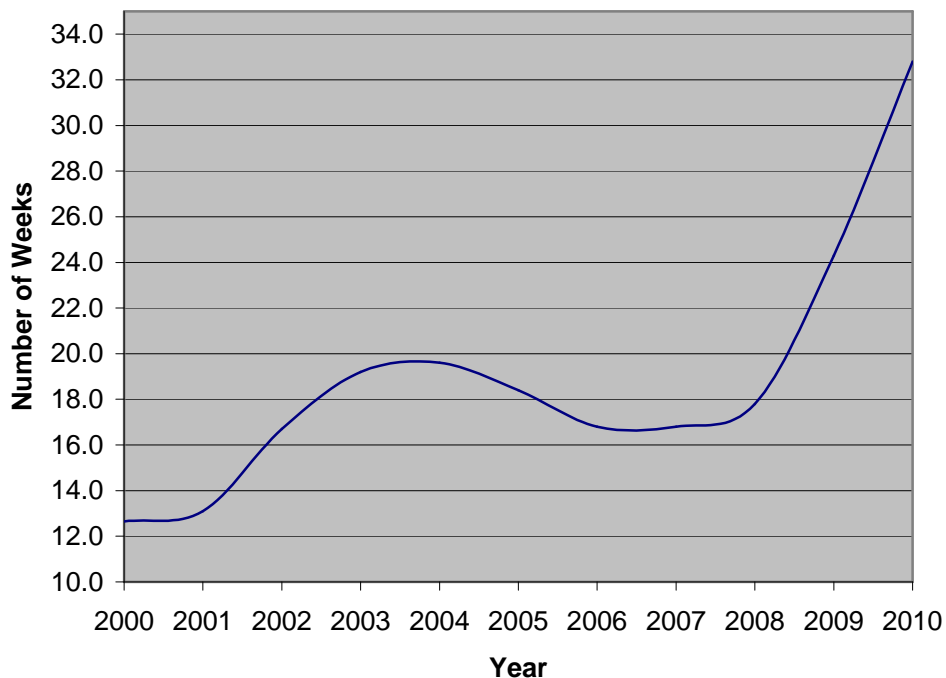
Despite substantial joblessness and fundamental economic changes during the study period, notions of personal responsibility continued to color cultural perceptions of unemployment. While the use of food stamps invited less stigma for the working poor and newly unemployed than it had previously (DeParle & Gebeloff, 2009), stigma related to joblessness held fairly constant, despite record numbers of citizens being out of work (Rampell, 2010). Popular opinion echoed the sentiment that "it's not just about giving out [unemployment] checks, it's about personal responsibility as well" (Stech, 2009), as evidenced by the rise of the Tea Party and other conservative movements (e.g., Tea Party Patriots, 2010). Thus, while the "Great Recession" may have partially redefined the American Dream away from work (Seeyle, 2009), the value of paid employment—and the stigma that issued from its absence—persisted on national, state, and county stages.

Horizon Mills[2]: "This town was built on a solid foundation"

The nexus of national and regional manufacturing declines, unemployment, and social stigma is woven throughout daily life in Horizon Mills. With a population under 40,000 people, Horizon Mills is the county seat for over 100,000 residents of the surrounding region (U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey of the region from 2005-2007). Table 1 evidences Horizon Mills' predominantly middle-class Caucasian population, whose

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[2] The following description aims to paint a vivid and accurate picture of Horizon Mills, the rural North Carolina town in which this study took place. To protect the privacy of the many consultants who selflessly shared their time and wisdom, I use the name 'Horizon Mills' as a pseudonym and employ generic descriptions of the town's demographics and geographic location in the paragraphs below. The moniker 'Horizon Mills' evokes the changing, uncertain identity of Horizon Mills relative to the manufacturing industry, a concern that repeatedly surfaced in my conversations with residents. In portraying Horizon Mills, I omit specific references that might divulge the town's true name and location, but I highlight data from these omitted references using nonspecific in-text citations. Similarly, I modified the names and roles of some of my consultants, as well as depictions of particular locations within Horizon Mills, to further protect privacy. However, these amendments do not hinder the purpose of the next pages: the essence of Horizon Mills and its residents lies not in the minutiae of semantics but in larger person-environment relationships that the town and its citizens effected.

members are mostly high school-educated and still fairly involved with the manufacturing industry.

Table 1. Basic demographic information for Horizon Mills.[3]

Population distribution (ethnicity)	Caucasian: 2/3
	Hispanic: 1/4
	African American: 1/10
Educational achievement	Less than 9th grade: 1/10
	High school but no diploma: 1/10
	High school diploma/GED: 1/3
	Some college but no degree: 1/5
	Other: 1/4
Working population with a disability	1/10
Population making less than $50,000/year	4/5
Families below the poverty level	1/4
Workers in manufacturing	1/3

Heavy historical reliance on the manufacturing and textile industries kept unemployment in Horizon Mills as low as 2% until as recently as 2001 (D. Smith, Horizon Mills media member, personal communication, September 2, 2009; F. White, Horizon Mills Chamber of Commerce member, personal communication, October 21, 2009), but by the mid-2000s, only one-third of Horizon Mills' residents were employed in those industries (per the U.S. Census Bureau American Community Survey 2005-2007). An influx of manufacturing work in the 1980s fostered faith that Horizon Mills was "insulated" from national economic downturns,

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[3] The figures in this chapter have been generalized to maintain the confidentiality of the study site and participants.

and this belief in the protective "longevity" of manufacturing persisted until 2004 (per the

local newspaper). Yet the recent loss of over 120,000 jobs in the State—many in industries

local to the Horizon Mills area (per a local labor study)—forced Horizon Mills' residents into

an unwelcome reality where manufacturing offered no such protection. Referencing national

and state economic changes vis-à-vis the local manufacturing bust, one longtime resident

noted, "NAFTA turned into SHAFTA pretty quick" for Horizon Mills. This sentiment

prevails in Horizon Mills despite recognition that

> several of the changes that now have an international manifestation…are as much the result (albeit indirect) of domestic shifts and policy agendas to diversify the regional economic base of states like North Carolina, away from single industries centered around traditional sectors and toward more mixed economies, as of foreign competition per se (Tewari, 2005, p. 115).

Portelli's (2005) observation that such a change "is felt less as a political and economic loss

and more as an existential catastrophe" (p. 57) seemed apropos for the situation I came to

understand in Horizon Mills.

In contrast to the occupational opulence of earlier decades, the largest influx of

manufacturing work to Horizon Mills during the 10 months of this study came in the form of

100 new jobs at a cereal factory. To residents, those jobs seemed as ineffective as placing a

band-aid on a gaping wound: when a local waffle restaurant received scores of applications

for *one* new position (L. Williams, Horizon Mills service provider, personal communication,

July 10, 2009), 100 new factory jobs presented no panacea for thousands of unemployed

residents, despite local newspaper headlines that the jobs would "revive" the town. As an

outreach worker observed, "[Local unemployed people are] between a rock and a hard place,

and there's no other job, whether it's manufacturing or fast food. . . the jobs aren't there." For

this reason, a national business magazine classified Horizon Mills as one of the top "dying"

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cities in the nation. The long-past but not forgotten era in which Horizon Mills had "more jobs than people" made residents bristle at such a negative depiction of their town (G. Young, Horizon Mills business owner, personal conversation, July 15, 2009).

Its bleak industrial future notwithstanding, positive sentiment also surrounds Horizon Mills. In December 2009, a national television news program filmed a show in Horizon Mills to focus on residents' paths to economic recovery. During one of several roundtable discussions featured in this program, I heard local business leaders and political figures discuss Horizon Mills as a "treasure," a "prudent place" where people are "responsible" and reap the benefits of small town life. I asked one of the segment's producers why they selected Horizon Mills for the story, and he told me that Horizon Mills seemed to showcase "interesting characters who are the brains behind the [economic] recovery." One particular draw, he noted, was the aging yet operational factories that abutted modern "mom and pop" shops on Worth Street (the main street in town), the latter of which catered to affluent interests such as antiquing and tourism. Almost anachronistic, the mesh of old and new industry that interested the television producer captured Horizon Mills' slow transition to new economic underpinnings. Rather than being known for its vanishing manufacturing base—which local officials in the economic development board, Chamber of Commerce, and community ministries quickly liken to other regions in the U.S.—Horizon Mills aims to situate itself as a quaint escape for modern travelers. Local leaders praise the town's location, which is within half a day's drive of the North Carolina state zoo, stock car and motorcycle museums, the Blue Ridge Mountains, and potters' communities. The town's website evokes modernity, using brightly colored photographs to feature events such as summer jazz concerts and a farmer's market. With two new interstates set to intersect just outside town

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limits, local leaders advertise Horizon Mills as the next big retirement hotspot, mere hours

from major cities like Atlanta and less than one hour from more metropolitan areas of North

Carolina (F. White, personal communication, October 21, 2009).

Horizon Mills reminded me of many Northern California logging towns through

which I traveled as a child, whose movement from industry to tourism relied on similar

selling points (cf. Sherman, 2009). Described in my fieldnotes as "Mayberry—minus the

black and white," Horizon Mills evoked more tight-knit notions of community than I found

in the "big city" of Durham. Describing Horizon Mills as "a pretty good place to live" that is

"relatively safe," one local citizen said

> Typical Horizon Mills [residents]. . . are people that care about their family, care
> about their community; rich or poor, they still have that same pride in being from the
> community. We still fill the stadium up at football games on Friday night. . . There's
> a church on every corner, or seems to be. The Chamber of Commerce is alive and
> doing well and making differences in our community, helping with business.
> Economic development is reaching out to the world saying, "Hey, we can make your
> widgets here." The tourism department says, "Come visit [this] county". . . so there's
> a lot to do around here, just a lot to be proud of…just folks trying to make a living,
> raise their family, do what's right. . . We spend time with family, work on projects. . .
> I know the restaurants in town still seem to be pretty busy, so people are still eating
> out and enjoying each other's company. If you go to the mall on a cold winter night
> to walk, there's a big line of folks going to the movies. . . and then there's [a big city]
> just up the road, you see a lot of folks headed that way on a Friday evening (B. Jones,
> Christians' Care director, personal communication, August 7, 2009).

People in this town have the reputation of caring for one another, and familiarity is part-and-

parcel of the Horizon Mills experience (B. Jones, personal communication, August 7, 2009;

C, Young, Horizon Mills Employment Securities Commission manager, August 10, 2009).

Horizon Mills is a place where generations of a family live their entire lives, where marrying

"a Smith" means something to local residents. It is a place where outsiders such as myself—a

"California girl" who is less easily categorized than a "Yankee"—are conspicuous: on my

first day in town, as the director of a community ministry was orienting me to Worth Street,

his wife received a call from a friend asking why he was talking to a "young lady" who no one recognized. Similarly, toward the end of the study, one consultant laughed and said I "stuck out [in town]. . . but in a good way."

In Horizon Mills, business deals often happen with a handshake amidst a blend of personal and professional conversation. People who live in Horizon Mills want to stay in Horizon Mills, and (if they are able) will drive up to an hour to work just for the privilege of calling the town home (D. Smith, personal communication, September 2, 2009; F. White, personal communication, October 21, 2009; C. Young, personal communication, August 10, 2009). One resident who moved as an adult to Horizon Mills described it as a "funny little town" with small town quirks, such as "Horizon Mills-style prayer: we eat first and pray after." Horizon Mills was alcohol-free until the mid-2000s, when a hotly contested referendum to permit the sale of alcohol fostered death threats against the referendum's spearhead. (Until that time, residents made a well-known "county-line run" to procure alcohol, according to a member of the law enforcement community.) The same "conservative mindset" that generated opposition to alcohol also fuels some suspicion and bigotry in Horizon Mills (D. Smith, personal communication, September 2, 2009; F. White, personal communication, October 21, 2009), especially in light of the town's economic troubles. Echoing a sentiment that was not uncommon around town, one secretary at a temporary employment agency said of the burgeoning Hispanic population, "Instead of leaving your country because it's bad, stay in your country and make it better. Don't come here and make a problem for us."

Concern for the town's troubled economy underlines most conversations about Horizon Mills. On Worth Street, smokestacks, train tracks, and variegated brick warehouses

serve as reminders of the town's history with a now dying industry. The manager of the local

Employment Securities Commission (ESC) said that initial manufacturing sector layoffs

were gradual, so

> no one got scared, no reason to panic, because you literally could get fired from one manufacturer and walk across the street or walk down the street and be hired at the next one. That's what this community was made of. . . When you start seeing that domino effect, and it's been doing that for the past 4 or 5 years, it was literally, "We're doing fine," and everybody's smiling and happy, and then all of a sudden, "No, we're shutting down. We can't do it anymore. Today."

In the face of mechanization and subsequent reductions in the manufacturing workforce,

"employers had to become employers again instead of friends" to other Horizon Mills

residents (C. Young, personal communication, August 10, 2009). In the 1990s, according to a

local newsperson, employers "talked about workers coming in to apply for a job and about

the only thing [applicants] could do was stand upright. [Job applicants] weren't fit for

anything else." Similarly, the ESC manager summarized the precedent set by local employers

that "if [job seekers have] got a pulse, I'll take them. Even if it's weak." For decades,

Horizon Mills accommodated multiple skill levels with gainful employment; belonging to

what once was the "sixth heaviest industrialized county in this state" F. White, personal

communication, October 21, 2009), local factories hired people with disabilities for rote

work (per a vocational workshop manager) as often as they hired white-collar professionals

to be plant managers and engineers (F. White, personal communication, October 21, 2009).

In fact, many locals give sole credit for the creation of Horizon Mills' middle class to the

manufacturing industry (A. Johnson, Horizon Mills social worker, personal communication,

August 17, 2009), making the industry's decline all the more distressing. While many of

Horizon Mills' residents blame the town's economic changes on NAFTA, some take a

broader perspective that highlights the nation's larger shift away from manufacturing (D.

Smith, personal communication, September 2, 2009; F. White, personal communication, October 21, 2009; C. Young, personal communication, August 10, 2009).

Changes to the national and local economies disrupted more than just employment in Horizon Mills; it upset the pace of life. With the movement of manufacturing jobs offshore and limited migration of new industry to the area, Horizon Mills began a slow transition from which it has yet to emerge, and the in-between space that it occupies is exemplified by both visible and invisible characteristics of the town. Lacking mass exoduses of workers yet maintaining audible whistles at shift changes, local factories resemble Willy Wonka's factory to outsiders: "Nobody ever goes in, and nobody ever comes out,"[4] I wrote in my fieldnotes during my first few days in town. For a place linked so directly to manufacturing in every description, the lack of visible factory activity makes Horizon Mills appear somewhat forgotten by time. Chipping paint and cracked windows adorn the factories along Worth Street, and evidence of workers entering or leaving buildings requires more than a fleeting observational glance.

Although visible ties to manufacturing continue to diminish, an invisible manufacturing mentality maintains a firm grasp on Horizon Mills as a whole. This mentality is most apparent relative to education, which both constrains and affords employment in the town. Many of the unemployed people who filter through Horizon Mills' social service agencies and community ministries possess the limited education that typifies manufacturing employees in the area (D. Smith, personal communication, September 2, 2009; M. Thompson, Horizon Mills community college president, personal communication, February 9, 2010; L. Williams, personal communication, July 10, 2009). Historically, it was not

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[4] From the movie "Willy Wonka and the Chocolate Factory" (1971)

uncommon for Horizon Mills residents to leave high school at the age of 16 to pursue a

lifelong career in manufacturing:

> Most of the boys and girls I went to school with, if they quit [school] they went down to the mill and got them a job, bought a truck, got married, started having kids, and…could buy a home and do okay. Some did better than others. I know people that have beach houses and houses in the mountains, and I know people who are living in a little rented place out in the country with no air and barely running water. But they made it. Those of us that went on to graduate from high school, I don't know that we did any better. Very few went to college (B. Jones, personal communication, August 7, 2009).

The ease of securing manufacturing work promoted a general ambivalence toward education

in Horizon Mills, a mentality that outlasted the viability of the manufacturing industry in the

town. In a 2004 survey of unemployed persons in the community, local officials determined

that "the workforce doesn't value or seek higher education and skill development." As a local

newsperson explained,

> You could always go get. . . what was considered a good job in this area, retire, have a good life, have your bass fishing boat. So [workers say], "What do you mean, I've got to go back and get an education? I didn't enjoy education when I was in there, that's why I dropped out."

More than just a disregard for education, the manufacturing mentality sometimes seemingly

promotes an anti-education stance in Horizon Mills because, until recently, manufacturing

reliably supported generations of families. As a newsperson described,

> You heard people saying, "What, you're too *good* to go to work like your father did? You think you've got to get a high school education? You think you're going off to college? What kind of a snob are you?" There was social pressure *not* to go. . . It has been very difficult to overcome that.

In the Horizon Mills of today, reduced manufacturing employment opportunities

require workers to either adjust their skills or develop new ones, but this transition is not an

easy one to make. For example, a man laid off from a factory turned to personal appliance

repair as a source of livelihood, but he eventually abandoned this work due to the

administrative duties of entrepreneurship, wishing that someone else would "just handle this so I can fix widgets" (D. Smith, personal communication, September 2, 2009). Based on many similar stories, local leaders worry that

> factory people don't translate well into the service economy. There's a reason why they're in manufacturing: they have a mindset. What they want to be trained for—and they're perfectly willing to be *trained*, they don't want to be *educated*—is another manufacturing job that allows them to go in and perform a function for a set period of time and then go home and do other things (D. Smith, personal communication, September 2, 2009).

In the face of local reticence regarding education, Horizon Mills' community college, the Chamber of Commerce, an economic development board, and the ESC continually organize initiatives to support entrepreneurship and employment re-training. The community college president preaches that the world of secure manufacturing careers

> was a different world, and that world is gone. So today, if you want to participate in the emerging economy, you have to have more education than your daddy or your mama had. . . I stay in very close touch with community leaders and am trying to read the crystal ball and see where our economy is headed. Our job as the community college is to be out in front of those changes, to be there and waiting and ready to train people for the jobs of tomorrow rather than just continue to offer the programs to train for the jobs of yesterday.

In addition to, or perhaps as a result of, local ambivalence toward educational retraining is a "fear and reluctance" to attend the community college:

> We've actually had stories of people who came here, drove up on campus, got out of the car, started to come in, went back and got in their car, and left because they were afraid. I think there's a lack of confidence when you've been laid off two or three times, you. . . never went [to school] in the first place, and you don't see any jobs out there (M. Thompson, personal communication, February 9, 2010).

Located across from an industrial park on the outskirts of town, the community college has a decidedly different aura from that of Worth Street. Though small (the entire campus is contained in half a dozen buildings), the community college nevertheless bears the hallmarks of most academic environments: manicured grounds, students gathered in the "quad" around

which buildings are centered, hallways peppered with flyers advertising used books and tutoring services. As opposed to the feeling of cemented finality that characterizes the main part of town, the community college emits a hopeful yet transitory air, as if students' brief time there signals a more possibility-filled trajectory than available in a Worth Street factory.

Horizon Mills' uncertain identity as a not-quite-post-industrial town stems from more than conflicting views of work and education. To escape the town's "growing pains," the ESC manager argued that Horizon Mills' leaders

> have to figure out what their niche is, and work on their niche here. . . What is this county going to be known for? Either you become a master of *something*, or you become nothing. You're just a pass-through. You're a ghost town. . . You're just a place to stop and get some gas between here or there.

Despite being a town that locals love to inhabit, Horizon Mills has trouble attracting new companies—and therefore, new people—to take up residence. A community ministry director noted that

> when somebody's trying to decide whether to locate a factory in a community. . . most of the time it comes down to one or two guys. [If] they're joggers, and they have to jog on the [highway], they're not coming to Horizon Mills. But that [jogging] trail [community leaders have] been talking about [building] all these years might make a difference.

Similarly, although Horizon Mills' proximity to cultural experiences and attractive locations forms a large part of its identity, the lack of public transportation makes traveling within city limits somewhat problematic. The ESC manager, community college president, volunteer center coordinator, and economic development board member all recognized the quandary caused by Horizon Mills' public transportation deficiency, noting its necessity for the community's future viability.

In search of a new economic niche and new identity, unwilling to relinquish its roots but unable to parlay them into a profitable future, Horizon Mills finds itself struggling in the

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midst of many transitions. While many of its characteristics make residents proud to call

Horizon Mills home, some of its attributes are also problematic. Years of elevated

unemployment keeps the local ESC office busy, and the manager believes that "there will be

some manufacturing and there will always be some [unemployment] checks out, [but] there

won't be anything like the roaring '90s or 2000s" in Horizon Mills. In fact, unemployment

insurance now helps sustain the local economy:

> 80 percent of every [unemployment insurance] check stays inside the community. . .
> people still need to buy groceries, people still need their lights on, people still need a
> telephone. And most of these are local things. And it keeps the grocery stores open
> and they hire people, it keeps the power on so they can have people to work on the
> electricity (C. Young, personal communication, August 10, 2009).

Yet local assistance agencies such as the ESC or the Department of Social Services (DSS)

bear the reputation of being "handout agencies" (per a social worker at DSS). Despite

sizeable increases in client load at these agencies, snide comments that "people used to be too

proud to take help, but they're not anymore" are common in Horizon Mills (D. Smith,

personal communication, September 2, 2009). Similar to national sentiments regarding social

service benefits, this perspective of service agencies is amplified by Horizon Mills'

conservative Quaker roots, which give primacy to earnings derived from hard work (D.

Smith, personal communication, September 2, 2009).

However, the same roots that denigrate social service receipt also sparked the creation

of a community ministry—Christians' Care—that assists indigent people in the region. The

director of Christians' Care explains:

> There was a notion, and had been in [this] county for probably close to 20 years, that
> the faith community could join in some way to do what they were already doing—
> every church in the community helps somebody in some way. . . The purpose of this
> organization would be to do what was required of us: to do justice, to love mercy, to
> walk humbly with God, meeting people at their point of need, following the examples
> of Christ. . . helping people with short-term financial crisis intervention: food pantry,

assistance with basic need—rent, utilities, medication, gasoline to go back and forth to work, car parts—whatever the basic need is, are things that we do. We've also added to that a couple of homeless programs. . . If you really did have a problem and you *really* needed help, you might have to go to 3 or 4 places to tell that story that would be so hard to go in and tell about what had happened to cause you to have a problem. Well now people can come here and tell it, and we can help. And that's the biggest difference that it has made to the people who are in need in our community.

Christians' Care sidesteps some of the stigma associated with other service agencies in Horizon Mills, both because of its religious affiliation and because community members know that staff members "do what we say we're going to do" (B. Jones, personal communication, August 7, 2009). Staff members at Christians' Care believe that "people need to participate in their own prosperity when they can," and like other social service providers in town, the organization sees people from all walks of life in its daily operations.

Individual situations: Introducing the key consultants

As Horizon Mills struggles with high unemployment, organizations like Christians' Care serve an increasing number and variety of people. Here, I offer vignettes of the types of people who might wait for help in Christians' Care's lobby. The five people described below became the key consultants for this study, and although not all of them accessed Christians' Care, each person was tied to social service benefits in some manner. As described in the next chapter on methods, this study encompassed more than the lives and occupations of these five people, and these vignettes serve only as a capstone for this description of the study situation.

Rose

Looking back at my notes from our first encounter, it became clear that Rose was just the sort of person I thought I would find in Horizon Mills. Almost one year into her layoff from a local factory, Rose was trying to overcome her lack of education and return to school

at the age of 50. She had grown up in the area, and like many of her peers, had assimilated into factory work at a young age. Although she had earned a high school diploma, Rose scored too low on the entrance reading exam to qualify for the Certified Nursing Assistant (CNA) program at the community college. She saw this program as her chance to leave the unstable cycle of manufacturing jobs that had characterized her post-high school life, and she said her test failure made her feel "lower than a snake's belly." With her salt-and-pepper hair tied in a loose bun and her glasses held together by strategically placed scotch tape, Rose began to tell me her story with more openness than I expected from someone waiting for help at an assistance agency. Complete with her Southern drawl and colloquialisms, she was the "typical unemployed person" whose presence had been foretold by many community leaders. Indeed, Rose was the first person I met of the five workers I eventually came to follow, and her history with factory work and involvement in the informal economy embodied many aspects of the local situation that interested me. A long-time resident of the area, she gave me a sense of what it was like to call this region of North Carolina "home." Yet my interactions with her illuminated surprising complexity in her self-labeled "average" life, and I came to understand that Rose's situation could not be easily categorized and judged as "typical."

Rose collected unemployment insurance while waiting to re-take the reading test for the CNA program. She filled her time by watching her granddaughter, ferrying vehicle-less neighbors to and from work, and doing things like playing cards to keep from being "bored." When the weather was nice (or when she needed to leave the apartment during exterminator visits), she sat at picnic tables in her apartment complex's parking lot and talked with neighbors who were also under- or unemployed. This setting—a former motel that had been converted to week-to-week apartments—brought to life the flux and constancy that were

simultaneous facets of Rose's experience: while resident turnover remained generally high, there were some people whose stay had become more long-term. Such was the case with Rose, whose financial situation and daily schedule hinged on balancing her family's expected and unexpected needs. Although her extended family helped with expenses on occasion, it was not infrequent that Rose had to put off doing laundry because she had to put the money for "washing powder" toward the more pressing need for shelter.

Rose's goals were simple: she wanted a job that would not disappear, and she wanted to be able to start saving money so that she and her husband could take their first vacation in nearly 20 years. She wanted a job that paid more than her unemployment, but given the town's economy and her need to take remedial classes for the CNA program, she did not put great effort into her search. Her husband wanted to move to the country because "there's no beer and nobody offering you drugs there," as was an unfortunate aspect of their current living situation. In contrast to the oversimplified estimations of her apartment manager that unemployed people spend most of their time "doing nothing," Rose explained her "boring" days as the result of insufficient funds, a lack of opportunities in the small town, and the futility of initiating major undertakings in the short time before her CNA classes began. Describing her daily endeavors, Rose said, "I don't think I'm any better or any worse than anybody else" but she noted that she would "rather be working or in school" than doing most of the things that comprised her day.

Cindy

Also a lifelong resident of the Horizon Mills area, Cindy said she used to be "the Kool-Aid queen" among her children's friends, fulfilling her motherly duties by whipping up the sugary beverage during playtime. "I had my shit together back then," she proclaimed. But

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years of struggling with drug addiction and depression fomented a distinction between observations about her former and present self: "I used to be such a planner" stood in stark contrast to "I'm 39 years old, not working. My son is supporting me. And then I start looking around, and things are not the way they used to be." The day I met Cindy, she was waiting for services at Christians' Care. In response to a flyer about my research, she walked up to me and said, "I've got a story for you." Standing before me in an ill-fitting blouse and jeans, Cindy did not stand apart from other clients in any apparent way. The fit and wear of her clothing had all the signs of thrift store shopping, and coupled with her mildly unkempt auburn hair, she looked neither particularly ragged nor polished. Her big smile and strong voice—which would wax and wane over the months that I knew her—belied the tenuous nature of her self and her situation.

Before the back injury that forced her out of her white-collar office work and eventually led to her dependence on prescription painkillers, Cindy lived in a world where she *knew* she could get a job. "This town has always been so good to me. Any job I wanted and went after, I got it. And good paying jobs." Facing health insurance problems, continued battles with addiction, and a lackluster recent work history, she found herself in a world where she relied on her son's factory wages instead of attempting to navigate the unsavory job market. Although she believed she could bring her office skills up to current standards, her drive to search for work ebbed and flowed as she waited for a "sparkle of hope" that her life would turn around. Her actions did not always appear oriented to this goal, and feelings of worthlessness were a recurrent theme in her life. Despite the value she found in caring for her 20 year-old son and her friends, Cindy felt that "everybody looks at you differently when

you don't have a job. They don't look at you metaphorically differently, they look at you <u>in the face</u> differently."

Of the five people I followed during this study, Cindy was the hardest to consistently locate. Plagued by phone disconnections and demands from friends who needed her help, Cindy tried to maintain a semblance of self by negotiating what I saw her doing and where I saw her doing it: the last time we met, she apologized for being difficult to contact and explained that

> there's a lot of days that I don't want you to see me like that. Maybe you need to see me like that, at my worst. I can call you one day and say, 'Okay, you can come.' Look at the mess, see me in the mess, and then you'll know this is how bad it gets.

Rife with uncertainty, Cindy all but abandoned planning her days "because every single time I plan, nothing goes my way." She oscillated between peaks of activity and valleys of inactivity in concert with her depression, addiction, and the needs of people in her life. Well aware that she often "didn't do shit," Cindy nevertheless voiced a need and desire to be useful to others. Yet between helping others, helping herself, and seeking social services, Cindy's "sparkle of hope" never seemed to get any closer.

Allen

Allen was not what I expected. His caseworkers had described a young, intense man with a long criminal past, a man in transition from a life of violence and fast money to one in which he tried to set an example for his young child. Although his caseworkers also highlighted Allen's creative and motivational talents, it was their description of his unpredictability and "cold eyes" that set a tone for my first encounter with him. Thus I was unprepared to meet a chubby, cherub-faced, clean-shaven twenty-something who covered most of his tattoos and removed his piercings. Although he significantly outweighed me, he

did not strike me as a particularly imposing character. I eventually saw flashes of his "cold eyes"—directed at others from his past, not me—but I mostly came to know Allen as a chatty guy who was paradoxically thankful for his colored history. He proudly told me, "I've kind of done something right by getting into trouble." Although he struggled to find formal employment due to his criminal background, Allen used his story and struggles to mentor at-risk youth who were on a similar path, an undertaking that helped distance him from the role of "black sheep" within his family.

Court fees, transportation difficulties, curfew requirements, and his need to live with family all played into the structure of Allen's days, but he maintained a surprisingly positive outlook in the face of these constraints. Allen accepted that his past choices made his present circumstance challenging, but he clung to the belief that his efforts were

> always worth something. If you don't do anything right, then you'll never amount to nothing. If you try to do something right, then maybe you'll amount to something. But if you stick with it and actually *do* something right, *then* you'll amount to something.

Of all the people I became acquainted with during the study, Allen was the only one who never spoke of completely giving up his search for employment. He said,

> I didn't think that I'd be *able* to have a job because of my record and me having tattoos and me being unemployed for the amount of time I was. I don't know about giving up, but *damn*, [I was] about close.

The social and financial support Allen found in family and friends helped keep him going. Without the shelter, transportation, encouragement, and sometimes, discipline provided by key people in his life, Allen admitted, "I'd probably still be getting in trouble. It's either me keep doing what I was doing, or come back here and them keep me on the straight and narrow." This support eventually helped Allen find a job in a town near Horizon Mills, and it also helped him access a variety of unpaid occupations that came to define his

new identity. It created a space where he redefined activities—such as walking—to fill needs that went unmet in the nexus of low finances and restricted choice emanating from the void of unemployment.

Margie

When Margie walks into a room, people notice. Her self-description as a "Yankee Sarah Palin stunt double" hints at her physical form, but her overall comportment is even more striking. At our first meeting, Margie swept into her office like a whirlwind, displaying both a briskness and a lack of hesitation uncharacteristic of my other encounters in the field. She wore a black power suit, heels, and pantyhose, likening the last item to men's neckties in that it formed her professional "armor." Not a strand of her chestnut hair escaped her French twist hairdo, and her makeup was perfect in a well-practiced-but-not-overdone sort of way. Balancing coffee and her Blackberry in one hand and a stack of manila folders in the other, she effortlessly unlocked her office door and invited me in, apologizing for running late from a previous meeting. For the first time in six months of field research, I felt overly casual in both dress and demeanor.

A college-educated single mother in her early 40s, Margie embodied noticeable confidence due to her life experiences. Having spent much of her career in high-value real estate and finance in various regions of the U.S., Margie knew how to play the professional game with—and against—the "good ol' boys." She joked about her reputation with former clients and co-workers as "a smart lady [who] doesn't make you feel like an idiot, and she's good to look at." She told me, "I pride myself on being strong because I've mostly had to deal with men," and her strength offered as much personal stability as it did professional aptitude. In the span of 18 months, Margie lost her home, got a divorce, and was released

from her job at the bank. Although some of her strength came from her religious faith, Margie exuded a surety indicative of her drive to achieve whatever she set her mind to. Despite falling from a six-figure income to below the poverty line during her residential and marital crises, she maintained her goal-oriented nature with surprising composure. A quotation by Earl Nightingale (which Margie received via email as her "motivational quote of the day" one morning) encapsulates Margie's approach to life and its changes: "All you have to do is know where you're going. The answers will come to you of their own accord."

Margie embodied this statement through her volunteer work at a local nonprofit agency, where she used her banking knowledge to aid local fundraising efforts through the AmeriCorps program. Her decision *not* to seek formal employment represented a strategic move to pad her résumé with new skills, but it also betrayed her desire to build a legacy of which her daughters could be proud. "Improving the lives of others improves my life," she said, and "seeing the impact on *humanity*, not the economy" gave her the sense of inhabiting a "Mother Theresa versus a Princess Diana world…I've lived in both." In fact, Margie felt "blessed" to have been ousted from the banking world, given the economic climate of recent years. Due to the savings cushion afforded by her previous career, Margie knew she was "not your typical person on unemployment;" yet she viewed her situational uncertainty as something positive irrespective of financial constraints: "When you do something that you love, it comes easy."

Jeanette

"You were here when I found out I was losing everything," Jeanette said to me as we sat on her back porch. She had just called to see if Christians' Care would help with the mortgage payment due that day; the answer was 'no,' and her fate as a foreclosure victim

was sealed. Of all my experiences in the field, the ones I had with Jeanette were the most filled with urgency. In less than a year, Jeanette had lost her job, attempted suicide, and lost her home. A single mother of two teenagers, Jeanette had not anticipated facing so many crises in her early 40s. In a journal entry that she shared with me, Jeanette wrote,

> I can say with conviction I was awesome at my job. . . when I woke up and put that headset on, the outside world disappeared. When I lost that 'headset' the real world came back with a vengeance!

Job loss was not the only trauma with which Jeanette coped. A series of events had created a deep rift between Jeanette and her family, making her "long day's journey into night" (O'Neill, 1956) an even more isolating experience. Jeanette was at once resigned to and critical of her situation, alternately commenting, "It is what it is. . . nothing anybody can say or do" and "How do I stop being the 'victim' when I am shunned by all?"

Formerly an investment and life insurance assistant working a nine-to-five job, Jeanette's routines changed dramatically because of the uncertainty fostered by her unemployment. She had no money to spare and feared that more of her life would disappear if she strayed too far from her home. Home was the only remaining arena where Jeanette felt she had control, and even there, her vestiges of power were fading due to her children's increasing criticisms about her joblessness. What Jeanette called "hopeless sitting moments" filled with failed problem solving came to dominate her days, despite her desire to spend her time more productively. Between seeking help via social services (a traumatic experience in itself), conserving resources to survive the month, and preserving her mental health so she could care for her children, Jeanette felt her life was mostly "wasted time," which she described as "a whole different world for me." Even things that used to seem routine (such as cleaning) became challenging: Jeanette wanted to clean her house and make it "very cute

with big personality," but her lack of proper supplies kept her from even attempting the task: she said, "When you don't have what you need to get it that way, forget it. . . no use in getting something started when you can't finish it."

Jeanette struggled to make sense of her self in light of her restricted occupational choices, limited financial means, and continued job search disappointment. She floated between several reactions to her situation, from a nearly fixed state of discouragement and permanent residence on her couch, to renewed confidence and the accomplishment of daily life tasks. Often, Jeanette existed somewhere in between, yearning to do more but unable to find the financial, emotional, or social means to achieve her goals. Her physical appearance modeled these reactionary changes: her manner of dress became increasingly casual as she slipped further into hopelessness over her situation, but each glimmer of hope moved her from sweatpants and t-shirts to jeans and cable-knit sweaters. Worried that she would eventually "disappear forever," Jeanette's response to her situation echoed the idea that "none of us can help the things life has done to us. They're done before you realize it, and once they're done they make you do other things, until at last everything comes between you and what you'd like to be, and you've lost your true self forever."[5]

Conclusion

For these five people, a mere description of the study setting would offer an insufficient basis for understanding their experiences. Accounts of national, state, and local socioeconomic climates and demographics provide only superficial references if their relations to individual consultants remain undeveloped. As a preface to the more detailed findings of later chapters, this final section suggests ways in which consultants transacted with economic, social, and other elements to create the study situation in Horizon Mills.

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[5] From *Long Day's Journey into Night* (1956/1989), p. 63.

Again, this larger study situation encompassed the dynamic micro-macro relationships exemplified by specific situations with consultants; this concluding section will emphasize those relationships by connecting particular examples with the broader information discussed thus far.

The global and national economic changes that shook Horizon Mills' foundation affected each consultant's situations as a discouraged worker, albeit differentially. For instance, Rose embodied the problematic educational habits that grew out of Horizon Mills' manufacturing tradition, as well as the tension produced by the dysfunction of those habits in the face of recent industrial changes. The severity of Cindy's self-perceived worthlessness and lack of consistent occupations stood in light of her need to be a "good worker" in Horizon Mills, where opportunities to fulfill that need had been both abundant and accessible throughout most of her life. Allen's desire to "do something right" aligned with the social and religious mores of the Horizon Mills area, but with an excess of applicants without criminal histories, employers had no need to entertain Allen's applications at any length; coupled with his lack of transportation, Allen's checkered past made it difficult for him to initiate transactions and become the "good worker" that Horizon Mills expected him to be. Margie and Jeanette both fell victim to the unstable situation of Horizon Mills' middle class, which was made vulnerable in the interruption between the sustaining manufacturing work of the past and the not-yet-realized work of the future. Both single mothers were told they were "overqualified" for most jobs in Horizon Mills, but Margie's financial cushion and volunteer opportunities afforded vastly different possibilities than were available in Jeanette's situation.

Each person-environment relationship also evoked different elements of community values in Horizon Mills, alternately—or sometimes, simultaneously and problematically—

upholding local ideas about caring for one's neighbors versus the importance of "taking care of your own." Social networks were more salient to Rose's, Cindy's, and Allen's situations: they relied on others for their day-to-day survival and transportation, whereas Margie (who was more financially self-sufficient) or Jeanette (who had no others upon whom she could rely) did not. As will be explained later, these consultants' reliance on social networks evoked different judgments related to community values, depending on their particular situations. For Rose, Cindy, and Allen, weight of these judgments wove through their own cultural fabric as lifelong residents of the Horizon Mills area. In contrast, Margie and Jeanette had different, and perhaps more critical, appraisals of these judgments by virtue of moving to Horizon Mills as adults.

Though brief, these examples begin to illustrate the understanding of consultants' situations that will weave throughout the following chapters. They show that situational elements fostered an uncertain identity for Horizon Mills, which in turn created distinct and uncertain situations for each of these people. These elements also created a larger study situation in which five diverse consultants fell in rank with one another as discouraged workers in rural North Carolina. With each successive chapter, this picture of the study situation will become increasingly detailed. Ultimately, this picture will illustrate how different situational qualities fostered divergent occupational possibilities (Rudman, 2010) for each of my five consultants. The next chapter discusses the methods I proposed and enacted relative to the study situation. In that discussion, I detail when, where, and how I came to know the five people described above, as well as how various elements influenced the formation and development of the study situation.

Chapter 4. Methods

During our 9-month research relationship, Cindy cancelled our planned meetings at the last minute on four separate occasions; missed one meeting entirely; admitted forgetting about a different meeting (which she also missed) when I called her about it; left nine of my phone messages unreturned; and had her home phone disconnected twice, which gave me no alternative for communicating when her cell phone was (usually) out of minutes. Not surprisingly, this trend of unreliability threw a wrench into my neatly formulated research plans. Starting a discussion of methods with a list of apparent failures may seem to work at cross purposes, yet these details—and the frustrations and modifications associated with them—actually justify the ethnographic approach that I used to study discouraged workers. Similar to challenges I described with another discouraged worker (Aldrich & Callanan, 2011), Cindy's cyclic disappearance and reappearance stimulated conscious reflections about the pros and cons of doing ethnography with a 'hidden' population (Singer, 1999). While my discussion of Deweyan philosophy in Chapter 2 offered a general rationale for experience-based methods, and while the utility of *experiencing with* (Bailliard, Aldrich, & Dickie, in process) has been linked especially to understanding complex phenomena and ill-defined populations (LeCompte & Schensul, 1999), these abstract discussions fail to fully communicate the necessity of ethnographic methods for my study. In the next pages, I detail both procedural and interpersonal aspects of my methodology to show that openness to the process of discovering "*what* people actually do" (emphasis in original) through sustained

ethnographic investigation is vital for interpreting and theorizing about people's experiences (LeCompte & Schensul, 1999, p. 1-2).

Cindy and other discouraged workers were variably present throughout my study. Their unpredictable availability reinforced my need for the ethnographic process (including data collection and analysis) to be refined according to emergent experience (Whyte, 1984). Rather than posing a threat to rigor, this methodological sensitivity to discouraged workers' situations instead seemed to produce more genuine understandings about their experiences (Lofland, Snow, Anderson, & Lofland, 2006). As exemplified in my dealings with Cindy, something as mundane as unreturned phone calls—which superficial analysis might attribute to normal attrition issues—became a source of information about her situation as a discouraged worker, which she described vaguely as "things com[ing] up in this lifestyle." The de-familiarizing of such seemingly mundane occurrences (Marcus & Fischer, 1986) is especially central to discussions of research method, thickening descriptions of what is observed, who does the observing, how the tale of observation is constructed, and for whom that tale is told (Van Maanen, 1988). This chapter takes on that task, detailing my research process vis-à-vis the study situation described in Chapter 3.

Like musical themes and variations, my ethnographic process built upon an initial idea in multiple and sometimes unexpected ways. Initially, I set out to observe discouraged workers' daily occupations in the many contexts of their lives, aiming to collaboratively pen an ethnography for scholars, policymakers, and Horizon Mills residents. Yet, as with mice and men (Burns, 1785), my best-laid plans were subject to the vagaries of experience, and like Duneier (1999), I believe that a report of my methods must position those vagaries within the broader unfolding of my research process. In the next pages, I detail the specific

data collection plans that I outlined in my original study proposal. After describing the journey that led me to do my research in Horizon Mills, I deconstruct various situational elements that influenced my data collection, and explain the changes that those elements helped foster. Those changes included shifts in recruitment and retention tactics as well as a re-envisioning of how my relationships with key consultants would develop over time. I also describe how the time that I spent with individual discouraged workers contributed to my growing understandings about their situations as a whole. I end the chapter by summarizing my data analysis and writing procedures and specifying consultants' responses to my invitations to collaborate and shape this study (Lassiter, 2005).

A word about collaboration: Participants versus consultants

The term 'consultant' hails from Lassiter's (2005) text on collaborative ethnography, which urges a reconsideration of the researcher-participant relationship in ethnography. A collaborative approach to ethnography represents an attempt to rectify power imbalances that are common in research relationships (Clifford, 1986; Lawless, 1992) by issuing continual invitations to participants to shape the study, thereby making them *consultants* in the research process. Whether a consultant *accepts* an invitation to shape the study matters less than the fact that the invitation is wholehearted and repeated throughout the research process. The guiding belief behind collaborative ethnography is that research understandings would be impossible without the input and guidance of willing consultants, and thus their active and influential contribution to the knowledge gained through research ought to be recognized.

The best-laid plans: Original study conceptualization

Table 2 illustrates my originally proposed methodological plan.

Table 2. Original conceptualization of study.

Procedure	Phase 1 (Jun-Jul 2009)	Phase 2 (Aug 2009-May 2010)	Phase 3 (Jun-Aug 2010)	Phase 4 (Sept-Dec 2010)
Participant observation	XXX	XXX	XXX	XXX
Focus groups	XX			
Free listing	X			
Focus group analysis	XX			
Pile sorting	X			
Interviews		XXX	XXX	
Interview logging/transcription		XXX	XXX	
Coding of transcripts		XXX	XXX	
Coding analysis		X	XX	XXX
Fieldnotes analysis			XXX	
Writing up findings				XXX
Member checking	XX	XXX	XXX	XXX

As initially envisioned, this study included data collection strategies of sustained participant observation, interviews (both semi-structured and open-ended), and focus groups. Participant observation and interviews are relatively standard ethnographic tools that give the researcher broad and deep understandings of phenomena (Schensul, Schensul, & LeCompte, 1999). I planned to spend roughly three days per week over 10 months engaged in these activities with up to 10 consultants, who were to be recruited through convenience sampling of focus group participants. Due to the lack of detailed literature on discouraged workers, focus groups seemed to offer a useful means of grounding my participant observations and interviews (Kitzinger & Barbour, 1999; Rubin & Rubin, 1995). I expected to hold two or three 60-90 minute focus groups with four to six participants each (Schensul, 1999) to identify people and issues for further study. Specifically, I planned to have focus group participants engage in free listing to generate situation-specific guiding topics for my ethnographic explorations (Trotter II & Schensul, 1998; Weller & Romney, 1988). I intended

to use pile sorting, content analysis, and member checking to ensure that focus group data appropriately framed the next phases of my study (Berg, 2009; Schwandt, 2007; Trotter II & Schensul; Weller & Romney). I also planned to offer refreshments and $10 in travel compensation to focus group participants, and an additional $30 in gift cards to each person who agreed to continue for long-term participant observation.

I based my recruitment parameters on the formal governmental definition of discouraged workers (outlined in Chapter 1). Because I knew it would be difficult to find people who had only stopped looking for work in the previous 4 weeks, I decided to operationalize the definition of 'discouraged worker' to include any person of working age (between 18 and 65 years old) who wanted to work but was not currently looking for work because he or she did not believe a job was available. I maintained the formal distinction between people whose schooling, retirement, or disability prevented them from working ('marginally attached' workers) and people who believed they lacked the skill or opportunity for paid employment ('discouraged' workers) (Castillo, 1998), recruiting only from the latter group. I intended to recruit participants primarily through flyers posted at the Christians' Care agency (described in Chapter 3). Recruiting only social service seekers held the possibility of introducing selection bias into my study; however, it was a necessary tactic due to the hidden nature of my target study population (Singer, 1999). Further, because generalizability was neither the goal of my study nor the purpose of ethnography in general, I did not see this potential for selection bias as problematic. I limited potential study participants to English-speaking persons with the ability to consistently answer interview questions, given my own linguistic limitations and the centrality of interviews as a data source. I did not plan to specifically sample for ethnicity, sex, or age, because

representativeness was not a goal and I anticipated difficulty recruiting from a hidden

population. In addition, given the inconsistency of demographic information about

discouraged workers, I reasoned that sampling for particular types of people artificially and

unduly restricted the range of phenomena I was likely to encounter. The Institutional Review

Board (IRB) at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill approved this original

research plan and all subsequent modifications to it.

Finding Horizon Mills

My search for a study site co-occurred with my development of a research plan.

Given discouraged workers' heterogeneous and hidden nature (Buss & Redburn, 1988) and

my previous research with unemployed people, I knew that potential participants were

unlikely to self-identify as discouraged workers or congregate in an ostensible way (cf.

Cottle, 2001). 'Discouraged worker' is a government term whose specific referent is not

widely understood, and throughout my study I found that people often took the term to imply

job dissatisfaction rather than discouragement with job searching. Such misunderstanding

was common enough to suggest that discouraged workers would likely not apply the label to

their own situations, and making consultant self-identification problematic. To accommodate

this difficulty, I omitted the term 'discouraged worker' from my recruitment materials and

instead used general descriptors of the label based on its formal definition. Combined with

statistics about discouraged workers' increased prevalence during periods of economic

distress (cf. Benati, 2001), knowledge of this label's problematic nature directed my site

search toward geographic regions with above average economic hardship. With a higher

proportion of unemployed people from which to recruit study participants, such regions

increased the likelihood that I would encounter a sufficient number of people who fit my working definition of 'discouraged worker.'

My site search also concentrated on areas outside the Triangle region of North Carolina (roughly defined as the cities of Raleigh, Durham, and Chapel Hill) to situate my research in a novel environment (to me), as is consistent in ethnographic practice (cf. Marcus & Fischer, 1986; Passaro, 1997). Rural areas were a foreign setting for me for two primary reasons: I had always lived and worked in more populated metropolitan cities, and I possessed limited familiarity with the culturally defining industries of the state's rural regions. Although my hometown in California had strong ties to agricultural industries, its culture (cf. Matsumoto, 2009) bore no resemblance to the mill towns that have defined much of North Carolina's rural economy. The culture of mill towns and its influence on daily life is well documented (cf. Chatterley & Rouveral, 2000; Dudley, 1994) and I believed that special attention to discouraged workers' experiences in such locations might especially illuminate the complexities of their situations. Rural towns steeped in a single industry seemed to hold the potential to shape the discouraged worker's situation at a more basic level than larger urban locations, where the availability of accommodations might lessen people's tendencies to abandon their search for work. Accordingly, I focused my site search on rural North Carolina working towns with demonstrable economic distress because they constituted an unfamiliar environment that was potentially rife with discouraged workers. I limited my search to towns within driving distance of my home in Durham, as I planned to commute to and from my fieldwork on a daily basis.

To further delimit potential research sites, I enlisted the help of Dr. Anne Bacon, senior director of workforce development at the North Carolina Rural Economic

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Development Center (NCRED). This organization, which was recommended by an associate

at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill's Center on Work, Poverty, and

Opportunity, uses a foundation of ongoing, community-centered research to "develop,

promote and implement sound economic strategies to improve the quality of life of rural

North Carolinians" (NC Rural Center, 2010). After I explained the parameters and intent of

my study, Dr. Bacon supplied the names of appropriate towns as well as contact information

for local leaders with whom the NCRED maintained ties. All of these ties were based on

research previously conducted by the NCRED in conjunction with the communities in

question. From Dr. Bacon's original list, I selected two potential research sites in different

geographic regions of the state and visited each location. After meeting with both NCRED

community contacts, I decided to conduct my research in Horizon Mills in large part due to

the enthusiasm of the Christians' Care director (the NCRED contact) regarding my research.

Based on Whyte's (1984) and Singer's (1999) shared assertion that entry into the

ethnographic field is impossible without the aid of a gatekeeper, I placed great emphasis on

the need for a supportive community contact through which I could gain access to local

culture. As the next section demonstrates, my connection with Christians' Care and its

director fostered successes in what otherwise might have been a research-derailing situation.

Initial fieldwork procedures

After an unexpected delay due to final IRB application modifications, I arrived in the

field on July 3, 2009 to begin my participant observation (Phase 1 in Table 2). I planned to

observe and recruit study participants from Christians' Care's unemployed clientele, and I

posted flyers in the ministry's waiting area to notify clients of the study and of my presence

as a researcher. I typically arrived at the site between one hour and 30 minutes before the

ministry opened at 10:00 a. m., and stayed until Christians' Care closed at 3:00 p. m. I was a mere observer for most of my first day at Christians' Care, trying to develop a working schema of the ministry's operations and patrons. Due to overwhelming client demand on that particular date—the ministry assisted 93 families over five hours—I also helped fill food pantry orders for two hours. My first day in the field was a formative one, giving me a sense of the level of need and pace of help that Christians' Care's staff members experienced every day. For the next few weeks, I observed client service representatives as they interviewed clients about specific needs and requests. Combined with my observations in the ministry's waiting area, these experiences helped me understand clients' movement through the ministry's service receipt process, which in turn structured my attempts to speak with clients during their waiting time in the lobby.

However, observation alone was insufficient to contextualize clients' situations and their interactions with the ministry. Because I wanted to maintain regular client contact but did not want to violate client privacy, I began more active participant observation in August 2009 by volunteering in the ministry's front office. This participant observation entailed learning and mimicking staff behaviors based on my observations to-date (cf. Spradley, 1980). My duties included answering the telephone, pulling client files for service representatives, and managing the numbering system that moved clients through the service receipt process. I maintained this form of participant observation throughout my time in the field, gradually decreasing its frequency as the study took me outside the ministry's walls. My participant observation in the front office gave me further foundation for the types of people and life experiences I was likely to encounter at Christians' Care, as well as the manner of help that the ministry was likely to offer in specific situations.

My typical day of participant observation at Christians' Care followed a fairly regular pattern: after making initial notes and participating in the staff prayer circle at 9:50 a. m., I would assist the office staff with processing the day's first wave of clients. After clients' files had been pulled (a process that took anywhere from 10 to 40 minutes), I moved into the lobby to speak with clients as they waited for services. Armed with a notebook, a pen, and a wheeled office chair, I picked one end of an occupied row of seats and introduced myself to the person who sat closest to me, using the posted research flyers as a conversational entrée. I explained that I was interested in talking to people while they waited for services, asked what sorts of difficulties had brought people to Christians' Care, and inquired about people's typical daily activities. Even if I directed my initial inquiry toward a single individual, several people often engaged in (or at least listened to) the conversation, contributing examples about economic hardship and unemployment as they deemed appropriate. If people declined to speak with me (which happened only twice over the course of my research), I thanked them for their time and simply redirected my inquiry to another individual. Overall, I was pleased and generally surprised by people's willingness to talk openly in such a public setting. While many of these conversations spanned between five and 10 minutes (either because people were called back for interviews or because people did not meet the study's parameters), some of them lasted as long as 30 minutes. The variable number of people waiting for services and types of services requested affected individual wait times; thus, I prepared to have only a few minutes to determine whether or not an individual was appropriate for focus groups or further participant observation.

If a person seemed to fit my recruitment parameters, I asked about further study participation and either distributed my contact information or requested that person's

information for future contact. In general, I left two or three phone messages for people (calling every seven to 10 days) and if I did not receive a return call, I assumed that the person was uninterested in pursuing the study any further. If I had difficulty leaving a message or discovered that a phone number had been disconnected (a common occurrence), I extended my contact efforts by one or two phone calls. I waited until phone contact was successful to initiate the consent process, which always occurred outside Christians' Care (either at another public location or in a person's home) for privacy purposes.

Within the first month of the study, I began to venture outside Christians' Care to expand my knowledge of unemployment specifically and culture generally in Horizon Mills. My connection to the Christians' Care director was central to these undertakings because many of my initial experiences came via accompanying him to events. For instance, I joined the director at local housing coalition and Rotary Club meetings, and he notified me of media and social events that he thought might aid my understanding of Horizon Mills. He also used his professional connections to recommend other community leaders (such as Chamber of Commerce contacts, media members, the Employment Securities Commission (ESC) manager, and a local group of religious leaders) that he thought might have useful perspectives for my study. Because the director held a known and respected position in the community, I found myself benefiting from my association with him. On more than one occasion, merely being introduced by him engendered visible comfort for the party with whom I was interacting, as if my association with the Christians' Care director offered sufficient vetting in the community. (The director was always quick to correct my observations of this fact, saying that it was my association with Christians' Care and not *him* that gave me credibility. His reaction spoke both to his humble nature and to his awareness of

his strong personality, which he described as a professionally but not always personally positive attribute.) The director's consistent statement that "she [Beccy] does what she's says she's going to do" seemed to legitimize my presence in a way that would have been difficult to secure on my own. Given my obvious position as an outsider in Horizon Mills (as exemplified by the phone call to the director's wife described in Chapter 3), the ministry director's support proved crucial to study's success. Similarly (but to a lesser degree), the Christians' Care staff treated me like a member of the family from the beginning of the research process, and staff members often asked if they could do anything to help my research.

While my involvement with Christians' Care and its staff members was a boon to getting me 'inside' Horizon Mills, it did generate some ethical considerations. My duties as an office volunteer facilitated my interaction with clients without giving me power over the distribution of assistance. (The ministry limited decision-making responsibilities to a select few staff members, of which office workers had no part.) However, my mere act of taking names and numbers and standing on the 'staff' side of the office window placed me definitively on one side of the service giver-service receiver dichotomy. Although clients never expressed an expectation that I could or would help plead their cases, I encountered increasing questions about the availability of the ministry's funds as participants came to view me as an 'insider' there. Likewise, as the Christians' Care staff became accustomed to my presence, staff members began to share information with me that necessitated careful ethical treatment. Often, this information came in the form of personal asides based on a staff member's interactions with clients outside the ministry. I never focused much on the particular substance of such comments, instead viewing their mention as evidencing the non-

anonymous way of life in Horizon Mills. However, the comfort and trust associated with such comments sometimes brought an implicit expectation that I would side with staff members in contentious moments. For example, the director once called me into his office to be a "witness" as he addressed a client's complaint and file discrepancy. After the client left the office, the director explained that he wanted to expose me to the types of issues that accompanied the ministry's work. He then asked my opinion on whether he had handled the situation appropriately, which put me in a position of siding with or against one of my most valuable community resources. Although these situations were infrequent and never ultimately created ethical problems, they illuminated the careful balancing act required of my ethnographic practices.

Thanks in large part to having Christians' Care as an origin for my research, I was able to interview many community leaders who were connected to the town's unemployment difficulties. Formal interviewees included the regional ESC manager, staff members at a probation reporting center, one member of the Chamber of Commerce, the director of a local economic development board, the community college president, and a newspaper reporter. I also conducted informal interviews with a local factory's human resources manager, two vocational workshop managers, a volunteer center coordinator, and a local politician. In addition, I familiarized myself with Horizon Mills' history via community resources such as the local library, and I made a point to explore frequently referenced locations such as the farmer's market, the mall, and the park. These experiences outside Christians' Care began just after the end of my first month in the field, and thus my trips to Horizon Mills were often a mix of participant observation at Christians' Care, interviews with various leaders and potential consultants, and more general observations at other community locations.

The observational data that I collected during the first weeks of the study helped me establish a system for taking fieldnotes. While speaking to clients in the Christians' Care lobby or conducting interviews in and around the ministry, I often jotted quick notes which I expanded in a separate location at the soonest opportunity. If I was unable to take notes during an encounter, I tried to find regular opportunities throughout the day to excuse myself and record my thoughts and observations, often at a desk in the ministry's food pantry or front office. In response to the hectic pace of my days, I also allotted time after my return home to write my reflections on the day's events. I reviewed all of my notes every four to six weeks throughout the study to augment my iterative understandings and garner a sense of where I was in the larger research process.

While these initial fieldwork endeavors gave me a solid foundation for the study, they also illuminated the need for an adjustment to my original research plan. By late August 2009, I had met only one person who met my criteria for participant observation. As the calendar changed to September, I began to worry that I might not find sufficient participants for my study. Although the clients I met at Christians' Care were more than willing to speak with me, I found that they largely failed to match the operational definition of 'discouraged worker' that framed my study. Many clients were either underemployed or unemployed and still searching for work, and while their stories of hardship, abandonment, loss, and need illuminated important information about economically distressed lifestyles, the tales did not specifically speak to the trials and tribulations of being a 'discouraged' worker. I wrote in my fieldnotes on August 24, 2009, "I spend all day, 3 days/week at Christians' Care and maybe 1 person fits my criteria, but many have no interest in research participation. Seems that in a place where there must be many discouraged workers, they truly have disappeared." In

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Chapter 5, I provide a more in-depth look at the definition of 'discouraged' workers relative to my study situation; however, for the present discussion, the important point is that my concerns about recruitment prompted me to critically re-evaluate the research plan outlined in Table 2.

Plans gone awry: Methodological revisions based on the study situation

Changes to my research plan fell under two broad categories: participant recruitment and participant retention. As shown in Table 2, I originally planned to recruit study participants from the Christians' Care clientele, both for focus groups and for long-term participant observation. I planned to complete my focus groups by the beginning of August 2009 and conduct individual participant observation for the rest of the study period (through May 2010). However, I ultimately removed focus groups from my research plan and moved beyond posting flyers at Christians' Care to recruit people for long-term participant observation. While these changes did not dramatically alter the overall study timeline (I finished data collection by May 2010 and commenced data analysis and writing in June 2010), they did alter the means by which I found and followed individual discouraged workers in Horizon Mills.

Recruitment

After seeing the pace and volume of client movement through Christians' Care on my first day in the field, I realized that recruiting participants via flyers at the ministry would likely yield insufficient response. The Christians' Care lobby was often so full that the space became standing room-only, and this meant that clients frequently could not see or read the research flyers that I had posted on the lobby wall's bulletin board. While, in many settings, reading flyers is not a regular feature of experience, the use of flyers fit well within the

context of Christians' Care. The ministry's lobby featured two bulletin boards: one on the wall adjacent to the client services office, which held flyers advertising various social services and outreach programs in and around Horizon Mills, and one at the back of the room, which featured pictures and quotations of a Christian religious nature. Although I posted my flyers on the bulletin board containing other service-related information, it did not generate as great or consistent a response as I had anticipated.

Initially, I tried to accommodate this problem by posting additional flyers at the client check-in window and in each of the client services offices. Although my flyers did garner occasional interest, the people who actually responded to the flyers often fell into a different labor force classification than I was seeking (i.e., they were under- or unemployed) or they misunderstood the flyer and thought I could help them find a job. In discussing this situation with a former Christians' Care employee (a local social worker who also graciously housed me one night per week), I found that the ministry's mission of short-term financial crisis intervention skewed its clientele more toward underemployed people than chronically unemployed people. (Chapters 5 and 8 contain more detail about the hidden nature of discouraged workers in Horizon Mills.) Although I ultimately recruited three people from Christians' Care for sustained participant observation, it took more time to find and secure their participation than I had originally anticipated, which reinforced the need to shift and expand my planned recruitment strategies.

Hence I broadened my recruitment beyond the confines of the ministry's bulletin boards. Based on recommendations from my community contacts—especially the suggestions of a local media person—I also posted recruitment flyers at the local Employment Securities Commission (ESC), the JobLink center, the local Department of

Social Services (DSS), the probation reporting center, Laundromats, the Goodwill resource center, and one convenience store bulletin board. In early September, the New York Times ran an article describing discouraged workers (Luo, 2009), and I added an excerpt from that article to my flyers at their posted locations to clarify the type of worker for whom I was searching. In addition to more widely dispersing flyers, I placed a listing in the newspaper to advertise my research for three days in one week in September. Based on the questions used in the Current Population Survey to define discouraged workers (detailed in Chapter 5), I also created informal anonymous surveys and placed them at the ESC and Christians' Care for interested parties to fill out. I reasoned that these surveys would give me a better idea of how many clients at these agencies fell into the "want to work but not looking" category. Although I did not formally analyze this set of data, it reinforced my assumption that a very small proportion of these agencies' clientele (six out of 115 respondents) self-classified as 'discouraged' workers.

In addition to paper-based recruitment, I expanded my observations to include the ESC and the DSS so that I could gauge the possibility of recruiting directly from those locations. While the manager of the ESC was an enthusiastic and tireless supporter of my work, I found little success in recruiting from that site. I found that ESC clients were primarily focused on securing or losing their benefits, so much so that they were unable to consider participating in a study with low remunerative potential. Many people told me that they wanted to focus their efforts on finding work, not talking about its absence. The same was the case at the DSS. I also contacted local temporary employment agencies, thinking that although their clientele allegedly looked for work and thus were not 'discouraged' in the formal sense, perhaps I could gain some insight on where people went when they stopped

looking for work. After a few frustrating and unproductive conversations with various

temporary employment agencies, I decided that recruitment and observation at these

locations would not produce satisfactory results.

Aside from modifying my advertising and observational strategies, I also tried to

actively root out discouraged workers in community settings outside of social service

scenarios. Again based on the recommendation of a media person, I went to community

bulletin boards—at the community college, grocery stores, convenience stores, and service

agencies—and pulled business cards that advertised what appeared to be informal economy

services. The rationale behind calling the phone numbers on these cards was that such

advertisements might come from people who had ceased participating in the formal

economy. Although this strategy was ultimately unhelpful for recruitment (all of the people

with whom I spoke were either self-employed or still looking for formal work), it bolstered

my understanding of how and where people existed outside the formal economy in Horizon

Mills. In addition to scouting the informal economy, I also attended community functions

related to Horizon Mills' financial crisis, such as a roundtable discussion hosted by a national

media conglomerate and a church service whose themes included the town's economic woes.

I met people at each of these functions who assisted my recruitment efforts by taking my

research flyers and communicating my study to interested parties. These tactics for

broadening my recruitment efforts ultimately yielded the final two discouraged workers

whom I followed in the study.

As a last-ditch effort (and based on the recommendation of the former Christians'

Care social worker), I also began to ask the clientele at local assistance agencies for their

own recruitment ideas. Every person with whom I spoke confirmed that I had targeted

appropriate locations around Horizon Mills, and most people verified that there were no real "hang out" areas in town and that people spent a great deal of time at home. As much as these conversations reassured me that I was looking in all the right places, they also revealed places *not* to look for potential participants, including a housing project called "The Lake" and any of the local bars. (Alcohol had only become legal in Horizon Mills in the past few years, and a definite stigma still attended local purveyors.) Referencing such locations, one man with whom I spoke said, "I wouldn't send you to any place that people hang out!" Social workers and community leaders in Horizon Mills corroborated these answers, and the only alternative recruitment strategy yielded by these conversations was one woman's suggestion that I "go door to door" to seek consultants. For reasons of safety and social propriety, I did not pursue that recruitment option, but the suggestion did become relevant once I secured long-term consultants (to be described more fully in the next section.)

Despite these many modifications, I failed to recruit the volume of key consultants for which I had originally aimed (up to 10 discouraged workers for participant observation, and at least 12 for focus groups). As a result, in October 2009 I abandoned the idea of using focus groups as a foundation for long-term participant observation. In talking with clients at Christians' Care, the ESC, and the DSS, I encountered some hesitation to discuss sensitive unemployment-related topics in front of other people: people appeared more willing to speak with me individually than in front of other Horizon Mills' residents, perhaps due to the already minimal anonymity in the town. Combined with my inability to obtain multiple people's participation at a single time, I determined that focus groups were not feasible in my particular study situation. Lacking focus group data as a springboard for discussion topics and observations, I began to rely more heavily on the Occupational Questionnaire (Smith,

Kielhofner, & Watts, 1986), which I had added to my toolkit in mid-July 2009. This questionnaire (see Figure 1A in the Appendix) asks respondents to record their activities in half-hour increments between the hours of 5:00 a. m. and 11:30 p. m. on a 'typical' weekday. Respondents are asked to categorize each activity as 'work,' 'daily living work,' 'recreation,' or 'rest' and rate the activity's importance, their performance of the activity, and their enjoyment of the activity. I initially chose to incorporate the Occupational Questionnaire because I was having difficulty initiating direct conversations about occupation with Christians' Care clientele. Described more thoroughly in Chapter 6, I found that people gave indeterminate descriptions of their daily occupations, and I believed that the Occupational Questionnaire might provide a more concrete springboard for those discussions. However, when I decided to abandon focus groups as part of the study, I realized that the Occupational Questionnaire might fill the same role that I intended for the focus groups, only on an individual rather than group level. Although I collected Occupational Questionnaire data for three persons outside my five key consultants, I did not include that additional data in my final analysis.

In the end, I posted more types of flyers in more locations and relied upon a wider range of community contacts than I had anticipated prior to arriving in Horizon Mills. Reinforcing the need to be sensitive to the emergent nature of ethnography (Whyte, 1984), the necessity of these tactical shifts increased my understanding of Horizon Mills' culture and its issues of unemployment. These shifts ultimately yielded the five discouraged workers whose stories were first introduced in Chapter 3. Table 1 in the Appendix lists the many consultants whose contributions helped shape my understanding of discouraged workers' complex (and hidden) situations in Horizon Mills. It also illustrates the duration of my

contact with these consultants, as well as the types of data I gathered with them. The table is progressively shaded to denote different levels of comprehension that I derived from experiences with various consultants: discouraged workers gave me a window into the day-to-day lives of individual people; persons involved with social services helped me grasp the many social processes surrounding unemployment; and community leaders exposed me to issues that shaped broader life in Horizon Mills. My study's findings represent an understanding of how these spheres of experience transacted and manifested in particular situations.

Despite this study's focus on five key consultants, the foregoing description of my recruitment and data collection demonstrates that this ethnography concerns much more than five individual lives. Elements of the study situation—including the hidden nature of discouraged workers, the particular culture of Horizon Mills, and the lifestyle of long-term unemployment—forced me to reframe my study as one of discouraged workers' *situations* rather than of the workers' themselves (Aldrich & Callanan, 2011). Unable to readily find and recruit discouraged workers en masse, I was forced to explore unanticipated facets of Horizon Mills and speak to community leaders (such as the media person) whose influence and role I did not predict beforehand. The knowledge I drew from reframing my study broadened my eventual understandings of my key consultants and their daily occupations. Only through my knowledge of these consultants' situations in Horizon Mills was I able to retain consultants throughout the study and properly interpret the data I collected with them.

The disappearing discouraged worker: Retention

Almost immediately upon securing key consultants for participant observation, I noticed my inability to maintain consistent contact with them. Coming from an ultra-

connected college town, I had already been forced to shift away from viewing email as a primary medium of communication; home Internet connections were not ubiquitous in Horizon Mills, and my iPhone was one of only a few smartphones I ever saw in town. While these communication trends were not surprising, I was completely unprepared to encounter difficulties with basic phone communication. From my earliest days in the field, I observed many social service clients using what appeared to be base model cellular phones. As I spent more time with social service providers, my observation was confirmed: many of the under- and unemployed people in town received pay-as-you-go phones from the DSS when their home phones were disconnected due to lapses in payments. I frequently encountered both phone disconnections and people running out of prepaid minutes, which made scheduling regular interviews and observations quite problematic. In addition to phone insufficiencies, I also noticed a trend whereby people would answer my call if I called from the Christians' Care office—a local phone number—but they would not answer my call if I called from my cellular phone—a non-local phone number—despite having given my phone number to people in advance. Service providers in Horizon Mills echoed similar experiences, citing people's desire to avoid bill collectors as the reason for not answering non-local phone calls. The local media person (whose experience researching unemployment issues in the area was invaluable to my success) said, "We run into the same thing. There is a hesitancy to talk on the phone." While I did manage relative success with phone communication over time, my initial difficulties prompted me to take one client's recruitment suggestion ("go door to door") to heart: based on the requests of three key consultants (Rose, Jeanette, and Allen), I took to just showing up at predetermined locations (either a home or a community site) to try and meet with people. For instance, Rose, who had no phone, told me to "just stop by"

whenever I saw her minivan in the parking space outside her apartment, and Jeanette gave me similar direction. Likewise, Allen told me which days he would be at the probation reporting center, and I confirmed with the manager that it would be acceptable for me to drop by and speak to Allen on occasion. I was initially uncomfortable with this arrangement, having been raised with the idea that dropping by unannounced was impolite. However, as I came to better understand the qualities of people's long-term unemployment situations, I realized that I needed to adjust my strategies to maintain contact with key consultants over many months.

In changing my view of the study situation away from being somewhat appointment-based, I came to appreciate having Christians' Care as a base of operations for my study. Having been solidly situated there for several months, consultants came to associate me with the organization, and by October 2009, people began to call the ministry's phone number and ask whether or not I was around that day. Consultants who had no long-distance phone capabilities—or no phone at all—went through Christians' Care to contact me when they had no other option, a trend that continued throughout my study despite my very limited presence at the ministry after December 2009. This tactic was especially helpful when fundamental aspects of consultants' situations—such as their housing—changed. For instance, as described in Aldrich and Callanan (2011), Jeanette seemed to simply vanish one day, and neither phone calls nor my attempts to drop by her home seemed to help the situation. I eventually discovered that she had checked herself into a psychiatric hospital and had been out of communication as a result. When Jeanette again disappeared and then reappeared a few weeks later, it was only after she contacted me through Christians' Care that I learned that her home had been foreclosed upon and she had moved to a new house without a phone.

Over the course of the study, I completed 29 informal (unrecorded) interviews and 23 formal (recorded) interviews, ranging in length from 25 to 90 minutes and averaging 55 minutes. All told, I spent 72 days in Horizon Mills between July 2009 and the end of April 2010, and my contact with each of my key consultants ebbed and flowed during that time. I conducted formal interviews at times and places of convenience to my consultants, and engaged in participant observation in both private and public locations as my consultants went about their daily lives. During participant observation experiences, I conducted informal interviews as topics of interest arose. I saw each consultant at least once a month and spoke to him or her at least once outside of face-to-face contact, but there were also periods when obligations (either mine or consultants') prevented contact for several weeks. For each consultant, I came to a point where the research process seemed at a natural ending point; either the consultant's situation had not changed and did not appear to be changing soon, or contact became difficult to the point that we were unable to set up another meeting. The latter description applied most directly to my dealings with Cindy, whose struggle with addiction put her through another detoxification process in the last two months of my study, making her virtually disappear. A few days after my data collection period officially ended, Cindy called to apologize and tell me about her most recent struggle, but only after she had ventured to Christians' Care to inquire about my whereabouts. A similar pattern occurred with other consultants. For example, I discovered in March 2010 that the ESC manager with whom I had worked so closely had been transferred to an office in another town. Rather than make the effort to build a relationship with his replacement, I decided to view the manager's departure as a natural ending point for my interactions with that agency.

Reflexivity and reciprocity: Processing trauma and developing relationships

Once I began following key consultants on a consistent basis, I recognized a need to develop a strategy for processing the highly emotional experiences in which consultants generously allowed me to take part. In the first weeks of my research, the gravity of people's long-term unemployment situations did not unduly affect me: although I heard many heartbreaking stories, the stories' ubiquity seemed to make them easier to handle, as if their commonality and relative facelessness somehow made them less poignant. However, I distinctly remember the day that the research became "real" enough to warrant concerted emotional processing on my part. Back home after a day in the field in early August, I was heading to a friend's house when I received a phone call from a woman who was referred to me by the Horizon Mills' ESC manager. The woman explained the reason for her call and almost immediately started crying, telling me that her unemployment benefits had just run out and she did not know what to do because she had not been able to find work in her 18 months of unemployment. She told me that she was newly divorced after 25 years of marriage, that she needed to keep her home so that her son could afford to go to college, and then she asked if I had any information that could help keep her from giving up hope.

Although that woman declined to participate in my study, her story brought home that my study was far from a priority in any potential consultant's life. While I did not naïvely assume that most people would have the time or resources to easily participate in my study, I did not anticipate how helpless I would feel about the limited reciprocity I was able to offer in return for consultants' time and energy. I funded my research expenses out of my own pocket until I received two awards (a Dissertation Research Grant from the American Occupational Therapy Foundation, and a Love of Learning Award from the Phi Kappa Phi

Honor Society) midway through my study; consequently, my offer of $30 grocery or gas gift cards stretched the boundaries of my already tight graduate student budget. Yet, in the context of my consultants' often dire financial circumstances and the emotional trauma they communicated, the offer of a gift card and the chance to tell their story seemed (to me) almost laughably inadequate. I found myself needing time to cope with my own feelings of helplessness regarding this issue, and I used my commute from Horizon Mills to Durham to decompress, distancing myself from people's tales of loss and hardship with each mile that I drove. Were it not for that drive, my daily reflections about the research process, and the support of family, friends, and my adviser, I doubt I could have worked through this challenging research topic as well as I did.

This process of regularly distancing myself from Horizon Mills somewhat differed from traditional ethnographic immersion that promotes being "in the field" for a sustained period of time. Although I spent one night in Horizon Mills during most weeks of the study, I never stayed with key consultants and viewed the experience more in terms of its fuel-saving benefits alone. While I did maximize my time in Horizon Mills by going to events, eating at restaurants, and doing other 'daily life' things, it would be incorrect to say that I "lived" there. In fact, I made a conscious decision *not* to live there based on financial and emotional necessities: my graduate school commitments required me to be in Chapel Hill several days a week and I could not afford to pay for dual residences. While the distance between my home and my research site allowed me to decompress in the ways described above, it also limited my interactions with consultants and the relationships and understandings that I developed from them.

Not being fully "in the field" meant that my relationships with my consultants developed slowly through one to five-hour interactions that recurred over several months. My relationship with each consultant was qualitatively different and seemed to depend both on the number of times I saw that person as well as the experiences we shared together. For instance, my relationship with Margie was fairly formal because our interactions occurred at her volunteer site or community locations where she presented her work; we rarely had an opportunity to explore the mundane facets of her life, and the most emotionally heightened situation I encountered with her was the day she left work to euthanize her pet cat (which she appeared to handle with a fair amount of calm). In stark contrast, I spent many hours sitting beside Jeanette on her couch and actually saw her confirm that she would lose her home to foreclosure; not surprisingly, I felt closer to Jeanette by virtue of being allowed to share such experiences with her, and as a result my observations and interviews with her seemed to be deeper than those I had with Margie. Chapter 7 will provide more detailed examples of the time I spent with each key consultant, but in general my respective relationships with Rose, Cindy, Margie, Allen, and Jeanette developed in their own right, never evaluated in relation to (or modeled after) those of others. I let each person guide the depth and breadth of my interactions with him or her, and my understandings are thus a product of my attempt to negotiate and develop what each consultant chose to show me about his or her situation. Circumscribed in various ways, the types of interactions I had with each consultant spoke to the nature of our respective relationships, and the conversations and understandings that emerged from each relationship—to which the next section turns—flowed more easily with some consultants than with others.

Data analysis and writing

In spite of my early difficulties with recruitment and struggles with retention and reciprocity, I adhered fairly well to my original research timeline. I stopped collecting data on April 30, 2010. I spent most of the month of May converting my handwritten fieldnotes into electronic Word documents so that all of my qualitative data (fieldnotes and interview logs/transcripts) would be in a single format for data analysis. I used version 6 of the Atlas.ti software (Cincom Systems, 2010) to code my fieldnotes, interview logs, and interview transcripts, and used open and focused coding strategies as outlined in Lofland, Snow, Anderson, and Lofland (2006). I had begun the iterative process of reviewing my data and looking for themes in January 2010, but the more formal process occurred between May and July 2010. I distilled themes and discussed them with my adviser, and began writing my results in August 2010, a process that continued through February 2011.

As I analyzed my interview transcripts and fieldnotes, I gained a deeper understanding of how my relationship with each consultant developed over the study, and of how each relationship fostered the various understandings contained in this document. Just as the experiences that my consultants chose to share with me illuminated those that they did not share, the topics we discussed and the events we co-experienced revealed what I still had yet to learn. In my lengthy but sometimes wandering interviews with Rose, for example, I saw my struggles to relate to and communicate with a person whose life differed so completely from my own: revisions in my speech away from my multi-syllabic norm and success at staying "on track" progressed with each successive interview. Similarly, Margie's willingness to show a chink in her proudly worn "armor" as we touched on progressively personal issues became apparent as the data moved forward in time. Thus, my data analysis

not only revealed the thematic understandings that underlie the next three chapters, but it also prompted reflections on the interpersonal processes that were crucial to developing and fully contextualizing those understandings.

While composing my findings and analytic results, I asked various consultants to read and comment on sections that were relevant to them. This process of taking my writing back to the field and modifying it based on the input of consultants was done less under the guise of member checking (Schwandt, 2007) than it was in accordance with the idea that ethnography is a form of witnessing that bears responsibility to those who are witnessed (Behar, 1996). In answer to that responsibility, I reissued invitations for collaboration (Lassiter, 2005) by carrying my interpretations back to my consultants, in the hopes of avoiding a monophonic tone that might mask my intersubjective field experiences (Clifford, 1983; Lawless, 1992). Not all of my consultants and key consultants expressed an interest in this process, but those who did express interest participated in a range of ways. For example, the Christians' Care director read my depiction of Horizon Mills and provided feedback on some of my findings, whereas Jeanette co-authored a scholarly journal article based on my interactions with her (Aldrich & Callanan, 2011). Recognizing the significance of my representational choices (Van Maanen, 1988) and the need for reflexivity about the intended audience of my writing (Wolf, 1992), I maintained as much polyvocality as my collaborations with consultants could afford, and endeavored to produce a document that could eventually be modified to meet multiple needs outside those of a doctoral dissertation.

Conclusion

Although this chapter cannot possibly convey the full complexity of my research process, it begins the task of demonstrating the complex connection between the situation in

Horizon Mills and the progression of my study from July 2009 through April 2010. Unlike previous research on discouraged workers—which has consistently used survey methods to generate information—it was impossible for me to conceive of understanding discouraged workers without the immersion that accompanies the ethnographic method. The small-town nature of Horizon Mills dictated a need to carve out a place of trust for myself within the community, and that endeavor necessitated extended time in the field. Over time, my increasingly nuanced knowledge of Horizon Mills translated into nuanced knowledge about the relationship between discouraged workers' situations and their engagement in occupations, which is more fully described in Chapter 7. My time in the field also helped me deconstruct the situational factors that affected my participant recruitment and retention strategies, illuminating alternative tactics that honed my situational understandings in unexpected ways. Overall, my methods yielded transactional understandings of discouraged workers that wove together data from a diversity of interviews and participant observations in Horizon Mills. In the next chapter, I build upon those understandings in relation to the definition of discouraged workers, the problematic nature of which was revealed through the emergent ethnographic process described above.

Chapter 5. There's a Difference Between "Giving Up" and "Quitting": Defining Discouraged Workers

Initially, the Bureau of Labor Statistics' (BLS) definition of "discouraged workers" seemed to clearly outline this study's target population. In 1994, the BLS added two parameters—how recently a person had looked for work, and whether a person was available to work—to Current Population Survey (CPS) questions on employment (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2010a). The CPS questions constitute the main and most consistent source of information about discouraged workers, and the new parameters aimed to better distinguish this group from other sects of the labor force (Castillo, 1998). These revisions reduced subsequent CPS tallies of discouraged workers by nearly 50%, an expected consequence of more "objectively" characterizing this group (Castillo). Although these revisions seem to have honed the discouraged worker as a theoretical construct, their specificity did little to demystify discouraged workers' larger lives, as evidenced by the paucity of literature about this group.

Given the high unemployment rate in Horizon Mills and informal forecasts of discouraged workers' prevalence there, one might suspect that the detailed BLS definition would offer an unproblematic sorting mechanism for on-the-ground recruitment; the definition's specificity should have provided straightforward inclusion criteria for who fell into the discouraged worker category and who did not. However, early encounters in the field suggested that a host of cultural, social, and practical factors influenced how and whether unemployed people fit the formal definition of discouraged workers. From the first few

months of research, interview and observations about participant recruitment and daily occupation increasingly led me to question how discouraged workers are officially defined and measured. In this section, I will deconstruct the official definition of discouraged workers, beginning with a detailed account of its origins and measurement in the CPS. I will illustrate how my interactions with community officials and unemployed persons (including my five key consultants) gave rise to two themes related to defining discouraged workers: *what it means to look for work* and *the difference between "giving up" and "quitting"* the search for work. I will conclude this chapter by extrapolating the sociopolitical implications of narrowly defining and under-representing members of this group.

Defining discouraged workers, CPS style

Data on discouraged workers was first collected by the CPS in the late 1960s, after these "unused human resources in our economy" entered labor economists' awareness (Castillo, 1998, p. 34). The monthly CPS survey began in 1940 and currently samples 60,000 households, or approximately 110,000 people, to represent the entire non-institutional U.S. population over the age of 16 (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2010a[6], 2010b). The sample reflects rural, urban, industrial, and geographic variations across all 50 states and the District of Columbia. It is conducted in a 4-8-4 rotation where households are included in the survey for 4 months, omitted for 8 months, and included again for 4 months. Trained Census Bureau employees administer the CPS to household members during a monthly survey week, asking prescribed questions to avoid influencing respondents' answers. According to Jim Borbely, an economist with the CPS and BLS, interviewers conduct the survey in person in the first month of the rotation and update the survey via phone in months 2 through 4 (personal communication, July 6, 2010). They follow the same pattern when the household is re-

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[6] Except where noted, all information about the CPS in this section comes from this reference.

surveyed 8 months later. Thus 75% of the sample is common in consecutive months and 50% is common in consecutive years.

The questions included in the CPS never directly address unemployment classifications. Respondents are only classified as *employed*, *unemployed*, or *not in the labor force* once their answers are matched with preprogrammed definitions in the BLS database. Table 3 defines those classifications, Table 4 lists questions related to the latter two classifications, and Figure 6 differentiates between discouraged workers and marginally attached workers who are considered *not in the labor force*.

Table 3: Labor Force Classifications from the Current Population Survey (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2010a)

Classification	Definition
Employed	Has a job
Unemployed	Jobless, looking for a job, available to work
Not in the Labor Force	Not in either of the above categories

Table 4: CPS Questions Asked of People Not Working or Looking for Work in the Past Four Weeks (J. Borbely, personal communication, November 4, 2009)

Question	Possible Responses
Q23. Do you currently want a job, either full or part time?	Yes, or maybe, it depends
	No
	Retired
	Disabled
	Unable
Q23A. What is the main reason you were not looking for work during the LAST 4 WEEKS?	(Open ended)
Q23B. Did you look for work at any time during the last 12 months?	Yes
	No
Q23B-1. Did you actually WORK at a job or business during the last 12 months?	Yes
	No
Q23B-2. Did you do any of this work during the last 4 weeks?	Yes
	No
Q23B-3. And since you LEFT that job or business have you looked for work?	Yes
	No
Q23C. LAST WEEK, could you have started a job if one had been offered?	Yes
	No

Wants a job

Yes   No

Looking for work

Yes   No

Looked in last year

Yes   No

Looked in last month

Yes   No

Not looking because:

Believes no work is
available

Can't find work

Lacks schooling,
training, skills, or
experience

Employers think is too
old or young

Other discrimination

In school

Disabled

Retired

Other reasons

Marginally attached

Discouraged worker
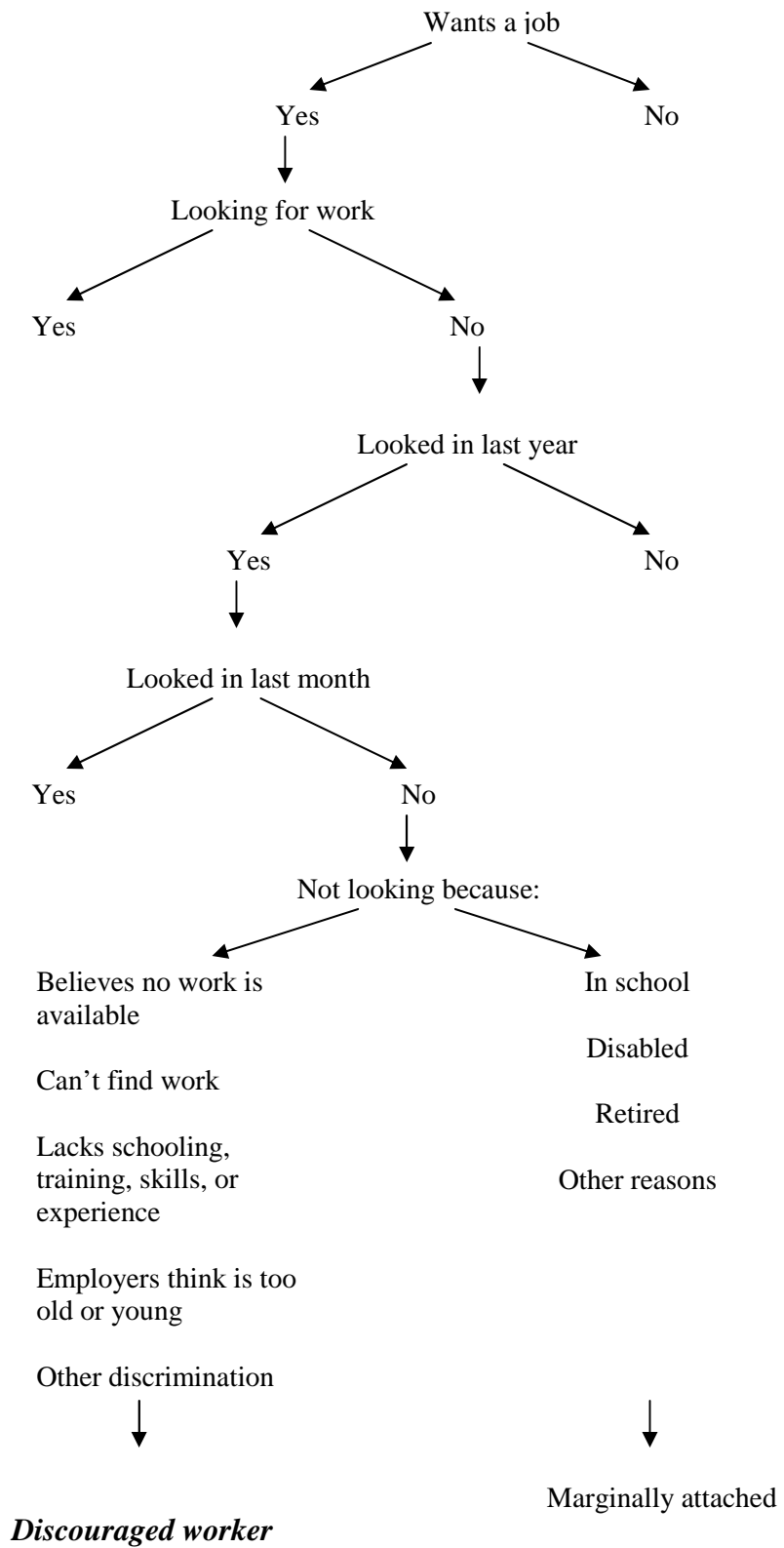
Figure 6: Response Pattern for Discouraged Workers Designated in CPS (J. Borbely, personal communication, November 4, 2009).

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Claims for unemployment insurance are not attached to these classifications, and persons participating in the Peace Corps or AmeriCorps programs are not included because their activities have no occupational classification relative to the labor market (J. Borbely, personal communication, July 6, 2010). Estimates from the CPS possess a 90% confidence interval (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2010b) and a non-interview rate (sampled households where interviews are not obtained) between 7 and 8 percent.

As shown in Figure 6, discouraged workers are people who want and are available to work, have looked for work in the past year, but did not look in the past month because they did not believe they could find work. In the initial stages of research, I naïvely believed that the CPS line of questioning offered sufficient guidelines for consultant recruitment. Much to my dismay, I had no "real" consultants—that is, no one who perfectly fit the discouraged worker definition—nearly three months into my study. I repeatedly met people who had abandoned hope in the face of long-term unemployment, but few stated that they had totally abandoned their job search.

In light of this, I began to seek counsel from community contacts about my problem. I queried the manager of the Employment Securities Commission (ESC), whose certainty about my ability to find discouraged workers in Horizon Mills was a boon to the early stages of my research. An effusive man, he believed he had "the best job in the world" because he helped people "see the light" through the shadows of unemployment. He described his conversations with the newly jobless person, saying

> I can walk up to him and say, "What is it that you want to do? Whatever it is that you dream, I'll pay for it. Go do it. I'm giving you a second chance." It's a powerful job. This is an *a-ma-zing* job. You change people's lives. You change *generational* lives. You can see somebody that doesn't care about [himself] one day go to the self-worth of a human being. . . *that's* what I do this for.

His enthusiasm and community connections notwithstanding, he was puzzled about my recruitment difficulties. He had admitted early on, "I don't know what happens" to people who stop looking for work, noting that they seemed to "disappear." He suggested that people might not want to participate in the study because of the "shock factor" of long-term unemployment and their associated scramble for survival, but he also declared with confidence that "no one's going to say they're not looking" for work, least of all to a stranger asking the question in a social service agency.

Others in the community echoed this sentiment. A local reporter offered many potential solutions for recruitment, but she also spoke of a general "hesitancy" to discuss the subject in Horizon Mills. As I maneuvered through my chain of contacts searching for answers, I continually heard that aspects of life in Horizon Mills made the CPS questions less neutral in real life. I eventually discovered that the question, "Are you currently looking for work?" was not as simple as it seemed. I realized that the implications of positioning oneself outside the labor force in Horizon Mills rested on an understanding of what does and does not qualify as "looking for work," both according to the CPS and to people doing the looking.

What it means to look for work: More than just "active" and "passive" job searches

In line with its refined definition of discouraged workers, the CPS delimits the types of activities that qualify as job searches. Table 5 lists these strategies.

Table 5: "Active" versus "Passive" Job Search Classifications (J. Borbely, personal communication, November 4, 2009).

Active	Passive
Contacted employers	Looked at advertisements (no follow up)
Took public employment agency courses	Attended job training
Accessed a private employment agency	Other
Asked friends or relatives about jobs	
Used a school employment center	
Sent out résumés or applications	
Checked professional registers	
Placed/answered advertisements	
Other	

The "active" type of strategy is tied to a labor force status of *unemployment* and the "passive" is associated with people who are *not in the labor force*. The implication of these categories, it seems, is that "active" search strategies contain the possibility of success, whereas "passive" strategies do not, and hence the latter do not suffice to place a person within the formal labor force. Though seemingly comprehensive, in the context of this study, these lists only scratched the surface of what it means to "look for work." They left no room to account for the motivations and rationales behind people's job searching activities, which I came to understand as a central feature of how people self-categorized as discouraged workers.

For example, a woman in her mid-20s with a background in primary education said she had given up looking for work after failing to secure a full-time teaching position. She described her sporadic substitute teaching and her frustration with the local job market, where her college degree did not even increase her chances for a job at a movie rental store. She discussed an international opportunity to teach English as one of the positions she uncovered in her search for work, at which point I expressed concerns that she did not fall

squarely within the discouraged worker category. As someone still looking for work, I explained, the CPS would consider her *unemployed* rather than *not in the labor force*. She protested, arguing that her job hunting was a tactic to "avoid depression" and do something other than "watch 'The Young and the Restless,' or sleep," and she suggested that "if I'm so discouraged that I'm thinking of leaving the country," she was clearly outside the formal labor force. In a similar vein, a middle-aged man who had only been able to find informal contracting jobs for the past two years said the only reason he had not stopped his search for work was "because of the good Lord. Don't get me wrong, some days I just feel like giving up. You've got to have something like faith." He found no utility in local temporary employment agencies, which never seemed to match his skills (years of contracting experience but no GED or formal education) with appropriate jobs. Although he was open to word-of-mouth opportunities and occasionally visited building sites to discuss jobs with foremen, his job seeking activities became stagnant because "when you go to the same places five times and they say no, no, no," it was financially inefficient to waste expensive gasoline without potential economic gain. Neither of these individuals fit the formal classification of discouraged workers, yet their rationales for their job searches signified less attachment to the formal labor force than their label of *unemployed* would suggest.

Likewise, a former veterinary technician told me that she sent five résumés every Monday because she wanted to "feel productive." She was unable to perform a more thorough job search because she could not afford gasoline for trips to local businesses. She was willing and available to work, but she did not think she could find a job given that 18 months of job searching had yielded no options. Although her résumé routine fell under the

"active" job search strategies of *unemployed* people, she described it relative to her sense of self more than its potential to produce formal employment.

As a more general example, I spent hours at the ESC watching people cycle through the lobby. A basic bulletin board that hung on the wall adjacent to the reception desk contained formal and informal job postings for the area, and nearly everyone stopped to look for signs of hope in new postings. However, what appeared to the casual observer to be "looking for work" would only be officially counted as such if those people followed up on postings via telephone, the Internet, or a personal visit to the employment site. Even if none of the available jobs fit people's qualifications, merely looking at the crinkled papers tacked to the board would have been insufficient to move workers from a status of *not in the labor force* to *unemployment*.

Experiences with each of my five key consultants continued to problematize the "active/passive" job search distinction and the larger classification of discouraged workers. Officially, Rose looked for two jobs per week in order to maintain her unemployment insurance; however, she revealed in our conversations that she simply went through the phonebook and wrote down the names and numbers of local companies to fulfill her job search requirement. "They don't even keep the papers to check up on whether you do it," she said.

> Most places, if you put down 'not hiring' [the ESC] won't call them because if you go in person and ask and [the business is] not hiring, and you put that down, [the Employment Securities Commission] don't know who's been in there to ask because there's been so many people *asking* for work.

Rose did not see much point in extending her job search when she would soon be enrolled in CNA training; unless a good job that paid significantly more than her unemployment benefits

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became available, she said, she saw no reason to look more actively for work in the short time before her classes started.

Similarly, Cindy and Jeanette both started and stopped looking for work in the time that I knew them, exemplifying the cycle in and out of the labor force evidenced by the literature on discouraged workers (cf. Benati, 2001; Bjørnstad, 2005; Schweitzer & Smith, 1974). One morning, Cindy strode into the lobby of Christians' Care and came directly toward me, beaming with excitement. She had just come from the ESC, where she had discovered 10 job postings for secretarial work. Infused with hope that she might get a job, she updated and printed out her résumé, intent on exploring those opportunities. Cindy said,

> The motivation's back. It's like, wow, I've got 10 chances here. What are the odds that I can't get one of these jobs? 10 chances. . . I went and actually tried today. . . if there was nothing on that computer, I would probably not be talking to you right now. I'd probably say, "Not today, not a good mood, bad day today, I can't find anything out there, can't we just do this some other time?". . . But that's not the case. I did find something. I'm *happy*. And there's hope, there's this sparkle of hope. And as long as I've got the light at the end of the tunnel, as long as I can still see a little bit of light, I'm ok.

Her son's layoff at the factory prompted Cindy to look for work, but his re-hiring halted her efforts just as quickly as his firing had ignited them. Cindy never followed up on any of the postings she had found, leaving her own description of her renewed job search at odds with the official classification of her activities as "passive" efforts. In her eyes, she had looked for work merely by printing out the job postings; yet by CPS standards, she never left the land of those *not in the labor force*.

In much the same manner, Jeanette came to spend a great deal of time at home looking for jobs on the Internet. When I first met her, she admitted that she "had quit. I tried and tried, 280-some résumés, turned down, turned down, turned down, overqualified. I quit. Laid here on my couch." After her suicide attempt, Jeanette continued to postpone her job

search while she navigated the many hours of therapy required for mental health treatment. The donation of a computer from Christians' Care made looking for work more feasible for Jeanette, whose self-described agoraphobia also impeded her activities outside her home. She searched job postings but mostly encountered jobs for which she had already applied, at which point she stopped her search for the day with no tangible results for her efforts. She, too, said she was looking for work, but her activities were mostly "passive" according to CPS definitions.

As the only one of my key consultants who never truly stopped looking for work, Allen appeared to eschew being labeled a discouraged worker. In truth, I initially became interested in Allen not because he formally fit the definition of a discouraged worker but because he seemed to be at great risk of becoming one. According to the "active/passive" CPS descriptors, Allen's activities made him *unemployed* rather than *not in the labor force*, a classification illuminated in his statements about looking for work. He said, "If you're determined to get a job, then sooner or later it'll happen. You can't just say, 'Oh well, I'm going to give up because I haven't gotten one yet.' You've just got to keep looking." Allen would go through the phone book and call local businesses to see where he could submit a job application. For months, even though every place he called was not hiring, he would set out on foot three to four times per week to fill out applications. Despite the futility of being one in a host of on-file candidates, Allen walked up to four hours one-way to submit job applications, often determining his route according to personal final destinations such as his fiancée's house. While there was no mistaking the "active" nature of Allen's search as I explain in Chapter 7, "looking for work" had multiple functions and often little probability of

success for him, prompting his eventual admission that he was "about close" to joining the official ranks of discouraged workers.

Margie was a different sort of outlier in relation to the discouraged worker definition. Occupying a liminal economic space due to her AmeriCorps position, Margie did not fall under the BLS *not in the labor force* category. Her decision to stop looking for formal employment after her downsizing was based on two factors: her belief that she could not find a job in banking in the 2009 recession, and her opportunity to develop new professional skills through volunteer work at a community advocacy agency. That agency secured AmeriCorps funding for Margie's work, which paid her a small taxable stipend (not counted as income) but left her below the poverty line. Although Margie did not actively look for work in the time that I knew her, her decision to stop looking for formal employment fell squarely within the official parameters for discouraged workers.

Each of these cases illuminates difficulties with basing the definition of discouraged workers on "active" and "passive" job search strategies. Because the CPS is interview-based, it is important to predict potential discord between the way people answer questions and the way answers will be categorized upon analysis. In the above examples, people may have said, "Yes, I'm looking for work" before describing their strategies, not knowing that official definitions would classify them as *not* looking for work. In addition, I further came to understand that *meanings* related to looking for work were intimately tied to cultural and social factors in Horizon Mills. To state whether a person was looking or not looking for work invoked the difference between "giving up" and "quitting" in the cultural milieu of rural North Carolina. As one community official put it, I "opened an interesting can of

worms" in seeking to unpack this difference, "rais[ing] an issue that's never crossed my [the

official's] mind, apparently not a lot of others', either."

The difference between "giving up" and "quitting": Pride, place, and labor force status

As I became more concerned about the official definition of discouraged workers,

my focus began to shift from recruiting appropriate consultants to merely *locating* them.

Using seven of the CPS questions related to discouraged workers, I created anonymous

questionnaires and left them in the lobbies of the ESC and Christians' Care for willing clients

to complete. I believed that surveying the responses would give me a better idea of whether I

was seeking discouraged workers in appropriate settings. Out of 116 responses over four

weeks, only 20 answered 'no' to the question "Are you currently looking for work?"; of

those 20 responses, 14 cited disability, pregnancy, or school as the main reason they were not

looking for work, placing them outside the discouraged worker category. I found this limited

response rate surprising, given what I had been told while investigating Horizon Mills as a

potential study site. However, when I sought advice about this dilemma, community contacts

contextualized this response rate within Horizon Mills' larger situation.

The manager at the ESC *laughed* at me when I described my difficulties with the

questionnaire, stating that the "loaded" first question, "Are you currently looking for work?"

would not encourage people to answer the survey. He admitted that he personally knew

people who fit the criteria but that "getting them to admit it is impossible." I began the study

knowing that unemployment has borne social and cultural stigma since the industrialization

of the U.S. (cf. Ashton, 1996; Badger, 2002; Brock, 1988). I believed that the anonymity of

my informal CPS-based questionnaires might negate any associated social stigma. Yet I

came to understand that a person's admission to not looking for work entailed practical and cultural concerns indicative of their mentality as a citizen in this North Carolina region.

From the practical perspective of social service recipients, a person's admission that he was not looking for work made him vulnerable to losing unemployment benefits. More than five people who inquired about participating in my study bluntly stated their fear that they would lose their unemployment benefits if they said they were not looking for work. During my months in Horizon Mills, I spent several days in the lobbies of the ESC and the Department of Social Services (DSS) and I came to understand this fear. Even though I was a student researcher who promised confidentiality and protection for respondents, talking to me in the context of service agencies was weighed against the risk of losing hard won benefits. Applying for benefits was an arduous process that entailed pages upon pages of privacy-shattering paperwork. People waiting for services were subject to the watchful (and often judgmental) eyes of agency staff members. At the DSS, staff members were seated behind a layer of bulletproof glass, flipping a switch when they needed—or wanted—to hear from people on the other side of the window. There was no glass at the ESC, but services there were even more directly tied to unemployment status than at the DSS, thus entailing greater personal risk relative to study participation. Even at Christians' Care, where assistance decisions were not tied to governmental stipulations or funding, people had to comport themselves in such a way as to appear worthy of services during their interviews with staff members. Saying they were not looking for work was tantamount to not trying to help themselves out of their situations.

While people were reluctant to be *not in the labor force* because of service receipt concerns, they also had to contend with the especially prominent stigma of being a non-

worker in a working town. The idea of needing to present oneself as worthy of help

illuminates the cultural situation that affected people's self-definition as discouraged

workers. Due to its Quaker origins, pride in being a worker was built into the very fabric of

Horizon Mills (according to several long-time community leaders and residents), a factor that

I did not fully grasp as someone from the "Democratic cesspool" of the big city (per a local

newsperson). As a member of the Chamber of Commerce said in reference to looking for

work, "giving up and quitting are two different things. You can become awfully discouraged

and give up, but that doesn't mean you're going to quit." He further explained,

> There's still a lot of pride in people, or at least the people you're trying to reach--the folks that were employed and were an asset to their family and their community; and now they're not employed and they have that void in their life.

Allen, one of my key consultants, corroborated this claim. When I asked whether there was a

difference between "giving up" and "quitting" his job search, Allen replied that "to give up is

just stopping for a little bit. Quitting means you're done for good." Allen's response made

sense in light of the cultural bedrock of the area.

> This town is built on a solid foundation. It will survive. It's going to struggle. The work ethic and the community support throughout the county has always been strong. People are just tough. It's built on a Quaker foundation (F. White, personal communication, October 21, 2009).

Similarly, as noted by the Community College President,

> One of the reasons manufacturers have come here is because this county has a *very* strong work ethic. When people come here and hire people, they always comment on the work ethic of the people. I think it's somewhat embarrassing and out of sync for people to say, in a county that holds labor in high regard, "Well, I'm not trying, I'm not looking." I think there's a sense of embarrassment about being considered a non-participant in a county that has a very high work ethic. . . you don't tell people you're not looking for work; you just tell people you've reinvested your life in other ways.

Reluctance to admit one's *not in the labor force* status thus illuminated the importance of the

worker identity that culturally structured Horizon Mills. A person could give up, become

discouraged, and believe that she could not get a job, but that did not mean she would say she had quit her search for work.

My five consultants displayed diverse relationships to Horizon Mills and its cultural foundation, and the nexus of pride and place affected each of these people differently. Margie and Jeanette had moved to the area as adults and never discussed their unemployment relative to the town's history of plentiful work. Both readily agreed that they had stopped looking for work when I first inquired about their participation in the study. They did not take pride in their admission, but their admission seemed no more laced with stigma than accounts of unemployment in other parts of the country (cf. Cottle, 2001). Margie said, "You kind of get that feeling, 'Ok, I'm able, why in the hell can't I do this? Why can't I get something out there?" Offering a more pointed portrayal of the stigma of unemployment, Jeanette confessed, "There are times that my aunt or somebody would knock on my door and I would hide. I would hide. Don't look at me, I'm worthless. If I can't support my family, I'm worthless." Margie and Jeanette felt the stigma of unemployment as individuals, but not as residents of Horizons Mills because neither one saw Horizon Mills as their true home. In conversation, both women believed they would eventually move away from the town when their situations stabilized.

Cindy, Rose, and Allen, however, all grew up in or around Horizon Mills and qualified their lack of looking by the reduced possibilities of the region's once fruitful job market. Cindy noted that

> this town has always been so good to me. Any job I wanted and went after, I got it. I *never* worried about getting a job. I could go in anywhere. I knew everybody. I always had a good work history. And now it's just been year after year after year, and it's just dragging me down.

When I asked Rose why she did not look for more than two jobs per week (what was required to receive her unemployment insurance), she answered, "There is hardly anything out there…all the jobs are going to other counties all around us, but not here." Echoing Quaker (and other Protestant) ideals about work, Allen said

> I don't like not being productive. I like doing something, keep myself motivated in a certain direction. I don't like trying to steer off from that. . . And with a job, it's like, I can do that. . . Actually, it's like having a job helps inset morals and values.

For Cindy, Rose, and Allen, their relationships to their job search status embodied their relationships with this region of North Carolina. For citizens of Horizon Mills, admitting to *not* looking for work involved a host of assertions about character and identity. In a place where people were historically "perfectly willing to be trained" to "make your widgets," such an admission left one vulnerable to practical and cultural suicide apart from the typical Western stigma surrounding unemployment. Uncovering the difference between "giving up" and "quitting" one's search for work in Horizon Mills drew further attention to issues related to the CPS estimations of discouraged workers. In the next and final section of this chapter, I will discuss the importance of understanding this distinction in relation to *finding* discouraged workers to define and count.

The "hidden" nature of discouraged workers: Effects on definition and measurement

One of my most valuable consultants was a local reporter who constantly checked the pulse of the town's employment situation. I could always count on this newsperson for a wealth of detailed but candid information about Horizon Mills and surrounding areas. Desperate and panicked about not having found any "real" discouraged workers in the first few months of my study, I asked the reporter why I failed to find people who common sense—and the economic situation—told me existed. I received a direct and simple response:

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"Maybe they don't want to be found." Both the local reporter in Horizon Mills and a national reporter who wrote about discouraged workers (M. Luo, personal communication, September 7, 2009) experienced difficulties finding discouraged workers to interview. Other leaders in the community echoed the notion of disappearance that the reporters encountered. At a meeting of local ministers representing half a dozen Christian denominations in Horizon Mills, I was told that unemployed people tended to disappear from church life despite church communities' traditions of nurturing people in times of need. One woman confirmed the ministers' observations, saying of her reduced church attendance, "I just didn't like being questioned everywhere I went. This is a small town, and I have been here a while, and I just got tired of talking about it sometimes." Jeanette, who also withdrew from church activities due to her unemployment, noted of people in her situation that

> you become recluse. You get shut down so much. . . so they tend to box themselves
> in a corner. . . These people, just like me, we disappear off the planet because half of
> us don't feel like we have any use on the planet. Can't get a job, can't support
> ourselves, so why would we be here? So they take off.

Both women's desire to disappear evoked an even stronger sentiment, captured in Cottle's (2001) tome on long-term unemployment: "You think there are clubs for unemployed people? And if there were, you think I'd join?" (p. 97). These experiences of embarrassment and isolation certainly resonated with what I had learned about the strong work ethic undergirding Horizon Mills, but purposeful disappearance only seemed to tell part of the story. I felt that my limited recruitment tactics, coupled with situational factors, were also partly to blame, but I wanted to crack the larger mystery of why discouraged workers were difficult to locate. I knew that some discouraged workers formed an intentionally "hidden" population that disappeared; eventually, I discovered that people disappeared *unintentionally* as well.

Many authorities in Horizon Mills were puzzled about how and why discouraged workers disappeared from community view. Based on his years of experience with long-term unemployment, the manager of the ESC surmised that discouraged workers

> literally disappear. . . they become nomads, going from pillar to post until they can find something. I don't know what happens to them. By the time they have gotten to the last of it, everything is almost gone anyway. So they're able to be very mobile at that point…they don't have a lot of *stuff*. Usually the ones that have a house figure something out. The ones that fall through the cracks, they're going to find family and friends. I don't know what happens to them. They make it though. Some actually come out better. Some make it. I've seen people that had nothing and one thing led to another and they got a job and they built it back again. Some don't ever make it back.

The ESC manager did not know where discouraged workers went, but he and a local sheriff both verified my observation unemployed people did not visibly congregate at any particular place in town. The sheriff conjectured that most people stayed home, and several of the clients at Christians' Care echoed that sentiment. Yet, if discouraged workers remained at home, I reasoned, their location should have been easy to pinpoint. Several social workers in the area commiserated with my problems finding and maintaining contact with potential consultants. They reassured me that they, too, experienced the enigma of disappearance with hidden populations, due mostly to the regular disconnection of their clients' phones or constant shifts in clients' places of residence. The social workers' observations revealed that elements of discouraged workers' situations outside of social stigma contributed to the hidden nature of this group.

I considered communication and housing to be basic elements of my own situation, but as I discussed in the previous chapter, I discovered that the variable nature of these situational elements were primary factors in the unintentional disappearance of my consultants (cf. Aldrich & Callanan, 2011). In my life outside Horizon Mills, cell phones and Internet access were ubiquitous, taken-for-granted aspects of daily life. Such resources were

luxuries—or unfulfilled needs—for down-and-out workers in this part of rural North

Carolina. Due to the financial flux accompanying long-term employment, many of the people

I encountered were unable to maintain reliable communication with the external world.

Identifying with my feeling that my iPhone was conspicuously incongruous in town, Margie

quipped that "you need a flip pay-as-you-go-phone to fit in here." All of my key consultants

except Margie used a pay-as-you-go phone, though each of them lost access to it at least once

over the duration of the study. For example, in eight months, Jeanette lost access to her

phone three times and moved houses once. Although she believed that "not having a phone is

crippling," she had to balance her need for a phone with other expenses such as her

medication; she said, "If it comes down between me having a phone or me having my

medicine, I've got to have my medicine." Cindy's phone was disconnected twice and she

disappeared for weeks at a time when she slipped back into old drug habits. Allen had a

phone but never had any minutes on it, and although he had access to a landline at his

relatives' house, he twice moved out of that house without my knowledge, leaving me no

means of contacting him. Rose relied on her son's cell phone for communication, but she

hesitated to use it because she did not want to deplete his minutes. Throughout the course of

my research, standard methods of communication were often unreliable—and sometimes, not

at all feasible—with these disappearing discouraged workers. As detailed in the methods

section, I developed alternate strategies of communication to accommodate this feature of

consultants' lives, but the need for those strategies raised questions about the efficacy of

surveys like the CPS for gathering information about discouraged workers.

My understandings about the meaning of "looking for work," "giving up," and

"quitting" relative to cultural values, coupled with the problematic communication and

housing conditions I observed in my key consultants' lives, led me to doubt that the CPS's large-scale survey format would be appropriate in a setting like Horizon Mills. My dissertation research overlapped with the 2010 U.S. Census, and I met with the manager of a local Census office in the final months of my research. A longtime and respected member of the Horizon Mills community, she knew the value of using local citizens for Census purposes: not only was it more cost effective (given that the government paid Census workers mileage) but it also took advantage of the trust that accompanied community membership. Although Census workers did not directly administer surveys to local people, the manager told me that the Census Bureau assumed increased response rates if neighbors rather than strangers asked people to fill out the surveys. The Bureau believed that having an "in" by virtue of community membership increased both response rate and response accuracy for the Census.

The U.S. Census Bureau also administers the CPS (2010c) and utilizes local citizens in that survey process (CPS representative, personal communication, September 9, 2010). However, using local interviewers might also amplify the stigma associated with unemployment. In a town like Horizon Mills, where anonymity is nigh impossible, survey respondents might be reticent to position themselves outside the labor force to someone raised with the same cultural emphases on being a productive worker. Even if discouraged workers had consistent phone numbers and street addresses—which many of my key consultants did not—it is unclear that an accurate picture of their lives could be obtained solely through survey methodology. My own understandings took nearly a year to develop and hinged on the cooperation and efforts of many community contacts bringing me inside the fold. Whether local or non-local interviewers seek to better understand this group, the

discord between the CPS definition of discouraged workers, situational factors that influence whether people admit to *not* looking for work, and unreliable communication and housing conditions demonstrates that representing these workers through episodic surveys is problematic.

Sociopolitical implications of keeping discouraged workers "hidden"

Although discouraged workers have received more attention in the mass media due to the recent recession (cf. Dougherty, 2009; Douthat, 2010; Luo, 2009), many researchers minimize discouraged workers' importance by emphasizing that they comprise "the smallest number of those not in the labor force" (Clark, 2010, p. 4). Yet downplaying discouraged workers' importance in the labor market—along with narrowly focusing research on their numbers and labor force status—bears the markings of an intentional sociopolitical act. Bellin and Miller (1990) argue that "the language of economists becomes the dialogue of policy and obscures the fact that hidden ideology, values, and policy choices are involved in that terminology" (p. 182). In this case, "discouraged worker" is a government-generated label, and recipients of this appellation are measured in a manner that does not appear to accommodate the uncertainty and variance inherent in their situations. Although I do not intend to compare the respective utility of survey and ethnographic methodologies, the findings discussed above illuminate flaws with sole reliance on surveys for information about discouraged workers. People in this category who do not regularly have a phone for surveyors to call or a home for surveyors to visit are truly "disappeared" (Pang, Lang, & Chiu, 2005) in that they stand little chance of discovery via the one measure that might denote their existence (e.g. the CPS).

This discord between measurement and situation keeps the count of discouraged

workers—and, by extension, unemployment—low (Barro, 1997), which may be beneficial

for governmental projections about the country's economy. It may, however, also indicate a

"regime of disappearance" in the U.S. in which discouraged workers are "marginalized or

erased by the institutional and ideological aspects of work, social welfare, and politics that

are dominant under neoliberalism" (Goode & Maskovsky, 2001). Despite being counted in

the CPS, discouraged workers are denied social recognition in their omission from the larger

unemployment picture, creating a situation where "the [discouraged worker] may no longer

believe that he or she is even a statistic, and in fact, he or she isn't" (Cottle, 2001, p. x).

Masking evidence of discouraged workers in snapshots of national economic health does a

disservice by furthering the disappearance that results from embarrassment or social stigma.

In the CPS, discouraged workers are differentiated from other *not in the labor force* persons

because their labor force attachment appears to say something about their economic and

social value. Yet if the count of discouraged workers remains artificially low due to

incongruence between measurement method and elements of discouraged workers'

situations, the economic and social value of these people is forcibly lowered as well.

Problems with the definition and measurement of discouraged workers thus indirectly affect

the value of these workers in larger U.S. society, and just like accepting the inevitability of

some level of unemployment, these definitional practices are a "matter of choice" for law and

policy makers (Erikson, 1990, p. 9). Skocpol (1990) writes that "the United States has been

profoundly reluctant both in political precept and in practice to use active governmental

measures…to promote a full employment economy with decent jobs for all who want them

(p. 197), and the same reluctance may characterize the tactics employed to count and define discouraged workers.

These findings underscore the need for more information about discouraged workers, but substantial questions about people in this group beyond their numbers remain (Buss & Redburn, 1988). Cottle (2001) explains that

> because of the frequency with which labor statistics are reported in newspapers and on television, it is only natural that many people might tend of think of unemployed people *as* statistics. . . We must honor accounts of the *experience* of long-term unemployment in the same way that traditionally we have honored hard-earned statistics on unemployment (p. 6).

As the following chapters will show, there is much more to discouraged workers' situations than their contested labor force status. They engage in a variety of non-work occupations that influence estimations of personal worth and well-being, yet their ability to engage in these occupations hinges on a variety of situational factors. Their 'disappeared' status—which results from a combination of personal choices and societal mechanisms that obscure their presence—is *itself* a barrier to occupational engagement. Discussed first in the next chapter and more fully in Chapter 8, being 'disappeared' directly impacted my key consultants' abilities to negotiate their occupational possibilities (Rudman, 2010) in their daily lives. The following chapter will explore the foundations of my five key consultants' occupations in detail, focusing on the situational elements that afforded and constrained their abilities to plan and routinely execute occupations on a daily basis.

Chapter 6. "It's Hard to Plan Your Day When You Have No Money": Routine and Occupational Possibilities

Concurrent with my efforts to define and identify discouraged workers, I found myself struggling to initiate conversations about their daily occupations. Per the requirements of my university's Institutional Review Board (and bolstered by the Deweyan mandate for flexible, non-*a priori* inquiry), I entered the field with what I thought were clear but open questions about people's daily doings. The first of these questions, "What sorts of things do you do every day instead of going to a job?" seemed (on paper) to provide a straightforward springboard for discussion about occupation. However, as I moved around the lobby of Christians' Care and asked this question of willing clients, I came to find that this query was anything but simple to answer. I was surprised to hear more initial comments about daily routine than about occupation (or, daily activity), and noted that clients often presented these comments as apologetic qualifications of their lives. Even when I acknowledged the amorphousness of their situations, many unemployed people still said, "It depends" or "I don't know, nothing" when I requested specific examples of their occupations. One woman said she only "worr[ied] about how to pay the bills and where the next bill is going to come from" (Christians' Care client), and another woman complained that "people who don't work, their lives don't work on a schedule" (Cindy). These comments suggested a need to reexamine routines as building blocks of daily occupation (Yerxa, 1990) in the context of long-term unemployment: something made people lament, "I can't even do a plan, it's like every day something else gets thrown at me" (Jeanette), and any discussion of occupation

clearly required understanding how and why people's routines became caveats for their larger situations.

This chapter details my journey toward understanding the influences on routine in my key consultants' lives. Given the prevalent mention of routine in my initial fieldwork experiences, I expected my key consultants to communicate similar sentiments about their occupational foundations. However, just as my key consultants' heterogeneity stretched the bounds of the discouraged worker definition, it also grounded diverse representations of routine. While my consultants all exemplified some degree of unemployment's negative effect on 'time structure' (cf. Haworth & Ducker, 1991), the mere absence of employment alone did not seem to render this effect. Rather, interview and Occupational Questionnaire (Smith, Kielhofner, & Watts, 1986) data suggest that my consultant's routines mirrored the contingency and uncertainty of their total situations, of which the lack of a job was only one part. In particular, consultants' relative needs to seek help from social service agencies, local ministries, friends, and relatives appeared most salient to the stability or instability of their routines, yet these needs were not uniformly conveyed across the data.

In the next pages, I explain how the need for help secondary to long-term unemployment revealed and intensified my consultants' problems with establishing routines. Couched within scholarly understandings about routine, the divergence in my data sources seemed to evidence a process of active negotiation, whereby different representations of routine manifested consultants' attempts to reconcile actual and possible structures for their daily occupations. The contingency of this negotiation seemed to foster an in-flux foundation for occupational possibilities (Rudman, 2010), elucidating why my opening question was not as straightforward as it originally seemed. This understanding of *routine as a situational*

response provides a new perspective through which to view my key consultants' daily

occupations, which are discussed in detail in the final findings chapter.

Understandings about routine

Defined as "a customary or regular course of procedure" (Dictionary.com, 2010),

'routine' enjoys connotations of stability, calm, and control via its ability to sequence action

and structure experience. To say something is routine awards it status as a regular feature of

life, implying both acceptance and acknowledgement of its everydayness. The constancy of

routine is more often praised than condemned; it tends to be criticized only when it threatens

to stifle creativity or unnecessarily restrict opportunity. Although common synonyms for

routine suggest more negative connotations such as "daily grind" or "rat race"

(Thesaurus.com, 2011), they seem narrowly focused on "habitual activity" as a referent,

rather than the larger structuring experience with which positive connotations of routine are

concerned.

As a discipline interested in the processes and products of everyday life, occupational

science often invokes the notion of routine, yet its theorization of the concept remains

surprisingly limited. Scholarship on occupation describes routines as predictable ways of

acting that organize occupations and yield "an orderly life" (Clark, 2000, p. 128S). As

higher-order habits that make parts of experience subconscious, routines are believed to

positively influence quality of life and identity through their ability to structure daily

experience (Clark, 2000; Garrison, 2002). The construction and maintenance of routines in

daily life often goes unquestioned by scholars of occupation (Gallimore & Lopez, 2007)

because routines primarily exist below symbolic levels of meaning (Fiese, 2007); as a result,

the coordinated rhythms established by routines appear commonplace, and seem to justify a view of routine as an expected and 'normal' feature of life.

However, in the Deweyan literature that increasingly informs scholarship on occupation, the term 'routine' often describes a less-than-desirable type of action or experience. For instance, Dewey (1938/2008) distinguished between 'routine' and 'intelligent' activity and wrote of the problems associated with the 'routine consciousness' of the public (Dewey, 1927). As a whole, Dewey's writings evidence a specific colloquial usage of 'routine,' one that emphasized rote and repetition (Dewey, 1922/2008) rather than helpful meta-habit. A cursory glance at his works suggests disdain for the very everydayness of routine that the scholarship on occupation celebrates; yet, upon closer examination, Dewey's condemnations do not seem to attack the idea of routine itself, but rather the lack of thought that is often attributed to it. He wrote that "routine habits are unthinking habits…habits that possess us instead of our possessing them" (Dewey, 1916/2003, p. 54). When Dewey (1887/2003) linked routine and habit, he described the former as a "fossilized" version of the latter, and suggested that although a tendency toward routine was a "natural" human trait, it held the potential to jeopardize reflective thought and growth (Dewey, 1918/2003). While he viewed unconsidered routine behavior as dangerous, Dewey (1935/2003) also claimed that routine "provides a constant basis for liberation" (p. 62) if it fosters more than a merely mechanical response. To my knowledge, Dewey never directly discussed the day-to-day structuring effected by routine. Instead, he seemed to take two paths, either employing the term as a general qualifier of experience, or specifically differentiating between routine (unthinking) and non-routine (thought-influenced) habit or behavior (cf. Dewey, 1922/2008). However, a positive perspective on having *a* routine—as opposed to something *being* or

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becoming routine—does not seem anathema to Dewey's philosophy. In fact, if viewed less as a passive response pattern and more as a consciously mediated rhythm of living, routines seem worthy of the praise that Dewey bestowed upon habit.

As discussed previously, Dewey defined habits as predispositions toward modes of response that help humans coordinate with their situations (Cutchin, Aldrich, Bailliard, & Coppola, 2008). He suggested that "each habit demands appropriate conditions for its exercise and when habits are numerous and complex, as with the human organism, to find these conditions involves search and experimentation" (Dewey, 1925/2000, p. 281). Dewey (1922/2008) described habit as the communion of intelligence and behavior, and routine as the undesirable separation of action from thought; however, Dewey's description seems less applicable to a view of routine as a habit in its own right (rather than as a qualifier of habit). While responding to experience in a routine way surely entails *some* unreflective or automatic operation, there is no reason why routines themselves cannot be open to modification through inquiry process. Dependent as they are on habits (which hinge on the organic unity of thought and action), routines only represent reflexive and thoughtless "modes of response" if their everydayness becomes conflated with implicit moral acceptance. Stated otherwise, assuming that the everydayness of routines implies that they are *only* thoughtless reflexive ways of acting ignores the influence of the situations in which routines occur. Instead, it seems reasonable that, as a "mode of response," routines only stay automatic when underlying person-environment coordination preserves the utility of their structure. When elements of a situation (such as the economy) change, why would routines remain exempt from the dysfunctional coordination that stimulates habit change (Kestenbaum, 1977)? Moreover, is it not probable that dysfunctional routines themselves

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stimulate tension and necessitate reflective reconstruction of a situation (Fesmire, 2003)? The problem, then, seems to be that routines are *perceived* as unthinking ways of acting, but little justification for that perception is available in Dewey's writings.

Despite its negative references to routine, Dewey's work actually defends a reconceptualization of routine as an active situational response. His many references to rhythm in his writings are particularly demonstrative of this fact. He believed that the rhythm of nature is "an operation through which material effects its own culmination in experience," and that "the larger rhythms of nature are so bound up with the conditions of even elementary human subsistence that they cannot have escaped the notice of man" (Dewey, 1934, p. 152). Dewey spoke of experience in terms of a rhythm of living, much the same way that scholars have conceptualized routine; yet he described an artful negotiation of situational elements as central to the establishment and maintenance of this rhythm. Similarly, conceiving of routines as "a compromise between what is desirable and what is practical, given the surrounding ecology" (Gallimore & Lopez, 2002, p. 72S) avoids association with the automaton-type behavior that Dewey denounced. It maintains routine's habitual nature while also recognizing routine's part in the rhythm of experience.

In introducing this chapter, I discussed the frequency with which under- and unemployed Horizon Mills residents spoke of their uncertain daily schedules. The incidence of those comments suggested that, despite being expected features of daily life, routines and their structuring benefits were not taken-for-granted or devoid of reflective consideration in the stream of experience. In the next section, I discuss both qualitative and quantitative data about the relationship of long-term unemployment and my key consultants' daily routines. These data illustrate that routines are not foregone or thoughtless "modes of response"

because they owe their existence to the process of person-environment coordination. Challenging the notion that routines merely overlay people's days, this data prompts reconsideration of the relationship between occupation and routine. While Clark (2000) originally described occupation as a building block of daily routines, the slightly expanded Deweyan perspective asserted here advocates viewing routine as foundational rhythms of occupational possibilities (Rudman, 2010) that stem from the habitual transaction of humans and their environments.

Long-term unemployment and routine

Long-term unemployment's disruption of daily life is well documented in the sociological and anthropological literature (cf. Cottle, 2001; Jahoda, Lazarsfeld, & Zeisel, 1971/2002). An extended absence of paid employment often entails a reduction in social approval because of work's centrality to American values and culture (Ashton, 1986; Badger, 2002; Brock, 1998). Beyond its social detriments and its handicapping influence on future employment (Ydstie, 2010), long-term unemployment creates an occupational vacuum that alters the structure of people's days (Haworth & Ducker, 1991). Without external demands that bring them to a work site for a specified length of time, unemployed people are left to chart a different course through their daily experiences. Internet searches about discouraged workers and other out-of-work individuals unearth many perceptions about the "free time" made available by unemployment (cf. Reddit.com, 2010). Scholarly literature (cf. Pettifer, 1993; Unruh, 2004) acknowledges the inappropriateness of equating non-work time with leisure, and often blames the unstructured nature of unemployment on the lack of activities that provide self-efficacy and control (cf. Creed & Watson, 2003; Evans & Haworth, 1991). What appears to go unconsidered in the literature, however, is a focus on how the practical

accommodation of unemployment—in particular, compensating for a lack of income—affects the larger structure of unemployed people's experiences. Scholarship on informal and social economic activities (cf. Halperin, 1990) provide some insight into the structure of unemployed people's lives, and literature on the 'working poor' (cf. Ehrenreich, 2001; Newman 1999) illuminates the balancing act required to 'make ends meet.' Yet the relation of these understandings to *routine* as a foundation for what people do, especially with respect to discouraged workers, needs further development. Both quantitative and qualitative data from my study justify the importance of developing this understanding.

Quantitative data

The Occupational Questionnaire (Smith, Kielhofner, & Watts, 1980) served as one tool for gathering data about my consultants' daily routines. I asked my consultants to complete the Occupational Questionnaire at two points during the study: once during our first formal meeting, and again after at least two months of involvement in the project. I originally regarded the instrument as an entrée for discussing specific occupations; however, in light of comments about the amoebic daily structure of long-term unemployment, I came to view these instruments as a window into consultants' larger patterns of behavior. Because the Occupational Questionnaire was designed in part to show relationships between activity patterns and life satisfaction, I took its average scores to communicate something about respondents' view of their overall routines. In contrast to time diaries that ask about *specific* days, the Occupational Questionnaire seeks information about a *typical* day, a focus that seems to privilege information about regular patterns of behavior. With the exception of Jeanette, whose first Occupational Questionnaire contained many blank spaces, each consultant completely filled the Occupational Questionnaire with activities such as sleeping,

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grooming, meal preparation, watching television, and familial responsibilities. Table 6 shows

each consultant's ratings of his/her performance, importance, and enjoyment of these typical

daily activities, based on average scores across two Occupational Questionnaire forms. Table

6 includes both numeric and written values for the ratings. To obtain these ratings, I summed

all scores from each category and divided those sums by the total number of scores in each

category. I then rounded the final ratings to the next highest whole number as appropriate.

Table 6. Occupational Questionnaire average activity ratings by consultant (N=5)

Consultant	Average rating of performance		Average rating of importance		Average rating of enjoyment	
	Time 1	Time 2	Time 1	Time 2	Time 1	Time 2
Jeanette	3 (about average) *gaps	3 (about average)	2 (important) *gaps	2 (important)	3 (neither like nor dislike it) *gaps	3 (neither like nor dislike it)
Rose	2 (well)	3 (about average)	2 (important)	4 (rather not do it)	2 (like it)	3 (neither like nor dislike it)
Cindy	2 (well)	2 (well)	3 (take it or leave it)	2 (important)	2 (like it)	2 (like it)
Margie	3 (about average)	3 (about average)	3 (take it or leave it)	2 (important)	3 (neither like nor dislike it)	2 (like it)
Allen	2 (well)	2 (well)	2 (important)	2 (important)	3 (neither like nor dislike)	2 (like it)

Given that possible ratings included activities being done 'very poorly,' seen as a 'total waste of time,' or 'strongly disliked,' the above responses suggested that consultants did not view their daily round of occupations negatively. Consultants did not express high levels of dissatisfaction, nor list occupational types that fell outside expected norms, given their particular situations. (The expectations surrounding each consultant's occupations will be addressed more fully in the next chapter.) The correspondence between consultants' activities (such as sleeping or eating) and the time of day the activities were performed did not greatly differ from the routines of formally employed people (cf. Cox, Carter, Quealy, & Schoenfeld, 2009), with the exception of time spent watching television. Moreover, a majority of my consultants' ratings actually became more positive between their first and second Occupational Questionnaires, which suggests an increased level of satisfaction with their shape of their 'typical' days as their separation from the formal labor force persisted.

Upon first review, my consultants' Occupational Questionnaires did not seem to evoke the uncertainty or frustration that I encountered in people's initial comments about their daily routines. The completeness of consultants' responses and their non-negative ratings also suggested that consultants did not struggle to structure their days. Although my consultants grappled with defining a 'typical' day when completing the Occupational Questionnaire, their questions and comments on that topic—such as "Well, each day is different" or "Do *you* have a typical day?"—did not seem to indicate any problems unique to their situations as discouraged workers. Despite their non-negative perceptions of the activities that structured their 'typical' days, my key consultants' verbal comments told a different story about the structure of their lives. Similar to studies that evidence dissatisfaction with daily planning due to long-term unemployment (cf. Havitz, Morden, &

Samdahl, 2004), my consultants' comments illuminated perspectives of their days that the

Occupational Questionnaire seemed unable to answer. A closer look at qualitative data

(including interview transcripts and fieldnotes) for each key consultant revealed that

processes of negotiation hid beneath consultants' seemingly simple quantitative

representations of their daily routines.

Qualitative data, and comparison to quantitative data

Jeanette said of her daily routine, "Basically, my days are dictated by how far in

overdraft I am by Monday." Jeanette's unemployment insurance did not cover her family's

financial needs, and she often sought additional assistance with food or bills at Christians'

Care or the local Salvation Army. She complained that she could not "do much of anything"

until her unemployment insurance was deposited in her bank account, an event which

usually—but not always—happened on Monday morning at 11 o'clock. She explained:

"Mondays, when unemployment [insurance] hits, that's when I pay what I can pay and get

what few groceries I can…then usually by Wednesdays, I'll have to go to Christians' Care or

somewhere to get my groceries." She selected resources for food based on how recently she

had visited a particular food pantry, accommodating restrictions that such services enacted to

extend their waning resources. Jeanette's ability to endure long wait times at social service

agencies also influenced when and whether she asked for help. Jeanette reasoned that, "When

you've only got from 10[a. m.] to 1[p. m.] as a window to get there, you never know what

it's going to be like. . .10 to 1 might just be the waiting period." When I asked Jeanette

whether or not she was able to plan her days, she replied that she only engaged in "attempted

planning. It's more anxiety than planning. It doesn't take me long to figure out there's no

way." Jeanette's inability to plan due to her need to access and maintain outreach services made her feel like she was living a "wasted life" because "nothing is under my control."

Despite the centrality of seeking social services in her daily schedule, Jeanette did not list her access to these resources on either of her Occupational Questionnaires. Sparsely filled, her first Occupational Questionnaire evidenced a glaring lack of routine; in retrospect, she described the holes in her schedule as the result of "lay[ing] around on the couch on my behind feeling sorry for myself." Her second Occupational Questionnaire contained fewer gaps due to the psychological therapy sessions that followed her suicide attempt, yet even this later snapshot of her 'typical' day contained two hours labeled "N/A, nothing" for the "wasted time" between Jeanette's childcare duties and her therapy sessions. Per her Occupational Questionnaire ratings (see Table 6), Jeanette felt she performed her daily activities with average proficiency and viewed them as important, but overall she rated her daily activities as 'take it or leave it' experiences. Less than one-third of her ratings invoked extremely negative evaluations, which painted an overall picture of her days that omitted the uncertainty she described relative to her reliance on social services.

Rose's also described her daily routines relative to her need for externally sustaining resources. After preparing breakfast and sending her daughter to school, she and her husband prioritized their trip to Christians' Care in their daily agenda. As with many others, Rose often lined up outside the ministry an hour before it opened to minimize the often-long wait time. She only included her trip to Christians' Care on her Occupational Questionnaire after I asked how it fit into her day, and noted that she only went to the agency on an as-needed basis. When she did patronize Christians' Care, Rose structured the rest of her day around the time she emerged from the ministry and how long it then took to retrieve her unemployment

insurance, which she looked for in her bank account every Tuesday at noon. The amount of money left after paying bills determined the rest of Rose's day: if she had no money remaining, her day was often filled with watching hours of television or visiting with neighbors, evidence of her efforts to conserve precious fuel resources. Alternatively, if Rose had money left over, she would use it to purchase "washing powder" or other household necessities, and occasionally she spent a few dollars at a local Internet gaming café. Rose also spent time taking neighbors to work or babysitting her granddaughter, but those responsibilities were constantly in flux and she had difficulty fitting them into her Occupational Questionnaires. Overall, Rose spoke of her routine as "pretty boring" and she told me, "As you can see, there isn't much to do around here." Rose said she looked forward to starting CNA classes in the summer so "I won't have to sit around here and watch TV, or lay in bed and go to sleep." She said that starting classes "will make me really happy, because I'll have homework to concentrate on" instead of facing an uncertain daily schedule.

As shown in Table 6, Rose's Occupational Questionnaire ratings tended toward average and apathy, partly because she felt "I don't think I'm any better or worse than anybody else" and partly because she thought others had a similar routine. Rose's descriptions of her daily routine often centered around her lack of money. For example, when her minivan fell into disrepair, she described the rest of her day based on the negotiations needed to fix the disruptive situation: "We've got to go talk to [my husband's] father and find out if he can help give us the money to get the parts, because there's a neighbor over here who said he'll fix it for nothing." This forced her to stop her informal taxi service, and her average ratings became more negative subsequent to her decreased responsibilities, despite her verbal comments that not driving neighbors around gave her more "freedom." For Rose,

becoming accustomed to a lack of routine seemed both positive and negative, as she took her

daily uncertainty in stride but continued to wish for "more to do."

Cindy said of her situation that needing financial help determined

not just what my day looks like, but what my week looks like. . . say Social Services can't kick in our food stamps for a couple of days, then we have to go to Christians' Care or Salvation Army. It's a plan thing, you have to plan it day by day because you never know what's going to come up.

Cindy did not note her access of social services on her Occupational Questionnaires, but as

with Jeanette and Rose, it played a primary role in the structure of her days. For example,

Cindy recounted that

the biggest thing I had to do yesterday was go to Social Services. I *had* to do that. I had to reapply for food stamps, and thank goodness they hadn't cut me off yet, it was just a re-certification instead of having to reapply. So I had to do that and get a few groceries, with the help of my boyfriend. . . Thank god Salvation Army is going to give me some food and Christians' Care is going to give me some food, and [my son] gets his paycheck tomorrow, so we should be good. . . And it really does help to have those friends around, because they go, "Oh I didn't know you didn't have this, here" or "You're out of toilet paper? Here." See, if I say 'no' to these people, then, you know, I'm alone.

Cindy repeatedly mentioned the uncertainty of her daily routine and its "stressful" nature.

While seemingly resigned to the fact that "things come up in this lifestyle" of long-term

unemployment, Cindy spoke of her unpredictable routine in a negative manner. Although she

did not receive unemployment insurance, the social network upon which she relied to sustain

her life hailed from her past drug addiction, which seemingly augmented the uncertainty of

her days. She said,

letting go of the friends you have in that is very hard because you've grown to be very close. A lot of times they will call and need something for themselves. . . it's like, "Well, can you help me with money, can you take me somewhere?". . . I mean, they know I'm not working, and they know it's hard for me to say 'no.'

As a matter of course, Cindy left "squeak room" in her schedule to accommodate "who calls, and what they need," never knowing who would appear to make requests of her. She did not want to alienate her social contacts because doing so might potentially decrease her own receipt of help. As a result, Cindy said, "I don't plan where I'm at, I wake up every morning going, 'Okay, what do I need to do today?'" which confirms Collins' (1995) conclusion that "social networks are an essential tool in piecing together a livelihood" (p. 44). Cindy's schedule also depended on her son's factory work, as he was the sole source of income for the household and "if I can't get back in time to get him to work, then he's out of a job." Thus, Cindy said, "Every single time I plan, nothing goes my way. . . you're just at the whim of whatever is available and what you have to do without. . . you have to plan it day by day because you never know what's going to come up."

Although her Occupational Questionnaires showed no blank spaces, Cindy said "it's really kind of hard to fill that thing out" because "nobody's day is on a specific schedule." Cindy's careful negotiations of others' needs was not represented on her Occupational Questionnaires, and in fact the jam-packed appearance of her forms and the positive ratings they contained seemed somewhat at odds with her negative description of her daily uncertainty. Neither did the Occupational Questionnaires reflect her other comments about "staying busy," being "bored" or "stressed," or needing to find ways to "fill" her time.

Despite a financial cushion from her previous career in banking, Margie also needed an array of social services to maintain her family's survival. She said, "It's very time consuming dealing with DSS, food stamps, medical, unemployment. I would say that if I could put it in concrete numbers, monthly, I would estimate it's about 15 hours." Thanks to her understanding volunteer supervisor, Margie was able to set aside one day each month to

maintain her eligibility for social services. These efforts were not listed on either of her

Occupational Questionnaires, and they did not often enter into our conversations, which

suggests that they exerted less influence on her daily routines than in the cases of Jeanette,

Rose, and Cindy. Margie's daily schedule largely revolved around her full-time volunteer

and parental duties. She knew that she was not a "typical" unemployed person because her

volunteering activities kept her "still working in a sense," but she said that a "what if" quality

still colored her daily routines. She did not plan far ahead because she never knew what

financial decisions she would encounter in her daily doings, yet Margie spoke of her

financial instability in a positive manner. She described herself as more "creative" *because* of

her unemployment, noting that her "new frugality" and need to view everything as

"emergency funds" made her realize that "money's not everything." Margie also believed

that "whenever I've needed money, it's appeared. . . I do worry, but I don't let it consume

me, and it's amazing how when I stretch the faith that it appears." Margie spoke of her

situation as helping reframe her lifestyle away from "keeping up with the Joneses." She said

her unemployment was actually filled with *less* urgency than her work in banking, citing for

example that she did not need to "schedule 'me' time" just to get a few minutes of

unstructured experience. Feeling that for "the last 15 years I've been on a treadmill, like a

hamster," she felt "blessed" apart from the stresses and uncertainties caused by her financial

situation.

Surprisingly, Margie's Occupational Questionnaire ratings (see Table 6) suggest that

her days were characterized by more indifference than other consultants' 'typical' days, even

though Margie's comments about uncertainty were much more positive than those of others.

As with Jeanette, Rose, and Cindy—whose days seemed more anchored to their need for

financial assistance—Margie's comments evidenced a process of negotiation surrounding her need to make ends meet. Yet, the structure and allowances provided by her volunteer work, coupled with her relief to stop maintaining a wealthy lifestyle, Margie seemed more certain of her daily routines. In turn, she displayed more confidence than other consultants when completing the Occupational Questionnaire, although some discord remained between the routines evidenced by this instrument and the negotiations Margie discussed in relation to them.

In contrast to my other consultants, Allen did not need to access any social services because he enjoyed sustaining family financial support. Forced to live in the country with the relatives who supported him and lacking possession of a driver's license, however, Allen had to rely on being driven around by his best friend and his own two legs for activities outside his home. He never knew when his friend (who was employed) might arrive to take him out for lunch or job-hunting, and Allen spent hours walking to, from, and around town as a result. Out of sheer will, Allen worked to impose as much of a routine on his life as possible, noting that "in order for me to settle down…I need a stable structure and a stable environment." He credited his best friend with increasing that structure by giving him rides and helping Allen pass the time during his evening curfew hours. Because Allen did not *need* to support himself or others—his relatives covered costs related to his housing and necessities—and he did not have immediate deadline for his legal fees, Allen's days were less determined by financial sufficiency than other consultants' days. The friends and family upon whom Allen depended were more reliable than Cindy's, and decreased rather than increased the uncertainty of his days because they made more activity choices available to him. With a little help from his friends, Allen was more able to look for work, socialize, and

do things other than watching television, playing video games, or surfing the Internet from the confines of his home. On the whole, Allen's average Occupational Questionnaire ratings reflected a fairly stable life filled with a round of occupations that he viewed as important (see Table 6).

Allen's decreased financial concerns and lack of responsibility for others' welfare made his daily structure mostly a matter of personal choice. As opposed to the other consultants—whose roles as primary caregivers further heightened their need to secure financial resources—Allen enjoyed the benefits of embracing or reducing the uncertainty of his daily routines as he saw fit. More than Jeanette, Rose, Cindy, or even Margie, Allen's verbal descriptions of his days aligned fairly well with the illustration offered through the Occupational Questionnaire. In the next section, I suggest that this alignment evidenced a reduced quality of uncertainty and increased ability to negotiate situational elements, which justifies a view of routines as actively-constructed (rather than passively donned) rhythms in discouraged workers' days.

Representing routines as negotiations

Despite hailing from a common origin of long-term unemployment, my five key consultants evidenced different quantitative and qualitative representations of routines in their lives. Often related to ideas about control, planning, and predictability, these representations suggest the need for a subtle but crucial change in scholarly perspectives of routine. Rather than viewing routines as unconsidered structures that emerge from people's daily round of occupations (cf. Clark, 2000), these data suggest that routines are more appropriately construed as negotiated responses that evidence people's abilities to coordinate with their situations. As demonstrated above, simply looking at my key consultants'

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Occupational Questionnaires would not have provided sufficient understandings of their daily routines. Jeanette, Rose, and Cindy regularly navigated uncertain social service resources and accommodated the needs of friends and family members, and their balancing acts increased their awareness of their situational uncertainty and their ever-changing (or absent) routines. In contrast, Margie and Allen communicated more certain routines and seemed to more easily coordinate with their situations, thanks to the helpful structures provided by volunteering and a lack of financial worry, respectively. My participant observations with each of these consultants were crucial to understanding routines as considered products of people's situational negotiation. Through watching people access resources and discuss the financial issues related to unemployment, I discovered that having a 'typical' day rested upon more than the presence or absence of job-related expectations; in short, I found that it really was "hard to plan your day when you have no money."

Spending the better part of one day sitting next to Jeanette on her couch, I came to understand how her lack of money created an abundance of "hopeless sitting moments" and an experience mostly devoid of routine. With each canceled meeting due to last-minute requests from friends, I understood that Cindy's need for support made her unable to structure her larger experience. Driving with Rose as she collected her food donation, purchased household items, and patronized the Internet café, I was struck by how she approached her uncertain schedule as 'normal,' especially in light of her constant comments about financial insecurity. Watching the predictability that accompanied Margie's volunteering illuminated what the other consultants' situations might be missing: the financial stability to engage in an occupation that externally structured their days. Canvassing the streets of Allen's past, present, and future on one of his walks into town, I realized the

freedom and certainty that accompanied his lack of need for external financial supports.

Thus, more than the structure provided by particular occupations, my consultants' days

seemed fundamentally moderated by their levels of financial sufficiency, a finding supported

by Havitz, Morden, & Samdahl (2004). More than a product of each consultant's net worth,

however, the influence of money on routine behavior seemed to stem from the *process* of

achieving economic stability. Unpredictable wait times for food donations, utility assistance,

unemployment insurance verifications, and other people meant that uncertainty became an

overriding consideration in consultants' situations; imperative to their (and their respective

families') continued survival, the need for these resources may have forced my consultants to

mold their routines around the inevitability of uncertainty that accompanied their lack of

income. Thus, it was not only consultants' individual daily rhythms but also situational

rhythms that influenced their occupational engagements, supporting a view of their organic

unity with their environments.

The literature suggests many reasons why processes of negotiation were more or less

apparent across my data sources. While consultants' qualitative comments may have

evidenced an unrealistic "psychology of victimization" related to time (as is common in

time-use research in American culture) (Robinson & Godbey, 1995), they may also illustrate

a response bias wherein consultants forced their lives to fit the structure outlined by the

Occupational Questionnaire. In asking about a 'typical' day, the instrument's wording might

have elicited more generic rather than specific responses, and its restricted options for

categorizing and ranking occupations may have imposed a particular cultural frame that

excluded a variety of processes and occupations (Hammell, 2009). The difference between

the stability of the Occupational Questionnaire ratings and the instability communicated in

consultants' comments may also suggest a divergence between *perceived* and *actual* time use (Robinson & Godbey, 1996; 2005). Although the Occupational Questionnaire asks about a 'typical' rather than a specific day, it may still invite memory recall problems that diminish the lack of routine that consultants verbalized with such emotion. Alternatively, the difference between quantitative and qualitative data may suggest that the *perception* of absent routine is a larger determinant of behavior than the *actuality* of absent routine (Berry, 1990), or indicate that consultants used the Occupational Questionnaire to represent more ideal versions of their routines than the reality conveyed through their verbal comments.

A larger consideration raised by this data, however, relates to the connotations of routine and the methods of acquiring knowledge about experience. As discussed at the beginning of this chapter, routine connotes control, constancy, and everydayness, and in the context of unemployment, engages cultural expectations about what one's days *ought* to look like. The common conflation of the lack of employment with an increase in leisure time suggests that mainstream society thoughtlessly asks of unemployed people, "What else have they got to do?" This question surfaced repeatedly in my participant observation at Christians' Care, most often in response to clients' complaints about the long and uncertain waiting process that preceded their receipt of services. This question suggests a view of routine as a mere by-product of the things that people do every day. However, my data suggests that my consultants *created* their routines with more or less success as they negotiated their uncertain situations. Their quantitative representations of their routines may have approximated those of employed people because the Occupational Questionnaire itself is based on a day that includes the occupation of paid employment; as a consequence, the

instrument may have prompted people to omit activities (such as seeking social services) that did not fit within the instrument's underlying framework of employment-centered norms.

However, it can be argued that my consultants' comments couched their management of unemployment-related financial instability outside the realm of their 'typical' days. While this may be true to some extent, I suggest instead that unanticipated events such as trips to Christians' Care became part of my consultants' regular routines on account of the pervasive uncertainty in their situations. The level of uncertainty expressed by each consultant seemed to bear a negative correlation to the level of routine he or she attributed to daily life. In the next and final section of this chapter, I conclude my argument that consultants' descriptions of their routines were influenced by their negotiation of their tense, problematic situations, suggesting that their awareness and construction of routines provided a foundational rhythm for their more specific occupational possibilities (Rudman, 2010).

Routine as a building block of occupational possibilities

The idea of occupational possibilities is rooted in larger discussions of justice, to which Wilcock (2006) linked unemployment in light of employment's defining place in Western society. Scholarship on occupation has developed a range of useful concepts within the justice framework (Bailliard, 2010) including the notion of occupational deprivation, which may help contextualize the occupational effects of unemployment. Whiteford (2000) defined occupational deprivation as "a state in which the opportunity to perform those occupations that have social, cultural, and personal relevance is rendered difficult if not impossible" (p. 200). The financial instability that issues from long-term unemployment undoubtedly deprives people of access to culturally relevant occupations. However, while this definition emphasizes the external restrictions that prevent access to specific

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occupations, it does not acknowledge habit and routine, which have only recently begun to receive attention in that literature (Townsend, 2007). The findings detailed above suggest that discouraged workers' routines are not solely affected by external restrictions, but instead hinge on individual people's responses to those restrictions. Akin to Cutchin's (2004a) description of "place integration," my consultants' routines seemed to balance on the complex coordination of elements in their situations. When, as in Jeanette or Cindy's situations, the process of functional coordination broke down secondary to long-term unemployment, awareness of routine as a necessary foundation for occupation was brought to the fore. Jeanette and Cindy both discussed their attempts to reconcile the uncertainty of their days with the level of routine they wanted and expected to structure their occupations. The lesser degree of concern for routine communicated by Rose, Margie, and Allen suggests a lesser need for inquiry and a higher amount of functional coordination in their situations. Based on a modified Deweyan perspective, then, the view of routine as a *response* to a situation calls for a construct that better captures the processes that ground the rhythmic unity of person and environment.

Rudman's (2010) concept of occupational possibilities frames these findings particularly well, as it emphasizes "what people take for granted as what they can and should do, and [what] occupations are supported and promoted by various aspects of the broader systems and structures in which [people's] lives are lived" (p. 55). The types of things that my consultants did every day, which will be delineated more specifically in the next chapter, rested upon their abilities to adapt and coordinate with a situation that included long-term unemployment. In much the same way that Thompson and Ellis (1990) described behavior as a product of need-resource management strategies, these discouraged workers' occupational

possibilities seemed to rest on their routines as negotiated products of their situations. The hesitation and vagueness with which my initial research question ("What sorts of things do you do every day instead of going to a job?") was repeatedly met, and the invocation of absent routines as a caveat for people's occupational descriptions, portrays routines as the foundations of what occupations people see as possible for themselves. Examples of these occupational possibilities will be discussed in the final findings chapter, but the data presented in the preceding pages shows that the seemingly simple routine of "get up, look at TV, walk up and down the streets, can't find [a job], go back home, and that's it" (older male client at Christians' Care) represents neither an assumed, thoughtless routine nor a mere effect of occupational engagement.

Quantitative and qualitative data from this study challenge conventional notions of routine and promote the need for a renewed look at how routine underlies discouraged workers' lives. My key consultants' diverse experiences evidenced different process of negotiation based on particular situational person-environment relationships. For instance, in Margie's life, long-term unemployment changed the shape of her days away from that of her previous experience, but she viewed the change positively because her financial instability did not prevent her from positively occupying her time through volunteer work. In contrast, Jeanette's inability to coordinate her situation fostered a lack of routine, a suicide attempt, and an inability to plan her daily occupations. As yet another point of contrast, Rose seemed to adapt to the uncertainty of her situation so that uncertainty supplanted routine, illustrating a response similar to that of other people experiencing long-term unemployment (L. Shaw, personal communication, October 16, 2010). Both qualitative and quantitative data evidenced Cindy's ever-changing negotiations of her situation, and she described her daily routine as at

the "whim" of others' needs. In contrast to the destabilizing nature of Cindy's social resources, Allen's family's and friend's support gave his days a feeling of increased routine. All of my key consultants used quantitative and qualitative representations of routine to justify what occupations were possible in their situations, shedding further light on why my leading question did not evoke a simple or straightforward answer.

Conclusion

The importance of viewing routine as a thoughtful, negotiated response to situations will be further grounded in the discussion section, which illuminates the problem of positioning routine in opposition to notions of crisis. The dualism created by this opposition is not only antithetical to the Deweyan perspective, but it also creates an insufficiently complex foundation for understanding the negotiation of resources that counterbalance the effects of discouraged workers' long-term unemployment. Just as the everydayness of routine cannot be taken for granted in discouraged workers' experiences, so must perspectives of crisis account for the transformation of the ordinary into the extraordinary vis-à-vis the types of things that discouraged workers do every day.

Chapter 7. "A Day in the Life"[7]: Discouraged Workers' Daily Occupations

The previous two chapters have problematized the formal definition of 'discouraged' workers and the building blocks of those workers' daily occupations, illustrating the not-so-simple nature of my study's focus on *what* discouraged workers *do* in light of situational influences. These findings offer an important foundation for understanding my key consultants' occupations, but they fall short of communicating a truly ethnographic sense of those undertakings. In this chapter, I describe particular experiences that evoke the situational negotiations underlying each consultant's daily occupations. While I frame each story in terms of a specific experience, I employ information from other parts of the study to enhance the wholeness of each tale. These vignettes not only illustrate the types of interactions that helped me understand my consultants' occupational possibilities (Rudman, 2010), but they also exemplify the relationships my consultants and I forged as we shared moments and came to co-understandings. I do not attempt in this chapter to make sense of these discouraged workers' occupations through theoretical constructs; instead, I coalesce my findings about what it means to live life as a discouraged worker in Horizon Mills, laying the final brick in the foundation upon which the discussion chapter is built.

Before proceeding with the vignettes, it is important to explain why I chose these particular events to represent my key consultants' larger lives. Given the wealth of data accumulated over a 10-month study, fleshing out only one encounter may seem

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[7] Lennon, J. & McCartney, P. (1967). A day in the life. From *Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band*. London: EMI.

problematically narrow as a window into consultants' experiences. However, my tack in this chapter builds on the Deweyan assumption (outlined in Chapter 2) that we can gain knowledge from the person-environment relationships instanced in a discrete situation. It is through accounts of particular situations—augmented by broader findings—that those relationships and the understandings they manifest come alive. I did not choose to describe these particular situations because they were extraordinary or exceptionally inclusive of the influences at work in my consultants' lives; rather, I chose to focus on these situations because my consultants spoke of them as "normal" parts of their days. The very mundaneness of these events offered an ideal opportunity for intense ethnographic development and de-familiarization (cf. Marcus & Fischer, 1986). Accordingly, while the following vignettes are portrayed here as defining moments for my understandings, it is important to remember that their occurrence did not significantly stand apart from other experiences that I shared with my consultants.

Cindy

Although my contact with Cindy spanned eight months, I never had an opportunity to observe her outside the Christians' Care lobby or parking lot. I initially worried about my lack of access to Cindy's "real" life, but I came to understand the nature of my interactions with her—including our many communication difficulties and missed or canceled appointments—as representative of her haphazard experience. Cindy's admission that "things come up in this lifestyle" rang truer each time I saw her, and the sliver of time we spent together elucidated both her actual and possible occupational engagements. The following vignette illuminates the centrality of other-focused occupations in Cindy's life: that is, it demonstrates that Cindy framed her life around *doing* for others, whether through formal

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caregiving activities or simple social reciprocity. 'Doing for others' played into Cindy's self-positioning vis-à-vis expectations about unemployment, noticeably manifested in her descriptions of her well-being. Like her navigation of needed social services, Cindy's efforts to help others seemed to infiltrate and influence her daily doings in ways beyond her control.

After one no-show, one cancellation, one interview, and several unreturned phone calls, my optimism for collaborating with Cindy had begun to wane. One morning in late October 2009, as I sat in the Christians' Care lobby talking to clients, Cindy came through the door looking more disheveled than usual. Her makeup stood in opposition to her mismatched sweats, her glasses, and her tousled hair; despite her efforts to put on a publicly presentable face, she definitely lacked a "sparkle of hope" that day. While my interactions with Cindy to-date had been sporadic at best, I had enough understanding of her to assume that something was amiss. Cindy strode up to me on our first meeting and confidently said, "I've got a story for you," and while she did not take pride in her situation, she talked about it openly and passionately. Our first interview covered a range of topics, from her past drug addiction and marital problems to her desire to support her son and friends as best she could. We also talked about her recent foray into job searching—which Chapter 5 examined vis-à-vis her status as a 'discouraged worker'—upon her son's layoff from a local factory. I knew from the Occupational Questionnaire that Cindy completed the previous week that she had likely spent her morning sleeping, taking a neighbor's child to school, and watching TV before coming to Christians' Care, and that the rest of her day would be a mix of the same activities with some added housework and cooking for her son. Cindy's description of her 'typical' day during another of our meetings justified my assumptions:

> Today I got up about 8:30 and then I went back to sleep. I got up at about 9:30 because my cousin had to go home at 10 and she spent the night. So we got her stuff

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together and we started talking about our day. [My boyfriend] had to go do some things with his friends. He asked me what I was doing today, and I said, "I've got to go here, here, and here" because I had talked to you. That's what happened. I talked to you and we made a plan. So he made plans, I drug [my friend] along with me, and the rest of the day is going to go like, I'm going to take him to do a couple of errands and go back home, maybe finish the dishes, make sure there's food on the table when [my son] gets up…And then I'll just hang out, chill out. And there's going to be a phone call or two saying, "Can you run me here? Can you run me there?" I might have to take [my friend] home tonight. That's it. And hopefully by 10:30, I'll get to go to sleep, *if* [my son's girlfriend] can take [him] to work. If not, then I have to take him to work at 10:30, wind down.

The Occupational Questionnaire that Cindy completed four months later evidenced no real changes to this basic round of daily occupation, despite minor changes to *who* Cindy was helping (she stopped taking one neighbor's kids to school but started driving her boyfriend around). To reinforce that point, Cindy told me that most of the changes to her days came from

who calls, and what they need. Times that I pick up my boyfriend, times that I take him to work. Sometimes he doesn't work. Times that [my son] goes in, because he'll work like four 10-hour days and two or one 8-hour days. Sometimes he'll work seven days a week, sometimes he'll work 6, and sometimes he's working 8-hour days.

What made this particular morning different from her typical day—yet still representative of Cindy's *modus operandi* of helping others—is that she was sick and had come to Christians' Care for emergency assistance with prescription medications. Illness was not an uncommon theme in Cindy's life: in the several months that I knew her, Cindy suffered bronchitis, kidney infections, colds, and headaches, and she described chronic problems with urinary tract infections, bronchitis, back pain, and depression. On this day, Cindy was battling a kidney infection for which she needed two prescriptions, each of which would cost her $4 at the local Wal-Mart pharmacy. She sat down beside me in the third row of chairs in Christian's Care and caught me up on her life since our last meeting. She had not followed up on any of the job postings she had found because her son was called back to

work at the factory, and she had subsequently resumed doing his laundry and cooking to support his work efforts. She had not planned on returning to Christians' Care so soon—a mere week after she had last come in for assistance with food—but the severity of her infection left her in immediate need of medication. She said, "I called everyone I know and I can't get anyone to give me $8" for the prescriptions. Her obvious frustration in this admission stemmed from the fact that Cindy spent a great deal of time engaged in the service of others. Highlighted in Chapter 6 in relation to her daily routine, Cindy's social reciprocity did not always yield positive outcomes in her own life: while friends and acquaintances did provide assistance in some times of need, Cindy also felt that they took advantage of her situation, that "they know I'm not working, and they know it's hard for me to say 'no.'" Yet, she said that "you can't say, 'Hey, can't have anything else to do with you,' turn your nose up at them, you can't do that. That's not being a human being."

"Being a human being" through social reciprocity held a central place in Cindy's self-evaluations. She said that people's requests for help "made me feel better to know I was needed. What would they do if I wasn't here?" Not only did constant interactions with others help when Cindy was "in that depressed state again and I don't want to be by myself," according to Cindy they also "make me feel usable. Instead of worthless, usable." Cindy spoke of unemployment in relation to her pride, saying that "when you start depending on other people, which is a pride thing, it just brings you down even further." Being able to do things for others seemed to offset the insults to Cindy's pride by redirecting her attention away from her dependence on others. She described the jolting effect of her occasional realization that "my son is supporting me" in the context of the many things she did to support him: she said,

> That kind of takes me out of the "I feel worthless" thing. And that's probably why I crave this going to help other people thing. Not only does it take my mind off of things, but I've heard it now twice from two different people: "I *know* you. If I need anything, I can call you."

Cindy said that being supportive of others "will make me look better" and improved her view of herself, which was colored by negative social perceptions of unemployment (introduced in Chapter 3). Whether through distraction or genuine fulfillment, "being a human being" to others through occupation was a valued and major part of Cindy's life.

Cindy's social reciprocity was not always returned in-kind, however, and when left in a lurch, both Cindy's occupations and self-evaluations seemed to shift. Cindy's observation that "it doesn't matter what I'm going through, they're always knocking at my door" was exemplified on the morning that she came into Christians' Care for medication assistance. As Cindy sat next to me amid the cacophony, she related her financial woes and lack of friends' support in her present circumstance. Yet, she also spoke of plans to take typing classes and revise her resume when she was once again healthy. Her optimism was evident, despite her current ailment.

In the middle of our conversation, a woman came into Christians' Care and approached Cindy. She asked Cindy to speak with her outside, and Cindy excused herself and followed the woman out the lobby door. Several minutes passed before Cindy's return, upon which she sat down next to me and said, "I told you people always try to find me." Cindy then told me that the woman was an acquaintance of hers who had called Cindy's house looking for her. Upon being told that Cindy was getting medication help at Christians' Care, the woman came to the ministry to seek Cindy out with the purpose of trying to sell her some anti-anxiety medications. Cindy explained her situation to the woman, saying that she did not have money for necessary medications—let alone recreational ones—and did not

want to buy the pills. The woman pressed Cindy for the names of people who might want to purchase the pills, a request that Cindy obliged before re-entering the ministry's doors. Cindy and I resumed our conversation when she came back into the lobby, and she left to fill out medication paperwork in a back office shortly thereafter.

According to Cindy's Occupational Questionnaires, the 'doing for others' occupations that pervaded her life fell under the heading of 'daily living work,' and while she thought she did those activities 'well' and some were 'extremely important, ' she indicated some ambivalence in her enjoyment of them. The experience related in the above vignette offers one reason for such ambivalence: "being a human being" through caring occupations did not always yield sure rewards in times of need. While such occupations fell under what Ferman (1990) and others have described as 'social economy' activities, it seems that their value was not universally recognized in Cindy's life. Cindy's descriptions of these occupations' value clearly resonated with cultural expectations in Horizon Mills about being productive, making a contribution, and "taking care of your own." She only labeled one such occupation as 'work' (taking a neighbor's child to school), recognizing that most of her day did not align with traditional conceptualizations of that occupational category. The nature of her occupations—structuring her time around her son's third-shift factory job, or taking neighborhood children to school because of a lack of public transportation in town—further spoke to their integration with Cindy's specific situations.

However, because I never actually *observed* Cindy engaged in these occupations, it is difficult to fully grasp them as responses to her uncertain situation. While Cindy and I had a positive research relationship, she acknowledged that she kept me somewhat at bay (as noted in Chapter 3). Thus Cindy consciously guided my understandings in such a way that

privileged her portrayal of her daily occupational negotiations, making her claim that "*I've got a story for you*" true on multiple levels.

Margie

As with Cindy, I never got the chance to observe Margie in her home environment. The short duration of our contact (four months), combined with Margie's parenting responsibilities and social calendar, prevented any real opportunity for me to meet her at her home. However, the time we spent together during her Vista volunteer activities showed me how Margie was both "still working in a sense" and also turning over a new leaf in her occupational opportunities. Margie often described herself and her occupations in opposition to her former high-stress lifestyle as a banker; the juxtaposition of her 'new' and 'old' selves in her volunteer work connoted a subtle yet (for her) dramatic reframing of her endeavors, such that her situation as a discouraged worker appeared to contain very little discouragement. The vignette that follows shows Margie's enthusiasm for the changes afforded by her situation, and communicates how her particular circumstances afforded a richness of occupational experiences that Margie had forgotten existed.

Margie began her volunteer work just a few weeks after she had been let go from the bank, "just to get me out of the house and to give me something to look forward to, kind of socialize and have a purpose in life besides finding a job." Her Vista volunteer opportunity grew out of those early volunteering efforts and had come to be something that Margie "fell in love with" in her day-to-day life. Aside from giving her a "purpose" and allowing her to create a "legacy" and be a "role model," her position also gave her life a "flexibility…that I wouldn't get in a normal role." That flexibility was particularly evident on one of the days I spent with Margie, when I met her in a nearby community to watch her present to the local

Rotary Club. Margie's morning had encompassed 'daily living work' such as getting her youngest daughter ready for school, and 'work' activities such as doing paperwork for her volunteer position. We had planned to rendezvous at the Rotary Club—which met in the Community Room of a local Methodist church—just before the presentation began at 12:30 p. m. However, Margie was delayed due to her car being blocked by an ambulance at her volunteer center, and she whisked into the room just as the pre-presentation lunch had ended.

Margie's dark brown suit jacket and skirt were offset by the bright green blouse she had worn to mark St. Patrick's Day. (She quipped to the club members that it was the "ugliest thing" she could find in her closet, and that it embarrassed her daughter, much to Margie's delight.) Her heels, nylons, large purse, laptop, and projector bag completed her look as a professional woman, and I could immediately see how Margie's past role in banking influenced her self-presentation for this event. Margie began by introducing herself, describing her personal mission as "serving God and loving people," and summarizing her educational and professional background. Using a remote to advance her PowerPoint slides as she stood behind the podium at the front of the room, Margie summarized the goal of the fundraising project that subsumed her Vista volunteer efforts. She seemed comfortable speaking to the group of strangers, her voice unwavering as she easily accommodated technological glitches and answered pointed questions from audience members (such as the project's funding source being "not taxes").

Following her presentation, Margie and I got into her leather-interior Denali SUV—a remnant from her banking career—and drove to a nearby coffee shop to chat. We drank tea and discussed her résumé, which she was beginning to ready for her post-Vista job search later that summer. She discussed her efforts to build up her LinkedIn profile and reintroduce

herself to former professional contacts in the banking world. She also aired her concerns that future potential employers would not understand why she purposely chose *not* to work and engage in the Vista program. Margie reiterated the lack of urgency in her new situation, despite the financial difficulties that accompanied her unemployment. She underscored the positive effects of her daily flexibility, using her plan for the rest of the day to exemplify the perks of not having a nine-to-five job (though she adhered to that schedule most weekdays); after our meeting, she planned to go grocery shopping and do some extra cooking while her daughter spent the night at her former husband's home. She used her off-parenting days to complete such tasks, as well as take advantage of the "me time" it afforded. Because Margie was able to flex her hours in her volunteer position, she had the opportunity to balance her personal and professional endeavors more than she had experienced in her previous career. Although she noted that people like her ex-husband "bust my balls" because they did not see her Vista position "as a true job," she felt satisfied knowing that she was contributing to her community, creating a legacy of which her daughters could be proud, taking the "opportunity to stop and smell the roses," and acquiring new professional skills for her eventual return to the formal labor force.

Although Margie's volunteering activities (such as the presentation I observed) gave a helpful yet flexible structure to her days, she was ambivalent about them in her Occupational Questionnaire ratings. She marked them as 'take it or leave it' endeavors that she 'neither like[d] nor dislike[d]' or would simply 'rather not do.' Despite her volunteer work helping her balance her life and "create a legacy," it was the caregiving for her young daughter that Margie rated as 'important' in her days. Much has been written about the benefits of volunteer work for promoting skill utilization and other work-like categories of

experience (cf. van Willigen, 2000), but its role as an occupation that simultaneously resembles and modifies traditional life rhythms, and promotes other occupational possibilities through the conditions in which it is performed, remains in need of exploration (cf. Thoits & Hewitt, 2001).

Margie, too, chose to guide my understandings by selecting the types of experiences that we shared during the study. Nevertheless, Margie's view of her volunteering-related occupations—which she labeled as fulfilling the role of 'work' in her life—seemed to show that *what* she did to fill her time (e.g., checking email and giving presentations) bore less significance than the *function* those occupations served (e.g., providing opportunities for "legacy" and a flexible schedule). Whether 'work' or 'daily living work,' what Margie spent her time *doing* represented her negotiation of her personal history, prevailing values, and future goals in a way that the static occupational categories on the Occupational Questionnaire did not appear to capture.

Rose

Of all my key consultants, the interactions I had with Rose appeared the most developed at the end of my data collection period. Because she had no telephone, Rose encouraged me to "drop by" her apartment whenever I wanted to see her. Her open invitation helped me garner varied understandings over the nine months that I knew her. In contrast to my insights about Cindy's and Margie's respective lives—based on fairly narrow participant observations and made whole via interview and Occupational Questionnaire data—my knowledge of Rose's occupational pursuits stemmed from experiencing several facets of her 'typical' day over time. The next vignette details one of those experiences, what Rose called a "boring" day. Rose's professed ennui masked an underlying negotiation of situational

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factors and unexpected occurrences, however, and the resulting flexibility of her occupations testified to the complexity behind even the most 'typical' of days.

On this particular morning, I arrived at Rose's apartment just after 9:30 a. m., ready to spend the day with her per our discussion the previous week. Occupying one of the converted units in a former motel known as the Court, Rose, her husband, and her two children (a 17 year-old son and 14 year-old daughter) lived in close and modest quarters. The space—which could not have been more than 500 square feet—was cluttered and crammed, a visible testament to the constant juggling that characterized Rose's life. The main area of the apartment held a tattered slate blue couch with a pull-out feature that faced away from the door; a small 1990s-era tube television with a digital antenna; a frameless full-size mattress and box frame along the left wall; a small sink and perpetually-fogged mirror along the same wall; and many piles of clothes, toys, videos, and miscellany. Rose was not caring for her toddler granddaughter on this day, so the plastic feeding chair, baby gate, and stroller that I had seen on previous visits did not occupy any coveted floor space. A small bathroom (which I never saw) adjoined at one end of the room's left side, and to the right of this main room stood the kitchen, which, despite its lack of a door, contained another full-size mattress and box springs to double as a bedroom for Rose and her husband.

By the time I arrived, Rose had already cooked breakfast for her family, ushered her daughter off to high school, and watched part of a "Dr. Oz" episode that was on television. Rose often spoke of watching television as "the only thing we've got to do" because she could not afford most recreational activities outside her home. Although she felt that television was a "privilege," she also said that she mainly watched it "out of boredom" because there was "nothing else to do." While waiting for her husband to return from driving

a neighbor to an appointment, Rose talked with me about her former work at a hosiery mill and her desire to take certified nursing assistant classes at the local community college. As with most of our conversations, Rose's words flowed freely and frequently that morning, but while we covered a number of topics, the transcript proves that our conversational range was due more to my stumbling introduction of poorly-connected ideas than to a natural movement between related ideas. Although Rose allowed me to chart a topical course for our interviews, her words definitely dominated them, and without the occasional remarks from her husband as small interruptions, Rose took full advantage of her dominant conversational role.

Rose's husband returned home after 45 minutes, and we and one of their neighbors piled into her minivan to collect Rose's bi-monthly food request at Christians' Care. Their minivan bore all the signs of visible wear and tear: stains, dirt, and rocks on the floor mats; a rattling noise during acceleration; a rear driver's side door that could not be opened from the outside due to a broken handle; and the driver's seatback permanently stuck in a reclined position. Rose mentioned that this trip to the ministry was somewhat abnormal because we were arriving 15 minutes *after* Christians' Care had opened; usually, Rose waited in line before the ministry opened to ensure that they would get a place at the front of the service line. This venture to the ministry, which came four months into my research process, was also somewhat different for me because it was the first time I had entered Christians' Care *with* a client and had not gone into the office to greet the staff members. Rose, her neighbor, and I sat down in chairs near the back of the room (they side-by-side, me in the row behind them). Shortly thereafter, a young woman sitting next to Rose began to talk about getting services for children in town, and Rose and her friend launched into an explanation of

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various places to visit doctors and purchase diapers. As the women shared tips, stories, and baby pictures, they also discussed part-time job opportunities in the area, including the option of ringing a bell for the Salvation Army holiday drive.

Rose was called back to a client services office, emerging a few minutes later and telling me that the ministry had reduced her receipt of food pantry donations to one time per month. This sparked a conversation between Rose and her neighbor about the staff members at Christians' Care and the relative politeness of social service providers. We left Christians' Care at 11:20 a. m. with several bags of groceries, which Rose began to sort once we arrived back at the Court. Sifting out two cans of beans, Rose explained that her apartment complex had its own food pantry: the windowsill in the manager's office was piled high with canned vegetables, fruits, and bags of cereal, and residents were free to take items for personal use when necessary. Rose said that she and her husband tried to share their extras with neighbors, and that they were also regular beneficiaries of their neighbors' generosity. We sat back on the couch and talked about her high school reunion, the particulars of her unemployment insurance, and her job history, and Rose quipped, "As you can see, there isn't much to do around here." At 12:30 p. m., I drove with Rose and her husband to the ATM where they withdrew her weekly unemployment insurance deposit. Removing the money needed for her weekly rent, Rose gave her husband $10 to put gas in their van. The neighbors who benefited from Rose's informal taxi service often contributed money for gas as a means of reciprocity, but one of those people had lost his job and was unable to give Rose any money this week.

After an amusing drive back from the gas station where Rose's husband teased her about her reaction to severe weather—joking about her jumpiness in a way that got him playfully slapped on the arm—Rose, her neighbor, and I got back in the van and made our

way to the Internet café on the main business route in town. This small, single room in a strip mall smelled and sounded like Las Vegas, with cigarette smoke and poorly filtered air hovering over rows of computers. I sat at an empty station next to Rose, who put $5 on her account, checked her email, and played a matching game long enough to win $10 for her efforts. Deciding to quit while she was ahead, Rose cashed out and the three of us went next door to the grocery store, where Rose purchased milk, eggs, and toilet paper. On the way back to the minivan, she noted that she had $20 remaining from the unemployment insurance she had withdrawn that morning, and that it needed to last her for the rest of the week. On the few-minute drive back to Rose's apartment, she described her plan for the rest of the day as taking her neighbor's husband to work, possibly taking a nap, and "probably sit[ting] around the house" until it was time to cook supper. Just before I departed at 2:00 p. m., Rose mentioned that this was the "most active day" of her week and was still "boring." Her observation fell in line with both of her Occupational Questionnaires, which listed similar activities plus various cleaning and household maintenance endeavors that I did not observe on that day. Eventually, Rose filled more of her time with the remedial classes and exams needed for the certified nursing assistant program, but her days still retained their meandering pace with swaths of time spent at home.

While Rose's day was filled with 'daily living work' and 'recreation,' some of which she felt was 'extremely important' because it helped "keep a roof over our heads," she also did many things that she would 'rather not do' or felt apathy towards. Yet Rose seemed to manage her situation in stride, such that everything seemed "average" and nothing seemed unexpected. As I will discuss in the next chapter, Rose's occupational engagements seemed devoid of notions of crisis that often accompany long-term unemployment. Although Rose

lamented having only "boring" things to occupy her time, she also appeared to have achieved

fairly successful coordination with her environment, developing an understanding of the

pragmatic and social influences on the rhythm and shape of her daily pursuits.

Allen

Allen and I possessed widely disparate life experiences, despite him being the closest

of any consultant to my own age. Because of our differences, my understandings of his

occupations emerged much like Agar (2002) described culture "happening" to

anthropologists. Although he and I had discussed his occupations at length in our initial

interviews, it was not until the first day we spent together that I grasped the multiple layers of

how Allen spent his time. Over the course of our seven-month collaboration, those layers

changed in accordance with Allen's situation, but their fundamental composition remained.

The following vignette peels back some of those layers to show how Allen challenged

conventional understandings about "who discouraged workers are, and what they do" (Buss

& Redburn, 1988).

I got my first glimpse of Allen's life on a gray, drizzly November day. I arrived on

his grandparents' property just after 9:00 a. m. and drove up the long, winding, gravel

driveway toward two structures: on my left, the trailer that Allen lived in with his relatives,

and straight ahead of me, one of two barns on the property. Allen's grandparents—farmers

by trade—allowed him to move into their country home after he had gotten into some trouble

that landed him in jail. As part of his probation, Allen had a 6:00 p. m. to 6:00 a. m. curfew,

which coupled with his lack of transportation and country residence to keep him relatively

away from problematic associations in the nearby town. I parked my car next to a large tree

in front of the trailer and was greeted by Allen, who stood on the porch and asked if I was

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ready to "go walking." Having heard so much about his walking in previous interviews, I dressed for the day accordingly, wearing jeans, a hooded sweatshirt, and tennis shoes and bringing a backpack to carry my notebook, digital recorder, and umbrella. It struck me as I watched Allen walk down the trailer's front stairs wearing basketball shorts, an oversized gray sweatshirt, and black tennis shoes that although he and I were not dressed all that differently, we definitely *looked* different from one another. No matter how casual I thought I looked, I still looked like a middle-class college student (and had been told as much by various consultants on several occasions). However, realizing that Allen and I were both an 'other' to each other turned out to be the least dramatic "happening" of culture that day.

As we walked down the gravel driveway and turned onto the edge of the highway, Allen began to tell me about how his life had evolved in and around the path of our journey. Occasionally, when he turned to look for cars, a crinkling noise disclosed the garbage bag he had donned beneath his clothing, an informal but regular attempt to increase the weight loss that he hoped his walks would foster. Allen pointed out his childhood home and the homes of relatives as we entered more residential areas inside the town's limits. He spoke about his mandated community service as we passed the graveyard where that service took place, proudly telling me about the extra hours he had put in by saying, "I actually did something good without having to do it." It began to rain as we turned onto the business highway route that served as a hub of activity in the town. This road was Allen's intended destination on that morning because he wanted to put in put in some job applications at businesses there. The night before, Allen had gone through the phone book and called local businesses to ask about putting in applications; although none had said that they were hiring, they told him that he could still fill out an application to be kept on file.

However, we had walked more quickly than Allen had expected, and at 10:30 a. m.,

most of the places Allen had called the previous night were not yet open for business. So, he

and I continued walking along the highway to pass the time, an activity that seemed very

familiar to Allen. I was amazed at how much of his young life had played out along this very

road: Allen pointed out the auto parts store parking lot where his "crew" used to gather,

which was just across the street from where he had been in a knife fight several years earlier.

He spoke of various corners that doubled as well-known drug selling locations, and each time

an undercover police car drove by, he pointed it out to me immediately. Our meander down

the highway made it clear that Allen's past—which he avowed he was trying to escape by

"doing the right thing" and trying to work—stayed with him every second of the day. On

several occasions, I caught Allen looking over his shoulder or squinting at a person across the

street, and he acknowledged that he still kept an eye on his back despite his distance from his

former lifestyle. Barely old enough to legally drink alcohol, Allen had already experienced

much of a side of life that I had never seen.

After walking for over half a mile, Allen and I stopped at a local sporting goods store

to kill some time before a nearby restaurant opened for lunch. Using the gift card I had given

him for research reciprocity, he purchased a baseball so that he could play catch with his

fiancée's son, to whom Allen had become a father-like figure. As he tossed the ball up and

down in the store, Allen explained that his own father's absence had left an impact on him,

and his desire to spend some of his many free hours playing catch was part of the "only one

life, only one chance" mantra that framed the reshaping of his life. While he drew a great

deal of motivation from that phrase, Allen faced discouraging realities that reminded him of

his situation every day: although he desired to work, he knew that one line on a job

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application—"Have you ever been convicted of a felony?"—would forever be an obstacle to his efforts. Allen remained convinced throughout our collaboration that he could overcome the detrimental effects of his past, but he was less sure about the limiting factors of his present. His lack of transportation meant that he often arrived at businesses wearing casual clothing and covered in sweat or rain. Although he made an effort to cover his tattoos, remove his piercings, and look presentable, Allen knew that his two to six hours of walking per day limited his ability to look professional for potential employers. He said of the employment game,

> You know, they look at you on how you dress, how you walk in, how you talk to them. They look down on you if you have tattoos, but if you can hide them, they'll never know. If you sit there and talk to them like you're educated and know what you want to do, you've got a better chance of getting a job. Don't go in there and B.S. them, be straight up with them. I mean, that's how I've gotten any job that I've ever had.

We stood outside for almost 15 minutes waiting for the nearby restaurant to open. The rain had picked up, and I finally broke down and opened my umbrella, which Allen declined to share. When 11:00 a. m. finally came, Allen went next door and put in an application at the pizza restaurant where he, his friend, and I had eaten lunch the previous week, following the weekly lunch routine that they had established. We retraced our steps back along the business route of the highway, stopping at two more restaurants so Allen could fill out job applications. We sat down to eat at the last restaurant we visited, and just as we were about to order, Allen's friend called and asked what we were doing. Within 10 minutes, this friend arrived at the restaurant to pick us up and take us to lunch elsewhere. As we drove to the Chinese buffet—Allen sat in the bed of the truck so that I could have the front passenger seat—Allen's friend talked to me about Allen's past, noting that keeping Allen out of trouble was sometimes "a full-time job." I watched Allen's friend joke with

Allen about "making" me go walking in such bad weather, and it was clear that the two men had been friends for a long time. I left Allen just after 2:00 p. m., after the three of us had returned to his grandparents' house. His plan for the rest of the day—to shower, "hang out," and watch television until his friend had to leave for his job—rounded out the non-walking occupations I had also seen on his Occupational Questionnaire.

Allen ultimately decided to join the National Guard because he became uncertain of his ability to ever find work in the civilian market. Although Allen eventually found part-time work as a security guard and night club bouncer—which fueled his "adrenaline junkie" side and stimulated descriptions reminiscent of ones like "I feel the need, the need for speed"[8] (a familiar cultural phrase for young men who enjoy risks)—he saw his daily pursuits as connected to his desire to "buy my way into Heaven." While Allen spent most of his days (before gaining these jobs) like the one described above, the walking that filled so much of his time seemed to serve multiple functions and yet lack importance and enjoyable qualities. He did not label the walking as 'work' despite it being his only connection to the formal labor market, and although he spoke positively of his walking as providing exercise and "me time" away from his relatives, Allen rated it as a 'take it or leave it' experience that he 'neither like[d] nor dislike[d].' Although he felt his eventual employment was 'important' in his days, he still rated it as something he 'neither like[d] nor dislike[d].' Of the many experiences Allen could have chosen to share with me, his day of walking perhaps best illuminated Allen's need to address and accommodate social expectations, personal goals, and environmental constraints in determining his occupational possibilities.

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[8] Badalato, B. & Scott, T. (1986). *Top gun* [motion picture]. United States: Paramount Pictures.

Jeanette

Not long after I met Jeanette in the waiting area of Christians' Care, she disappeared. The circumstances of her disappearance (detailed in Aldrich & Callanan, 2011) showed me the sometimes insidious quality of uncertainty in discouraged workers' lives. More than my other key consultants, Jeanette seemed particularly challenged in her attempts to negotiate her situation. The day I describe below came shortly after Jeanette's reappearance, and more than the other vignettes it illustrates the moment-to-moment negotiations associated with a life wholly removed from the formal labor force. My third visit to Jeanette's house began like many others: I came in, patted her large dog Simba on the head, and sat down opposite Jeanette on her living room couch. However, although we returned to the familiar topic of her almost absent family support and her struggles to care for her children, we also entered new territory in the study situation when I watched Jeanette make a life-changing phone call. As I would come to understand, that phone call not only shifted the course of Jeanette's life but also threw her day's occupations into a state of disarray.

Behind the fateful phone call that I witnessed on that cold October day was a story of struggle regarding Jeanette's mortgage. Since being laid off from her job as an investment assistant 10 months prior, Jeanette had worked hard to maintain the quality of life to which she and her two children had become accustomed. In an effort to stretch her ever-waning resources, Jeanette had decided to let her mortgage payments lapse for three months so that she would be eligible for modification and refinancing, as was dictated by her mortgage company's rules. However, her mortgage company was sold in the midst of that process, and the new company did not honor the original terms of refinancing under which Jeanette had been operating. Frantic, Jeanette had gone to Christians' Care seeking assistance for a last-

minute mortgage payment, representing a 'hail Mary' effort to keep a roof over her family's heads. I was at Christians' Care when Jeanette made that request (the day before the one we spent together), and was told offhand by a client services representative that she did not think the ministry would be able to make the mortgage payment. When I asked why, I received a multitude of reasons, ranging from the pragmatic—Jeanette had no way of maintaining payments without a job, and thus the help would not actually *help* in the long run—to the evaluative—the staff member quipped that she did not understand why Jeanette would allow her mortgage payments to slip but decide to purchase a car. Having heard similar comments before, Jeanette said to me the morning of the phone call,

> Nobody gives you a chance to tell them. "You made this much money last year, why are you in this situation?" Because I raised two kids and I have no child support. And yeah, I made 40-some thousand dollars last year, but take out $375 a month in medical insurance, car insurance, life insurance--my paychecks weren't all that after you take out those deductions. . . We don't go traveling; we don't go places; once a month we go to the movies.

These explanations, if heard at all, seemed to fall on deaf ears. The Christians' Care client services representative noted that she could not say for certain what the final decision would be, but I left the interaction with an ominous feeling in my gut.

When I arrived at Jeanette's house just after 9 a. m. the following morning, I felt the pit of my stomach drop when she mentioned that she was going to call Christians' Care to see about her mortgage payment, which had a final deadline of that day. Because she had been advised not to call before 10:15 a. m. (to give the staff time to process waiting clients once the ministry opened at 10 a. m.), Jeanette discussed how she had come to have new houseguests following her hospital stay. These houseguests—a woman in her mid-30s and that woman's boyfriend of a similar age—were busy getting ready for the day in a nearby bedroom, traversing the living room quickly and quietly as they retrieved needed items from

upstairs or outside. Jeanette spoke fondly of her new living arrangement: despite being

separated from her children (who were staying with relatives while Jeanette recovered from

her suicide attempt), she felt supported by her friends in a variety of ways. Jeanette said of

her friend,

> She makes me get up every morning, It's like we play off of each other's insecurities. It's been very good for me having her here. And he. . . did you see my flower bed? Oh my god. He works 24/7 cleaning. They do it, constantly. They clean, they cook. "Are you ok? Do you need anything" It's taking some of the pressure off.

The presence of these people in Jeanette's house had already changed the shape of her days.

According to the Occupational Questionnaire Jeanette had completed the previous month,

Jeanette spent very little time doing anything aside from sitting on the couch, cooking

breakfast and dinner for her children, taking her children to school, getting her

unemployment insurance and buying groceries, and watching a little television. In contrast,

Jeanette said of the morning before I arrived,

> I even got motivated this morning. I've been up since 2 o'clock and I scrubbed my daughter's bathroom, cleaned the baseboards, and like, wow, I actually *cleaned* something. . . They've been a blessing.

 Jeanette's enthusiasm and energy came to an abrupt halt when she stopped to call

Christians' Care about her mortgage. She and I had moved our conversation to her back

porch so she could smoke a cigarette. I sat on a wooden porch swing, watching the morning

sun filter through the trees, warmed by a blanket that Jeanette had brought out to keep my

legs warm on the brisk autumn morning. Jeanette sat across the porch in a rickety plastic

chair with a terrycloth robe covering her lap, holding the cordless phone in one hand and a

smoking cigarette in the other. The call to Christians' Care was quick, lasting no more than a

minute: telling the person on the other end of the line her name and the purpose for her call,

Jeanette waited, then seemed to listen to what the other person said before saying, "Thank

you" and hanging up. Against the backdrop of the peaceful neighborhood atmosphere, disrupted occasionally by the barking of neighboring dogs or bursts of television noise pouring out of the upstairs window, Jeanette told me, "You were here when I found out I was losing everything." As Simba the dog looked on, she asked no one in particular, "Now do I ball up in a corner, or go look other places?" Whereas she had been tearing up in our previous conversation about her troubles, Jeanette was simply quiet in her post-call state, and as I apologized for sitting there dumbly without a helpful or hopeful response, she looked at me and said, "It is what it is. . . nothing anybody can say or do."

After several minutes of quiet sitting, Jeanette's friend came out on the porch and asked what had happened. Jeanette told her that she was not going to get help, and her friend offered her condolences and shot me a knowing glance before she went back inside the house. Jeanette and I stayed a few more minutes on the porch before going back inside and resuming our respective positions on the couch. Jeanette's friend came downstairs and offered to drive Jeanette around to look for other places to live. Jeanette thought for a moment before she assented to her friend's suggestion, and lamented to me that "it takes money to move" that she did not have. She said, "I refuse to lie" about not having a job or a co-signer for a lease, which made it almost impossible to find housing opportunities that she deemed clean and safe enough for herself and her children. I watched Jeanette make various phone calls to relatives and potential landlords before she set out with her friend in search of a new home. By the time Jeanette, her friend, and I went our separate ways outside Jeanette's home, I realized that the few hours I had spent there had passed surprisingly slowly. Without a plan of action to structure time—Jeanette had put off planning her day until she knew the

outcome of her phone call with Christians' Care—the "hopeless sitting moments" had consumed the morning without us even knowing it.

Eventually, Jeanette found another place to live. She had a falling out with her friends over some violent behavior, but continued to house her friend's daughter and young grandchild in the basement of her new home. With this move and the acquisition of a donated computer from Christians' Care, Jeanette filled more of her days with a search for work, though she never seemed to find new jobs to pursue. The "hopeless sitting moments" waxed and waned in their dominance of her daily schedule, but they never disappeared completely.

Surprisingly, Jeanette's "hopeless sitting moments" were only evidenced on her Occupational Questionnaire by the spaces she left blank. Although Jeanette spoke of these moments as often active instances of *doing* (e.g., problem-solving), their presence in her day went unrecognized on the questionnaire. These moments resulted from many factors in Jeanette's situation: with no money to fuel or insure her car and no opportunities for public transportation, Jeanette felt forced to stay home, thus constraining her occupational possibilities. Jeanette's openness throughout the study imparted a naked honesty to the function and value of these moments that gave me a window into the occupational limitations and complexities of someone who has "nothing to hide."

Conclusion

These vignettes illustrate that understanding what discouraged workers *do* requires more than overcoming their 'disappeared' nature or acknowledging the destabilizing influences of their variably negotiated routines: they show that the possible types, values, and functions of occupations in situations of long-term unemployment need to be rethought. Like discouraged workers themselves, the presence of various occupations had the potential to

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become obscured or 'hidden' by the measure (e.g., the Occupational Questionnaire) and questions (e.g., my focus on relations of occupations and economic factors) that characterize occupation as a construct. Jonsson (2008), Whalley-Hammell (2009 a/b) and others have criticized the limitations of too narrowly categorizing and classifying occupations, and Jeanette's "hopeless sitting moments," Allen's walking, Margie's volunteering, Rose's receipt of social services, and Cindy's "being a human being" through caregiving occupations all fuel the fire of such criticisms. As I will more fully explain in the next chapter vis-à-vis dialectics about crisis and 'everyday' life, those occupations suggest not only the need to rethink occupational classifications in a broad sense, but also the occupational possibilities that are expected for discouraged workers and others in situations of long-term unemployment.

Chapter 8. Discussion: Cultural Dialectics[9] of Crisis and Positioning via Occupation

Taken together, my findings report much more than *what* discouraged workers did and the *values*, *functions*, and *socioeconomic* relations attendant to that doing: they also suggest why discouraged workers may remain misunderstood despite their growing numbers. Simply describing my key consultants' situated 'daily living work' and 'recreational' occupations, as well as their intersections with the informal and social economies, communicates only part of their story. Based on my findings, it seems significant to also discuss cultural frameworks that people use to make sense of discouraged workers' situations. In this chapter, I argue that one such framework—centered on the idea of crisis— compounded discouraged workers' disappearance in Horizon Mills by precluding recognition of the content and complexity of their experiences.

In analyzing my findings, I found myself repeatedly returning to the concept of crisis as an anchor for my understandings. While none of my key consultants used the word 'crisis' to describe their situations, they used descriptors of their experience such as "unstable" that evoked the term, somewhat echoing more direct appellations of crisis that abounded in Horizon Mills. As I reflected upon the association of crisis with the uncertainty of discouraged workers' situations, I began to see connections with Dewey's ideas about tension and remaking problematic situations (cf. Fesmire, 2003; Kestenbaum, 1977). I also came to understand that the discourse surrounding crisis in Horizon Mills was as moralizing

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[9] This use of the term 'dialectic' does not invoke Hegelian notions of logical reasoning processes. Rather, it reflects that a conflict of ideas can become an influential aspect of a given situation. My use of this term implies that cultural conversations around a conflict of ideas are met *through* occupation, and in turn, the shape of conversations around conflict influence engagement in occupation.

as that of the American Dream (introduced in Chapter 1): my consultants' positioning within that moral order seemed central to how 'disappeared' they and their daily doings were in Horizon Mills.

I realized that while cultural understandings of crisis in Horizon Mills formerly offered clear expectations for the structure and content of daily experience, by the time of the study situation, those understandings had shifted due to economic changes at the global, national, state, and local levels (described in Chapter 3). Expectations about crisis in Horizon Mills lagged behind the economic changes that came to typify the town, and the growing experience of long-term crisis rubbed uncomfortably against entrenched cultural understandings. While "a lot of people just sat down and have been drawing checks for two years, hoping the market will change, hoping [industry] will come back" (C. Young, personal communication, August 10, 2009), the widespread unemployment of the Great Recession invalidated responses that treated crisis as a short-term phenomenon: according to a local newsperson,

> before [now] you could make it by living with whatever you might have saved, living off help from friends and relatives, getting the odd job until you could find another manufacturing job or be a stocker at Wal-Mart. So you found ways to make do. Based on what I'm hearing, those sort of stopgap measures aren't cutting it. [The recession is] too severe, too long.

Rather than being a transitory phase preceding a more stable future (Dictionary.com, 2010), crisis became ongoing for many people in Horizon Mills: Jeanette said, "I thought it was [short-term]. I think now the need has become so long-term because there are no jobs, there is no money out there to be made, and after so long, I wonder if everybody's in the same rut I'm in." This experience of *crisis becoming routine* manifested significantly in my data, most often tied to the financial instability that accompanied long-term unemployment, which

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required my key consultants to regularly interact with organizations that embodied cultural beliefs about (acceptable) crisis being (only) short-term.

Overall, I began to see that my key consultants were forced to negotiate their problematic situations using a stagnant idea of crisis that did not match their in-flux situations. Juxtaposed to my findings about discouraged workers' routines and occupations, the concept of crisis pinpoints an ever-present situational tension that required remaking in the process of discouraged workers' person-environment coordination. In this chapter, I weave together conceptual discussions and ethnographic examples to analytically frame the findings gained through this study. I begin by situating and exemplifying dialectics about crisis in Horizon Mills before moving to an exposition of the concept in opposition to 'everyday' experience. After suggesting the inadequacy of that opposition, I then explain Deweyan conceptions about tension and remaking problematic situations. In particular, I highlight how consultants remade their situations *through occupation*, drawing on examples discussed in the previous chapter's vignettes. I end by asserting that discouraged workers' respective views of crisis in their situations related integrally to their perceptions of their well-being, by virtue of the occupations those views seemed to afford. This assertion provides a basis for several veins of future research that will be discussed in the next and final chapter.

Long-term unemployment and crisis in Horizon Mills

During this study, long-term unemployment became increasingly common both nationally (cf. Rampell, 2010) and in Horizon Mills. From my first days in town, community officials told me I had "come to the right place" to find people who had disengaged from the formal economy (per the Christians' Care director, the ESC manager, a Chamber of Commerce

member, and an economic development board member). Despite begrudging acceptance of the town's extended and grim economic circumstances, a majority of Horizon Mills residents maintained some level of employment, and sociocultural norms continued to demand the daily rhythms established by the dominant occupation of work. Those norms endorsed beliefs about work safeguarding against idleness (Ashton, 1986; Badger, 2002; Brock, 1988) and structuring people's identities (Unruh, 2004) and daily lives (Jahoda, 1982, as cited in Creed & Watson, 2003). Serious references by many Horizon Mills residents to "idle hands" and "Devil's workshop" added moral weight to speculations about the types of daily structures and occupations that busied discouraged workers (per a Christians' Care staff member and a local apartment complex manager).

In line with this cultural understanding, my consultants negatively described the character of their experience in opposition to the norm of employment. For instance, when filling out her first Occupational Questionnaire (Smith, Kielhofner, & Watts, 1986), Jeanette reminisced that when she was working, "I was always busy" with occupations such as cooking, cleaning, and gardening. Similarly, Allen noted that the schedule provided by employment "just makes you feel better, that you can actually do something instead of be[ing] unproductive." Rose spoke of her unemployed time as "boring" and filled with "not much" to do, and Cindy said that without a job to put her in a "work mode," her days were at the "whim" of her uncertain life circumstances. Even Margie, who kept active with consistent volunteer work, said, "I've had to learn to restructure my day and my systems…it's a whole different mindset…It is stressful, because I don't have much expectation put upon me." Underlying these observations was the idea that people can and

should plan their lives around the rhythms of paid employment *even in its absence*, because employment constitutes a familiar and everyday mode of living.

In light of Dewey's (1934) writings on the intertwining of people's rhythms with those of their environments, the prevalence and acceptance of employment-based rhythms as a norm for experience in Horizon Mills was not surprising. Whether my consultants had "given up" or "quit" searching for work did not excuse them from having a life shaped differently from their working counterparts. Despite the increasing commonality of long-term unemployment in Horizon Mills, however, cultural expectations made it clear that these experiences should not become ways of life. The strong work ethic woven into Horizon Mills' social fabric drew a definite distinction between (acceptable) short-term unemployment crises and (unacceptable) long-term unemployment crises. While periods of unemployment due to layoffs—termed "slow time" by local residents—were not infrequent in Horizon Mills (per a lifelong resident and daughter of a factory worker in Horizon Mills), aid organizations like Christians' Care were created because "short-term financial crisis intervention was the thing that the churches were most burdened with" (B. Jones, personal communication, August 7, 2009). Community leaders and service providers in Horizon Mills clung to ideas of crisis and unemployment as temporary states, seemingly due to the town's history of abundant manufacturing work.

Manifestations of crisis in aid organizations

The belief that crisis constituted a short-term experience was most clearly apparent in my observations at local aid organizations. For example, the director of Christians' Care described the ministry's service provision by first defining crisis as a short-term phenomenon:

> *'Crisis'* intervention tends to tell me that you can't really plan for it, or predict it. You might can plan for it, in case something happens, but you can't say, "On March the fourth of every year, I'm going to have a crisis."

Staff members' comments that "we're just a crisis agency…we can't keep them [going]" underscored the belief that deviating from "short-term crisis intervention" might

> set [clients] up for failure because maybe we may maintain them for one month but we can't be ongoing, and what are they going to do next month? It's not realistic to lead [clients] to believe that help's going to be there forever.

Given the larger economic elements at play in Horizon Mills, repeat and long-term clientele were expected at Christians' Care; however, clients' abilities to plan and "do what they can to help themselves" were central to the ministry's goal of "helping people become less a-dependent." The director of Christians' Care explained that "the bottom line is, if [a client is] not going to have any income, then maybe help won't help." Phrased differently, if a client did not have a true *crisis*—if his or her situation appeared to be more permanent than transitory—then the ministry viewed its funds as more of a temporary salve than the permanent solution it aimed to support.

Expectations of crisis and unemployment as short-term events also existed in other Horizon Mills agencies. Although local residents stigmatized the Department of Social Services (DSS) as a place for "people who want welfare" long-term (per a DSS client and a DSS social worker), the agency's practices actually reflected short-term understandings of crisis. For instance, the DSS limited utility assistance to annual distributions (every February), and receptionists there referred clients to Christians' Care or the Salvation Army for longer-term needs like grocery offerings. Similarly, the ESC manager noted that although the ESC "could literally shut the State to the Dark Ages" if it stopped disbursing unemployment insurance, the ESC "[does] all we can for [people in long-term crises], but

eventually, that's it." When faced with a situation where crisis endured in clients'

experiences, the ESC manager said, "I have no clue what to do. I hope and pray that maybe

the Department of Social Services can help them, [or] a community-based program

somewhere" might provide extended assistance. These agencies employed short-term notions

of crisis out of financial necessity, in light of unemployment rates that taxed the foundations

of the entire nation's social service system (C. Young, personal communication, August 10,

2009). As a result, people whose unemployment forced them to interact with Horizon Mills

social assistance providers had to reconcile their situations with this overriding notion of

crisis.

Similar to Shevchenko's (2009) observations of poverty in postsocialist Moscow, I

came to understand that "evoking the image of crisis…became a means of insuring a smooth

interaction and an atmosphere of mutual understanding" (p. 74) between long-term

unemployed clients and staff members at social service agencies. Out of necessity, it seemed,

clients used predominant conceptions of crisis as "communicational currency in routine

encounters [to] bridge ideological gaps" (p. 74) that separated them from their benefactors.

As I watched both general clients and my key consultants move through the service receipt

process, I developed a sense of the judgment-justification cycle that characterized staff-client

interactions, and I came to understand that "crisis itself represented a new habitus in which

particular and unique skills could be honed" to "accommodate an infinite number of periods

and situations" (p. 69). Clients had to simultaneously (appear to) ascribe to cultural standards

about crisis while also demonstrating their worthiness for services, justifying that "living day

by day implied that in the conditions of uncertainty and unpredictability, a reasonable person

had to concentrate on the immediate practical considerations of the moment" (p. 85).

The clearest example of this positioning was built directly into interactions in Christians' Care. As described earlier, the ministry incorporated understandings of crisis as a short-term phenomenon into its mission and philosophy. Because the ministry did not have to conform to the façade of impartiality required by government agencies such as the DSS and the ESC, it made its expectations clear to clients through four questions used during intake interviews: "What is your need?; What caused your problem?; Will help help?; How can we help?" Although the first and last of these questions were pragmatic in nature, the second and third questions bore an obviously evaluative tone that placed staff members in a position of judging clients, and clients in a position of justifying their need for help based on how they described their situations. For instance, one man in his early 40s described his needs and acknowledged his role in his problem, but said that he was "determined to restructure and rebuild" his life and "learn to do for myself" instead of relying on external assistance. Another older man who had received help from Christians' Care two years prior said, "I ain't trying to come in here no more, just trying to get help on my rent." One older woman said she had "tried to own a home and be like everybody else," acknowledging that her situation did not measure up to established expectations. In each of these interactions, clients had to demonstrate their knowledge of cultural expectations about crisis while also carefully situating themselves within those expectations. They had to show that they embodied the notion of crisis to which the ministry ascribed, yet at the same time they also had to give examples—referencing the shape and contents of their days—to prove that they were not too far gone for help to make a difference.

I also observed countless client-staff interactions at Christians' Care in which the tension between expectations and experiences of crisis came to the fore. In one instance, a

woman in her late 30s had been out of work for eight months and her husband had recently lost his job. With four children to support and no response to numerous job applications, she needed help paying her electric bill. The woman contended that she and her husband were able to afford their house, car, and utility payments when they were both employed, and she complained when Christians' Care's staff members decided that she did not have a crisis because her problems were not "short-term." In contrast, an older man who had not held a steady job for nearly three years had also come for help with his utility bills. He told the client services representative that "I try to hold down and live within my means, ma'am," but in light of the economy, his stopgap sources for informal work were "not calling me like they used to." Despite his lackluster formal work history, staff members viewed the man as "really deserving" of help: they saw his sparse requests from the ministry as indicative of control (he had not been in for help in five or six years, whereas the other woman had recently sought help), and although his unemployment was not short-term, his situation appeared to be more crisis-like in the their estimation of the term.

The same values that guided Christians' Care's intake questions and service provision ran throughout the Horizon Mills community. The ministry's director made a point of communicating this congruence to me in one of our last meetings, saying that "everywhere we go…people want to help, but they want to help people who, as they often say, really need it." While he admitted that various people had different ideas about what "really" needing help meant, he said that "people on the [ministry] Board, in the community, people that write the checks, people that fund this place" all shared a similar philosophy about the types of situations which were worthy of help: situations where people fought against the crisis and took a role in ensuring their own prosperity, as opposed to allowing the crisis to become a

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way of life. All of the aid organizations in Horizon Mills—faith-based or governmental—made that philosophy clear through the service guidelines they communicated to clients, and each one of my consultants referenced those expectations in describing their situations regardless of their level of involvement with social service agencies.

Consultant examples

For instance, Rose spoke of some of her occupations as things she *had* to do keep her family housed, fed, and clothed, but her descriptions of her daily pursuits did not echo the tone of emergency that staff members at Christians' Care expected for someone living "day-to-day." Spending much of her time watching TV and complaining about being "bored" were the types of comments that made Rose seem to others in the community like a "lazy" unemployed person who does nothing productive with her time. However, instead of signifying laziness or acceptance of her situation, Rose's calm regarding her days seemed to suggest that she had merely developed a new habitus in order to deal with her uncertain situation: Rose had become adept at economizing resources and accommodating unanticipated expenditures, such that she approached her life with a composure that seemed to indicate a lack of crisis. Similarly, Cindy said

> I used to worry all the time. . . I've stopped doing that. There's no sense in doing that. There's nothing I can do about it. . . I spent most of my time worrying about it and panicking, and the next day something comes up. I'm just tired of worrying.

As she described relative to her daily routine (in Chapter 6), Cindy lived her life in a way that acknowledged her ever-changing situation, yet she removed the tone of emergency that other people in town had associated with the notion of crisis because she found it counterproductive to making it through the day. In contrast, Jeanette was repeatedly told that her situation did *not* constitute a crisis worthy of assistance, but to Jeanette, there was

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nothing more crisis-like than her situation. While Jeanette seemed loathe to discard the middle-class lifestyle and expectations to which she and her family had become accustomed, she appeared particularly tortured that her desperation about her situation seemed to fall on deaf ears at social service agencies. She and I repeatedly discussed her attempts to portray her situation in the service receipt process, and the tension surrounding discordant views of crisis was laced throughout these discussions. As yet another point of contrast, Allen—who had spent most of his life *not* conforming to social norms—saw his current situation as actually resembling 'everyday' experience more than it ever had. Yet the caseworkers who introduced me to Allen spoke of his situation as being a crisis that put him on the edge of returning to a life of crime:

> He's got a good support system. That makes a difference, too [because others in his situation have said] "What the heck? I'd rather just go to jail for 3 hots and a cot and not have to worry about anything." And that is sad. They'll go out and commit offenses just to get fed sometimes. "I've been on the street, I don't have anywhere to lay my head, I'm cold, I'm hungry."

Similarly, Margie was described by the man who referred me to her as being in a state of crisis due to her single parenthood and lack of work. However, like Allen, Margie's depiction of her situation did not much engage themes of crisis because she felt thankful for the enforced slowing it had afforded after her high-stress banking career.

For each of my key consultants, there existed a discord between the relative amounts of crisis they perceived or communicated about their situations and the perceptions of others. While this discord became more crucial for consultants engaged in the social service receipt process, its existence may also have been problematic in a more general sense. Upon further analysis, these discouraged workers seemed to fall out of available interpretive cultural frameworks in Horizon Mills as easily as they fall out of national unemployment statistics:

put simply, available frameworks had no means of accommodating the fact that my key consultants' experiences were not uniformly or easily classifiable. My key consultants' respective reactions to and negotiations of their situations vacillated between invocations of 'crisis' and the 'everyday,' and they often occupied a middle ground that distorted clear-cut distinctions and thwarted the cultural tools that guided interpretations of their experiences. In the next section, I discuss this middle ground using the work of Shevchenko (2009) to suggest why discordant views of crisis problematically obscure elements of discouraged workers experiences.

Crisis: Opposed to the 'everyday,' or merely one end of the experiential spectrum?

Competing views of crisis in Horizon Mills reinforced the in-flux, transitional nature of discouraged workers' situations there; however, the discord between competing conceptions of the term seemed to obscure the true complexities of my key consultants' situations. Shevchenko (2009) described the

> inadequacies of viewing crisis and everyday life as polar opposites. The notion of crisis typically evokes connotations of a sudden rupture, of a breakdown in the natural order of things, of all that everyday life is not. It is an event out of the ordinary, a powerful force that inevitably destroys the habitual patterns of existence (p. 2)

However, when people do not return from such a rupture—when the extraordinary event becomes ordinary—experiential norms necessarily shift. Shevchenko argued that situations of extended or "total" crisis "without boundaries and expiration dates" (p. 173) blend "seemingly contradictory messages of deterioration and stability" (p. 69) such that "a routinized long-term condition has a different dynamic than an acute event" (p. 3) of the same nature. This provides an effective frame for understanding the cultural tension in Horizon Mills between views of crisis based on "slow time" and those forming in reaction to

the long-term unemployment of the Great Recession. In cases of total (or long-term) crisis,

the "breakdown" of 'everyday' experience becomes a stable feature to which people adapt

their actions; in other words, the "breakdown" *becomes* the 'everyday.' In this vein,

Shevchenko suggested that

> a crisis may be perceived not as an isolated occurrence, but as a routine and
> unchanging condition. In such circumstances, the crisis evolves from a singular and
> alien happening into the very stuff of everyday life, the immediate context of decision
> and actions, and, after a certain point, the only reality with which individuals have the
> social and cultural tools to deal. Crisis may become the default expectation that
> organizes people's priorities and desires, as well as the benchmark against which they
> measure their successes or failures (p. 2).

Moreover, she argued that

> in situations where the crisis is embedded in everyday life and represents for its
> constituents the most familiar and habitual operating environment, the conceptual
> separation between its manifestations and "normal" existence becomes more
> problematic (p. 3).

 In surveying the conceptual history of crisis and applying it to real-world situations,

Shevchenko's (2009) assertion helped to clarify the experiences I shared with discouraged

workers in Horizon Mills. Ideas about crisis that had grown from historically prevalent "short

time" failed to account for the tone, content, and complexity of my key consultants'

experiences: not all of those discouraged workers viewed their situations as ones of crisis,

and not all discouraged workers' situations were uniformly viewed as crisis by service

providers. These inconsistencies demonstrated that my key consultants negotiated different

realities of crisis in Horizon Mills, implying support for the more spectrum-based view of

crisis and 'everyday' experience that Shevchenko advocated. However, the mere fact that

conceptions of crisis framed discouraged workers' situations so differentially—and the fact

that those conceptions bore such a direct relation to the social services that sustained some of

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my key consultants—suggests that cultural frameworks surrounding crisis required attention in day-to-day experience in Horizon Mills.

The Deweyan perspective offers some useful concepts for understanding how discouraged workers engaged with these frameworks in their daily lives. Shevchenko's argument about 'crisis' and 'everyday' experience indicates general dissatisfaction with dualistic conceptions of experience, which aligns with tenets of the Deweyan perspective (as explained in Chapters 1 and 2). Based on my data, the representation of discouraged workers' experiences as *either* 'crisis' *or* 'everyday' seemed as inadequate as using only the four Occupational Questionnaire categories to classify discouraged workers' daily engagements. In the next section, I delve more deeply into Dewey's ideas about tension and remaking problematic situations, showing how notions of crisis played into my key consultants' occupational experiences.

Remaking situational tension

Like his view of uncertainty, Dewey (according to Kestenbaum, 1977) believed that tension was an ever-present aspect of experience. Dewey saw tension as providing a rhythm to person-environment transactions, encompassing uncertainty and providing guiding direction for the future. To Dewey, the negotiation of ever-present tension into harmonious balance allowed people to coordinate with their situations and move forward through experience. His perspective suggests that an absence of tension leaves people without a sense of self relative to their environments; likewise, too much tension promotes an imbalanced relation with the world. Dewey (1938) wrote of human behavior that

> what exists. . . is thus a circuit of which the earlier or "open" phase is the tension of
> various elements. . . while the final or "closed" phase is the institution of integrated
> interaction of organism and environment. . . The close of the circuit is not identical
> with the state out of which disequilibrium and tension emerged. A certain

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modification of environment has also occurred, though it may only be a change in the conditions which future behavior must meet (p. 38).

The modification that precedes the close of humans' "circuit" of behavior occurs through a process of inquiry, in which the tension felt in experience is reflected upon. Situations in which tension becomes an overriding consideration become *problematic* (Campbell, 1995; Dewey, 1929/2005) and stimulate the inquiry process. In this process, people employ "dramatic rehearsal" to imagine possible resolutions of tension and reconstruct their situations (Fesmire, 2003). Dramatic rehearsal is intimately tied to moral customs, in that the habits of thought that suggest solutions to problematic situations are themselves a product of moral customs (Dewey, 1922/2008). Accordingly, the possible courses of action that people 'try on' in dramatic rehearsal reflect both their particular person-environment coordinations as well as more general social expectations about those coordinations.

In Dewey's eyes, humans intelligently remake situations by adapting customs, or moral standards, to their situations (Dewey, 1922/2008). I suggest that my key consultants reshaped conceptions of crisis in negotiating their situations. "In a situation of continuous transformation" such as the one I experienced with my consultants in Horizon Mills, "the binary opposition between external circumstance and social actors becomes blurred" (Shevchenko, 2009, p. 173) such that the two elements transact to recreate situationally-specific moral standards. I argue that my discouraged workers' experiences illuminated discourses and practices of crisis that were remade according to the constraints of particular situations. If we view both discourses and practices of crisis "as essentially two branches of the same tree" (Shevchenko, 2009, p. 10) and 'crisis' and the 'everyday' as members of the same spectrum of experience, then "crisis has to do with security and control as much as with instability and powerlessness" (p. 11). I saw all of these themes in each of my key

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consultants' situations in the ways that my consultants framed their occupational

engagements and occupational possibilities. In light of the reconceptualization of crisis

discussed above, and framed by Deweyan ideas about tension and problematic situations, I

argue that discouraged workers in Horizon Mills situated themselves differentially within the

prevailing moral order about crisis as a means of fostering solutions to their problematic

situations. However, I also suggest that discouraged workers' remakings of their situations

were largely invisible to the larger community, because competing notions of crisis

prevented the formation of an interpretive framework that could accommodate such

remakings within accepted norms for experience.

Remaking situations through occupations and occupational possibilities

The types of things that my key consultants *did* every day—caring for friends and

family, volunteering, sitting at home, and walking, to name a few specific examples—were

not outliers in the stream of 'normal' experience. While none of my key consultants engaged

in *unusual* occupations, their daily doings served a variety of functions that challenged

typical categorizations of occupation. Viewed against the backdrop of dialectics about 'crisis'

and 'everyday' experience, however, the complexity of my key consultants' occupations

seemed to remain unknown to people outside their situations, because those people lacked a

framework for understanding the experience of long-term unemployment outside of the

crisis-everyday dichotomy. In discussing my observation of this, the Christians' Care director

said, "I don't know that the people who support [Christian's Care]…would understand how

complicated it can be, how hard it can be to get somewhere" in situations like the ones my

key consultants experienced. He said, "there is a lot of the mentality that, 'Well, that's all

[unemployed people] have got to do,' and that kind of stinks." Based on decades of

experience with outreach and the disjointed nature of service provision in Horizon Mills and

towns like it, the director had formed a not-so-commonly-held perspective of long-term

unemployed people's situations: "I think that the folks that would have trouble being

[necessary] places and getting there on time is probably not any different than the folks who

work, trying to get down to the corner to pick up their medication before the drugstore closed

or get by the gas company to pay the bill…it's the same stuff, it's just different things." In

essence, the director's comment suggested that people's artful negotiations of situations of

long-term unemployment went unnoticed because they did not contain the same elements

found in employed people's situations. However, his recognition that long-term unemployed

people like discouraged workers deal with "the same stuff. . . just different things" suggests

the potential to reframe discouraged workers' occupational endeavors in a way that might

lessen their 'disappeared' nature.

The vignettes contained in the previous chapter offer examples of occupations whose

complexity was obscured by their nonconformity to dualistic conceptions of 'crisis' and

'everyday' experience. For instance, in looking at Rose's negotiation of the services that

sustained her and her family, it seems evident that Rose had developed a habitus that blurred

the line between crisis and the 'everyday' in her life (Shevchenko, 2009). That habitus

seemed also to indicate the functional coordination of Rose and her environment: emergency

and alarm were not part of the experiences Rose and I shared, and her confidence in sharing

information and strategies with other clients in the Christians' Care waiting area signaled a

fair amount of success in negotiating resource allocation and expenditures to generate

realistic solutions to her problematic situation. Put simply, Rose seemed to have balanced the

tension that others perceived as overriding her situation of long-term unemployment.

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However, whereas the achievement of such balance might be lauded for people engaged in formal employment—as suggested by the Slow philosophy (Honoré, 2004) introduced in Chapter 1—praise was not associated with Rose's efforts. While, as noted in Chapter 6, stability and routine are hard-won victories for discouraged workers, and whereas stability is associated with the 'everyday' experience that prevailing moral orders suggest people ought to strive for, Rose's remaking of her problematic situation into one of stability totally escaped recognition and respect in the eyes of outsiders. Couched in the work ethic that undergirded Horizon Mills, it is not surprising that cultural frameworks and moral orders would have no room for situations that bore negative connotations like laziness and idleness; yet, given the prevalence of such situations in the context of the Great Recession, it seems that such artful negotiation deserves at least some social acknowledgement by virtue of the effort it takes to maintain. Without cultural frameworks that recognize the 'everydayness' of situations of 'crisis,' however, discouraged workers like Rose and their situational negotiations seem destined to remain hidden and misunderstood.

Similarly, although much has been written about social reciprocity and its value outside the formal economy, cultural frameworks in Horizon Mills gave people like Cindy no means of making "doing for others" recognized in the larger social scene. While her son and friends (mostly) appreciated her efforts on their behalf, Cindy's service for others did not mitigate the negative connotations of status as a long-term unemployed person. This stood in stark contrast to Margie's volunteer work, which (although its feasibility mystified people looking in on her situation, such as the man who referred me to her) at least occurred on a stage and through venues that other people in the community could see. By aligning with a socially recognized organization to be in service to others, Margie put herself in a position

where her remaking of her 'crisis' into acceptable 'everyday' experience was visible to others.

Visibility and its key role in interpretations of discouraged workers' occupations was even more evident in Jeanette and Allen's situations. Jeanette's "hopeless sitting moments" and Allen's walking were complex, active endeavors that both evidenced artful situational negotiations and served multiple functions in those people's respective lives; however, these occupations were largely invisible to the larger community. While others' ignorance of Jeanette's "hopeless sitting moments" is not unexpected—after all, they occurred at home, out of the sight of outsiders—recognition of the complexity of those moments hinges not only on people's ability to *see* them, but also on the availability of frameworks that illuminate their complexity and relation to 'everyday' experience. Likewise, although Allen's walking was visible to anyone who also traveled the streets he traversed, understanding its function in his particular situation required more than mere observation. In both of these people's cases (as discussed in Chapter 7), traditional categorizations of occupations did their part to obscure the complexity of these endeavors, but the tension between 'crisis' and 'everyday' experience in Horizon Mills further cloaked Jeanette's and Allen's daily engagements.

Thus, it seemed that people were unable to *see* discouraged workers because their experiences were invisible on the radar guided by cultural norms. As suggested above, part of this invisibility likely stemmed from the fact that discouraged workers' activities did not regularly manifest in social settings; like my incorrect initial assumption about the factories on Worth Street (outlined in Chapter 3), many people in Horizon Mills assumed that discouraged workers did "nothing" because discouraged workers were not uniformly visible

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in places of social note. In general, the strong work ethic in Horizon Mills contributed to a sweeping of social service agencies and their patrons under the proverbial rug: Christians' Care clients lined up in a back parking lot to wait for services, away from the eyes of tourists and business people that passed by the ministry's Worth Street antique store façade; the DSS and ESC were located in non-descript buildings away from the main business drag, out of other citizens' regular line of sight. No one saw Jeanette's "hopeless sitting moments" or Cindy's service to others, and evidence of Rose's negotiations and Allen's multi-purpose walking relied on levels of exposure that their daily life did not afford. Only Margie's volunteering efforts enjoyed regular physical visibility, and yet they, too, remained somewhat obscured by people's inability to reconcile the alleged 'crisis' of her situation with her 'everyday' estimations of her experience. It seemed that each of my consultants practiced their preferred discourse of crisis through their occupational engagements: Jeanette reified the crisis in her situation through her "hopeless sitting moments" and Rose, Cindy, Allen, and Margie tried to align their various occupational engagements with the 'everyday' lives they wanted to live (and believed they were living). In the next section, I suggest that my key consultants' self-perceived well-being related in some way to the visibility of their daily occupations vis-à-vis their remade conceptions of 'everyday' or 'crisis' experience. In addition, it appeared that the totality of each person's 'disappeared' status—based on evaluations of their occupations and occupational possibilities—also seemed correlated with the level of well-being each person saw for him or herself.

Well-being and visibility of occupations

While I neither measured my key consultants' well-being using a standardized assessment nor defined normative parameters for the term (Aldrich, 2010), I did initiate

discussions with each person about self-perceived well-being and what daily life changes might bolster it. Rose said of her well-being, "I would say it's not excellent, but we're working towards it." She told me that not having to deal with external obligations such as caring for her granddaughter or ferrying vehicle-less neighbors around would improve her well-being by allowing for more opportunities to "keep busy" in her free time. For Cindy, who thought of her well-being in terms of her feeling "worthless," she said that recognition of her efforts by others "made me feel better to know that I was needed." Worth also factored into Jeanette's evaluation of her well-being: she said, "The longer it takes me to find something to make me feel like I'm worth something and I earned it, the more of an ant I feel like." For Jeanette, "meeting a goal" and having others acknowledge her success was central to her well-being. Similarly, for Margie—whose situation arguably most resembled normative conceptions of well-being due to her financial cushion and opportunity for volunteering—well-being rested on having a purpose through creating a "legacy." Stability was the primary theme in Allen's discussion of his well-being, particularly in relation to his ability to be "productive" in the eyes of himself and others and move away from being the "black sheep" in his family.

The idea of visibility and acknowledgement within guiding cultural frameworks runs through each of my key consultants' discussions about well-being. Although I was unable to explore the topic of well-being in great detail during the study, the above comments suggest an intimate connection between the visibility afforded by my key consultants' daily occupations and the security, control, instability, and powerlessness (Shevchenko, 2009) they uncertainly negotiated in tense cultural dialectics about 'crisis' and 'everyday' experience. These discouraged workers seemed to situate themselves within an in-flux moral order

through occupation, and their relative success in doing so—their abilities to functionally coordinate with their environments and have those efforts *seen*—appeared to affect their sense of well-being in no uncertain terms.

Conclusion: Reframing discouraged workers' occupations to counteract disappearance

In this chapter, I have argued for the need to consider cultural expectations about crisis in understanding discouraged workers' diverse experiences and occupations. My key consultants' success at functionally coordinating with their environments was as heterogeneous as the consultants themselves, and understanding this diversity requires understanding the types of occupations that are valued and even made possible by the cultural frameworks that define particular situations and experiences. My key consultants attempted to position themselves and their occupations in relation to outdated and shifting norms that failed to capture the complexity of their experiences. In turn, the ability of those norms to recognize and value my consultants' endeavors—or, the ways in which they magnified or mitigated my consultants' disappearance from the eyes of larger society— seemed to play into consultants' perceptions of their well-being. While this discussion examines only one cultural framework in relation to discouraged workers' experiences, it suggests many avenues of future research, which are discussed in the next chapter.

Chapter 9. Conclusions, Strengths and Limitations, and Future Directions

This study has cast discouraged workers' occupations in a Deweyan light, showing those occupations to be responses to uncertain and tense situations. In illuminating the negotiated character of discouraged workers' daily routines, this study evidenced that a dualistic conception of everyday life fails to capture the complexity of discouraged workers' experiences, much like circumscribed occupational categories fail to capture the range of things that discouraged workers *do* in their days. This study also showed that understanding discouraged workers' particular person-environment coordinations—of which their occupations are manifestations—requires a consideration of visibility and its effects on both personal and social evaluations. In this chapter, I discuss my conclusions related to these findings, as well as my study's strengths, limitations, and future directions. I couch each finding's significance in light of problems identified in my original literature review, and discuss future possibilities for this research in both occupational science and other disciplines. I end by detailing how my key consultants' lives have unfolded since the end of my time in Horizon Mills, recognizing that this dissertation communicates only a sliver of information about situations that continue to be remade.

Definitions and disappearance

My findings about the ways in which discouraged workers are classified, counted, and conceptualized suggest the need to accommodate salient experiential elements when researching this population. Many current methods of data collection—most particularly, those used in the Current Population Survey (CPS)—seem adequate in representing the

heterogeneous backgrounds exhibited by my key consultants. However, my findings regarding discouraged workers' situational uncertainty illuminates why research to-date has had difficulty representing the number and types of people in this economic category (Buss & Redburn, 1988): a combination of personal choices and societal (or definitional) mechanisms seem to keep this population 'disappeared' from larger society, and thus there exists a lack of clarity about discouraged workers' prevalence, backgrounds, and experiences. This disappearance is not only problematic for statistical accuracy; it also plays into political decisions about the social service resources upon which discouraged workers rely for survival. A more complete understanding of the size and makeup of this population may be yielded via modifications to data collection procedures, such as increasing the frequency of on-site survey follow-ups so that issues like phone disconnections do not skew the measurement of people in this category. Such modifications may help bolster recognition of discouraged workers' tense and indeterminate situations, and increase political and social imperatives to keep discouraged workers from becoming 'disappeared' as a result. While the acquisition of in-depth experiential information is not the purpose of the CPS, the survey's non-accommodation of experiential factors and inattention to sociocultural norms surrounding the search for work may foster unrealistic views of discouraged workers, which is especially concerning given their increased presence in society.

Thus, researchers must continue to hone the ways in which they collect data on discouraged workers. Whether by modifying the Current Population Survey to further clarify 'active' and 'passive' job search efforts, or by incorporating experiential strategies to ensure that discouraged workers do not become further 'disappeared' in the survey process, researchers must ensure that policy-influencing data provides a better understanding of

discouraged workers. Accordingly, while my findings related to the search for work help to explain both my own recruitment difficulties and the larger literature's lack of experiential studies, they also underscore the necessity of accommodating discouraged workers' uncertain situations to support the comprehensiveness of information about discouraged workers themselves.

Reconceptualizing routine

My findings about discouraged workers' routines provide an impetus for reexamining one of the most foundational concepts used by scholars of occupation (cf. Clark, 2000; Gallimore & Lopez, 2007). My data demonstrated that routines were neither automatic nor below conscious consideration for my key consultants; instead, routines were actively negotiated and were a source of social evaluation and comparison in Horizon Mills. My key consultants' daily rhythms became dependent on the ever-uncertain process of securing resources for their survival, whether through aid organizations or carefully maintained kin and social networks. While the literature on discouraged workers mentions resources in relation to job searching (cf. Benati, 2001), it does not extend the need for resources to other aspects of discouraged workers' experiences. This finding extends current knowledge about discouraged workers by drawing attention to the function and effects of the resource-gathering processes that are central in long-term unemployment (cf. Cottle, 2001).

The discord between quantitative and qualitative information about discouraged workers' routines highlights how data collection may further contribute to discouraged workers' disappearance from mainstream view. Using tools such as the Occupational Questionnaire (Smith, Kielhofner, & Watts, 1986) to gather data about discouraged workers' routines may prompt discouraged workers to forcibly situate their experiences within the

social expectations that structure those tools. Modifications to those tools such as those proposed by Scanlan and Bundy (2011) suggest a promising way of managing the ill fit between cultural expectations and discouraged workers' modes of living. To force a fit of expectations and experience in data collection runs the risk of masking discouraged workers' complex negotiations in data analysis. My findings about the key role of social services vis-à-vis the construction of daily rhythms highlight the need for further research on what routines social service receipt foments. The heterogeneous social service needs of my consultants—and the fact that no single aid organization served as a hub for discouraged workers in Horizon Mills—call for increased awareness of how quickly and completely discouraged workers become invisible on social, political, and community radars. This invisibility again explains not only the paucity of current research on discouraged workers, but also why available social services and occupational possibilities (Rudman, 2010) may remain mismatched to discouraged workers' experiences. Inhabiting the social periphery as they do, discouraged workers are not often in a position where their lives and endeavors are seen, much less accessible for understanding, and so they have restricted possibilities from the vantage of social systems that operate according to dominant views of daily experience.

Occupations: Categorizations, possibilities, and well-being

My findings about the extra-ordinary and multi-purpose nature of discouraged workers' occupations further underscores the relationship between discouraged workers' 'disappeared' nature, their negotiated routines, and what they see as possible daily doings. While some of my consultants, such as Margie, were able to engage in socially-valued occupations that occurred in public places, other consultants, such as Jeanette, were not as able to access those types of daily engagements. As with the ill fit of norm-based tools for

capturing discouraged workers' routines, my findings suggest that discouraged workers'

occupations necessitate wider flexibility than is available through traditional categories and

conceptions of occupation. If cultural frameworks had recognized the negotiated, situated,

and multi-faceted nature of my key consultants' occupations, then my key consultants might

have entertained different occupational possibilities for themselves. However, the broader

systems and structures in which my key consultants operated did not afford visibility to

productive non-work occupations outside public view; as a consequence, my key consultants

either struggled to gain recognition for their (seemingly) invisible endeavors (like Jeanette

did with her "hopeless sitting moments"), or they continued to follow cultural norms that

positioned productive and visible occupations like work or volunteering as their ultimate goal

(like Allen and his emphasis on work and volunteer counseling). Moreover, my key

consultants' abilities to match their occupational possibilities with those outlined on a

societal level seemed tied to their self-perceived well-being. building upon Zippay's (1995)

foundation of highlighting discouraged workers' non-work occupations, this set of findings

resonates with literature that links diminished social status and reduced opportunities for

meaningful activity with periods of unemployment (cf. Creed & Watson, 2003), and its

heterogeneous manifestation in my key consultants' lives reinforces the literature's evidence

regarding unemployment's non-uniform effects (cf. McKee-Ryan et al., 2005).

 These findings suggest that discouraged workers' occupations must be viewed as

ever-changing responses to situations that exist somewhere between 'crisis' and 'everyday'

experience. They reinforce Kantartzis and Molineux's (2010) claim that "within any society,

a way of life emerges that members perceive to be the usual and 'healthy' way to live, the

only possible way of doing things" (p. 1); in other words, the findings imply the need to

revise expectations regarding the types of occupations that are considered possible in situations of long-term unemployment. Put simply, whereas occupations that are socially recognized as "work-like" might not be possible for all discouraged workers, discouraged workers nevertheless engage in a host of occupations that have informal and social economic value (cf. Ferman, 1990) and meet a variety of experiential needs, and the complexity of those occupations often goes unrecognized in unemployed people's lives (cf. Jahoda, Lazarsfeld, & Zeisel, 1933/2002) due to their visibility in social arenas. In order to make sense of whether discouraged workers are "unused human resources" (Castillo, 1998) whose lives are "stripped of any worthwhile occupation" (Toulmin, 1995), researchers must view occupations not simply as contextualized activities, but as responses that contend with perceptions of what is possible and expected in non-normative situations.

Labels, visibility, and masking worlds of experience

Taken together, this study's findings draw attention to a larger problem with efforts to understand discouraged workers' occupations and situations. The use of static categories—whether to define discouraged workers or delimit their occupational possibilities—can become reified in such a way that worlds of experience remain hidden from view. Superficially, the specificity of the 'discouraged' category restricted the potential sample size of this study, which makes the findings vulnerable to criticisms about their validity and utility. Yet, more importantly, the study suggests that being labeled a 'discouraged worker' may have little relevance to the structure and content of daily life, especially given that the label is *not* used by discouraged workers themselves. While some of my key consultants' relationships to the formal labor force fluctuated throughout the study, their experiences did dramatically vary from one another based on that factor alone. The government's very

specific definition of discouraged workers suggests that these workers' experiences differ significantly from their 'unemployed' counterparts; however, apart from their job seeking efforts—which this study has shown to be a contested foundation for statistical classifications—discouraged workers' negotiations of their situations may be akin to those of people outside the 'discouraged' classification. It is highly probable that other people's disappearance from societal visibility affects their routines, occupations, and well-being: thus, as with the potential of occupational categories to mask the things that people do every day (cf. Scanlan & Bundy, 2011; Whalley Hammell, 2009a), it is dangerous to link this study's findings only to a classification as problematic as 'discouraged worker.'

While labels streamline information and help facilitate conversations around a particular topic, this study suggests the need to also consider what labels might exclude from view. As hidden people who may be increasingly 'disappeared' by the very specificity of their formal definition, discouraged workers may represent only a small portion of people who share situations and occupations that remain invisible in the public domain. Accordingly, future research on this group—which will be introduced following a discussion of this study's strengths and limitations—must proceed cautiously and acknowledge that, until proven otherwise, discouraged workers likely experience aspects of their situations that many other people find in common.

Strengths and limitations

Limitations

As with all research, this study had both strengths and limitations. The study's limitations include my lack of full immersion in Horizon Mills and the relative homogeneity of my key consultants. I did not assume residency at my research site, and despite my regular

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presence in Horizon Mills (approximately three days per week), I never approximated full-time attendance in the town. Increasing the temporal length and depth of my research in Horizon Mills would likely have expanded and reinforced the findings I drew from this study. By spending more time in Horizon Mills, I might also have been able to recruit key consultants who better encompassed the supposed heterogeneity of discouraged workers (as evidenced by the literature). While my key consultants were diverse with respect to age and background, they were not as diverse in terms of sex or ethnicity; accordingly, my findings may be restricted in their applicability to people from other walks of life.

However, none of these limitations compromise the value of my findings. Passaro (1997) makes a strong argument for the type of multi-sited, non-resident ethnography that comprised my study situation. Like her study of homelessness in New York, my lack of restriction to one particular location in Horizon Mills or a sole focus on a discouraged worker 'community' allowed me to investigate multiple elements of discouraged workers' situations and privilege "transition and instability" over the "imperative of coherence" (Passaro, p. 152). For example, I drew understandings from both sides of the service provider-service receiver relationship through my participant observation at Christians' Care, and was able to situate those understandings as I observed and interviewed people in the larger community. Through my multi-sited ethnography, I gleaned a deep understanding of the contingent and uncertain negotiations that underlie discouraged workers' situations and occupations, and I explored topics from the vantages of multiple people, places, and elements. Similarly, regular physical and personal distancing from Horizon Mills allowed me to maintain a fresh perspective throughout the study, helping me understand my consultants' experiences within other situations in the state of North Carolina and in the broader country and world.

Strengths

These limitations notwithstanding, the foundation that this research provides for future scholarship is one of my study's biggest strengths. The lack of ethnographic studies specifically focused on discouraged workers makes this study a significant step forward in developing understandings about this 'disappeared' population. The collaborative ethnographic nature of my study—most specifically, my consultants' feedback on sections of this dissertation—augmented the trustworthiness of my findings, which was founded on the multiple sources and types of data used during the study. My ability to gain multiple perspectives of the myriad elements of discouraged workers' situations provided a solid origin for future exploration.

In addition, while generalizability is not the goal of ethnographic research, extrapolation of findings—especially as they relate to conceptual development—is an important function of such studies. This study has illuminated several domains of conceptual development with respect to discouraged workers, but it has also laid a foundation for specific development in the discipline of occupational science. The aim of addressing societal problems has long been stated in occupational science (Clark et al., 1991; Hocking, 2000; Molke, Laliberte-Rudman, & Polatajko, 2004; Wicks, 2006; Yerxa et al., 1990), but it has not always been concretely realized in scholarship on occupation (Clark, 2006; Hocking, 2009). This study provides one example of research from an occupational science perspective that has both explicit interdisciplinary potential and a concern for a timely social issue. The study's findings demonstrate the ability of such research to have both concrete and conceptual outcomes that plant the seeds for multifaceted lines of future inquiries. In the next section, I describe three such lines of inquiry that I hope to pursue in the future.

Future research directions

One topic that I was unable to explore in great detail during this study was the topic of well-being. As evidenced by the literature review in Chapter 1, a great deal of research has already focused on the relationship between unemployment and well-being; however, none of this research has explored how discouraged workers' disconnection from the formal labor market might make their perceptions of well-being different from their 'unemployed' counterparts. This difference is especially salient in light of the divergent visibility of discouraged workers from their other labor force counterparts. Analysis of longitudinal data on the relationship of well-being and life transitions such as unemployment is an ongoing theme of interdisciplinary research (cf. Ryff, Keyes, & Hughes, 2004), but the concept of well-being is in need of further development by scholars of occupation (Aldrich, 2010). Researching well-being with a specific eye to the particular experiences of marginalized but growing populations like discouraged workers, and from the perspective of occupational science, may contribute valuable understandings to the multiple ways in which well-being is conceptualized and assessed (Diener, 2009).

Another vein of future research concerns exploring the process of seeking social services *as an occupational endeavor*. While 'making ends meet' via social services is not an occupation in the same way that formal or informal employment are occupations, my findings suggest that the skill, negotiation, and time use involved in the social service process make those efforts an active part of discouraged workers' days. Research is beginning to recognize a relationship between seeking social services and perceptions of well-being (cf. Saad, 2010), which fosters a natural relation between this line of inquiry and the one mentioned in the preceding paragraph. In addition, research in anthropology on subsistence

adaptation (cf. Baldwin, 1998), scholarship in education regarding the social service institutional maze (cf. Nichols, 2008), and social work investigations of the shaping influence of social services' sociopolitical underpinnings suggest several avenues that an occupation-focused analysis may complement.

Finally, building on discourse analysis trends in anthropology (cf. Nisim & Benjamin, 2010) and occupational science (cf. Rudman & Molke, 2009), it is important to examine what discouraged workers' verbal descriptions of their occupations say about their position within their everyday situations. Situated negotiations formed a strong current in my study's data, and exploring discursive practices in future research stands to provide another level of insight about how those negotiations occur and sit within the various cultural frames that discouraged workers encounter through their various occupational engagements.

Still "searching for the light" or the "sparkle of hope," or finding the *tempo giusto*: Update on key consultants

Just as this line of research will move forward from this particular study, so have the lives of my key consultants moved forward since April 2010. In the closing paragraphs that follow, I offer a brief update on each of my key consultants to show how their situations and occupations continue to develop.

Jeanette

Jeanette wrote in an email: "I had to move in with the two people who shunned me the most, MY PARENTS! I have gone through every employment agency to find work and have had no luck yet. My children left me and moved in with their father, which means my daughter had to abandon her Early College in her senior year. My life has turned into a country song, to add to the loss of everything, Simba (my big baby dog) has been missing for almost a month. He is the source of my existence, maybe God gave him to me for the

years that I needed to live and possibly took him home to heaven???…Currently I am in a "Home Recovery" program to help with the total downward spiral of my mental well being. I have found that long periods of unemployment following several horrible life experiences can bring out the entire gamut of mental health issues I had been so good at covering. Although I have not attempted suicide again, I have developed fears of everything and everyone. I do not leave my "safe zone"…I still have no insurance, but have since applied for disability. I did share your paper with the group I am in and they loved that you took the time and cared enough to research it. I still pray that someday it will make a difference on how people, social services and the government look at what 'corporate America' can do to a person."

Margie

Margie eventually secured a job as a loan specialist in the fall of 2010. When I contacted her to see where life had taken her, she wrote (in an email), "All I can say is, 'wow'." Although she had been able to secure employment following the end of her Vista volunteer position, she was forced to relocate to do so, and she needed to pass a mortgage broker examination that she described as "a real ass-kicker." She also filed an FMLA with her employer in January 2011 and moved temporarily to Florida to care for her ailing parents. She wrote, "My dad died February 8$^{\text{th}}$ and I just came back to NC this week. My mom is with me and we are looking for homes for her near me, my mortgage broker exam is next week and I have been taking about eight hours a week to apply for federal positions. I have two which I have met their minimum qualifications for the position and have moved to the next step." After reading excerpts of this dissertation that focused on my experiences with her, Margie wrote, "I have been blue (feeling sorry for myself instead of being thankful for these

life lessons) with all the life events which hit me all of a sudden. Your portrait of me really help put me back on track and remember my purpose in life."

Rose

On one of my return visits to Horizon Mills, I drove by Rose's apartment complex to see if she was available to bring me up-to-date on her life. I saw her familiar gray-blue minivan in its usual parking spot, but no one answered her apartment door when I knocked. I tried calling Rose's husband's sometimes-working pay-as-you-go phone, to no avail. When we last spoke in April 2010, Rose had been accepted into the community college's Certified Nursing Assistant program and had completed all of the required tests and paperwork for her entrance into the program. She was due to begin classes in the summer of 2010.

Cindy

When I tried to call Cindy to ask for her feedback on what I wrote about her, she said she did not have much time to talk because she was running low on cell phone minutes. I knew that she had fallen back into some drug use toward the end of the study period, and she called me in mid-May 2010 to apologize for disappearing and explain her absence as a result of needing to go through detox. When following up more recently, I asked if meeting in person in Horizon Mills would accommodate her need to preserve her few cell phone minutes; in response, she said she did not know if she would be available, and that she would know more about her availability after appearing in court the following morning. I was unable to successfully reach her via phone after that pre-court conversation.

Allen

When I spoke to Allen in November 2010, he seemed open to the idea of reconvening for a follow-up session. He had officially joined the National Guard, which kept him busy

two weekends per month, and he continued his work as a security guard, which he had begun

shortly before the study ended in April 2010. He also noted that he was spending two days

per week at the probation reporting center, which suggested that the case for his final felony

charge had finally closed and the upshot was that probation activities kept him out of jail.

When I tried to contact Allen again in the spring of 2011, my phone calls went unreturned.

Appendix

Table A1. List of consultants and duration/nature of data collection.

Name	Data Collection Duration	Nature of Data
Rose	August 2009-April 2010	Participant observation, 2 formal interviews, 2 Occupational Questionnaires
Cindy	September 2009- April 2010	Participant observation, 3 formal interviews, 2 Occupational Questionnaires
Jeanette	September 2009- April 2010	Participant observation, 3 formal interviews, 2 Occupational Questionnaires
Allen	October 2009- April 2010	Participant observation, 3 formal interviews, 2 Occupational Questionnaires
Margie	January-April 2010	Participant observation, 2 formal interviews, 2 Occupational Questionnaires
Christians' Care Director	July 2009-April 2010	Participant observation, 1 formal interview, many informal interviews
Christians' Care staff members (N=10)	July 2009-April 2010	Participant observation, 2 formal interviews, many informal interviews
Christians' Care social worker	July 2009-April 2010	1 formal interview, many informal interviews
ESC manager	August 2009- March 2010	1 formal interview, many informal interviews
Probation reporting center manager and staff person (N=2)	September 2009	1 formal interview, many informal interviews
DSS social worker	October 2009	1 informal interview
Chamber of Commerce member	October 2009	1 formal interview
Media person	September 2009	1 formal interview
Community college president	February 2010	1 formal interview
Local politician	March 2010	1 informal interview
Volunteer center coordinator	February 2010	1 informal interview
Sheriff's office public relations representative	September 2009	1 informal interview
Census Bureau representative	March 2010	1 informal interview
Outplacement consultant	December 2010	1 informal interview
Factory human relations director	January 2010	1 informal interview

Figure 1A: Occupational Questionnaire.

OCCUPATIONAL QUESTIONNAIRE
Developed by N. Riopel Smith with assistance from G Kielhofner and J. Hawkins Watts (1986).

Today's date _____

Name _____

Age _____

TYPICAL ACTIVITIES For the half hour beginning at:	QUESTION 1 I consider this activity to be: 1 - work 2 - daily living work 3 - recreation 4 - rest	QUESTION 2 I think that I do this: 1 - Very well 2 - Well 3 - About average 4 - Poorly 5 - Very poorly	QUESTION 3 For me this activity is: 1 - Extremely important 2 - Important 3 - Take it or leave it 4 - Rather not do it 5 - Total waste of time	QUESTION 4 How much do you enjoy this activity. 1 - Like it very much 2 - Like it 3 - Neither like it nor dislike it 4 - Dislike it 5 - Strongly dislike it
5:00am	1 2 3 4	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
5:30	1 2 3 4	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
6:00	1 2 3 4	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
6:30	1 2 3 4	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
7:00	1 2 3 4	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
7:30	1 2 3 4	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
8:00	1 2 3 4	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
8:30	1 2 3 4	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
9:00	1 2 3 4	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
9:30	1 2 3 4	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
10:00	1 2 3 4	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
10:30	1 2 3 4	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
11:00	1 2 3 4	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
11:30	1 2 3 4	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
12:00	1 2 3 4	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5

OCCUPATIONAL QUESTIONNAIRE (CONTINUED)

TYPICAL ACTIVITIES For the half hour beginning at:	QUESTION 1 I consider this activity to be: 1 - work 2 - daily living work 3 - recreation 4 - rest	QUESTION 2 I think that I do this: 1 - Very well 2 - Well 3 - About average 4 - Poorly 5 - Very poorly	QUESTION 3 For me this activity is: 1 - Extremely important 2 - Important 3 - Take it or leave it 4 - Rather not do it 5 - Total waste of time	QUESTION 4 How much do you enjoy this activity. 1 - Like it very much 2 - Like it 3 - Neither like it nor dislike it 4 - Dislike it 5 - Strongly dislike it
12:30pm	1 2 3 4	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
1:00	1 2 3 4	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
1:30	1 2 3 4	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
2:00	1 2 3 4	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
2:30	1 2 3 4	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
3:00	1 2 3 4	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
3:30	1 2 3 4	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
4:00	1 2 3 4	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
4:30	1 2 3 4	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
5:00	1 2 3 4	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
5:30	1 2 3 4	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
6:00	1 2 3 4	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
6:30	1 2 3 4	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
7:00	1 2 3 4	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
7:30	1 2 3 4	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
8:00	1 2 3 4	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
8:30	1 2 3 4	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
9:00	1 2 3 4	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
9:30	1 2 3 4	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
10:00	1 2 3 4	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
10:30	1 2 3 4	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
11:00	1 2 3 4	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
11:30	1 2 3 4	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5

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