UNEMPLOYED: WHAT MEN'S AND WOMEN'S DIVERGENT EXPERIENCES TELL US ABOUT GENDER INEQUALITY

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ABSTRACT

UNEMPLOYED: WHAT MEN AND WOMEN'S DIVERGENT EXPERIENCES TELL US ABOUT GENDER INEQUALITY

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Over the last few decades, there has been tremendous progress toward gender equality. In recent years though, some scholars have suggested that this movement toward gender equality has stalled as women's progress in various arenas, especially the home and in their labor-force participation, has plateaued. Scholars have thus focused their attention on ascertaining whether, where and for whom gender equality has stalled. Using family observation data as well as longitudinal in depth interviews with unemployed women, unemployed men, and their spouses, this dissertation argues that for this sample gender continues to powerfully shape life at home and orientations to the labor force. It shows that unemployed men's unemployment experiences are *central*. Unemployment is perceived by unemployed men and their spouses as problematic, and in need of immediate rectification. During men's unemployment, the home, family life and marital dynamics are organized so as to enable men to find re-employment. Alternatives to full-time paid employment are not considered. In contrast, the experience of demographically similar unemployed women is *peripheral* as their unemployment recedes to the backdrop of family life rather than being the center of it. Unemployed women do spend time job-searching, but they fit this into the schedule of their family life. Indeed, unemployed women often find themselves devoting extensive time to housework and childcare as they contend with being unemployed. Their husbands too emphasize that it is not imperative for women to find a job immediately, and they can take the time to focus on the home and children. Not all unemployed women's experiences are equally peripheral. The cases that are less so nevertheless illuminate the gendered tensions between couples about the role of women's paid employment in their marriage and family. These findings thus strongly support the idea of a gender stall for this sample. They show how, during the critical moment of unemployment, when gender rearrangements can be reconfigured and transformed in the home, the behaviors and attitudes of unemployed women, men, and their spouses, remain entrenched in normative notions of gender.

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INTRODUCTION

Central and Peripheral Gendered Experiences of Unemployment

Meet the Barons

Todd Baron is a 45-year old marketing manager who has worked for candy and cosmetic companies in the past. He is dressed casually in a grey T-shirt and loose black gym shorts. He stands at about 5'9" with silver-brown hair that is neatly parted on the right side. Todd's shoulders stoop as he walks, and while a smile plays at the corners of his mouth he is rubbing his index finger nervously against his thumb. His eyes dart around the room. He is friendly, but his fast-paced manner of speaking suggests a general restlessness.

The past five months have been tough for Todd, his wife Kimmie and their three sons who are all under the age of ten. Todd losat a job he had held for a little over a year. This is the second job loss Todd has experienced in the past four year years. His first one lasted for ten months and it dug deeply into the savings Todd and Kimmie had amassed. Earning a comfortable six figure salary, Todd has been the primary breadwinner in his family, while his wife Kimmie, who works part-time as a teacher at a local school, brings in about a fifth of his former income.

Losing his job was difficult for Todd. There had been rumblings that the candy company Todd worked for was not doing well. Both he and Kimmie had been anticipating that Todd might lose his job any week now. But Kimmie was nevertheless very concerned for Todd when that day finally came. A petite brunette with a fresh, make-up free face, chocolate brown eyes and long, wavy brown hair, Kimmie looked

worried even as she recounted the telephone call Todd made to her on the day he lost his job, "He was crying. He was upset…[I was] talking him out of doing something, anything rash… Ending his life or anything like that." Todd was upset, but not as much as Kimmie had initially feared. Still, the past five months have not been easy for any of them. Todd says, "It's tough sitting alone at home." Losing his job unmoored Todd; he did not know what to do with himself, how to spend his time, even how to retain friendships. Todd explains, "A good buddy of mine the last couple weeks said 'Hey, you want to go to lunch?' And I just told him 'I'm tied up.' And I wasn't...I mean, I ate a little sandwich at home."

On the other hand, the longer Todd stayed at home, the more antsy Kimmie became seeing him there. For the first few months after losing his job, Todd weighed his options: to look for another position or to become self-employed by opening up a franchise. He says, "We were looking into the franchise and I think she saw that that was getting me a little bit excited." After two months, Kimmie expressed her unease with their situation to Todd, and he continues, "I think she stuck with me for the first two months. But she kind of gave me that ultimatum on New Year's and said 'You've got to stop. We've lost two months…Now we're not getting money.' For her part, Kimmie explains what it was like for her to watch Todd at home, when she thought he should be out searching more frantically for jobs: "I'm always saying, 'You need to be looking, you need to be looking.' And he's kind of sit-on-his-hands and wait-for-the-other-shoe-to-drop." Shaking her head in exasperation, Kimmie purses her thin lips before continuing, "I'm not a sit-on-my-hands kind of person." Todd agrees with Kimmie that he should be doing more, "She's been patient…She could be much tougher knowing that I haven't

done a lot. I have a friend who's been laid off, he's working now, but his wife was on him every single day."

For Kimmie and Todd, while Todd's job loss itself was a blow, the more significant experience has been what Todd has done in the months since. As Kimmie explains above, she does not think Todd has been looking for jobs with as much vigor as she would prefer. From Kimmie's perspective, Todd's only priority should be to find a job. Todd agrees with her, but he also finds it difficult to do so. Yet, for both Kimmie and Todd, the fact that Todd is staying at home is a problem that dominates their marriage and their family life. Todd is ashamed of his unemployment and unable to socialize as he would have previously because of it; and Kimmie is worried. For the Barons, Todd's unemployment is a grave problem that needs to be rectified.

Meet the Brozeks

Lisa Brozek is an athletic 52-year old, so athletic that when we meet her right arm is in a cast, broken from a martial arts class she took. Her face is scrubbed clean; she has a pink glow on her cheeks and her blond hair tied up in a high ponytail. She is dressed casually in a fitted grey zip-up hoodie with a tank top underneath. Her pants are black corduroy and tucked into tan Uggs. Her hands sparkle with jewelry: a large pear-cut diamond on her ring finger, a bracelet of black and white pearls set in silver, and silver hoop earrings with butterflies dangling in the middle. Lisa had been the Chief Operating Officer at a foundation focused on eradicating kidney disease. She had been with this foundation for over 30 years – starting out as a secretary before she had even finished

college, working her way up the ladder and getting a bachelor's and eventually an MBA as she progressed up.

But two years ago, when a new CEO was hired, there were some changes, eventually culminating with Lisa losing her job three months ago. Lisa had in fact applied for the position of CEO when it had opened up, but once she was passed over in favor of an outsider, she recalls she had a lot of hurt. Lisa is matter of fact when she explains, "I was hurt by it." For her, losing this job was less painful than it might otherwise have been because of the lingering disappointment of being passed over for CEO. Yet, having been rejected from the CEO position meant that, "I've already been down there. I've already been in that trench of depression and pain about not being welcome…and just getting kind of rejected."

For these white-collar workers, the mantra of the day tells them that the key to finding their next job is to network. And Lisa jumped straight into this. Sam and Lisa have only been married for less than two years and it's the second marriage for both. Lisa has a 20-year old daughter with her ex-husband, who attends a four-year college a few hours' drive away. Sam has two teenaged daughters with his ex-wife, and they live with his ex-wife. While Sam and Lisa were dating and even during their marriage Lisa has been the primary breadwinner – earning in the six figures annually. She also paid for the couple's wedding. Sam Brozek, also in his early 50s, is self-employed and sells health insurance. In recent years, Sam has been doing well. His income has been steadily increasing each year, rising from $60,000 in the year before to $80,000 this year. He anticipates it increasing to $100,000 next year based on the number of clients whose healthcare coverage he manages. This is a huge change for Sam, who had declared

personal bankruptcy a decade ago. Nevertheless, at the time of the interview his income was at about half of Lisa's previous income. Together, the two also own a $200,000 home and Lisa has a savings account with close to a $100,000.

Sam has light blond hair that spikes up, a goatee on his reddish face and an easygoing smile. He dresses casually – usually wearing sweats in the winter and shorts in the summer, unless he has client meetings. Sam says,

> During those first six months, she was trying to network and have coffee with people. Network and find about jobs and everything...So, that kept her more in the game than anything else…Basically, until she figured out exactly what she wanted, she kept her game up.

By "kept her game up" Sam means that Lisa never tired of networking and kept at it. Lisa attributes this to having had lots of support from friends, "My friends have been pretty supportive...We get together. We go to lunch. We go out for drinks." She remains in touch with her friends from work - who she describes as being unhappy in the toxic work environment, and Lisa says,

> They're jealous that I don't have to be there…When we go out, they're like, "How are you?" And I'm like, "I'm doing great! How are you guys?" And they're miserable. They're just really unhappy. I feel like the whole dynamic at the [foundation] has become a place where people are so unhappy. It's just awful.

As Lisa and Sam describe, for Lisa, being unemployed is not a lonely experience – she has friends and activities that she is involved in. Unlike Todd Baron, whose experience

exuded a sense of loneliness, Lisa's schedule is filled with social and professional activities.

Lisa's calendar is full partly because Sam has encouraged Lisa to see her unemployment as an opportunity to figure out which direction she wants her working life to go. Sam says,

> I've told her, 'If you don't take the time to explore right now, you're never going to have it again and it's going to come back and bite you in the ass. So you take this time…to explore…because we have money and we have time…because if not you'll be looking back on it the rest of your life and regretting it.'

Lisa too explains that Sam's encouragement and support that she should use this time to explore means that "I don't have to leap at anything. I don't have to feel like it's this panic to find a job…And I'm really trying to be careful that I don't get sucked into something that's going to more of being unhappy."

For Lisa and Sam, Lisa's unemployment is not a problem in need of being rectified, as for the Barons, but rather it is an opportunity to explore a more fulfilling career. Lisa describes the options she is weighing as she tries to make the very best decision in terms of her career for herself as well as for Sam, "Let's say I started my own…shelter for cats...I'm not making any money for a while…And I think Sam would support me in that…We go back and forth about it. And sometimes I'm like 'No, I have to make money.'" Often it's Sam who pushes Lisa to focus on happiness rather than providing for their family, "Sam's more like, 'Lisa, you gotta do what makes you happy in what you want to be doing. And if that means you take a pay cut to do that…then

figure that out. To me, it's OK. Whatever you need to do.'" Lisa's unemployment is not an ideal situation for the Brozeks, but neither is it so fraught as for the Barons.

***

Why do Todd and Lisa– professionals who were both the primary breadwinners in their families – have such different experiences of unemployment? Why is Todd nervous, anxious, lonely, and his wife Kimmie pushing him toward finding a job quickly? Why does Lisa seems relaxed, relieved even, to be out of an unpleasant work situation? Why is Lisa's husband Sam supporting and encouraging her to take the time to explore her options and her desires, even though it means a considerable cutback in their income? More importantly, what do these differences in Todd's experience and Lisa's say about gender equality in these American marriages?

This dissertation aims to shows how and in what forms gender inequality continues to persist in marriages, with implications for gender inequality in the labor force. This holds even for this sample of married workers who have, theoretically, perhaps the greatest ability to be gender-egalitarian. It uses in-depth interviews with unemployed and college-educated men and women, and their spouses, as well as observational data with the families of these unemployed professionals, to show how the key, and at times traumatic, event of unemployment is experienced divergently by men and women.

I explain that men's unemployment is experientially *central* – an almost physical presence in the marriage and home, eclipsing other aspects of the marriage. It becomes a central concern for men, as being unemployed is viewed as a great deviance for men. It

is the dominant topic of conversation amongst unemployed men and their wives. The dynamic between unemployed husbands and their employed wives becomes one where wives strive to emotionally support their husbands as husbands try to find work; in the process making clear that these men must find re-employment. "Opting out" (Stone, 2007) of the labor force to become a stay-at-home dad is not an option. Men's unemployment and consequent efforts to find appropriate re-employment also shape their daily routine, and to an extent their families'. Indeed, for unemployed men, as their unemployment continues, the pressure to find a job grows acuter over time, and the density of their unemployment seems to loom larger.

In contrast, for many women their unemployment experience is *peripheral.*[1] Social or cultural sanctions to being unemployed are far less strong for women than for men; and so women's unemployment evaporates into the ether of family life, leaving only traces that something is not as it should be. For most unemployed women and their husbands, women's unemployment is not a central topic of conversation. When broached by a husband or unemployed wife, it is discussed only briefly and without much depth. Consequently, the marital dynamic is one where, when husbands try to be emotionally supportive to wives, this support comes in the form of reassuring wives that they can take as long as they need to find a job. Sometimes, husbands also suggest that women can consider "opting out," at least for a while. For most unemployed women, job-searching is not central to how they organize their days. Instead, women's days are shaped by their children's routines and household chores. Job-searching becomes just one of the many things unemployed women juggle during the course of their days. In this way,

[1] See Table 2 for more on central and peripheral unemployment experiences.

unemployed women's unemployment seems to mirror their employment. As we know, women, including professional women, struggle with trying to "have it all." Yet, unemployed women's unemployment experiences are more varied than men's, and more susceptible to qualitatively changing over time. Some unemployed women do focus on job-searching, but this is not socially sanctioned, especially by their husbands, in the way that unemployed men's job-searching is. Some women who start out looking for work decide, as they encounter a series of negative experiences and often encouraged by their husbands, to quit the labor force.

In parsing out these divergent and gendered experiences of unemployment, I show how gender inequality maintains a strong grip on these American marriages, and how unemployment has implications for reproducing gender differences and inequality in the home and the labor force. The concept of *norms* refers to unwritten and informal rules in a society that are widely recognized and have moral importance within the society. Violating norms may result in social sanctions, which can range from mild to severe depending on the norm being violated. Norms operate at multiple levels – for example, while shaped at the meta-level of the society or community, they are usually internalized by individuals, shaping behavior and beliefs at this level. Previous studies of men and women's employment have tended to focus on the internalization of gendered norms, as for example when it comes to men and women's identities vis-a-vis employment (Damaske, 2011; Lane, 2011; Garey, 1999; Gerson, 1985).

Other studies have tended to explain how *institutions*, most commonly the workplace, perpetuate gender inequality, for example by neglecting how men and women have different obligations outside of work (Stone, 2007; Acker, 1990). While these

studies have illuminated important aspects of how employment is gendered; we still need to know more about how these gendered norms are produced at the level of the family. In short, we need to know not just how individuals internalize gendered norms, or how at the macro-level institutions, such as that of paid work, encourage gendered conceptions, but also how, at the meso-level, members of couples interact with each other to shape gendered expectations around paid work. Including the last is crucial for a fuller picture of the dynamic ways through which gender inequality persists (Ridgeway, 2011)

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Gender stall or gender progress?

In the summer of 2016, no glass ceiling seems impermeable, and gender equality seems a given; Hillary Clinton is the presidential nominee of the Democratic National Party. Ms. Clinton herself, and others, see her rise to the highest political echelons as evidence that the world of work is women's for the taking, and Clinton has confidently said "To every little girl who dreams big: Yes you can be anything you want – even president."[2] Statements like this suggest that even though gender equality may not have been fully reached, we are well on our way there. It assumes that the progression is indubitably toward gender equality. With a strong female presidential candidate in the running, this is an opportune moment to assess gender equality in the US.

Yet, scholars continue to debate whether gender equality in American society has stalled or is progressing. There are myriad signs that it is progressing steadily, including:

[2] As tweeted on Hillary Clinton's official Twitter account: https://twitter.com/hillaryclinton/status/740349871073398785

women's increased labor force participation rates; the rise of breadwinner moms who bring in the greater share of the household income (Pew, 2013); the rise in stay-at-home dads (Pew, 2014); the convergence of hours spent on household chores, paid employment and childcare amongst men and women (Bianchi et al., 2006); more women now obtaining degrees in male-dominated fields, such as MDs and JDs than they did previously (England, 2010); women's general movement into more "male" jobs which come with higher pay and prestige (England and Folbre, 2005); and a higher number of women in managerial and executive positions than in previous decades.

Writing incisively about a gender stall, Paula England pointed out that although women have had strong incentives to enter jobs typified as male, because such jobs usually have higher status and pay, men have had little incentive to take on jobs typified as female. Approaching gender equality would mean that men and women would participate in all areas of education and occupation to a similar extent, yet that is not the case. While women may acquire higher educational degrees, they often don't do so in the most prestigious and highest paying majors, which continue to be occupied by men. Indeed, as women enter male-dominated fields, and especially if they become the majority "feminizing" the field, then there are indications that the prestige and pay in that field decreases. Paula England (2010) points out that the power of gender essentialism means that men and women continue to follow gender-typical paths.

Yet others point out that the increase in breadwinner moms is explained by the rise of single-mother households rather than a dramatic increase in wives out-earning their husbands (Pew, 2013). While women do have higher levels of education than men, and are entering male-dominated fields, the majority of women still tend to be

concentrated in majors associated with lower occupational prestige and earnings (Cohen, 2013). Although men's and women's hours spent on paid and unpaid work may be converging, women continue to spend far more time on thankless chores such as cleaning the bathroom, while men spend their share of housework time on more fulfilling chores such as spending time with children (Garner, 2015); or that while there may be a rise of stay-at-home dads, this is explained more by involuntary factors – such as being too ill to work and losing a job rather than choosing to stay at home (Pew, 2014). The data on key measures of gender equality remains complicated and the debate about the progress, or lack thereof, toward gender equality persists.

Other scholars have focused on the mechanisms behind gender inequality; *how* gender inequality persists, and why despite some clear advances toward equality, it keeps eluding us. Cecilia Ridgeway (2011) for example argues that gender inequality persists because as individuals encounter undetermined circumstances they fall into drawing on determined, usually very traditional, beliefs about gender. An example of this would be the results from one study which showed that although millennials have far more gender egalitarian beliefs than previous generations, when millennials started becoming parents they often assign primary childcare responsibilities to the mother and the obligations to provide economically to the father. This decision is usually based on a complex connection of factors: for example, childcare policies in the US make childcare expensive, often requiring a parent to stay at home. Mothers often end up being the stay-at-home parent since men continue to earn more than women and there are cultural norms that women are better suited for childcare (Gerson, 2010).

The question of whether and how the shift toward gender equality has stalled often draws on the theoretical conception of "doing gender" (West and Zimmerman, 1987). Stemming from the social interaction perspective, this concept suggests that instead of being a biological or social construction, gender is actually reproduced through micro-interactions. In these interactions, men and women strive to adhere to culturally-specific gendered norms. These interactions are infused with power relations, such that the performance of femininity is inherently the performance of subordination, as opposed to masculinity. In the US, a central component of doing masculinity is linked to paid employment, while a central component of doing femininity is linked to motherhood. Paying attention to the gendered nuances of unemployment has the potential to improve our understanding of how men and women "do gender" during this time, which in turn is key for understanding gender stall and inequality.

We thus need to ask: to what extent do the impressive strides women have made in the workplace translate into gender equality? Specifically, we need to focus on marriages, as they are key to understanding the status of gender equality in the United States. Marriages, and family life, provide unparalleled insight into the dynamics of gender differences and inequality in contemporary American society. To understand how gender continues to shape men and women's lives, at home and the workplace, we need to look into this realm in particular.

"Doing gender" during unemployment: reinforcing or ameliorating gender inequality?

American cultural expectations mean that earning and providing for their families is central to how men enact being husbands and fathers (Townsend, 2002; Gerson, 1993),

particularly middle-class men (Shows and Gerstel, 2009; Cooper, 2000). Gerson's important work on fatherhood (1993) finds that even men who are, or plan to be, "involved fathers" nevertheless prioritize working. They become "mother's helper's" instead of full-fledged partners in parenting. A more recent study similarly argues that although mainstream culture suggests that there is a shift toward a much more involved fatherhood, fathers still remain secondary parents (Wall and Arnold, 2007).

Just as gender is "done" (West and Zimmerman, 1987), it can also be "undone" (Deutsch, 2007; Risman, 2009). Undoing gender means gender differences, and consequent gender equalities, can diminish over time. Differences in gender performances may not be as inextricably tied to power and resources as they currently are. Some studies have shown that when mothers work more and contribute a greater share to the household income gender is "undone" in the family as fathers take on more parenting responsibilities. A study using time diary data from married fathers and mothers with children under the age of 13 showed that when wives are employed and spend greater time in the labor force, fathers engage in more "solo" care for their children where they retain the primary responsibility for certain aspects of childcare. Fathers also contribute more to routine childcare (for example, changing diapers) when wives' contribution to the couple's household income is greater than men's (Raley et al., 2012). In a study of stay-at-home fathers and breadwinning mothers, Chesley (2011) paints an optimistic picture of how even when involuntary situations, such as job losses, push men toward being stay-at-home fathers, this new "family arrangement" can be conducive to greater gender equality as "fathers come to value their increased involvement in children's care in ways that reduce gender differences in parenting" (Chesley, 2011: 642).

Chesley goes on to sanguinely suggest that this experience of being a stay-at-home father, intermittent as it may be, has "the potential to translate into institutional change, particularly when [men] reenter the labor force" (Chesley, 2011: 642).

Men's unemployment has often been seen as a time to understand whether entrenched notions of gender can be altered within the family. The performance of gender (Butler, 1990) or "doing gender" has been central in sociological understandings of how power relations between men and women are reproduced. In the social interaction line of analysis, gender is produced and reproduced through micro-interactions, as men and women are held accountable to culturally-specific gendered scripts. In the US, these gendered scripts are intertwined with employment, since notions of masculinity still prescribe economic provision to men, while work relating to children or tending to the upkeep of the home, for example by cleaning and cooking, is still seen largely as women's work. This is despite empirical shifts where women are now the primary or sole breadwinners in 40% of American families (Pew, 2013). Some previous research on men's unemployment has suggested that being unemployed "undoes gender" as men take over household chores, usually seen as feminine, while women in these scenarios end up being the breadwinners.

In *Company of One,* her book on unemployed white-collar workers in the Dallas technology industry, anthropologist Carrie Lane (2011) argues that unemployment amongst these skilled and educated workers has the potential to undo gender. She suggests that their unemployment pushes men to embrace a new form of masculinity – one where men are as comfortable with providing for their families through cooking, baking, and looking after their children, as they are through earning and providing

economically. Lane argues that unemployed men have recourse to a new masculinity, where embracing being at home while unemployed can be seen as enacting a progressive manhood. Welcoming this new masculinity, which does not see economic provision as solely men's responsibility, is possible partially because most of the men she interviews are part of dual-earner relationships. Wives' income thus cushions unemployed men from bearing the lone burden of economic provision. Lane suggests that this is in contrast to experiences of unemployed women. She finds that the unemployed women she talks to seem to have unemployment experiences reminiscent of those of men in the 1980s – feelings of intense stigma and failure. Lane (2011: 126) explains her puzzling finding by saying:

> It is not surprising that job loss is discomfiting for women who came of age in a world in which paid labor is expected of educated, middle-class women (at least until childbirth). Indeed, for many middle-class women, it is the decision not to work for pay that has become the culturally fraught one…[These women] do not sound like their unemployed male peers in the 2000s; in their guilt and self-recrimination they sound instead like the displaced managers Newman interviewed in the 1980s, judging themselves according to an ideology of meritocratic individualism that equates unemployment with individual failure and unworthiness.

Lane (2011) further suggests that men have "an alternative model that relieves them of the responsibility to provide for a dependent partner yet still manages to position them as autonomous, masculine agents" (126). Yet, Lane's data is at times too scarce to make such broad arguments. For example, she did not examine the perspectives of spouses as

well as unemployed individuals, and as such did not quite explain what it is like for both unemployed individuals and their spouses to navigate this emotionally charged period. A welcome starting point, Lane's findings on gender and family during unemployment nevertheless need both better data and improved conceptual development.

Lane (2011) is fundamentally revising earlier findings about masculinity and unemployment. In her interview-based study with unemployed men in New York City, as well as adults who had grown up as children in families with an unemployed father, Newman (1988) found that the narrative of a booming economy in the 1980s when she conducted her research, and the strictly male-breadwinner structure of the families she interviewed, meant that men in her sample felt extremely stigmatized. Men's unemployment negatively impacted marriages and children. The prevalent ideals of masculinity and the primacy of the male-breadwinner family structure in her sample meant that wives and unemployed men often acutely felt that men had broken the marital bargain. Unlike Lane's generation of unemployed men, men in Newman's sample did not have the ideal of an alternative masculinity to potentially smoothen their unemployment experience. Newman's sample was privileged; her sample of unemployed men had occupied high-level executive positions prior to losing their jobs. As such, their families did not face destitution. Instead, they faced relative deprivation – downward mobility from affluent lifestyles. Unable to tide over this stress these marriages often unraveled and wives berated husbands for this failure.

Even earlier, scholars studying the Great Depression examined how it shaped family relationships and pointed to the importance of relative deprivation as well as material deprivation in shaping experiences over the lifetime (Elder, 1974). In the largest

longitudinal study of the Great Depression, Glen H. Elder (1974) used interview-based data from the Oakland study which followed a cohort born in the 1920s and living in the San Francisco Bay Area. The cohort originated from working class and middle class families. Elder focused on how being born at this historical moment shaped the later life experiences of members of this cohort. In terms of family life, he particularly looked at the parent-child relationship to understand how, for example, having an unemployed father shaped the aspirations of these men and women in later life. Yet, Elder himself explained that the study was unable to illuminate what unemployment meant for marriages since it did not conduct interviews with any of the fathers of this cohort, and only one interview with mothers. He did explain though that for the sub-group of children from this sample who experienced material deprivation, the role of mothers became important as mothers from the economically more impacted families often started participating in the labor force, and also became emotional resources for children.

In her study of unemployment during the Great Depression, Mirra Komarovsky (1940), did focus on men's unemployment to ascertain what it meant for their roles in their families as fathers and husbands. Foreshadowing Carrie Lane's idea about alternative masculinity, one of Komarovsky's key findings is that men who have strong alternative identities as husbands and fathers had an easier experience of unemployment as they were more amenable to contributing to their family by taking care of children and helping out with household chores rather than focusing on their unemployment as failure of their manhood. These works clearly highlight the importance of experiences such as relative deprivation, and illuminate the importance of how men's roles and interactions in their immediate family shaped their experience of unemployment. Still, these earlier

studies are limited in terms of shedding light on the contemporary experience of unemployment. These studies were conducted at a time when dual-earner families were not a norm; and when gender norms were, on the surface at least, vastly different than they are currently.

Yet, other scholars resist the idea of such a sweeping change in conceptions of masculinity from the studies of Newman (1988) and Komarovsky (1940) as Lane (2011) suggests. In her qualitative study of men of various social classes contending with unemployment as well as precarious work, Allison Pugh (2016) explains how some men contend with unemployment by transforming the meaning of an "honorable masculinity." Pugh says, "masculinity has long involved social norms that are widely understood and upheld but that only a few can actually live up to." This has particular resonance for working-class men whose jobs are often precarious and subject to mass layoffs in industries across the board. While Lane (2011) suggests that an alternative model of masculinity has provided middle-class men with the cultural tools to contend with under- and unemployment, Pugh sees the lack of work many men experience during the course of a life as an enduring problem where men continue to struggle to reconcile the dissonance between cultural expectations and the realities of their lives.

In her recent book, *Job Loss Identity and Mental Health*, Dawn Norris (2016) too reports on interviews with unemployed white-collar men and women. She retains a social-psychological focus, delving deeply into the various aspects of one's identity that are impacted by job loss, and that often have to be renegotiated. In one chapter Norris, disagreeing with Lane (2011), explains that women in particular often cope with unemployment by shifting the focus of their identity to highlight their roles as mothers

and wives – roles rooted in the domestic and private sphere of the home - rather than as workers. This way of coping is not present for men (contrary to Lane's argument, and to an extent even Komarovsky's). Despite Norris's attempts to shed light on the gendered meaning and experience of unemployment, her conceptualization of unemployment is somewhat narrow as she focuses primarily on how unemployment impacts people's individual identities. Norris treats unemployment as a primarily individual experience, rather than also seeing it as one which is inherently shaped and produced by social interactions with key figures, especially spouses. As such, Norris does not analyze data from spouses of unemployed individuals, nor does she conduct family observations with unemployed individuals and their families.

Interviews with spouses are key for studies purporting to explain how one's place in the family shapes the experience of unemployment, in part because husbands and wives often have divergent interpretations and understandings of the same events, leading to what Jessie Bernard called "his" and "her" marriages (Bernard, 1972). Family observations on the other hand allow for comparing behavior with narratives – to understand not just how unemployed men and women proclaim thinking about their unemployment and how it shapes them, but also how they experience it at a daily level. Norris's book presents a welcome start to understanding how unemployment is a gendered experience, but the analysis it offers to this end is ultimately limited given the study's design.

Previous research suggests that when and how gender is done or undone is particularly susceptible to social class. For example, a study which compared fathers who were in the highly prestigious occupation of physicians with fathers who were in the less

prestigious occupation of Emergency Medical Technician (EMT), found that the latter spend far more time with their children. Additionally, unlike fathers who are EMTs, fathers who are physicians tend to spend time with children which is publicly visible – for example attending baseball games, as opposed to preparing meals for children (Shows and Gerstel, 2009).

This finding is corroborated by other studies which have found that although working-class men and women tend to espouse more gender-traditional ideals, they actually practice gender-egalitarianism in terms of the division of paid and unpaid labor (Presser, 2003; Deutsch and Saxon, 1998). Authors of these studies explain that the material conditions of these families – where the income from both partners is necessary, and there isn't enough income to outsource chores like childcare and cleaning – nevertheless results in gender egalitarian practices where men, out of necessity, contribute extensively to these chores.

In a more recent study, Legerski and Cornwall (2010) disagree with this claim. Using interview data from 49 men and women from conservative, working-class families after the forced unemployment of the breadwinning husbands, they find that while there is some de-gendering of housework, there are no significant shifts. They attribute this to institutional level factors, where they suggest that a lack of well-paying jobs, for women in particular, and the entrenched gendering of certain household tasks means that de-gendering is challenging. At the individual level they find that for this group gendered identities remain significant for both men and women. These findings disagree with a plethora of others which suggest that material needs mean that working-class families actually end up having more gender-egalitarian practices even if they don't have those

beliefs (Presser, 2003; Deutsch and Saxon, 1998). These findings may be anomalous amongst working-class families, as the authors drew a sample specifically from conservative families for whom de-gendering may be even more difficult and undesirable.

Yet, for upper-class families, their material wealth actually often encourages a turn to neo-traditionalism. In *Cut Adrift* (2014), Marianne Cooper studies how families contend with economic insecurity (in general, rather than unemployment in particular). Cooper's (2014) qualitative study of 50 families living in the Silicon Valley is divided amongst three broad social classes that she describes as upper-class, middle-class, and working-class. She is concerned with understanding how social class shapes the way families contend emotionally with insecure times. Cooper (2014) finds a gendered and classed division in how families deal with the emotional repercussions of financial anxieties. In the upper-class families of Cooper's study, which are most similar in terms of educational and occupational backgrounds to the families in my sample, the anxiety about economic insecurity was shared between both partners. These families were anxious about ensuring that their children had all the opportunities to reproduce the respondents' own, privileged, class status. For these wealthy families, this reproduction of class advantage was threatened due to what they saw as increased global competition and economic precarity in the US. These families retained an intensive focus on children's educational and extra-curricular performances. The division of anxiety was gendered, as the upper class families frequently fell into neo-traditional patterns: men focused on earning and managing the finances, whereas their wives expended tremendous effort in micro-managing their children's educational trajectories by overseeing

homework and conducting research on the best classes, teachers and school for their children.

While paid employment is often an important source of identity for some women (Blair-Loy, 2003), it is hardly ever the sole or primary source of identity for women, especially mothers. Indeed, navigating cultural expectations of being ideal workers and good mothers is an ongoing struggle as women contend with the necessity to do "intensive mothering" (Hays, 1996). As such, American mothers' work is frequently seen as a hindrance to their mothering obligations, instead of integral to parenting obligations, as for men. There are thus competing norms around femininity and paid employment, and some sense of ambiguity about the relationship between performed femininity and paid employment. Being employed and providing monetarily for the family is still not as integral to the definition of being a woman and a mother in the US.[3]

While many women choose to exit this struggle – essentially "opting out" (Stone, 2007) for the sake of their family (Damaske, 2011), this exit is often actually precipitated by unwelcoming workplaces. Pamela Stone (2007) finds that many professional and managerial women's "choices" to quit their careers are driven by work cultures that continue to imagine the ideal worker as someone who can be wholly devoted to work, and does not have household responsibilities (Acker, 1990). Sarah Damaske (2011) similarly asserts that women's decisions to leave the workforce have less to do with their

[3] Although for the post-feminist revolution era, there are hints that a strong and economically independent femininity is valued, for example in terms of being a "major career woman" (Damaske, 2011). Despite this, the strongest data-based evidence repeatedly suggests that for mothers, paid employment is just not as integral to their role as mothers as it is for fathers. The imperative to do well financially to be considered a good woman is not as clear cut as it is for men.

taking care of their families – even though women explain their decisions by articulating them in terms of being "for the family"– and more to do with indignity at work.

Other research too points toward the persistence of doing gender. In her study of American families where women earn one and a half times as much as husbands do, Veronica Tichenor (2005) finds that many of her mostly middle-class respondents, even when women out-earn husbands women's larger economic contribution to the household does not trump the advantage that their husbands have in being men. Wives often continued doing much of the housework, especially hidden work – such as the work of organizing their children's daily schedules with myriad activities, which are often left out of time-use surveys. Even for these respondents, husbands were more often the decision-makers, for example about major household purchases, and had more access to expendable income, often by maintaining their own individual bank account in addition to the joint couple's account, where wives were less likely to have the former.

Tichenor's findings are corroborated by quantitative studies of unemployment. One study for example showed that unlike unemployed men, whose contribution to housework increases by three hours per week, unemployed women increase their contribution to household chores by double that amount, at six hours per week on top of the normal amount of hours they spent on housework when employed (Gough and Killewald, 2011). Women who experience job loss take longer to re-enter the work-force (Farber, 2015). One study showed that working is so core to men, that when men are economically dependent on their wives, wives do up to six more hours of housework per week (Bitman et al., 2003) to "do gender." These findings suggest that rather than undoing gender, men's unemployment may actually exacerbate gender inequalities at

home. Thus there is a lack of clarity about when, how, and for whom men's unemployment undoes gender.

Combined, these findings on doing gender, earnings and the division of housework highlight that gender is a crucial factor mediating the negotiation about unpaid housework amongst spouses: from women doing more housework to neutralize the ostensible gender deviance from out-earning their husbands (Bitman et al., 2003), to husbands retaining power in household decision making and being shielded from contributing much more to housework when unemployed (Gough and Killewald, 2011; Tichenor, 2005). Other studies show conflicting evidence, suggesting that men do more housework, specifically childcare, when they are economically dependent on their wives (Raley et al., 2012; Chesley, 2011). We thus have an unclear understanding of why, when, and to what extent gender inequalities persists in marriages.

In summary, given the rise in women's employment, there are signs that when women with professional, and even powerful, careers face involuntary job loss, women and men may have relatively similar experiences of unemployment. But on the other hand, it is possible they may have different experiences. The minutiae of how men and women's unemployment experiences unfold can illuminate the powerful ways in which gender continues to shape marriages, and consequently, labor force participation. Attention on how unemployment experiences are gendered can additionally reveal the mechanisms which produce the gendered outcomes of unemployment discussed above. Understanding how gender is performed and what it means for gender equality during economically insecure times is particularly important in this economic context of rising

income and employment insecurity. In the next sections, I detail the historical shifts that have brought us to this economically precarious juncture in American history.

From "Company Man" to white-collar insecurity

The recent rise of employment precarity and unemployment amongst white-collar workers is better understood when situated in its historical context. How is it that men and women with educational credentials that used to be an asset protecting them from events like unemployment, came to be in a more precarious situation now than they ever were in previous decades? Scholars studying work, employment and organizations often explain this in terms of a risk shift. While in earlier decades employers frequently provided a social safety net, now individual workers are responsible for any risk that they may encounter. In *The Disposable American* New York Times economics correspondent Louis Uchitelle (2007) writes that "For almost ninety years, from the 1890s until the late 1970s, the thrust of American labor practices had been toward lasting attachment of employers to workers and vice versa" (Uchitelle, 2007: 4). Uchitelle explains that this security meant a belief that you would work for one company for the entirety of your career and life, and that this company would bear the responsibility for providing benefits, especially health coverage and pension when you retired. There was an assumption that you would live out a career in the company, which meant that your income would increase as you got promoted within the company. And lastly, as scholars such as C. Wright Mills (1951), William H. Whyte (1956) and Rosabeth Moss Kanter (1977) pointed out, this expectation of a lifelong association with a company also meant a profound sense of identification with said company. Writing in the middle of the 20th

century Whyte (1956) for example pointed out that the organization became almost totemic for what he calls the "organization man" who reveres the organization as a religious entity. Whyte highlighted this as being problematic, writing that these men are "keenly aware of how much more deeply beholden they are to the organization than were their elders" (4). He adds, "the fault is not in the organization, in short; it is in our worship of it" (13).

Loyalty, these scholars often suggested, ran both ways, such that while the company you worked for invested in you, you too invested in the company. Indeed, Rosabeth Moss Kanter explains that staffing principles for organizations had operated on a principle of "big is better." But in her 1993 afterward to her 1977 classic *Men and Women of the Corporation* she explains that this principle gave way to the assumption that "smaller is beautiful":

> Increasingly, the desire for "fat" organizations that relied on redundancy, encouraged overstaffing, and could afford to waste people on non-essential tasks, has been replaced by a preference for "lean" organizations with focused efforts. Such organizations rely on outsourcing and external suppliers for internal services, and impose overtime and overload on existing staff before adding others. This makes organizations more flexible and cost-efficient, but it also strains people's endurance while undermining their security. (Kanter, 1993: 290)

Perhaps the mantra that a lean organization is a successful one is nowhere better embodied than in "Chainsaw Al" - Albert Dunlap - who, in his role as CEO used ruthless methods, including laying off scores of workers from Scott Paper Company in the early

1990s. CEOs like Dunlap and Jack Welch – glorified for their pitiless efficacy – symbolized this stark shift in the employer-employee relationship. In the 21st century, Amazon has acquired a draconian reputation for being a "soul crushing experience" (Nolan, 2014) for workers, with employees constantly worried about losing their jobs.

Indeed, scholars frequently pinpoint the 1980s, and at times the 1990s (Greenhouse, 2008), as a time when the assumed and reciprocal loyalty between employer and employee, indeed the social contract of employment itself, started eroding. Scholars have attributed this shift in the employer-employee relationship to a variety of factors, including neoliberal transformations, globalization, and technical change (Cooper, 2014; Sharone, 2014). Political scientist Jacob Hacker (1996:ix) has called this a risk shift where "economic risk has been offloaded by government and corporations onto the increasingly fragile balance sheets of workers and their families." For workers this means that while companies often make risky decisions, the risks of their decisions are passed on to workers (Gosselin, 2008). Peter Gosselin, an economics reporter, paints a painful picture of companies taking gambles for which they know they will not bear the costs. He writes, "The banks made strategic mistakes. But instead of bearing the costs themselves, they were able to pass the consequences of their errors straight along to…employees." (Gosselin, 2008: 19). Yet, any benefits accruing from these risky decisions do not typically get passed on to the workers. Indeed, as Gosselin points out, "in the past twenty-five years, the top 1 percent of Americans have gone from claiming less than 10% of the fruits of the economy to claiming almost 20 percent." (Gosselin, 2008: 8).

The norm for employers hiring white-collar workers until the 1980s was to assure a job for life, complete with benefits. Since the 1990s, writers and scholars have argued that employers have drastically reduced what they are willing to provide for their employees. In a review of the research on employment stability in the American labor market, Hollister (2011) writes that employment practices – specifically the prevalence of downsizing, restructuring, outsourcing, and the growth of contract and temporary workers – points to a decline in employment stability. Additionally, for male workers in particular there has been a decline in long-term employment tenure, especially in the private sector, in recent decades. On the other hand, there has been an increase in women's long-term employment tenure, although this is likely linked to the fact that women are now less likely to interrupt their careers because of childcare responsibilities.

In prominent labor writer Steven Greenhouse's (2008) estimation, large corporations in particular have legal as well as illegal policies designed to "exploit" workers. Greenhouse writes that "far too many workers have had their wages cut because of lawbreaking by their bosses" (291). The list of how workers, including white-collar workers, often get short shrift extends beyond this and includes the following: switching from pensions to 401(k)s – where in the latter workers actually get less for their retirement, with many continuing to work beyond retirement to maintain their lifestyle, or to even just make ends meet; asking workers to do tasks that are not theirs; making unpaid overtime a requisite for maintaining a job. For white-collar workers this might mean a work culture where workers are expected to be accessible all day around, through mobile phones, emails and other devices; limited health insurance for workers with much of the cost of health coverage passed onto workers; and more work for lower wages.

Pecuniary and non-pecuniary impacts of unemployment on individuals and families

In October of 2009, in the midst of the Great Recession of 2007-2009, the US national unemployment rate peaked at 10%. This was twice the percentage considered acceptable for a healthy economy (Federal Reserve, 2016). It was the highest unemployment rate in the United States in over 25 years. While the increase in unemployment rates during recessions and depressions is nothing new, what the Great Recession made clear was that now no one, not even college-educated workers whose high levels of education used to protect them from the tumult of economic forces and the vagaries of the labor market, were safe. Of course, the biggest losers in this recession, like most recessions and depressions, were still unskilled workers. In this recession male-dominated industries, such as construction, were adversely impacted, leading popular press to call the Great Recession a "Mancession" (Thompson, 2009)

Yet, the Great Recession showed without any doubt that college-educated workers are now more likely than their counterparts in previous decades to lose jobs (Sharone, 2014; Newman, 2008). Until the 1970s, white-collar workers were relatively safe from unemployment, but since the 1970s, the unemployment rate for white collar workers has increased at a sharper rate than for less-skilled workers without a college education. Indeed, data on unemployment has also shown that when white collar workers do lose jobs they tend to be pushed into long-term unemployment (Sharone, 2014) lasting 27 weeks or longer (BLS, 2010). Some studies have also shown that they also face the steepest financial penalties, with most earning less in a job after unemployment than they earned prior to it (Newman, 2008).

One has only to look at the news headlines in recent years, weeks and months to see how widespread, indeed mundane, white-collar unemployment has become. News outlets in recent weeks have been filled with announcements about massive cuts in the work force from major companies like tech and telecom giants Microsoft, Intel, and Verizon as well as companies like Boeing. All have announced plans to lay-off thousands of workers, including managerial and executive-level staff. Articles directed at white-collar laid off workers proliferate and have titles such as "Laid off? Three tips to weather the storm" (Rosso, 2016); "4 tips to surviving a layoff" (Moreno, 2016) and "Best money moves when you get laid off" (Hannon, 2016).

In 2016, the American unemployment rate has settled into a much more respectable one of about 5% - a rate which denotes a healthy economy. Yet, what this seemingly salubrious percentage conceals is the fact that while at any given time only a small percentage of the labor force may experience unemployment, the shift to the norm of labor market churning means that the vast majority of American workers are likely to experience involuntary unemployment at least once in their life. The National Longitudinal Survey of the cohort born between 1957-1964 who were first interviewed in 1979 and then continuously at each survey thereafter in the period until 2010 found that over 91% of respondents with a Bachelor's degree or higher experienced at least one spell of unemployment, defined by the Bureau of Labor Statistics as people who "do not have a job, have actively looked for work in the prior 4 weeks, and are currently available for work" (BLS, 2016b). Less than 10% of these workers with a Bachelor's degree or higher experienced no spell of unemployment (BLS, 2016b). Unemployment is becoming

a ubiquitous work-related experience for most American workers, even privileged, college-educated workers.

Consequently, the impact of unemployment on individuals and families has been of interest to social scientists, particularly since the Great Depression, and continuing through with other economic setbacks, for example the Iowa Farm Crisis of the 1980s. Research has repeatedly found detrimental impacts of unemployment. Studies show, for example, that unemployment is associated with a negative impact on individual well-being (lasting up to several years after re-employment), particularly for those in the middle classes (Young, 2012; Anderson, 2009); depression, especially for men (Thoits, 1986); and increased anxieties in men about masculinity. The last is because American cultural norms continue to mean that despite a rise of female breadwinners, stay-at-home dads, and other trends in paid and unpaid work (Chesley, 2011; Bianchi et al. 2006), providing for their families still continues to be framed as particularly important for men (Conroy-Bass, 2015; Michniewicz et al., 2014; Legerski & Cornwall, 2010; Townsend, 2002, although others disagree. See Lane, 2011).

These two events, the Great Depression and the Iowa Farm crisis, in particular were instrumental in helping academics develop theories of the impact of unemployment on individuals and families. These two economic crises of the 20th century led to the development of the Family Stress Model (Conger et al., 1990). The model predicts that economic hardship, induced by unemployment, can give rise to feelings of stress which in turn lead to decreased marital quality, and increased spousal abuse. Implicit in the model is the idea that the mechanism leading to increased spousal violence and decreased marital quality is economic hardship, and equally importantly the male inability to

provide economically, which is seen as integral to masculine identities. This supposed failure by men to fulfill their gender roles adequately has been conceptualized as an important link between unemployment and spousal violence in the model.

Recent research on unemployment has focused primarily on unemployed individuals and so it potentially overlooked how the emotional fallout of unemployment and job-searching likely extends beyond the unemployed individual, and reverberates within families. By focusing on the experiences of unemployed individuals, research has demonstrated that even as unemployed individuals contend with diminished well-being, job-searching for a white-collar job requires them to portray a cheer they do not feel. The American job-search process makes extensive emotional demands on unemployed workers (Sharone, 2014; Ehrenreich 2005; Smith, 2001). Unemployed American, white-collar, job-seekers work hard to create pleasurable interactions as evidence of "chemistry" with potential employers (Sharone, 2014) and as such, job-seekers are advised to present themselves as personable, friendly, cheerful, and confident in addition to having the right skills for the job. They do so even as they deal with myriad daily professional rejections (for details on the emotional labor of the white-collar job search process in the United States, see: Sharone, 2014; Ehrenreich, 2005; Smith, 2001). But this research has not paid attention to job-seekers' lives and experiences at home.

In sum, qualitative research on unemployment, from the Great Depression and after has shown how unemployment experiences are shaped by family life. Yet, recent research on unemployment has tended to treat unemployment experiences as individualized rather than inherently shaped by social interactions, specifically

interactions with spouses. This is a key omission as studies of unemployment can shed light on gender inequality within marriages and, to an extent, labor force participation.

Research Questions

Thus, in this dissertation, I ask the following questions. First, how do men and women imbue meaning to their unemployment? Second, if unemployment holds different meanings for men and women, how do they contend with gendered divisions of labor in the home during unemployment? Third, what are the long-term implications of unemployment for men and women's orientations to the labor force, and does unemployment shape women's decisions to drop out of the labor force?

I next discuss the methods I use to answer these questions, and then briefly delineate the organization of the dissertation.

The study

Sample and recruitment

[Table 1 about here]

This dissertation uses data from a multi-tiered data collection approach. As Table 1 indicates, the data include interviews with a total of 72 participants. Twenty-five participants were unemployed men and 13 participants were the wives of these men. Another 23 were unemployed women, and 11 were the husbands of these unemployed women. I conducted follow-up interviews with some of these participants, bringing the total number of in-depth interviews in this study to 107. I also conducted intensive participant observations in four homes, equally divided between families of unemployed

men and unemployed women. Combined, the aim of these in-depth methods is to privileges data and theoretical saturation, and the collection of qualitatively rich data to develop conceptual arguments (Roy et al., 2015; Weiss, 1994).

Inclusion criteria, sample characteristics, and recruitment methods

[Tables 3, 4 and 5 about here]

The sample was recruited through professional associations and job clubs catering to unemployed professionals from a metropolitan area in the northeastern United States. Most frequently, I would contact the organizer of such a seminar or event catered toward unemployed job-seekers, provide a brief background on myself as well as my research. I would then ask if I could have a couple of minutes sometime during the course of the event – perhaps during a break – to tell the participants about my research and see if anyone fit the recruitment criteria and was willing to participate. Mostly, organizers agreed and I did this. The sample is thus not primarily a snowball sample, since only a couple of participants were referred to me by someone else I had interviewed, while most I recruited individually. At the end of each interview with the unemployed individual I asked if they could put me in touch with their spouse to do the interview. While most agreed (although spouses often declined to participate when I contacted them), about 5% of the sample of unemployed men and women each declined to let me contact their spouse, often stating that things were tense and they did not feel they could ask their spouse for anything at this point. One man, Doug Easton, who originally refused to put me in touch with his wife agreed to do so during the follow up interview a year later, at which time he was still unemployed, and his wife agreed to the interview which we then conducted. This is thus a non-random sample.

Somewhat surprisingly, while using these professional networking groups to locate unemployed men proved to be quite easy, recruiting unemployed women through these methods took a longer time. While many unemployed women would come up to me to volunteer to participate in my study, a preliminary screening would indicate that they were ineligible for any number of reasons, for example being unmarried, or not having children. As such, for unemployed women I had to extend my search specifically to networking groups catering to professional women, women's career resource centers, career counselors and parent list-serves. I had to try harder to recruit unemployed women who met my sample criteria. Ultimately, I was successful in having a fairly equal division of unemployed men and women, but this difference bears mentioning.

The inclusion criteria required unemployed men and women to be currently unemployed or to have been unemployed until at most three months prior to the original interview, have at least a bachelor-level degree, be married to a spouse who worked at least 20 hours a week, and have children aged 22 or younger. These criteria were designed to capture experiences of unemployment in middle and upper-middle class, dual-earner families[4].

This project is intended to contribute to the growing body of research on middle-class professional and managerial unemployment, where the reverberation of unemployment within the family remains under-studied. Highly skilled and educated professionals are a conceptually interesting group, especially in terms of gender relations.

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[4] Demographic trends show that there is a rise in single-mother households. Yet, amongst highly educated and economically advantaged groups – like this sample – single motherhood is still far less common than in less educated groups. This group is privileged on many levels; on account of being: married, dual-earner, having high levels of education. Yet, it can still shed light on the conceptual issue of gender inequality in the US amongst similar groups.

Questions about progress toward gender equality frequently point to the achievements of professional women who occupy positions of power and earn high incomes. This study too aimed to capture these kinds of women who are particularly seen as contributing to and benefitting from greater gender equality. This inclusion criteria captures exactly these women at a moment of unemployment. As mentioned earlier, studies of unemployment and family life have tended to focus on the issue of material hardship and, frequently, its implications for marital relations. Studies often also point to the issue of emotional implications, but to a lesser extent. This professional group, for whom material hardship is not an immediate consequence (indeed, if at all, material hardship, even in the form of relative deprivation, comes months and months after unemployment) is suitable for parsing out the emotional experience of unemployment and what this means for marriages.

The unemployed men and women I interviewed were professionals who had held a variety of positions, including as IT analysts, program managers, engineers, and financial analysts until they lost their jobs. Two unemployed participants had only some college[5]. The spouses of these unemployed individuals also had relatively similar jobs – positions that required a college degree and had some level of autonomy and management control.[6] The original interviews averaged two hours, and were mostly conducted in person. A few times, meeting spouses in person was not feasible and so I conducted phone or Skype interviews. Original interviews were conducted between 2013 and 2014.

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[5] They are included in the sample because despite their educational attainment, their income and occupation when employed made them a part of the upper-level, white-collar work-force this study aimed to capture.
[6] See Tables 3, 4 and 5 for more details on the demographic characteristics of these families, as well as their finances.

Because unemployment is time-sensitive – for example, it is reasonable to assume that as unemployment endures financial worries spike, the unemployed individual's identity may be further adversely affected, as may relationships with spouses – I also draw on follow-up interviews. I conducted follow-up interviews with members of 24 of the 48 families. This includes: eleven of the men and seven wives; and thirteen unemployed women and four husbands. Follow-up interviews were conducted at least six months after the first interview, with purposefully selected participants. The selection criteria for the follow-up interviews divided the participants into three broad groups: those who had appeared to be having a relatively easy unemployment experience in terms of a combination of contentions with spouse and job-searching experiences; those who had seemed to be having a relatively challenging unemployment experience on the same lines; and those who had seemed to be having a neutral experience on the same lines. The aim of these follow-up interviews was to understand how the experience of unemployment evolved over time for the unemployed individual and their families. Follow-up interviews averaged an hour, with approximately two thirds being conducted in person. Follow-up interviews were conducted between 2014 and 2015.

Participant observations

Following in the methodological footsteps of previous studies on families (Cooper, 2014; Lareau, 2011), I conducted observations with families of four unemployed individuals, evenly divided between unemployed men and unemployed women, to better understand what people say about the experience of unemployment, as well as how they experience it in their daily life (Jerolmack and Khan, 2014). Each family had children under the age

of 6 at the time of observations, and both wives were employed full time. I observed families over a two to three week period with each family, visiting several times a week. To observe families of unemployed men, I simply began by asking the participants from the pool of 13 families of unemployed men, where both partners participated in the interviews whether their family would participate in the observations. Of the first four families, two agreed. Both families fell within the range of interview responses, and were representative of key themes emerging in the interview data. Similarly, with unemployed women, I began by asking from the pool of 11 families where both partners participated in interviews. The first family I asked, the Bachs, agreed. The subsequent four families I requested refused (one because the unemployed woman had just started a new job and so was ineligible for the study). The sixth family I asked agreed.

It is difficult for me to say with any certainty why some families agreed to participate while others refused. I believe this stemmed from altruistic reasons with some wanting to help out a graduate student or because they found the topic of unemployment to be especially personally meaningful. There are few hard and fast rules about financially compensating research participants in social sciences, although it is often considered good practice to offer some money or a gift card to thank participants for their time. Sociological studies of family life tend to offer honorariums to families in varying amounts. For example, in the mid 1990s, Lareau (2011) offered each family about $550 (in 2015 dollars), while Cooper (2014) offered $200 (in 2015 dollars) to the families she observed. I offered a modest honorarium of $250 to each family, but this did not seem to be a decisive factor for the families to participate. Even with an unemployed family member, this was an affluent group to whom $250 was not a significant amount. At

times, the families that agreed seemed nonchalant about the stipend, with William Smith, the focal unemployed man in one of the families observed even saying "You know we would have done this without the money?" I took this assertion at face value since the Smiths had agreed to the family observation even before I offered the honorarium. I was only able to offer them the honorarium part way through the observations once a grant I had applied for came through. On the other hand, Chuck Mason, whose wife Rebecca is unemployed, and whom I also observed, explained that they both thought unemployment was an important topic and they wanted to contribute toward that. They also added that the felt comfortable around me particularly because as a graduate student at Penn they could trust that I would follow the proper procedures and produce good quality work. The Mason family was the last family I observed, and I was able to offer them the stipend when I requested permission to observe them. Chuck also laughed when he added that "we did like the $250!" It is difficult for me to say whether the Masons would not have participated without the honorarium.

My visits to the families I observed ranged from two to six hours per visit. I went daily for around two weeks, spending over 45 hours with each family. I observed the Smith family (all names are pseudonyms) and Jansson family, in which wives were employed fulltime. Amongst the unemployed men, the Smiths have a five-year-old son, and the Janssons have a four-year-old and a two-year old. Amongst the unemployed women, the Bachs had a 15-year old son and the Masons had a one-year old daughter. Husbands in both families were employed full-time. As part of family observations, I ate meals with the families and went on trips to the zoo, library and grocery stores, amongst other daily activities. I present selected field-notes in this manuscript along with the

interview data. The family observations were instrumental in ensuring that I probed deeper with my subsequent interviews.

Family observations remain a rarity in sociological research on family life. This is likely because families are culturally seen as a scared and private realm, arguably more difficult to penetrate than more public sites such as workplaces, religious organizations, or schools (Lareau and Rao, working paper). When sociological studies have used observational data from families, the result has provided rich, textured description, but it has done more than this. These detailed, micro-level observations allowed the researcher to further extend and develop conceptual arguments in a way that interviews alone cannot do (Lareau and Rao, 2016). Studies of family life using observational data in recent years include Annette Lareau's path-breaking *Unequal Childhoods* and Marianne Cooper's *Cut Adrift*. In both works, the detailed data from family observations is key to the conceptual development of the argument as both authors *show* how families live their lives, and complement this with interview data explaining how family members imbue meaning to their daily activities. Similarly, the observational data I collected allows me to ground my myriad interviews in concrete case studies, and so make a more compelling argument about how men and women talk about their experiences of unemployment, as well as how they actually live their unemployment.

Data collection, analysis, and sample limitations

Interviews with unemployed individuals and their spouses were conducted separately, because individuals often experience marriages divergently (Bernard, 1972). Interviews were usually conducted in public spaces such as coffee shops and restaurants. Interviews

were semi-structured[7], allowing me to ask participants the same broad questions but also enabling flexibility to pursue individualized lines of questioning depending on responses.

Sample limitations

I attempted to interview wives of all the unemployed men in this sample and the husbands of all the unemployed women in this sample. I ultimately completed interviews with 13 wives and 11 husbands. Spousal interviews are generally difficult to obtain. Because most studies of family life draw on information collected from one family member, having reports from both spouses in this study provides valuable insights. Interviews with husbands and wives of unemployed women and women were particularly useful in understanding the overall experience of unemployment, not all of which could have been gleaned from the interviews with unemployed individuals alone. As one example of this, when it came to understanding the emotional experience of

[7] The original interview protocol was divided into seven sections. These sections were: (a) general background (information about the participant including age, race, religion, education, social class of origin and essentials on their marital situation); (b) career history (types and duration of employment in the past decade, work and identity); (c) the process and aftermath of job loss (first reactions, discussion with their spouse and children, how they started spending their days, job searching activities, division of household labor); (d) family finances (an overview of the couples' income, assets, expenditures, and debts, lifestyle changes); (e) mental and emotional health (questions about mood, drug and alcohol usage, sources of emotional support); (f) life at home (gender roles and employment, marital quality, how unemployment has impacted marriage and relationship with children; intimacy, fights, support from spouse); (g) ending (space for participant to make general comments). The interview protocol did not specifically ask about emotion work, but the questions, particularly those about emotions and support were designed to facilitate responses on emotion work. The interview guide for spouses covered the same materials as that for unemployed individuals.

The follow-up interview guide was divided into four main sections: (a) job searching activity, support received in this, and feelings around it since the original interview; (b) life at home, particularly relationship with spouse, children, time use, and division of household labor; (c) finances; (d) hopes and expectations in terms of career and family life and goals for the near-term (i.e., 1 year period) and long-term (i.e., next 5-10 years) future. The follow-up guide was individualized to check on specific outstanding comments from the original interview.

unemployment husbands and wives provided richer details about emotion work than the unemployed men did.

I compared the narratives of the unemployed men and women whose spouses participated in the study with those whose spouses did not participate in the study. Based on unemployed men and women's interviews, these sets of spouses did not appear to be systematically different from each other, and no particular aspect of unemployment seemed to explain the decision of some spouses not to participate. Based on this comparison, it appears to me that spouses who chose not to participate did so for reasons unrelated to their spouses' unemployment. I requested participants to set aside two hours for the interview, which may have seemed like an extensive time commitment for some of these working spouses.

Data analysis

Interviews were transcribed. My goal was to understand how emotion work is configured during this charged time, the directionality of it, and how participants explained it. I coded transcripts using grounded theoretical methodology (Glaser and Strauss, 1967). I re-read each transcript several times. In the first round, approximately 10-15 broad coding categories emerged through the inductive process of line-by-line coding. Examples of these categories include: "Division of household labor" and "Emotions and emotion work." Coding in the next two rounds was more fine-grained as I refined my coding categories, for example separating "emotion" from "emotion work." To refine the categories even further, I then combed through each category, again reading the data line by line for each category. I further demarcated these into sub-categories. For example, in

pulling out data from the "emotion work" category for wives, I divided this into data that fit under subcategories such as "hiding their feelings" and "professional reinforcement." After I divided each code in this manner, I rechecked my division of subcategories by re-reading the data in each code. I used the qualitative data analysis software Atlast.ti to facilitate coding.

Organization of the dissertation

The remainder of the dissertation is organized as follows. I begin by describing what the process of losing a job is like for white-collar workers. This chapter argues that losing a job itself is a relatively similar experience for both men and women. It explains how rumors about layoffs and restructuring in particular often circulate months, and at times even years, in advance, creating an atmosphere of uncertainty. It details the procedure in the weeks preceding the job loss, focusing on the discussions with superiors and Human Resources personnel that the unemployed person participates in. It then describes what unemployed men and women do in the days immediately following the job loss as they gear up for job-searching.

Yet, as the focus of the chapters shifts from the workplace to the home, we see a deep schism emerge between the experiences of the men and women in my sample. Chapter three focuses on unemployed men, and their weeks and months after job loss. It argues that men's unemployment, much like their paid employment, is *central* – a palpable presence at home. For unemployed men, staying at home is fraught: they feel like trespassers at home, uneasy and out of place because of being men in a space recognized as feminine. Unemployed men's days center on job-searching, and the idea

that this should be the focus on men's unemployment is shared by wives. This shared notion underpins the reason why men's unemployment does not mean a radical renegotiation of household chores.

Chapter four then turns to unemployed women. It argues that women's unemployment, like their paid employment, is *peripheral.* Instead of being central to the family, the reality that women are unemployed seems to disappear into the ether, leaving behind miniscule traces. Women's unemployment experience is thus drastically different: women feel far more comfortable staying at home. Their days center on slipping into tasks that are typed as feminine, such as childcare, carework for aging parents, household chores. Emphasizing their gendered roles as mothers is an important way for women to stave off the stigma of unemployment. Yet women's experiences are also more varied than unemployed men's. For example, a much smaller number of women feel uneasy being unemployed from the very beginning and yearn to get back to work. Some other women get uneasy about their newly acquired domestic roles as months of unemployment continue and re-employment seems out of reach. Yet others find pleasure in domesticity and decide to curtail their labor-force participation, including by deciding to quit job-searching for a period of time altogether.

Chapter five takes a close look at the marriage dynamics during men's and women's unemployment. It highlights how the density and diffusion in men and women's unemployment experiences are produced through micro-level interactions amongst the couples. It explains the crucial role that spouses play emotionally in encouraging (in the case of men) to find appropriate employment as quickly as possible; and encouraging (in the case of women) a more relaxed approach to job-searching. These

different ways of emotionally supporting and interacting with their spouses send clear messages about gender in these marriages – for men, it is imperative to work; for women, less so.

Chapter six is the concluding chapter. Here, I highlight how our understandings of how gender is "done" in marriages in contemporary times of precarious employment is limited. We do not yet fully understand what the broader economic shift toward insecurity means for marriage and gender inequality therein. While there is evidence that as women's paid employment becomes integral to a family's economic position, it will be valued and assessed in the same way as men's paid employment; there is also evidence suggesting that this is not the case – and that men's paid employment continues to be socially and culturally viewed as more significant for families than women's. I point out that focusing on families experiencing unemployment is a useful way to understand the power, or lack thereof, of gender in continuing to shape marriages, especially when it comes to the critical issues of paid employment and men and women's labor force participation. I argue that the way unemployed men and women and their spouses "do gender" during unemployment relies on traditional ideas about gender and paid employment and consequently reproduces gender inequalities in the home, and the labor force, instead ameliorating these inequalities.

THE PROCESS OF LOSING A JOB

Rumors, layoffs, severance packages, and the days after

Waiting for the axe to fall

39-year old William Smith stands at about 5'11 and has a boyish look about him. His chestnut brown hair is cut short. Outside of work, he dresses casually in knee-length black gym shorts and a T-shirt. On colder days he wears a hoodie and track pants with sneakers. His clothes indicate an active lifestyle – he squeezes in at least an hour-long run each day, and spends much of his time these days, while he is job-searching, taking care of his 4-year old son, Alex. William wears wire-rimmed square glasses. He is warm and approachable. If you were still in school, he could be a favorite teacher – equal parts geeky, funny, and strict. In fact, his easygoing smile can shift to a stern expression quintessential of teachers, quickly, especially when Alex has done something naughty like slyly eating more candy than he has been allowed or jumping roughly on their leather living room couch. As a spirited child, Alex is often subject to being reprimanded by his watchful dad.

Indeed, for most of his career since graduating from college with a bachelor's degree in English, William has been a teacher, at times in high school, at other times in elementary school in both public and private schools. Yet, through a series of twists, he found himself in the real estate business.

William met his wife Shannon, on a blind date when they both lived in Atlanta, Georgia. Since she is two years older than him, William jokingly calls his wife a "cougar." In Georgia, William had worked at an expensive, private school for children

with emotional challenges, but the school closed. After the closure, "I had a friend of mine who owned a real estate company. Still does, he said 'I need a real estate salesman, I need to build a sales team, can you do that?' It was a very tough time in the economy for teaching. That was when it was awful. So, I started doing that. He sold foreclosures and in 2009 the foreclosure business was booming. So I started doing that." So, through this series of unexpected events, William found himself shifting away from his teaching – which he describes as his passion and calling. Around this time, his wife Shannon who works in the non-profit industry and has always earned more than William during the course of their marriage, was offered a promotion that came along with a relocation: to the northeastern part of the United States. Uncertain about the direction of his career, William encouraged this relocation, and they moved. Through the friend who had given him a job in his real estate company in Georgia, in the middle of 2010 in this new northeastern city, William landed up finding work at a foreclosure agency. As an asset manager, he led a team of about seven people who examined, edited, and corrected foreclosure contracts and documents. William did not find this work particularly exciting, and he describes its exacting nature:

> Like some [contracts] they're just considered default status and people are still living there and so they haven't even moved out of the house yet. Some are instances where people have been out and the house need to be repaired and colored before it can be sold. Some are on the market and able to be sold, some are under contract and they just haven't closed yet. So there are all kinds of various states that the houses are in.

He explains what his particular role here is:

> So your job is to manage each phase of the operation to make sure that it's progressing according to plan. And the banks are pretty rigorous about wanting [contracts] in certain time frames so you have to make sure those are being adhered to. Contracts are correct. I mean basically what I did all day long, I proofread contracts. That's all I did.

With a sigh, William adds that "The English teacher in me was happy that I got to correct all day I guess. But that was essentially it." It was important that contracts be meticulously examined "If there were any mistakes, [the real estate agencies] would grade you according to each contract. Like they would spot. So if they found any mistakes…that means you would drop down in the rankings of the different companies." This means a loss of revenue, as William explains, because then "you would get less properties," for whom to manage the contracts.

But, as the economy recovered, William explains, the foreclosure business declined: "This is very good news because it means that the economy is doing better. There's not a lot of foreclosures, that's good news." A year before our interview, and three months before he lost his job, it was clear to William, and the rest of the approximately 100 employees at this company, that their days at the company were numbered. For William, work slowed down as the number of contracts the company managed dwindled to 20% of the contracts it had managed in the peak foreclosure years. William describes that "once it slowed down though…we were just kind of sitting there staring at each other, waiting for the axe to fall." He adds, "There was no work. We went from being obscenely busy to having nothing to do." During this time, William and the remaining employees whiled away their time as they waited to lose their jobs. "I'd get in

later, leave right at five. Spend time on the internet looking up whatever. I mean you don't have anything to do. Check sports scores, read about state of affairs, the election was going on so read about the election. That was it." William also spent some time figuring out how to transfer his teaching credentials to comply with the state laws in his current state of residence.

For several months before he finally lost his job, it was clear to both William and his wife that the writing was on the wall vis-a-vis his job: it was a question of when he would lose his job, rather than if. Shannon says, "Well, we knew it was coming…There was a certain day…that they did layoffs. So we knew if we get through that day, we have another week. I mean it wasn't a shock at all when he got laid off."

For others who lose their jobs, though, that they will lose their jobs isn't always as clear as it was for the Smiths. The process of losing your job can start with uncertainties, rumors, and often unpleasantness, months, sometimes years, before the actual job loss itself. Almost all unemployed men and women I interviewed had a sense that a job loss may be inevitable. Often this was because of rumors about their company's financials and because of management changes. Since my sample has primarily people over the age of 40, many of them also thought that age played a role in why they lost their jobs. What is striking, though, is how losing a job was very similar for men and women – at least initially. The sense of betrayal and hurt that men and women felt was similar, as were their initial concerns in the days immediately following a job loss. This similarity is, in some ways, unsurprising: after all, women have reached professional heights that were unimaginable even a generation ago, almost two-thirds of mothers with children under the age of six continue to participate in the labor force (BLS, 2016a), and women bring in

a larger share of the household income than they did just a few decades ago (Pew, 2013). So it makes sense that these highly skilled and highly educated men and women would have similar reactions to losing a job. In this chapter, I analyze what the job loss itself, and the days immediately following it, are like for men and women.

Rumors, unpleasantness, and premonitions

In corporate America, the rumblings of layoffs can start years in advance. In the pharmaceutical industry, for example, layoffs are often cyclical, shaped by research and development, new products placed on the market, as well as by factors like mergers. Connie Mandel, who works in the banking industry, is married to Scott Mandel who was an IT manager at a large pharmaceutical company. Connie explains the long process leading to Scott's eventual layoff. Two years before Scott was laid off along with other professionals at his company, who had been there for decades, the company underwent a merger. Connie says, "When [the company] announced their merger and announced the number of layoffs, Scott did not see how he was coming out of there with a job." Scott himself says in his characteristically dry manner, "So you know I watched the layoffs while I was there. I was there for four large layoffs. And so it wasn't a total shock to me." In December before he lost his job in the spring, Scott was told by the Human Resources personnel at his company that "We'll let everybody know before the year is out what your status will be." As Scott describes it, he was part of a two-year, staggered layoff cycle where "People were being let go starting December [last year]. November, December, January. March of this year, June of this year, September this year, December this year and into [next year]." Scott's wife Connie elaborates on this:

> It's quite the compliment to him that he actually had a job. 'Cause four out of five people were laid off. So that to him was like a boost almost. But he knew; he could see it was written on the wall…The merger started off being very positive and ended up going south…And they're shutting down in [our city]. So there was no way it was going to end well for him...

Scott's last day of work was finally on a warm spring day, several years after the merger. Given that an eventual job loss seemed likely, it's reasonable to ask why Scott didn't just minimize the uncertainty by quitting altogether and finding a new job instead of waiting for what seemed to be a likely job loss. Scott explains that when the major layoffs started he weighed the pros and cons of leaving his job or sticking around:

> At that point I had close to 50 years [of age]. So I was thinking about my age and my retirement and I thought 'at this point I'll just stay and ride it out and see what it looks like.' If I jump I lose, if I stay I probably get a leave. So, there was very little incentive for me to leave. Zero incentive. I had a lot to lose, nothing to gain.

Scott had earned a comfortable six figure salary. Here, he is talking about his health benefits and 401(K), the former of which he still has through his former employer because he had fulfilled many years of employment. For Scott, this meant a lump-sum payment of close to half a million dollars, based on the decades of service he had provided for his company. While Scott is convinced that his decision to stay on with the company, even when his layoff seemed imminent, was the right decision, his wife Connie is less convinced. She says, "What I don't think he handled well is knowing this was coming and he's had years to prepare for this to come, and he did nothing to stop it to

begin with."

For Gary Archer, as for Scott Mandel and for most unemployed men and women in sample, the writing was on the wall. Gary, a chemist by training who also works in the pharmaceutical industry like Scott, says, "I knew it was coming. It just was extremely disappointing and it was compounded by the way the economy is - in particular with the way it is in the pharmaceutical industry with so many layoffs in Big Pharma." From another industry - publishing – Dave Dunn, an editor with over 20 years of experience similarly says, "There started to be some rumblings that they were…difficulties. There were a lot of rumblings that the company was not doing well."

Sandy Clarke's husband, Terry Clarke, worked as a systems engineer in an entirely different industry from Scott, Gary or Dave above. But his experiences were strikingly similar. Sandy started thinking that Terry's days at his company were numbered. She explains, "He didn't feel that he was getting any support from…the manager he dealt with… [Additionally] there were rumors that [the company] had a possible opportunity that they were going to get a new contract, and then they didn't get the contract." Sighing, Sandy continues:

> [The company] started in part to require [some employees] to use their vacation time and so he was off on Fridays for a long time. And I just felt like that was setting him up in some way. I just had a feeling that he was going to be viewed as expendable. I felt that because they didn't require him to be there…that in some way he was being targeted.

Although Sandy had clear misgivings about her husband's future at this organization she didn't fully share them with her husband. She explains, "I didn't want to cause him to

worry unnecessarily. But it was sort of in the back of my mind…I think maybe I should have, but I didn't." Sometimes spouses are better able to discern the writing on the wall vis a vis impending job loss.

At times spouses are more proactive in terms of firmly telling their spouse about how they need to manage the situation at work to prevent a job loss. Emily Bader, is married to Brian who lost his job as a project manager at a large financial services company four months ago. Both Emily and Brian started becoming worried about some changes at Brian's workplace, which seemed to bode negatively for his continued employment.

> He emailed [his performance review] to me. He's never emailed me his reviews before.And I read the review and I was shocked. It was definitely a warning sign. So I started to get a little nervous.

Emily took a strong stance here in encouraging Brian to alter his behavior in order to safeguard his employment. She explains that Brian "Felt like what his boss was asking him to do was stupid…And Brian kept pushing back, and pushing back." Lowering her voice to a stage whisper, Emily continues, "Finally I said to Brian, I said 'It's not going to matter that you're right when you don't have a job.'" Emily knocked on the table in front of her to emphasize this. She continued:

> I didn't know he was going to get let go. But I could see the writing on the wall…Then he got the bad review and then it was like 'OK. You have to start doing what your boss tells you to do.' So then he started doing it, but it was too late. The boss did not like Brian and that writing him up was just paving the road for letting him go in my opinion.

Women who lost their jobs also had closely analogous experiences of the process of losing their job as unemployed men. Caroline Anderson, a business analyst in her early 50s experienced a job loss where she had major indications that it was imminent, although unlike Scott, Caroline felt like her company was blaming her for poor performance. She says, "They made me feel like I wasn't wanted." She explains that after some management changes, she felt like she was being singled out to be pushed out of the company:

> I had a new manager, and when she first came onboard, she tried to get to know all of her people. And she was trying to be…like a mentor to me saying, 'Oh, you should be like a business analyst, the work that you did. If there's anything that I can do to help you.' So I thought that was her being a nice manager.

Encouraged by her manager's interest in her career, Caroline says that she did keep an eye out for positions within the company to diversify her experience, "But I did look internally and I thought that I was going to get a great position that was supposed to be opening up. But…I didn't end up getting that position." Instead of helping her branchout and develop a career within this company, Caroline was surprised to find that she instead received a poor performance review from her new manager. To Caroline, this signaled the beginning of the end of her career at the company:

> They had a tiny little bit of excuse and then they blew it up into this big thing where I was the worst employee ever…One project that I worked on for about two months was the main reason for my bad review and they were saying I wasn't working fast enough and doing enough…I felt

> completely used and abused. I knew by then they just wanted me out and they were just using any way that they could to get me to leave.

Caroline's husband, Ben Anderson, concurs that they assumed the company was trying to set the stage to let Caroline go. Ben says, "Well, she saw the writing on the wall. She kind of figured it might happen." In fact, Ben explains that he was so certain about what was in store for Caroline at work, that, like many of the wives of unemployed men, he tried to prepare her, "I was actually bracing her for it before she saw it. I said, 'It looks like they're trying to push you out the door.'"

Like many of the wives of unemployed men earlier, Larry Bach, the husband of an unemployed woman, explains how when his wife, Darlene, started encountering problems at work he too took a more vocal stand in trying to guide her so that her job would remain safe:

> She would come home and say 'We had this meeting and would you believe what this guy said about this and this and this?' and I'm thinking 'well you're being backed into a corner here. They're making you responsible for other people's performance'…And I would suggest, 'You know, you've really got to call that guy [out]… You're being maneuvered into the situation of you being held accountable…What you need to do is defend yourself.'

As these cases above indicate, most of the professionals in my sample, and at times their spouses, frequently had warning signs that they may lose their jobs, although how strong the rumbles and rumors were varied across their place of employment.

Women who had lost their jobs, similar to men who had also lost their jobs,

emphasized how changes in management meant that they had some awareness beforehand that losing their job was a realistic possibility. Julia Crouch says, "The man that was my project manager was fired. He was let go and this other woman became my project manager. I had really high hopes for that situation." Rolling her eyes to indicate her disgust with this experience, Julia continued, "but then as things kind of progressed, just the whole culture of that place was…I always felt like I was a square peg in a round hole." Like Caroline Anderson earlier, Julia too felt like "they were trying to get rid of me." Julia saw the performance improvement plan she was put on as a "solid indication" that she was on her way out. She explains that "I never felt like [my manager] and I were really like clicking. There were some instances where she seemed kind of frustrated with me…Nothing was ever good enough, ever. Ever."

Since these rumblings of potential job loss often endured for months, a reasonable question to ask is why they didn't just quit. Some in my sample of both unemployed men and women interpreted quitting as indicative of a personal failure; a lack of perseverance. For Julia, not quitting a job she was starting to despise, and which she assumed she would soon be asked to leave, was nevertheless important for her sense of self:

> I was just like 'I just want to leave. I don't want to go back there anymore. It's so clear that they don't want me there'…I was frustrated. I was tired of trying too hard…[My husband and I] both talked about it. 'We're not going to let them win.' I'm going to try. I tried. At least for my self-respect I tried.

As for women like Julia, for most men quitting was not an option because of how they saw quitting as reflecting on a person's character. Emily Bader's husband Brian is

currently unemployed. Just as Julia Crouch above experienced several unpleasant months at her workplace before she was finally told to leave, so did Brian. Yet, during this time his wife explains, much as Julia did, that quitting was not an option for them: "We didn't talk about him looking [for another job]. Again, it was more like, 'clean it up where you are. Figure it out. And keep your job.'"

For others, both men and women, a combination of several factors kept them from leaving. Mitch Lazovert's company for example was paying for his MBA that he was doing on a part-time basis. Even though he was certain he was going to be laid off, he explains that it was just not worth it for him to quit and join another job because, "I was finishing up my MBA. So if I would have left the company I would have to pay back the company about $14,000 of the money they gave me for tuition." Shrugging his shoulders, he casually adds, "I wasn't too worried about finding another job. Basically I wanted to ride it out and finish my degree and get severance, get unemployment and look for something else and plus keep that money for tuition." Mitch wound up with severance for two months, which has been helpful in tiding the Lazoverts over while he job searches.

Both men and women frequently suggested that they had lost their jobs because of their age. They identified themselves as costly employees because of their high salaries, based on years of experience and expertise, as well as the benefit packages their higher position commanded. Scott Mandel succinctly says, "You could bring two, three, four people for what I was getting paid." Cheryl Stanley, a tall 60-year old woman who worked in healthcare administration at the same hospital for over 20 years attributes an age-pattern:

> From different people who were here and gone, here and gone. And in fact, they laid off somebody this summer who'd been there for 18 years….He wasn't a problem. He was doing his work. He was diligent. He was a patient advocate. He was there for 18 years and: 'Here's a piece of paper. Thank you. Your services are no longer needed.'…The pattern is there.

In fact, like several others, Cheryl was so concerned that she might have been discriminated against because of her age that she talked to an employment lawyer for peace of mind. After the legal consultation, she decided not to pursue matters. Most of my respondents were over 40. My respondents believed that older workers are particularly at a disadvantage in terms of losing jobs.Indeed, previous research on unemployment has borne this out (Newman, 1988). My respondents thus frequently brought up the issue of feeling like they had been singled out because of their age.

For the most part, men and women had extremely similar experiences of losing their jobs, as the above examples illustrate. Infrequently, though, a handful of the women who had lost jobs explained that they thought they had been pushed out because of being women. Anne Davis, a 40-year old woman, has a PhD in Psychology and specializes in child therapy. She was employed in her capacity as a child psychologist by an organization catering to families who have members with mental health challenges. She lost her job at the organization seven months ago, and she attributes this specifically to how her gender became salient when there was a change in management:

> We got a new CEO who - this is totally and completely my opinion – didn't like strong women... So I can think of four strong women, we were all pushed out in different ways…I kind of knew within the first couple

> months [of his joining] that this probably wasn't going to be a job that lasted for me. Just sort of watching what he was doing with other people, how he was letting people go, how he was forcing people out, how he was treating people, the things he was saying to me. I mean this was sort of a running joke with my husband, which was 'I'm gonna get fired.'

Anne explains in further detail how she thinks she was strategically targeted by her new CEO because she is a strong woman:

> Well for one thing, I was written up two months after he got there and the write-up was based on one of my subordinate's opinions when she had gotten in trouble. So basically what happened was she got in trouble for something related to her performance, threw me under the bus, and then I got written up for that without any data.

Anne explains that the norm is to be told when your employees have submitted formal complaints about you, so that you can assess them and, ideally, change your behavior. In Anne's case, in contrast, she was told that several employees had complained about her, but she was not told what they had said so that she could work on improving that aspect of her leadership skills. In fact, as Anne later found out, none of the members of her team had actually even complained about her. The whole thing had been fabricated by her boss to set the stage for letting her go:

> What I later found out…because we [HR director and Anne] had a friendly relationship, I reached out to her and I was like, 'What really happened?' And she said, 'There weren't multiple staff that came to him, there was one staff that came to him, and they lied to you and told you that

> it was multiple staff.'

Here, Anne's friend who had formerly been the HR director at the same company explains that her boss colluded with one of Anne's team members, and likely someone from HR, to make it seem as though there had been far more and serious complaints about her than was the reality. Being written up was a pivotal step in Anne'S eventually losing her job:

> In a write-up basically what happens is there's a clause at the bottom that says 'If at any point in the future this comes up again, you could be terminated.' So I knew…when he wrote me up with this, that at any point in time he could turn around and lie and say that somebody came to HR [about me]…and let me go, and that's exactly what happened…

To highlight how extraordinary this method of proceeding was, Anne says:

> I was shocked. One, because I had never heard that piece [about employee complaints about me] before; two, because it really wasn't true; and three, because in my experience with the center as a pretty high up supervisor I had always had the professional courtesy of HR or my superiors coming to me and saying 'Listen, there's this thing going on. Like your staff are saying this…We need to fix this.' And it got fixed together and so the experience of not even having the professional courtesy of talking with me…I didn't get a verbal warning.

The arrival of the new CEO led to Anne'S eventually losing her job a few months later, but Anne had already been having negative experiences at this workplace. Yet, she still chose not to leave of her own accord. Anne's reasons for this too were gendered, and she

explains:

> Honestly, the issue is that I wanted to have another baby and so I didn't want to leave the center because you need to work at an agency for a year before you have protected FMLA (Family Medical Leave Act) status. So it really, from a family standpoint, didn't make sense…And I'm actually the breadwinner in the family as well, so my salary was pulling us through all this so I really couldn't leave at that point.

Anne's six figure salary was necessary for her household, especially since her husband had just decided on a career change – shifting from working in the healthcare industry to the real estate industry. Still, throughout the course of their relationship, Anne has always earned more, and their lifestyle has been built more around the stability of her paycheck.

The actual job loss

The meeting

On the morning that William Smith was finally let go from the foreclosure company where he worked, he went to the break room to make himself a cup of coffee. He ran into the head of IT there, and started making small talk, "I was like 'What's up' blah blah blah? And I cracked some joke - you know just like good morning, small talk, that kind of thing." Nodding, as he thinks back on this day, William describes the uneasiness his colleague displayed this particular morning, "He didn't really laugh or engage with me. He said 'It was good seeing ya.'" William explains that "The IT guys were always the first to know about this sort of stuff because they have to block you out of your computer." He continues, "It didn't register with me then, but now I know that he

knew that the axe was going to fall. And then the head of operations just came and said 'Can I talk to you for a second?'" William was let go in the morning, but others in my sample were let go in the afternoon or at the end of the day. Often times, the meeting with a human resources personnel of the company is scheduled several days in advance, instead of on the day itself as was the case with William.

Meetings informing the employee that they no longer have a job typically take place with the employee's immediate supervisor and someone from human resources. The content of these meetings focuses on the severance package. William describes how he was summoned for this meeting: "They come knock on your little cubicle, or tap you on the shoulder: 'Hey come with me, I need to talk to ya.'" As we will see below, William's own process of losing his job unfolded smoothly and politely. Nevertheless, he still uses a somewhat painful imagery, the violence of it undercut to some extent by his gentle sense of humor:

> You ever watch a documentary with a herd of zebra and there's a lion? Lions catching one zebra, and all the other zebras are a little way off just kind of watching. That's kind of what it's like for all the other employees.

William's description captures a sense of the inevitability of his situation, the sense of survival that the rest of the employees have – even if it's for a short amount of time – as well as the power differentials between the bosses and those they are letting go. In an era of economic tumult and eroded employer-employee relationships, William captures the extent to which employees can be beholden to employers. This idea has also been strongly suggested in the earlier section when men and women explained why, when they know losing their job is inevitable, they don't just quit. Certainly, some must (although

they would not have been captured in this sample); yet, for the most part, in an uncertain economy, employers often have greater power than employees.

In the actual meeting itself, William's boss told him that "I have your separation letter." William succinctly describes the contents of this legalistic document, "It's so you can give that to [get] unemployment: 'so and so was separated from the job because due to a lack of work.'" William adds that for him, his boss reassured him that "'You're a good guy, this isn't any kind of reflection on you, and I like you. I'm sorry we have to do this, business has slowed down, we've all seen this. We've held out for as long as we could.'" For William, as for many others in my sample, his boss also added, "'You need a letter of reference? I'll give it…You need any recommendation.'" Because William had known that his days at his job were numbered and because he had maintained good relationships with his superiors he too was able to reply in return to them that "This has been fun, I appreciate it. Good luck to you in the future." Indeed, although William's own meeting was courteous, he says that "The process is very professional, very cut and dry…That wasn't a long conversation that we talked." Shrugging his shoulders, he adds "I mean, it's just business."

For others, men and women, even though they may recognize that this is just part of business, the meeting can be a much more visceral experience. James Peterson is a small, neat man in his early 50 with dark blond hair. He has a precise, almost mechanical way of speaking. He lost his job as a senior executive at a healthcare company about two months ago. Despite his unemotional manner, he evokes his own meeting as an intensely emotional experience. First, James describes the process "It was the straightforward textbook approach: sitting down, being informed that due to circumstances beyond their

control, decisions beyond their control and a direct quote, which I wrote down at the time, 'Nothing I did; not my fault.' The position was being eliminated." James emphasizes that he sees his job loss as solely a matter of higher-up decisions about restructuring the organization for greater financial profit, rather than a comment on him as a worker. Despite trying to reassure himself, he describes what he felt at this time:

> I stood up wanting to hold onto the back of a chair because this kind of news has both a emotional and physical reaction. So I just wanted to stand up to catch up my breath, because my breath was pretty much taken away. Hundreds and hundreds of thoughts ran through my mind simultaneously because of the rigors of search, the age, the hardship that this introduces on myself and others, the suddenness of the news and the fact that I was not informed yet what the safety and security provisions were going to be.

As James describes, knowing that your job may be taken away, and understanding, in those cases where this applies, that it might not be because of anything you've done, does not necessarily lessen the blow in the moment. This bureaucratic meeting can be, and often is, an emotional event.

Packing away your office

Regardless of whether this meeting telling the employee that they no longer have a job is cordial or not, the process of packing away your desk and office is generally a sad experience. Usually, human resources pack away the employee's desk, and lock the employee out of their computer and take away the company phone if the employee has one. This can be traumatic because it distances the employee from the organization.

William's exaggerated matter-of-fact manner undercuts his hurt when he explains, "There's a couple of other guys who are cleaning your desk of all your stuff. And then they put that in a box." William did not pack away his own office; others did it for him, ostensibly in order to ensure that the employee is not taking confidential company files and information.

As for men, for women too this cut-and-dry procedure is frequently experienced as acutely hurtful. Eileen Boyle, who was a field investigator for a large insurance firm, says that when she realized that being let go was imminent, she prepared for it. For her the biggest hint was when her boss scheduled a meeting, but "The meeting location was not within our department; it was outside the department. So I knew it was happening." To prepare for a smoother departure, Eileen, who had been with her firm for 27 years, did the following: "I went onto my computer, cleared everything; went onto my phone, cleared every - all my contacts, that sort of thing." Eileen explains that she did this because after such a long period with the same company, she had amassed some personal items and information on her office computer and official phone, "I didn't want them having any personal contacts and business contacts, because they're my contacts. So I deleted them."

But what bothered Eileen most was that right after the meeting with human resources where she was told she was being let go, she was also told that she was not welcome to stay for the remainder of the day to clean out her desk; policy demanded that she leave immediately: "And they're like 'We'd rather you leave now. We've called a cab for you.'" This stung Eileen, who has since tried to rationalize this impersonality: "I mean I had 27 years of exceeded expectations reviews. Never on probation…I mean

never did anything wrong. So people were shocked. My coworkers were stunned." Shaking her head as though trying to will herself into accepting these events she continues, "Again, it's the culture of the business world today, and I've accepted that." In addition, the car that Eileen drove to and from work belonged to the company since as a field investigator Eileen needed to be mobile. She explains that staff from human resources "Walked me out to my car, I took my personal effects out, and that was pretty much it." After 27 years of working at the same place, Eileen found her ties with it severed, swiftly.

Since almost all the people I interviewed had a strong suspicion before losing their jobs that this would happen, some made even more advance preparations. Darlene Bach explains that "two days prior" to a meeting scheduled with her supervisor – a meeting that she was certain was to inform her that she no longer had a job at this company – she "decided I'm going to take personal stuff out of my office. Because, as you can tell, I'm a crier. I wanted to minimize the amount of stuff that I would have to deal with personally. I tried to…keep my shit together." Darlene continues, "Even if you're prepared, when they tell you, it's awful. And I just didn't want to have to think." Darlene mimicked handing over small items to another person, as she said "'Here's my corporate credit card, here's my ID badge, here's my phone, here's my this, here's my this.' Like check, check, check, check." Darlene explains that because she only had the office emails of some of her work colleagues, she "Went around to a few of my friends, made sure I had their home email addresses. Had their home cell phone numbers."

Others, who may have accumulated extensive items in their office sometimes take trips over several days to fully clear out their items; at these times too, they arrange it

with human resources so that someone is watching them, given protocol. Indeed, the actual departure from the office is ritualized, and usually overseen by personnel from human resources. While seemingly a legally-driven practice, this impersonal manner can grate, especially when employees have been at the same company for many years.

Going home, and thinking about the finances[8]

But after packing up, the unemployed person has to contend with the remainder of the day: going home, telling their spouses and at times their children, and letting this sink in. Like many others, William Smith called his wife "and said it's over." William's wife, who had kept abreast of the situation replied, "'Oh no.' All done, that sucks." As William explains, "So the rest of that day, I just went home, I filled out the stuff for unemployment, updated my resume." His wife, Shannon Smith, was working from home that day, and he explained that "We talked about daycare and stuff like that." Because they had known that his job loss was imminent, he explains that "We had done most of this already. You know what I mean? This wasn't sudden." Specifically, he recalls that his wife asked him "'Are you able to get unemployment?' And I was like 'yeah.'"

Shannon has a similar recollection, "the day it happened I was actually working at home… And he came home; I knew as soon as he walked in the door what had happened…. he wouldn't have been home in the middle of the day. And he was home at 10 o'clock in the morning… it's the only reason why he would have come home…And he just said 'Well, today's the day!' 'I said 'Okay!'" Reflecting back on the day, Shannon

[8] See Table 5 for more details on finances of these families.

adds, "I gave him a hug, there's not that much that I can do." She continues, "I just kept working…And he got on the computer and applied for [unemployment]."

William explains that he and Shannon already had a plan of action in place, particularly around their finances, even before William lost his job and as they waited for that to happen. William recounts their financial discussion:

> I bring home about $2,500 to $3,000 dollars home a month from take home…Take home now in unemployment is about $2,200. Less, but I'm at home so my son isn't in daycare. And [daycare] was a $1,000 a month. So…financially, we don't really notice it.

William lost his job during a time when the federal and state governments were granting unemployment benefit extensions, largely because several years after the Great Recession, high unemployment rates persisted. With the combined extensions, William received unemployment benefits for about a year. They still receive unemployment benefits, but these will run out in a few months and no further extensions exist. He explains:

> Because I'm home I cook and we just save money 'cause we don't eat out as much. So…financially for us, we're actually doing better. Once unemployment runs out then it's gonna be bad.

William was one of the few men in the sample who actually took over a substantial amount of household chores. As I discuss in the next chapter, in many cases, men's presence at home did not necessarily mean that children were pulled out of daycare or that men took over household chores such as cooking.

Yet, the Smith's case is still instructive in telling us about how this highly-educated and well-paid group of people experiencing unemployment think about finances in the days following their job loss. As Table 3 shows, the people I spoke with have considerable financial cushions: in terms of savings; spouses who work; and prior earnings that were quite high. As dual-earner couples, and college educated at that, this sample commanded a considerable salary before they lost their jobs (see Tables 1 and 2). In addition, their spouses did so as well (see Tables 1 and 2). These families had also amassed considerable amounts of savings, in the form of liquid cash, assets such as stock options and mutual funds, as well as well-funded retirement plans for the older families in this sample who usually had several hundreds of thousands of dollars set aside for their retirement. Additionally, much like most college educated individuals in the US, these families also come from financially stable, even well-off, backgrounds. This means that this sample has access to financial help from family members, such as parents, and at times even siblings.[9]

As such, for these participants, losing a job did not mean a stark cutting back on their lifestyle. Mitchell Lazovert, a financial analyst in his mid-30s, says "the money issue wasn't such an issue." Instead, most felt quite secure that even just with their

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[9] This sample is similar in terms of education and economic stability to the unemployed workers studied by scholars such as Ofer Sharone (2014), Barbara Ehrenreich (2005) and Vicki Smith (2001). This affluent group of workers has started facing unemployment and general job instability in recent decades, partly shaped by economic structural shifts. Yet, this sample is quite distinct from the families studied by Komarovsky (1940) during the Great Depression, most of whom were unskilled workers; or even from Katharine Newman (1988). While Katharine Newman looked at families of well-educated and high-earning unemployed men, the family structures differed vastly from my sample since most families were sole male-breadwinner. Newman also described how the various financial assets these families had accumulated over the course of a lucrative career shielded them from destitution. Yet, the sample presented here differs from Newman's in being dual-earner, which means even less pressure. This dual-earner family structure better captures the reality of family life in contemporary America.

severance packages (almost everyone I spoke with got one) and unemployment benefits that would kick in later, they were relatively financially safe for the next few months.

Jim Radzik who has been job searching for the past year explains how in their family they haven't really cut back on expenses. During the interview, Jim, a man in his late 40s with neatly combed dark brown hair and a clean shaven face got progressively angrier, and his face redder, as he explained that while his wife thinks they have had to cut back on their spending, they have not: "She feels like she can't spend money." Shaking his head in frustration, Jim explains his disagreement with his wife's opinion that the family has had to cut back. As evidence he offers this: "Meanwhile she spent $12,000 last year on quilting. On *quilting* – twelve grand on *quilting*. Yet, we've cut back?!" Rolling his eyes dramatically, and continuing to shake his head, Jim lists a series of lifestyle expenditures which he feels suggests that they have not cut back on their expenses:

> I threw her a surprise forty-ninth party the year before. Last year we went to Mexico; the year before we went to Mexico. This year we're going to Mexico. We're going to New Orleans in May for our daughter's graduation. In June we're taking the kids to Europe for two weeks. She thinks we're cutting back. I'm like, 'Tell me how we're cutting back?'

In her own interview, Amelia agrees that Jim's unemployment doesn't really mean a drastic change in their lifestyle – she recognizes that they go on trips, and shop at high-end places. Amelia's comments about cutting back really stem from the discomfort that they are spending more than she feels they should given that her $200,000 a year salary – putting them in the rank of the affluent – might not be quite enough for all the luxuries

they continue to consume. Her discussion of cutting back, she explains, is really a way to motivate Jim to find a job.

For unemployed women too, the financial considerations mirrored those of their unemployed male counterparts. Darlene Bach explains why, despite being currently unemployed, she nevertheless feels relatively secure financially:

> I think because you realize that 'One way or another I'll get another job.'…But I also know we probably won't take a big vacation. You know last year we went to China for two weeks and it was very nice but it's super expensive to fly three people to China, and stay there for two weeks...But I know for myself you know I just have to try to minimize extra, the frivolous kind of expenditures.

Darlene explains what she means by frivolous expenditures: "We're still going to live in our house…The things that will be different will be maybe we won't go on a fancy vacation. We're not going to go out to eat dinner as much." As this example suggests, this group of unemployed individuals and their families do not face the worst material hardships. Yet, they still do have to calibrate their spending to accommodate their diminished income. Often, these decisions are made over what some may deem to be non-essential expenses – for example, going out to eat less; curtailing vacations (for example, taking a domestic instead of an international vacation).

Some male and female respondents did talk about deliberating over whether to spend money on two items in particular: seeking help from career counselors; seeking help from therapists. For many unemployed individuals, the former is seen as instrumental in having a successful job search which eventually results in a good job. The

latter too is key for some as they struggle with remaining motivated to continue job-searching or deal with mental health challenges, such as depression.

For Todd Baron, the choice of where his resources should go in fact came down to deciding between hiring a career counselor or visiting a therapist. He says, "Do I see a [career counselor] and spend a lot of money there. And will that help me? or do I go to a psychologist?" Todd decided not to invest substantially in either. Instead, he took to attending free peer-led networking meetings, and attending group seminars that a career counselor he knew hosts and which cost $25 per three-hour session with a small group of up to ten job-seekers. As for whether to see a psychologist and pay an extensive co-pay, he did the following, "My doctor felt I didn't need anything. But he felt, 'Hey, for your own sanity, why don't you go to see someone and just say 'I need some coping strategies.'" Todd visited a therapist a couple of times, and then he says, "I feel like I don't need to see him. I just need a job, a good job."

Many others relied on their family, mostly parents, to help with small, unexpected payments. Frank Amara, who worked in insurance earning about $40,000 a year and lost his job four months ago explains how they turned to his father to request money for unexpected bill of $1000, "We had the car inspected last August and it needed a whole bunch of stuff to pass inspection. And it came out to be far more than we had at the time. We asked [my father] for help with that…So we asked him for half."

For others, parents or in-laws can help them maintain a middle-class lifestyle even when a partner is unemployed. Rayan Levy, a tenured professor at a private university, whose wife, Monica Levy, also an academic who is searching for an academic position, explains how his own parents have been financially instrumental during this time:

> We sustained our life because of my parents, totally. They're constantly feeding us money to sustain this middle class lifestyle.…Last year they paid for my daughter's [elementary school]. That was $10,000. This year lent us…another $10,000…The couches you're looking at, they bought; our bed stuff, they bought; the car, they bought…When they come down to visit,[they would] give us like $500 here or $500 there…[If] my Visa was maxed out, I called my parents, I said, 'Can I just put it on [your] Visa?...When we went out for supper, my parents insisted that we use their Visa every time. So we'd go out like once every two weeks. Have sushi dinners with the kids, spend like $100 and it was on my parents…It was just that they were really in every way a kind of top-up.

The list that Rayan racks up here is extensive. Rayan's parents are not especially wealthy, and neither of them has a college degree. As middle-eastern immigrants in Canada their family depended on the income from their small corner grocery store, which they eventually sold a few years ago when they retired. Rayan doesn't have siblings and he finds himself often telling his wife, Monica, to relax about finances because:

> Look, my parents have property. We're both only kids. My parents have property. Your parents have property. We own property…I go to the point where I'm telling her, 'these are the retirement money my parents have.' That comes to us at some point. I know it sounds awful, but they're all going to die at some point.

Not all families provide this kind of exhaustive financial support. Still, it was a pattern amongst my respondents that parents and in-laws in particular did step in to ease

whatever financial constraints these respondents might have been feeling. Indeed, previous research on inter-generational transmission of support has found that adult children are more likely to receive support from elderly parents than provide monetary support to them (Fingerman et al., 2013), and that both adult daughters and adult sons are likely to receive the same amount of monetary help from parents, while adult daughters also receive more help in kind, such as childcare and emotional support (Swartz, 2009).

For unemployed women, the patterns about financial considerations and receiving financial help from family members were similar to unemployed men. Just as Todd Baron deliberated over whether to spend money on therapy or career counseling, Christina D'Angelo too explains how she and her husband discussed maintaining her visits to her psychologist. They decided that mental health was a priority for them, especially while Christina was unemployed, despite the cost of paying for visits to the psychologist:

> There are people that teeter on the edge - and I think there's a lot of them. Something like unemployment throws them into the abyss and then they have no tools to get out. I've seen that happen with a lot of my friends and I've experienced it myself.

Christina explains that in her case she was diagnosed with clinical depression and needed medication. While the high cost of seeing a psychologist was initially concerning for her, together she and her husband ultimately decided that their health, in all its aspects, was something they wanted to take care of:

> My psychologist was not covered by my health insurance. She's $150 a visit. When you're unemployed [this] is a significant amount of money.

> And you can't just go for one visit: if you're on drugs to update them and maintain them and to make sure that they're working correctly. So it becomes a very expensive endeavor. And if you're dealing with it because you're unemployed, paying $150 a pop to go get pills, plus the cost of the prescription on top of it, is a lot of money.

Christina and her husband were able to pay for Christina to see a psychologist "Only because we were getting family help. And we decided that that was the one expense that we would splurge on was to keep us healthy." As I mentioned earlier, most in my sample had ample savings of their own. In addition, almost all also mentioned that they knew if it came down to it, they could obtain financial help from their families.

Again, just as for unemployed men, for these unemployed women too, because most are well off, at times financial help from family meant paying for luxuries. Elliott Frankel, a lawyer, is married to Claire, a television producer. Claire, the primary breadwinner in their family, lost her job several months ago. At this time, Elliot's parents have stepped in to pay for expensive vacations, so that the whole family can still enjoy some quality time together. Elliott explains:

> We've been very lucky. A lot of people cut back on trips…we take a lot of family vacations that [my parents] pay for. [We go] with them…They get more time with the grandkids and we actually enjoy being with them…So we were in Italy this summer. Like who goes to Italy when you're out of work? It's crazy. And we would never do it. Other than the fact that we didn't pay for it, so why not?..We didn't have to cut some big fun activity like that.

Elliott mentioned that his parents would often show their affection to his family by paying for some part of trips they planned together even when Claire was working. Yet, now that Claire was out of work, they took care of much more of the financial aspects of trips.

For yet others, both unemployed men and unemployed women, just knowing that they can depend on extended family members when it comes to finances is helpful. Emily Bader's husband Brian lost his job as a financial services professional several months ago. In her interview with me, Emily, a vivacious woman in her mid 50s, described her's and husband's safety net. To describe their financial safety net, Emily placed her left palm flat on the wooden café table in front of her. With her right palm she drew a small semi-circle from the tip of her index finger of her left hand to the joint of her left wrist. She said "so your first safety net is just each other." She drew another, wider semi-circle, saying "And then what we've established as far as our safety net financially." She drew a third, even wider circle that enclosed these two smaller ones, saying "below that there's his parents and then there's my whole family. So we really have a nice safety net. But you know it's something you never want to use."

Like the Baders, the Boyles, where Eileen Boyle the primary breadwinner of her family who too lost her job several months ago, says how knowing that her in-laws have the ability to financially support them has been a relief: "Financially we have people there that can help us. And I think that has just relieved us." Eileen elaborates on what this means, "I don't want to go to my in-laws to say 'I need to borrow three thousand dollars this month.' But at the same time, it's there if we need it. So I don't have to worry about 'Can I make the car payment and the mortgage payment this month?' I can

worry about 'Am I getting job interviews this week?'…So that I think has just been a huge relief to us." Eileen describes the specifics of this situation that she finds to be relief.

> [My parents-in-law] have been generous with us and they said not to worry about it…My husband's grandparents had money – apparently a lot of money…And his mother was an only child so she inherited a huge estate. And [my husband's] parents also did very well…So the combination of inherited wealth and acquired wealth.

This is a relief to Eileen, because her in-laws have made promises about the money: "My husband just told me recently that his father told him that when they pass - now they're 80-something and they're far from gone – that none of [his siblings or him] will have to worry about working again."

People in my sample thus discussed how family members – usually parents or in-laws, stepped in to cover some of the children's expenses such as daycare or paying for school supplies; paid for occasional treats such as an extravagant dinner while unemployed; gave a loan, or a gift, in the thousands of dollars; and at times even paid for vacation to Europe. These generosities are possible because of the middle-class and upper-middle class nature of this sample. Additionally, even when family members did not specifically provide money, they still provided a sense of financial security because, as most in my sample explained, they felt that if it came down to it their family members would provide whatever financial support they needed. Indeed, previous research bears this out, showing that adult children who have at least one child of their own are further more likely to receive financial and other support from parents (Suitor et al., 2007); and

the perceived financial need of children (of which unemployment is likely a factor) is one of the most powerful predictors of whether parents provide financial help to their adult children (Hartnett at al., 2014).

Organizing for the unemployment and job-search: what unemployed people are concerned about

Once the job loss happens, the unemployed individual has to get organized to find their next job. For this sample of professionals, most got a severance package which included their salary for a set amount of time (usually for several months) either as a one-time lump sum payment or distributed over several payments; as well as continuing access to their benefits, such as healthcare insurance through the previous employer, for a determined period of time, and at times also access to career counselors an outplacement firms to help in the job search. For some of the highest ranking positions, such as vice presidents, in my sample, the severance package included stock options. The overall severance package could be straightforward for some, but for others it involved negotiations.

Rakesh Bhushan, in his mid 40s, who had been a vice president of finance at a large company, explains how negotiating his severance package took about two weeks.

> [The] first fifteen days or so after exit were all this negotiation that goes on between HR, the company, and me about the exit. How are you going to monetize my options? So that was taking up some time. And I actually had more stress about that; that somehow they're going to shortchange me on what I think I had earned.

To allay his concerns, Rakesh spoke to a lawyer, asking him to look over his severance agreement:

> I even spoke to…an old lawyer friend of mine…saying… 'Hey, would you be willing to help?' He said 'Yes,' so I had him read my severance agreement. He actually started talking to the company…So, my first fifteen days were all about getting my severance all settled.

For those two weeks that Rakesh was waiting for his severance package to be negotiated and finalized, he started losing sleep as he contemplated his employment future:

> I was having trouble sleeping. So I would stay up late and come up with all these weird scenarios. 'Hey, what if, doomsday, nothing is working, we've exhausted our severance and it's all over and no job and no nothing. What am I gonna do?'

As he thought over these questions, Rakesh describes how he coped with his worries:

> And that was my way to deal with that stress: that even in the worst case scenario, which I call Plan C, Plan C was if nothing happens, we can actually sell our house, liquidate everything that we have, monetize everything, go back to India.

Rakesh moved to the US as an adult, for a Master's degree after finishing his undergraduate studies in India. He has been a US citizen for decades. He and his wife have built a life in the US. Yet, both maintain strong connections with India – his wife's parents still live there. Going back to live a life in India remains a possibility, albeit not an ideal one. He weighs this possibility:

> That would be enough money for us to actually live a pretty decent life [in India], between now and the time I would be eligible for social security. I mean there are others who would be on the street... So that was kind of my coping mechanism. I would run those scenarios, run the math and I would say 'Oh well, very good, the Rupee is depreciating, more Rupees' [laughs].

For some other families of unemployed men, albeit a minority of the families, staying abreast of the deadlines, such as for federal extensions as was common in the years after the Great Recession, was another chore. When Kimmie Baron's husband Todd lost his job several months ago, Kimmie became responsible for keeping track of his application for unemployment benefits, including any extensions:

> Unemployment is running out next week because there's no federal extensions...[Todd] keeps saying 'What do you mean it's running out?'…I read everything online 'Well, extensions haven't been extended since December 28th. I know that Congress is on vacation for two weeks.' …these are things I keep checking, these are things I keep looking. These are things he has no idea of. You are unemployed, these are things you should know!

Sighing, Kimmie adds, "That's where my level of frustration comes in. that I'm relied on to know all these things and do all these things." Almost without exception, it was the unemployed individual in my sample who took care of the details around their severance or government unemployment. The Barons were unusual in this division of labor, and

their experience recalls how within marriages, women are often responsible for the mental work of organizing and scheduling (Tichenor, 2005).

Just as ironing out the details of severance packages from employers or figuring out the procedure for availing oneself of unemployment benefits from the government was a chore for unemployed men, and often their families, so it was for unemployed women. I met Darlene Bach on a sunny January morning. Darlene was dressed in sweats and sneakers. She had just come from submitting her forms to get unemployment. Her head hanging low as we walked. Shaking her head, she commented that, "If politicians could see the effort that it takes to get the unemployment you are due, they would not blame unemployed people for being unmotivated." The unemployment insurance line had been long, the staff their unhelpful, and she described her experience as "a bureaucratic runaround that the unemployment office requires."

For unemployed women getting the details of severance packages or government benefits ironed out can sometimes come with an additional sense of urgency. This was the case for a couple of women in my sample who happened to be pregnant around the time of their job loss. Anne Davis, a child psychologist explains how the process of negotiating her severance package, especially healthcare insurance, was challenging. Anne, has a toddler and was pregnant with her second child when she lost her job. In her meeting with the human resources personnel to discuss her benefits her pregnancy was her primary concern:

> What sort of happened for me in that meeting is I was arguing my case and all of a sudden I was like 'Oh my god, I'm pregnant!' Like, 'I just got fired and I'm [eight weeks] pregnant and I hold the health insurance…

> Great, I'm gonna be an unemployed, uninsured pregnant person.'

Worried about her healthcare because of her pregnancy, Anne explains, "And so what I actually ended up doing was hiring a lawyer…to negotiate a longer severance because I was pregnant." This move proved to be beneficial for Anne: "Yes, I did get a longer severance. They covered my insurance for a couple months." Instead of three months of severance pay, Anne received five months of pay, and additional months on her health care plan. But this negotiation was complicated:

> It was probably one of the most stressful processes that I have ever been involved in…I went about eight or nine weeks in this process between hiring a lawyer, sending letters, them sending stuff back…claiming all these terrible things that I did…. But I ended up with a longer severance.

As Anne's experience demonstrates, the job loss itself doesn't necessarily signal an end to a process, that as we saw, can start months in advance. After notice of the job loss, many unemployed individuals spend considerable time and emotions dealing with the bureaucracy of unemployment.

Once the more minute details around severances and unemployment benefits have been sorted out, which can occupy much of the first few weeks of unemployment, the unemployed individual can move on to strategizing about their job search. Recent research on the white-collar job search has demonstrated how there is a complex industry around it: from career counselors and outplacement firms, to self-help books about writing cover letters, interviewing techniques, to peer-led groups that purport to offer techniques and emotional support, as well as government-run workshops (for more on these see: Sharone 2014; Ehrenreich 2004; Smith 2001). In my sample too, the

unemployed job seekers were aware of, and usually quite embedded, in these activities. Specifically, these unemployed job-seekers often focused on skill development while unemployed and sought professional career advice.

For Terry Clarke, an engineer in his late 50s, losing his job about six months ago was a signal that he should take the time to focus on developing skills suitable for the current market:

> I'm sort of in this process of reinvention and I wish I had done that 20 years ago. I wish I had because what happens is in the job I was in, you could get complacent…: I know what I'm doing, I know how to do it, I enjoy it, I enjoy the people I'm working with…And yet…the type of business that I was in is characterized as a long-cycle business. Programs take years to complete. Well the business world is moving all the time and changing, new methodologies, new tools, new wisdom or knowledge and insight…I was aware of it but I never felt the need to go out and master it.

For unemployed women, just as for unemployed men, getting professional career advice and training too is important. Candace Wilson, a lawyer in her early 60s, says that in an initial job loss experience, a few years ago, she sought out a career counselor, signing up to meet him at frequent intervals to strategize about her job search. This kind of help typically runs in the thousands of dollars.[10] She says, "I went and actually paid to be a client of [my career counselor] as opposed to just going to these [group] meetings." As

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[10] Rates vary, depending on the career coach. Some offer intensive consultations for 6 months where they work with the client on key issues: resume, networking, interviewing, and then if a client gets interviews and offers, the coach works with the client on strategies to negotiate a higher salary, benefits and so on. For a 6 month course offering this, the price could be about $6,000. Unemployed workers also spend money on their application materials. One unemployed man for example told me that he spent $2,000 on getting his business card and resume professionally created.

she points out, this time, she only attends group workshops which cost about $25 and last three hours each. But there is no individualized attention provided.

The other major activity that unemployed job seekers focus on is networking, as scholars before have pointed out (Sharone 2014; Ehrenreich, 2005; Smith 2001). Some unemployed people, like Rakesh Bhushan, who experienced his first job loss eight months ago, take a while to learn the invisible rules of job searching for professionals in the US.

> First time in transition - I didn't know rules of engagement. I have no idea…I went online and Monster.com [a job search engine]. It took me a while to kind of understand 'Hey you're not going to get your next job through Monster or CareerBuilder.' So that's…when the outplacement guy was helpful…I spoke to the CFO who had hired me. He's retired now but he was extremely helpful…I was spending a good amount of time with people from the past I knew and they were giving me some really good counsel. And I came to the determination, my next job is gonna come from networking.

In contrast, Claire Frankel has gone through three job losses in the last handful of years. She is, thus, quite aware of the importance of networking. Claire has expanded the kinds of jobs she looks for, and consequently also expanded her venues of networking. While she was earlier primarily interested in TV production jobs – where she has spent the bulk of her career – now she is expanding to also look at public relations jobs, because she is unsure that she will be able to get a job in TV production given that at her high level of experiences there are fewer amount of jobs. Claire says:

> But even changing careers makes it hard. In this field I know what I'm getting into, I know I'm good at it, and I can sell myself because I know what they're looking for…Going to another field I don't have the exact experience and so it's not that easy. So you have this whole different connection and network base. It's a lot of work. I've been reaching out to people and now I'm getting out of my comfort zone… I'm going to a conference for brand marketing. Which is something I would never have thought I would do…I couldn't afford the registration fee. But I'd been talking to the president, I said 'I'd love to come but I can't afford the registration fee,' he waived the registration fee.

James Peterson, an unemployed man, echoes Claire's note about networking: "I am seizing every opportunity to meet people…who may know someone who may know someone that can help me with positions in the hidden position market." Indeed, as ample research has documented (Sharone, 2014; Lane, 2011; Ehrenreich, 2005) networking is one of the key characteristics of the unemployment experience for white-collar American workers.

Telling children and others about the job loss

Another thing that unemployed individuals and their spouses have to do is to figure out how to tell their children, as well as friends and family members. Sometimes, this happens on the day of the layoff. Caroline Anderson explains that when she lost her job, they followed the same routine in terms of telling their ten-year old and fourteen-year old sons as they had when her husband had been unemployed a few years ago:

> I guess they had kind of been a little used to it, because a couple of times my husband said, (chuckles) 'Well, Dad's not working for a while…So Dad will be home.' So we just told them the same thing that I'm not working anymore and I'll be home. We don't really discuss finances with them. They're still too young, so they didn't really ask a lot of questions. They just kind of rolled with the punches.

Caroline adds that in part they didn't find it necessary to discuss finances with their children because:

> We're not really big spenders, so it's not like we said, 'Okay, we're going to have to cut all of our extracurricular activities.' We didn't have to say to them, 'Well, we can't go out to dinner anymore or anything like that,' So I don't think they were too worried about their quality of life changing.

Like these unemployed women above, unemployed men had a fairly similar experience of telling their children. Peter Scotts, who lost his job at a pharmaceutical company five months ago, explains that he and his wife sat down with his two daughters to explain his unemployment to them:

> …When the severance package became a reality we sat down with them and we told them all the details…they knew I was going to get paid for such a period of time, we'd have insurance coverage and everything. So that really wasn't a stressful situation at all…for them. I mean they certainly never showed any negative emotions or worry or fear or anything.

Like many of the other parents, Peter Scotts made this conversation a teachable moment. These parents most frequently saw their own unemployment as a part of a broader trend of fragile and impermanent employment relationships. As such, they consider it important that their children become aware of the need to constantly protect their financial interests and to know the realities of the labor market:

> And also I kind of shared with them what I've done to stay on top of my career and why that puts me in a good position to move on to something else and have confidence that I can do that. So all of that was kind of reinforcing messages that we had been sharing with them all along… the fact that we were very well prepared financially …So it was a good example to say and here's why all that stuff paid off, or could pay off or put us in a position where we're not freaked out or completely have anxiety around this big change.

For a smaller set of these parents, equally in families of both unemployed men and women, telling their children is a more fraught process, as they worry about adding to their children's anxiety. Connie Mandel is a vice president at a bank. Her husband, Scott, lost his job several months ago. Connie and Scott decided not to tell their children until just recently, several months after Scott was laid off. Connie says:

> We didn't tell them for a long time, 'cause they were much more stressed about it… My daughter worries where her next pair of Uggs are coming. You know she right now wants an iPhone. Even if I was Bill Gates she would not be getting an iPhone. So really money has nothing to do with this. You know but she's worried about that. I've noticed in their

> Christmas list this year, at least my son, he's like much more like 'I want, you know, an old sock.' And my daughter still has her list [laughs]. So there must be much more hidden worry about that than I realize.

Connie adds that her children's concerns are unfounded since Scott's unemployment will not impact their lifestyle just yet:

> We haven't lived a lavish lifestyle to begin with. So it wasn't that we went from these major vacations and so on to nothing. Our spending habits really haven't changed all that much. Because we've always been frugal. You know I do worry, next year, my daughter's very heavily into ballet. Now if Scott doesn't get a job by next year I don't know how we're going to handle that.

Connie means that if Scott doesn't have a job next year the Mandels will need to seriously consider some lifestyle changes. In her mind a particularly expensive activity is her daughter's ballet. Connie is ambivalent about whether ballet is worth investing money in for her daughter, "My daughter's kind of good. And she has her sights on Princeton - they have a great dance program. She has a goal." Yet Connie adds that, "My daughter's good, but she…will never be…the prima ballerina. She's not that good." So, if Scott doesn't get a job, Connie is afraid that her daughter's expensive ballet lessons will have to be cut, although her daughter is tremendously fond of ballet. Connie is concerned about how her daughter would handle this change.

Like the Mandels, for Darlene Bach telling her 15-year old son Parker that she had lost her job was a more challenging process, which she attributes to Parker's anxious nature. Darlene says:

> I think the hardest part is telling your kid…It was easy to tell my husband 'cause he had been hearing the trials and tribulations all the way along. But my son was pretty sheltered from that. And he is also a very sensitive kid. So he was almost hysterical initially. His biggest concern was that we would have to sell our house and move. That we would not be able to keep his pet lizard…so he was like 'ohmygosh are we going to have to get rid of Sprinkles?' I said 'No no!' So I tried to explain to him these things would change and these other things wouldn't change.

In addition, unemployed individuals and their spouses often had to figure out how and when to tell others – such as extended family members or close friends. This was a process that unemployed men and their wives discussed more than unemployed women. For the former, telling others was an issue that had to be delicately handled, but not for unemployed women (I explore this at length in later chapters). Emily Bader for example decided to keep her husband Brian's job loss a private affair this time: "I kept it a secret this time." She found it mortifying when Brian revealed it during a family vacation which she, Brian and their two sons were taking with her parents, siblings, and nieces and nephews during the summer, a few weeks after Brian lost his job:

> We were on vacation and Brian blurted it out to everybody [chuckles]…This is like our whole family. There's like 20 of us. And we're at dinner and somebody makes a joke about having downtime or lots of time on their hands. And Brian was like 'speaking of that…I was let go.' That was rough.

She adds that her family probably wondered why she had concealed it, especially since Emily is close with her siblings:

> Probably some of them were a little shocked that I hadn't said anything. 'Cause like my one sister she probably was a little curious about why I hadn't told her…But, on the other hand, a lot of 'em were like 'Oh, you've done it before. No problem. You'll find another job. You're smart…you'll be fine.' And then we went on our way and everybody had a fine vacation.

Like Emily, Connie Mandel too didn't tell her family about her husband Scott's job loss. She explains why: "I guess I was embarrassed so I didn't tell them. I internalize a lot of that." She adds:

> I don't want people feeling sorry for me. Because it wasn't a sorrowful situation. We are not destitute…I mean it stinks…but it just isn't a horrible situation. So I did not want sympathy. I wanted to be strong. I felt like the only way I could be strong was if people weren't actually giving me a ton of sympathy.

At other times the issue can be about how to tell others, rather than whether to tell others. Lisa Brozek describes how she had to direct her husband to "reframe" her job loss to make it seem more "upbeat" instead of like a "crisis." Lisa says:

> So, we were at some event...And he's introducing me to someone, and she's like, 'Oh, what do you do?' and he goes, 'Oh, she just lost her job.' And she was like, 'Oh, I'm so sorry.' And I was like, 'Sam, dude, you're a salesman. C'mon, you need to say, 'Lisa's in transition, and this is what she's looking for.' Because you never know if that person you're talking

> to might know somebody who could help me.' So, I said, 'Practice that.' (laughs). And he was like 'I got it, I got it. You're right. I'm sorry.'

As these examples suggest, unemployed individuals, and their spouses, continue to have concerns about shame and stigma when it comes to telling outsiders. Alice Easton's husband Doug, a financial manager, was the primary breadwinner in their family, but he has been looking for a job for the last two years. Alice, a petite brunette in her late 40s, explains what the issue of the stigma of unemployment means for how Doug tells their family and close friends about being unemployed:

> You have your pride, and especially for men, I believe, when they're the primary supporter of the family financially, I think that there's a lot of pride. It's a huge blow to your self-esteem to have to admit that you lost your…He was very open and honest with our family.

Yet, Alice adds that Doug reframed his job loss as he moved to the outer circles of his acquaintance group:

> I think it might have been word-smithed in such a way that he didn't feel quite as bad or sound quite as bad. 'I took early retirement' sounds better than 'I was laid off.'…I think there's a level of pride, and when you lose your job, it takes a huge hit. If you can salvage that pride in any way when talking to people who are kind of outside your close-knit circle…

Summary

As this chapter suggests, the process of losing a job – the anticipation, or lack thereof – and the actual act of losing a job are strikingly similar for men and women. Both men and women often encounter long drawn out periods of uncertainty pertaining to

whether they will lose their job or not. This is a fraught period, and men and women discuss potential paths – such as quitting their job to stave off the emotionally destructive sense of uncertainty – with their spouses.

The actual job loss itself strikes emotionally, at least at this initial time, in similar ways to men and women. The impersonality of being told you have lost your job, along with the way in which the unemployed person is treated as a pariah who cannot pack away his or her own desk strikes a blow. At times, albeit infrequently, women did share suspicions about being targeted for their jobs because they were women, or expressed acute concern about losing the health insurance they accessed through employers, especially because of issues of pregnancy.

Still, in the days after this, both unemployed men and women focus on prioritizing their goals for re-employment, aware that the white-collar job-search process can be an emotionally draining one, replete with rounds of personality tests and interviews (Sharone, 2014; Ehrenreich, 2005). Some focus on getting trained and certified for skills, while others focus on networking, yet others on working on their application materials, especially resumes. This process too seems similar for both men and women at this initial stage.

Previous research has suggested that fatherhood is closely intertwined with earning in a way that motherhood is not (Townsend, 2002; Cooper, 2000). Other scholars disagree, pointing out that gender norms are evolving and the close tie that fatherhood had to providing economically is eroding (Lane, 2011). If the latter is true, then it makes sense that families of unemployed men and women described similar experiences of telling their children that one of the parents was unemployed. Yet, we do see here a sense

of stigma when it comes to sharing news of unemployment with friends and the extended circle of family members, such as siblings and parents. We see that for unemployed men and their wives this is an issue, while unemployed women do not bring it up as a challenge or even a consideration. For the most part though, the overarching initial experience of losing a job seems to be painful for men and women in similar ways at this initial stage.

HOW MEN'S UNEMPLOYMENT IS CENTRAL

How men's unemployment is palpably present in the family, and why it doesn't "undo" gender

One crisp fall evening, I met up with Laura Jansson, a 42-year old, at the train station near her home. It was about five-thirty in the evening and Laura had taken the train in from the city where she worked as a radio producer. Laura left New York City, where she spent most of her 20s and 30s, once she married her husband, Robert a 49-year old public relations manager. But Laura still retains her New York style. She was dressed fashionably in a figure-hugging black turtleneck tucked into a knee-length black leather skirt. This was set off with slim heeled black leather boots. Her shoulder-length blond hair is artfully colored with low-lights and high-lights. Several silver necklaces of varying lengths sparkle at her neck. She has a take charge manner. The Janssons, both in their 40s, have been married for five years. Until seven months ago, Robert worked as a public relations manager at a company he had been with for a year, and commanded a six figure salary in his position.

These past seven months have been trying for the Janssons. Robert Jansson's unemployment, like that most of the unemployed men I interviewed, has been a *central* experience for him and his marriage. This means that Robert, and to an even greater extent his wife Laura, perceive it as a problem that needs to be rectified. Their daily interactions are focused on helping Robert regain appropriate paid employment. Their household is organized so as to enable Robert to rectify this problem. Robert's unemployment looms large, providing a palpable backdrop for everything the couple

does and talks about. During this time, as other studies have shown (Raley et al. 2012; Chesley, 2011; Deutsch and Saxon, 1998), the Jansson's could have renegotiated their marriage to minimize the importance of Robert's paid employment. as I show below, the Janssons and other families of unemployed men instead amped up on the monetary and non-monetary importance of men's paid employment. Instead of undoing gender (Deutsch, 2007; Risman, 2009) this redid gender.

The Janssons

Today, Laura and I are waiting at the train station for the Jansson's two young children and the babysitter to pick us up. The Jansson's house is a short ten-minute walk from the train station, but it's a treat for Laura's four-year old daughter, Tessa, and Taylor, two-year old son to pick up their mother. The babysitter looks after the two children from nine in the morning until five in the evening each weekday. Once the babysitter and the children arrive, Laura launches into asking the children about their day, peppering her questions to the kids, with questions for the babysitter. When we reach their home, hearing the car pull up in their sloping driveway, Robert comes out of their home and onto the driveway to greet Laura and the two kids. Unlike Laura's alert eyes, Robert has soft, round blue eyes that take a while to take in their surroundings – he shares this softness with his son Taylor. Robert is dressed in jeans and a polo-neck, his silver hair cropped close to his head, and receding from his forehead. While Laura gives a feeling of efficiency and briskness, Robert gives a feeling of slowness and softness – like someone who is in no particular hurry. He kisses Laura hello. Noticing the questions she asks the kids, particularly Tessa, about their day, he too mildly turns to look at the children,

asking "Oh yeah what'd you guys do?" Laura knows not to ask Robert what the kids had done during the day. He wouldn't know.

At nine in the morning on each weekday, Robert goes down to his basement, remaining there until four in the evening, only coming up for lunch, tea, and snacks. He spends his time job-searching: going through online listings on sites such as Indeed.com, on Linkedin, as well as checking out specific companies that he thinks he would like to work in. He follows up on job leads, talks to recruiters, calls up acquaintances to set up networking coffee meetings. At times he researches skills development courses, signing up for them if one of them piques his interest. During the weekday, he comes upstairs only intermittently: to eat a quick lunch, or make himself a cup of tea. Laura and Robert have told the kids that "daddy goes to work downstairs." They have also additionally told them that Robert must not be disturbed during his work. At four in the evening, Robert drives to a nearby college campus to take an hour long walk on a trail-path marked out with shaved wood chips, returning just in time to welcome back the kids who are dropped off by the babysitter at about five in the evening.

Robert had not particularly enjoyed his job, largely because he didn't think he fit in with the culture and the other employees. For Robert, who once had aspirations to be an academic, his educational degrees and his intellectual pursuits are important to him. Yet, at this company, as he describes, "even in the corporate office it's maybe 50-50…college educated." He goes on to elaborate on why this made working at his previous position less enjoyable:

> My wife calls me a snob, but it's just a different experience when you're interacting with people [whose] interests are completely different. So it

> was just a bad cultural fit. I had nothing to talk to people about… So when you go home at night…if I'm watching television, I might be watching the Big Bang Theory, something like that. They're not watching the Big Bang Theory. They're watching Outdoor Network and they're watching, you know, Hot Rod, whatever… So it just felt like a fish out of water. So it wasn't a good cultural fit. So I didn't have a lot of friends at work.

Despite Robert's lackluster experience at this previous job as well as his equanimity in accepting his layoff, the Janssons have prioritized Robert's job-search. Ever since Robert's unemployment seven months ago, the Janssons have not substantially deviated from how they organize their days. Neither have they extensively redistributed the household chores amongst Laura and Robert during this time. Laura, a radio producer, still has her job, where she earns a comparable amount to the salary Robert had commanded. Both Laura and Robert explain that their two-year old is incredibly attached to Robert since Robert has been unemployed for a significant part of Taylor's young life which has enabled the father and son to bond.

Despite Robert's continuing unemployment, the Janssons continue to live a comfortably upper-middle class life. The street leading to the Jansson's three-bedroom home leads straight from the train station which links this affluent neighborhood to the city. It's easy to discern that this is a wealthy neighborhood when you spot the individuals who get off from the train in the evenings: tired men in suits holding briefcases and iPads, often with their suit jacket folded and slung on their arms. Women wear silk shells over pencil skirts or under pant suits. Their heels are glossy, their hair immaculately arranged, and there's often a discreet spark of a flashing diamond as they

move their hands. At the train stop, there is a group of high end shops catering to this neighborhoods clientele: a Lilly Pulitzer store, a specialty stationery store, a high-end makeup and beauty products store are just a few of the shops here. The Jansson's home is in the middle of a small, quiet and tidy street. The street is bordered with picturesque yet sturdy stone houses. There are no picket fences here, and instead the front garden of each house ends at the pavement that creates a buffer between the private gardens and the sidewalk. On weekday afternoons, you can spot a trundling yellow high school bus as it drops off teens who live in this neighborhoods.

Masculinity and unemployment

This chapter aims to contribute to the ongoing debate about unemployment and masculinity (Pugh, 2016; Lane, 2011; Chesley, 2011; Gough and Killewald, 2011; Bitman et al., 2003). In the first piece of a larger argument, I show that because unemployment continues to be framed as a problem for men, in their persistent and culturally mandated roles as economic providers, for unemployed men, staying at home is an uneasy experience. Men feel, and are frequently made to feel by their wives, as trespassers in the domestic space of the home. Wives worry that men might get much too comfortable staying at home, while men try to prove to their wives, as well as to others, that they are trying had to find work and leave this domestic space.

The second piece of this chapter explains how, because finding a job is seen as men's priority when unemployed, the division of labor does not undergo a drastic or enduring shift. While unemployed men do contribute more to household chores than they did prior to unemployment, they do not take ownership of domestic chores. At times, this can become an area of negotiation and even resentment amongst spouses. In this chapter,

I use my observations of the Jansson and Smith families, as well as narratives of unemployed men and their wives, to explain what being unemployed, staying at home while job-searching, negotiating household responsibilities and balancing ideals of masculinity during this chaotic and painful time are like for unemployed men and their wives.

Trespassers in their own homes

Unemployed men feel uneasy at home during the work-week, as though they do not belong there and are trespassing into this sphere. Doug Easton is a soft-spoken man in his early 50s. He has neatly parted and combed brown hair. Two years ago, Doug lost his job as a financial expert at a large corporation. He had been with the corporation for over 25 years. Still looking for a job two years later, Doug nevertheless continues to dress in carefully ironed business casuals – khakis with tucked-in Oxford shirts in understated colors and patterns. He wore a checkered pattern in light blue for our interview. He explains that for his wife Alice, a big concern when Doug first lost his job was

> Having me around the house all day. It's very difficult for her because for 16 years [she] had the house to herself. With nobody asking her where she was going or when she'd be home or anything like that, so. Which was a big adjustment for her.

Alice, Doug's wife of 18 years, is a chirpy brunette in her late 40s who works at a women's not-for-profit organization. She started off as a volunteer five years ago, and has since then steadily transitioned into a paying position, taking on more and more responsibility in the recent years. Alice usually works from home, going into the office a

couple of times a week. On average Alice works about 30 hours a week, although the number can go up to 50 or 60 hours a week during busy periods. Her $30,000 a year income from this position, and no benefits, means that she commands only a fifth of the salary Doug had commanded when he was employed. In the Easton's home Doug is seen as the primary breadwinner. Like Doug, Alice too explains how having Doug at home, which she sees as her space during the weekdays, was disconcerting. She laughs, "I think having anybody around you 24/7 is too much!" Alice elaborates on this:

> He would ask me: 'Where are you going?' 'What are you doing?' That level of accountability or just being tracked was not something I was used to. I tried to explain it to him that I've heard other people who have gone through unemployment situations say that's one of the hardest things - is having your spouse home all day, every day.

It was disconcerting for Alice to have Doug home all the time. To counter what she called this "too much togetherness" Alice ended up moving her home office. Earlier her home office had been adjacent to the kitchen and living room, where Doug often came in to get a drink, or work on his laptop on the kitchen table. Soon after Doug lost his job, Alice moved her office to the second floor - to literally create more space between them. Doug acknowledges the anomaly of his presence at home. He accepts that it is, naturally, difficult for his wife: "Well, we've learned to kind of, you know, stay out of each other's way. Or I try and stay out of her way." The onus falls on Doug, as an oddity in the home during the work-week, to not disturb Alice's daily rhythm.

For unemployed men and their wives, who sometimes work from home, but who are all certainly used to having husbands with full and busy careers, the change to a

husband who is now at home for a significant part of the day is a struggle. Alice mentions that she feels she had to explain her daily routine to Doug, which was exasperating enough for her that she sought to create a physical distance by rearranging her home.

Men's presence at home during the work-week is framed by men and their wives as a temporary problem which needs quick remedying. It is seen unequivocally as an unnatural occurrence. Emily Bader, an office manager, is married to Brian, who worked in the technology field but got laid off four months ago from a job he had held for five years. With her curly shoulder length strawberry blond hair, Emily is a gregarious, at time flamboyant, straight-talker who minces no words as she describes the *problem* of Brian's unemployment and the consequent increase in the time he spends at home: "I hate that he's home all the time. No man, I'm sorry to generalize, no man needs to be home all day. It's not good for them." Emily frames Brian's being at home as a problem because, in her view, men belong outside the home. Emily implicitly refers to deep, culturally ingrained conceptions of gender which frame the home as the space for women, and the outside, public world, as the space for men. Emily reiterates that it's "just too much, too much him being home. He needs to get out of the house."

Because Brian is not used to being home, he ends up interfering with the daily routine that Emily and their two teenage sons have established, by trying to carve out a space for himself. Emily explains that Brian has taken to micro-managing things about the family's routine to which he was earlier oblivious and which is irritating to Emily and their sons: "He micro-manages things that are just insane…Like the cereal that my son's eating. Like I asked [Brian] to get [cereal] puffs…And he micro-managed whether I should really have puffs or not."

Like Alice Easton earlier, Emily experiences Brian's presence in the home as both intrusive and unsettling. She is clear on how this should be resolved: "Yeah, like ugh! He needs a job. He needs to get busy. He's trying to keep busy with silly stuff." Like Doug, Brian also acknowledges how his being at home has upset the family's normal routine, and how they are trying to minimize the impact of this change. Emily used to work many hours of the week from the home, but has now started going into the office more. Brian says:

> But what she does is: she has an office she can go to, so she'll go to the office and work instead of at home…I prefer that. I mean, I prefer not to be with her around the clock. I mean that's too much. And I really don't have another place to go. I could I guess go other places if I really had to.

Brian adds that in his view the fact that Emily works more from the office now is good for her productivity:

> But it's funny, she goes to the office and she comes home and says, 'Oh, I got so much done because I didn't have all the distractions.' And so I could see where she's actually getting used to it, liking it. It's a plus for her in a way.

The notion that unemployed men cramp their wives', indeed their families', style was a common complaint by most wives in my sample. Like Emily, Maeve Gura is annoyed at her husband Nate's constant presence in the house, which she sees as disrupting the family's "well-oiled machinery." In their late forties, Maeve and Nate were college sweethearts who met in her freshman year and his sophomore year, getting married soon after college. Nate worked his way up the corporate ladder, last working as the regional

vice president of a multinational corporation in a large American city. Two years ago he lost this job that netted him close to $300,000 a year, depending on bonuses. Maeve works 20-30 hours a week as a receptionist a local business, bringing in just enough each week for the grocery bill for their family of six: the two parents and their four children ranging from ages eight to seventeen. For the Guras, Nate's job has been the unequivocal bread-and-butter. Nate clearly exemplified adherence to a "work devotion" schema (Blair-Loy, 2003) defined as seeing his career as an emotion- and time- absorbing calling.

For Maeve the shift from Nate's employment to unemployment was staggering because "[The kids'] were so used to he goes to work… So for him, I think, that was really hard at first to see all the stuff that he *was* missing out on and that [the kids] didn't depend on him for." Nate concurs with Maeve, saying "For years, I wasn't around. They had a dad in name. And I'm able to make up for that. I'm engaged." Still, Nate's attempts at being more involved at home and with the kids is not seamless, and he sticks out like a sore thumb in a landscape where Maeve and their four children have learned to get along without him. Maeve rolls her eyes as she explains:

> He kind of messed up our schedule a little. He had a little too much to say. Just dumb stuff like 'OK. Come from school, get your snack, have your homework.' And [the kids are] all, 'That's not how we did it!' You know what I mean? We did it when we could fit it in. It all got done and they were good students.

For Maeve, Nate's need to give direction to his kids at home is directly linked to his unemployment: "So, it was just, he felt he had to control something. Or that he had to be the head of something." From Maeve's perspective, as from Emily's, the need to

micromanage comes from a need for authority which these unemployed men had enjoyed at their workplace, but which they no longer have. Maeve adds, "I think he doesn't feel as worthy at times. He got a real high off of being a good provider, a good worker for a company. I think he's missing that validation that none of us can give him."

Nate seeks authority in the home – a space that has clearly been Maeve's domain in the way the Guras have organized their highly gendered family lives.[11] Maeve says that their division of household labor meant that the children didn't know what to make of Nate's unexpected presence at home: "And he would find that the kids would always ask me. They would always come to me. 'Can I go here?' 'Can I do this?' 'I need this.' Or 'I need…' and he'd be like 'Hello! I'm here, nobody's asking me.' Now that it's been two years since Nate was laid off, things have improved somewhat as Nate has accommodated himself to his family's daily rhythm. Maeve says, "But once he kind of got on board on our schedule, backed up a little, now it has just become expected he'll be there. Which is kind of nice, in a way."

Men's physical presence is often a troubling anomaly for both the unemployed men and the members of their family. In some cases, wives take a rigid stance where, because they find the idea of their husband's spending the majority of their time at home so troubling, they strongly encourage husbands to spend time outside the home. Amelia Radzik's husband, Jim, a marketing professional, has been unemployed and job searching for the past year. They have two children, a teenage son and a daughter in college. Amelia is a sales manager at a large, multinational company where she has been

[11] In fact as Mary Blair-Loy (2003) points out, part of the reward of the work devotion schema for men is that it enables their wives to adhere to the family devotion schema, with home-making, emotional and time investment in children, and focus on caring for the husband and children as a calling.

employed for over 20 years. Amelia has a round pink and white face, with large brown eyes behind glasses and her stick-straight chestnut hair grazes her shoulders, parted precisely in the middle. She has a direct manner of speaking.

It is evident that Amelia is frustrated at Jim and what she sees as his checkered employment history – moving in and out of jobs every couple of years for the last decade, at times taking up consulting. In contrast, Amelia's own employment history has been especially stable, and she has remained with the same multinational corporation for the last twenty years, steadily progressing up to her current high-level managerial position where she earns about $200,000 a year, plus benefits. Jim's last salary on the other hand was for about half that amount. It is Amelia's employment that makes their upper-middle-class lifestyle possible: a three-bedroom home in a wealthy suburban area, paying for two children's college education, planning on helping at least one out with graduate school expenses, annual domestic and international vacations, and a considerable savings amount for retirement. Yet, Amelia is still so uneasy with the time Jim is spending at home that she has given him an ultimatum. Amelia says,

> I said to him, I said, 'I don't care what you do, but you've got to do something by June 1st. I'm done. I'm done being the nice one…You have 'til June 1st to figure it out; otherwise you're gonna work at McDonalds. Because I'm done. Like, I don't want to hear it's gonna cost you more to go work at McDonalds. No, I'm done. You're getting out of the house.'

June first is still over half a year away. Amelia feels that she has been particularly patient with Jim through all his various employment setbacks, including two layoffs in the last decade, and the demise of his own consulting firm. Amelia's insistence that Jim needs to

get out of the house is vested in the cultural norm about masculinity which frames employment, usually outside the home, as normative for men. Not living up to this norm – of which Jim's presence at home is a daily reminder - concerns Amelia, including in terms of what staying at home might mean for Jim's mental well-being. She adds:

> I said to him, 'You have to do something…I don't even care if you go to Lowe's and do spring cleaning for them. I don't care what. You need something now.' So, I don't care what the profession is...It's his well-being, and that's what I'm the most concerned with - is his well-being - because he does get very depressed.

Amelia is not wrong in thinking about the implications of mental well-being of unemployment for Jim. Numerous studies have shown that unemployment is associated with worse mental health outcomes (Young, 2012) particularly for men (Norris 2016; Thoits, 1986). For his own part, Jim concedes that he has had days where it's been hard for him to get out of bed, and where he has spent the whole day napping. Yet, Jim finds Amelia's ultimatum troubling and counter-productive to his goal of looking for a professional position:

> Oh, that was hard to hear. And it was always a point of contention because I would say to her, 'Alright, so let's say I get a job at Home Depot or Lowe's or whatever and I'm making $10 an hour. Is my time better spent at Home Depot making 10 bucks an hour or looking for a job with a base salary of 160? Am I better off working on my resume or working at Home Depot? Am I better off taking a nap to get rested up for all my networking than making 10 bucks an hour?'

His cheeks flushed red, Jim pauses for a breath after launching into this description of his defense of not taking a job he sees himself as being overqualified for. Jim continues to believe that the best way he can contribute to his family is through earning.

Even though he hasn't gotten a salary in over a year, Jim counts on his previous economic provision for his family to explain how he was a good provider. When his wife Amelia pushes him to find a job, any job, he tells me that he often responds to her by saying, "'Would you like for me to break out our tax returns and discuss and review how much money you've earned over the last ten years versus me? Would you like to do that?' And she would shut up… I always earned substantially more, but I never threw it in her face."

Jim feels ambivalent about the reversal in their earning status, explaining that "the traditional part of me says I should be the breadwinner – the main breadwinner. But then parts of me say, you know, in this day and age, it's not uncommon for the wife to be the breadwinner." Amelia explains how in recent years Jim has made emotional progress such that he can now joke about this scenario where Amelia is the undisputed breadwinner: "He's now able to joke about it, like, he's got a sugar momma, he lives off of me. But years ago, he wouldn't have done that." A clean-shaven man, Jim too continues to dress in smart casuals even while he is unemployed. For Jim, this is because even though he does spend a large part of his day physically in the home, he nevertheless still gets out of the house, frequently for networking meetings and events. Jim resumes describing his discussion with his wife. A hint of annoyance in his tone, he starts by mimicking her response to his reasons:

'Well Andrea, you know, her husband, he'll do whatever takes, you know.

> He got a job at UPS, he got a job here, he got a job there.' 'Yeah, but I'm going after bigger game.' And that was a point of - I don't want to call it friction - but it was an uncomfortable conversation.

In the case of the Radziks, and this held for most of the unemployed men, it is the wife, Amelia, who is particularly troubled about the idea of Jim spending an inordinate amount of time at home. Unemployed men, for example as we saw with Doug Easton, also express unease at spending much more time at home. Yet wives are troubled by this as well – in part because of what staying at home, and deviating from cultural expectations about masculinity, means for men, but also in terms of what it means for wives to be married to men who are not currently fulfilling their role as economic providers. As I discuss in a later section, these tensions and acute sense of men's presence in the home as anomalous help explain the effort that husbands expend in trying to assure their wives that they are indeed trying to find a job, and that wives in turn expend in trying to convince others that husbands are hard at work trying to regain work.

Unlike unemployed women (discussed in the next chapter) who frequently find being at home and getting more deeply involved in domestic roles a source of comfort, being at home is often a deeply lonely experience for men. John Huber, a devout Catholic, was going through a period of unemployment which would eventually last for about six months. Christmas fell during this period, and the holidays were a respite for John who says,

> People come to visit at that time. So by people visiting, it usually makes it a little bit better where you have people, you interact with people. So you're not home alone where you feel like you're under house arrest as I

> used to call it; because [to job search] you need to be actively at your computer, you need to be actively at the phone, emails. So the holidays allowed time to interact with others.

Todd Baron too iterates the feeling of isolation that John describes in his evocative use of "house arrest":

> It's tough sitting alone at home. I mean, even a good buddy of mine the last couple weeks said 'Hey, you want to go to lunch?' And I just told him 'I'm tied up,' and I wasn't. I mean, I ate a little sandwich at home

Todd's isolation stems in part from financial concerns – he has been out of work for ten months, after an employment of two years, prior to which he was unemployed for a year. If this had been his first layoff, or if it had been a layoff after he and his wife had had time to fully add to the money they depleted during Todd's initial bout of unemployment, he might have been in a situation where he didn't have to watch his expenses so carefully. As discussed in an earlier chapter, while most of the families still maintained a middle-class life, for example continuing to own a home in a middle-class, and usually suburban neighborhood (like the Barons), for some, as for Todd and his family, the financial situation was more tight, and the cutbacks in expenses more acute than for others. This impacted their ability to socialize, compounding the sense of isolation that unemployed men felt at being at home.

Feeling anomalous is not just linked to being at home; it extends to other, oftentimes public, spaces which are frequently feminized. Research documenting how parents spend time with children has shown that parents take young children to spaces like parks, museums of natural history, zoos, and play-zones. Yet, these are not gender-

neutral spaces (Garner, 2015). Although stay-at-home fathers have increased from 1.1 million in 1989 to a peak of 2.2 million in 2010 (Pew, 2014) being a stay-at-home dad is still largely seen as deviant, and eyebrow-raising (Pugh, 2016). Even amongst stay-at-home dads, only 21% say they stay at home primarily in order to take care of the home and their family, while the rest cite reasons such as inability to find work or having an illness or disability. This is in contrast to 73% of stay-at-home moms who say they do so primarily in order to care for their home and family (Pew, 2014). In her qualitative study of men and women across social classes and of varying levels of employment precariousness, Allison Pugh notes how stay-at-home dads who are often commended for making an unusual choice feel irritated that acquaintances don't understand that they are not making a choice, rather they are making the best of a bad situation where, since it is difficult to provide economically, men provide for their families by taking on domestic duties, in an "alternative heroic masculinity" (Pugh, 2016).

This lack of choice and this need to take on a mantle of an alternative masculinity can be difficult for unemployed men. William Smith lost his job working in real estate, selling foreclosures, ten months ago. Wryly he notes that his layoff is actually good news for the economy "I was laid off bad in January. This is very good news because it means that the economy is doing better. There's not a lot of foreclosures, that's good news." Since William has been unemployed, he has taken on some more duties around the house, including spending more time with his four-year old son, Alex. William and his wife Shannon, who works at a managerial level job at a non-governmental organization, used to keep Alex in full-time daycare. Soon after William lost his job, they scaled back, so that Alex is home twice during the weekdays, during which time he is William's

responsibility. William, like many of the unemployed fathers in this sample, values this time at home with Alex, saying:

> And plus I'm home with Alex...He's not in daycare all day long, so it's better for him. So I mean [Shannon] kinda likes it… I go back and forth. Part of me really likes spending a lot of time, 'cause most folks don't get a chance to do it, and it's *so* valuable. In a lot of ways it is more valuable for me than I think it is for [Alex]. And I think I get more out of it than he does. He sees you he runs up and gives you a hug. It's, it's worth more than anything I could get in the job.

Yet, valuing the time that he gets with his son doesn't mean that William is insensitive to demands of masculinity which hinge on economic provision. On the contrary, spending time with Alex is bittersweet as it makes William acutely aware of how he is deviating from cultural expectations about men's roles and responsibilities demanded of American men. William describes a recent instance where being a dad during a weekday raised his unease at trespassing in a feminized space:

> It's funny, we'll go to places like TrampolineJump, it's a trampoline place: the kids go in and you pay them for an hour, and the kids just jump on trampolines. So they literally get to jump up and down for an hour. He's four, he loves it. But I'll go in there and I'll be the only guy.

Recounting other feminized spaces where he felt out of place, William adds:

> We were like, the member of a pool, and I would take him to the pool during the day it would be like 20 moms, you know maybe 30 kids, and then there'd be me, the guy…And so that was kind of hard.

Pausing to think about this, William reflectively adds that his sense of unease is not necessarily with how people in these spaces treat him, but rather with his own, internalized, ideas of which spaces he does and does not belong in:

> But I think most of it is very little to do with this, the people, and most of my reactions to folks was overwhelmingly me not feeling comfortable. And feeling like I'm, you know, an out-of-work dad playing housewife. Or stay-at-home mom. You know what I'm saying? So it wasn't folks. They could have been as friendly as possible but I was standoffish. You know, I would just play with my kid a lot, rather than kind of talk to folks. What am I going to talk to folks about?..I just didn't know how to engage and I didn't really want to you know, so… I mean I would talk to some folks but I mean mostly, I mean I just felt awkward. I just felt like I'm *that* guy.

For William, the spaces such as pools or a play-zone, where he takes Alex during the day are feminized to the extent that he feels as though he does not belong there. Worse, to him his presence in these spaces signals a visible failure – that he is here instead of being where he belongs: at work. Unemployed men like William struggle with thinking of themselves as stay-at-home dads, oftentimes because they identify it so closely with women's work. William in fact says, "I mean that kind of sucks: it kind of sucks that I'm a guy who's sitting at home and my wife is working and making very good money." Somewhat petulantly, to emphasize how he feels like he is an unproductive member of his family, he adds: "I feel like I should join a book club."

In contrast his wife Shannon attributes Will with having skills from which Alex

can benefit if he spends more time with his father:

> Part of me likes Will being at home because I like him with our little boy. So I was sort of like 'OK good, he'll get to spend more time with Alex.'…I know it's hard for Will not to work, but I like him spending more time with Alex. I don't like Alex in daycare. If I could stay with Alex and not kill him, I would. But I'm not really the stay-at-home type. He's much better than I am.

Although William explains how he sees value in spending time with Alex, and Shannon clearly wants him to, it is not an option that the Smiths are seriously considering because William is adamantly opposed to being a stay-at-home dad. He continues searching for a job, spending time with his son, albeit with a sense of both appreciation and unease at so doing.

For almost all of the families of unemployed men, the dynamic of the man at home seemed an oddity precisely because of this gender-reversal it seemed to invoke. Amelia Radzik is frustrated at her husband's dependence on her for companionship while he is unemployed:

> I'm involved with a couple organizations, and I've got a big event this weekend. And I was working on it last night, and he's like, 'Come sit with me.' And I'm like, "I'm working on my stuff.' And he's like, 'Come sit with me.'…So, there's that definite need for understanding that I need my space and my time. You've had yours all day of alone time.

Amelia adds:

> It's like, I come home at night and he's like, 'OK, so, how was your day?'

> And I'm just, like, I just want to be by myself for tenminutes!..Sometimes I feel like he's a puppy dog waiting at the front door 'til I come home going, 'OK, she's home! Now!' I'm like, 'Leave me alone.'…So, it's almost like the stay-at-home mom but now it's the stay-at-home dad and the mom's out working.

Amelia sees Jim's situation and resultant behavior through a gendered lens. The puppy-dog image is reminiscent of the ideals of 1950s housewives who planned their days around their husbands, often greeting them with a cocktail as soon as they arrived home from a long and difficult day at work. As we'll see in the next chapter, these experiences of unemployed men are in stark contrast to the unemployed women who slip into an easy routine at home, and feel perfectly at home being at home.

Men staying at home is viewed as anomalous, as the uneasy presence of a family member who does not fully belong there, certainly not during the work week. In this section we saw how families describe the challenges to incorporate these unemployed men, who, since they belong to the professional-managerial class, tend to adhere to the work-devotion schema (Blair-Loy, 2003). In the section below I describe how families adjust to this odd, and what they hope to be temporary, situation by reorganizing how space is shared in the home. Part of this spatial reorganization means creating an elaborate home office for men, where they can have the privacy to focus on job-searching.

Transforming the home into a workspace for men

Men being at home is an uneasy experience: for men, for their wives, and for their

children. Because these professional-managerial men had held demanding jobs with long work hours when employed, their presence at home during weekdays seems particularly odd. Unemployed men and their wives try to overcome this anomaly of the male presence in the domestic sphere by transforming the home into a workplace for men. In an earlier chapter I described how for unemployed individuals who are seeking re-employment the job-search process is time and emotionally intensive. As one participant said, "looking for a job is a full time job!" Because of this, unemployed men and their wives get to work soon after men's unemployment in order to create a space in the home from where unemployed men can focus on the intricacies of their job search: searching in online forums such as job and networking sites, applying to jobs (primarily an online process now), tweaking their resumes and cover letters, reaching out to former colleagues and acquaintances to set up in-person networking meetings, working with career coaches (usually paid for through severance packages that these unemployed professionals receive from their former companies). Because of the understanding, by both unemployed men and their spouses, that job-searching is a serious endeavor – as consuming as employment itself – a first step is often to create an in-home office for unemployed men. Emily Bader for example explains that they set up an office space for her unemployed husband Brian, "We did it right after, in July. We bought him a laptop, we got him a table, we got him an area. He set it all up, and he goes up there and he works on his computer. I think he does a lot of Linkedin, a lot of emails, job boards. He would do a lot over the phone."

Todd Baron is an unemployed father of three sons under the age of ten who has been looking for work for the past ten months. He and his wife Kimmie decided after some discussion to wall off a section of their living room so that Todd could have an

office space from where he could job search and be at home without the distractions of being at home. Todd explains the importance of setting up this office space in his home:

> The fact that I have a little home office and I could shut the door is good…So it was probably the best thing we ever did…If we didn't have that, that would suck because I'd probably be sitting at the dining room table with papers and spread out my laptop…But the fact that I could just shut the door, and even if the door's open, I'm in there, you know, it's walled off. Nobody sees me unless they come to the door. It's a big piece of solid wall, you know, in our living room.

For Todd, this space of his own, particularly the door and the ability that affords him to shut off the distractions at home, especially with three boisterous boys, is important, as it is for his wife. Todd adds, "I think she likes some of her space, too…when I'm home, I shut my door, and I have my little office."

Having this office space in the home is seen as important in terms of enabling unemployed men to job-search. But it also serves an important emotional function: by providing psychological space between the two spouses during a time when emotions are high. Todd Baron explains how the office is necessary to give both him and his wife space from each other. "I'll shut the door and I'll be on the phone…After she gets back from work she'll pop in and say hello." He adds that for his wife, seeing her unemployed husband can be frustrating. Todd's shutting himself off in his room can shield both of them: "I think she just psychologically is like you're sitting at home again, what are you doing? You're in your shorts and a T-shirt, so I think it's just hard for her."

Alice Easton agrees with Todd's speculation, saying that she likes physical space

between her husband and herself, particularly because she works from home: "It can put a strain on the relationship: because I was able to see what he was or wasn't doing and that can be frustrating at times." Alice is referring to the idea that if she and her husband had not demarcated different, physically distant, office spaces for themselves she would have been privy to all his job-searching activity, including those moments when Doug was procrastinating and less organized about job-searching. Alice thinks that Doug has been erratic with his job-search and this has been unnerving for her:

> It's not a full-time job for him…He'll have spurts of time where he might be more committed to networking. He might be more committed to researching jobs. But I think there are big stretches of time where he just gets very discouraged and then kind of withdraws from the process and doesn't do much. I think his attempts have been a little bit erratic depending on how he's feeling about it and who he's engaging with outside of our house. I just think it hasn't been a full-time, 'I need a job, I'm desperate, I'm going to do whatever it takes to make this happen.' I don't think that's sort of been his attitude.

Home offices shield wives from too much knowledge about their husband's activity. In addition, having this office space – an indication of the dominance of unemployment in these men's homes – means that men expect themselves, and are expected by their wives, to focus on job-searching.

Indeed, the topic of job-searching predominates in the homes of unemployed men. This was evident, for example, at the Janssons home. One weeknight, Robert and Laura were setting the dinner table and preparing the dinner. Robert was pouring water into the

glasses on the dinner table and Laura was preparing the kids' dinner. She was chopping up the chicken nuggets to make them easier to eat for Tessa and Taylor. Robert flitted in and out of the small kitchen to their adjacent dining area which had a table for six, plus Taylor's high chair.

During this time, Laura and Robert kept up a friendly conversation. Laura started off by saying, "So tell me more about how your day was?" Before Robert could answer, she immediately added "Did you read the list of jobs I sent you?" Roberts turned away to pick up something from the counter, saying "I actually only skimmed it at the end of the day, so I didn't have a chance to look in detail." Laura checks out job boards, emailing Robert jobs she thinks he may be interested in or suited for. Like many other wives who also job-search for their husbands, Laura does this several times a week. Laura continued chopping the nuggets. Then, scooping them up in her hands, she divided them on the kids' plates, walking into the dining room with a plate for Tessa and Taylor in each hand. Robert came in, and we all sat down. Robert sat at the head of the rectangular table, with Tessa in the chair beside him. Taylor was in a high seat between Tessa and Robert. Laura sat on Robert's other side, across the table from Tessa.

As soon as they sat down, Laura turned toward Robert. Her blond hair was pulled back into a messy bun. She put her elbow on the table and propped her chin on that palm, with her head jutting toward Robert she said "Well, I looked it over and there were three jobs that would be great for you, CommAll..." Robert interrupted her saying "CommAll? Like in the Midwest?" Laura shook her head and said "No, it's in the NorthEast." Robert shrugged his shoulders and went to get a glass of water he had left in the kitchen. When he entered the dining room again, he leaned over Laura to get a potato chip from the bowl

on the table and with her upturned face Laura asked him, "I thought the Chemico one would be good?" Robert glanced down at her, popped a chip in his mouth and chewing it responded with a noncommittal shrug, "Yeah, but you need to know someone to get in." Perkily Laura sat up straight, smiling and saying "I know someone at Chemico!" In a more subdued voice than Laura's Robert responded with "So do I. Not that they've ever helped me!" He turned away from Laura and walked to sit down in his chair. The conversation about job searching was over for the time being. Yet, as this picture of a dinner table conversation at the Jansson home reveals, the urgency for unemployed men to regain unemployment is tangible – it dominates the spatial reorganization of the home, the daily routine of the family, and conversations with spouses.

In fact, unemployed men frequently follow rigid schedules centered on job-seeking. Terry Clarke, a somewhat rotund, clean-shaven and balding engineer in his late 50s has been subject to several layoffs due to fluctuations in the aviation industry. He explains his weekday:

> It's fairly structured:…it's important to mitigate the risk of wasting time…I spend at least Monday through Thursday searching several websites using predefined searches that I have. So I have a business analyst search. I have a project management search. I don't generally go out.

Terry has a single-minded focus: to find an appropriate job and to do so as quickly as possible. Assessing her husband Terry's job-searching activities, Sandy says:

> Well I think he's pretty good. He will get up everyday. He's usually up by seven. And he has a focus: he'll clear the decks, get ready. He'll start to

> look for jobs. He's spent a lot of time enhancing his resume and talking to recruiters…and whatnot…But he likes having to be the master of [his schedule]. Likes to control that. So from that standpoint I think he's actually enjoyed being home. Not having to be accountable to somebody else in terms of their timeline.

As Sandy elaborates, Terry's razor-sharp focus on job-searching is related to his traditional conception of men as providers: "But he, I think, wants very much to find work. He wants to be valued in that way and he wants to feel productive to his family." Like Terry, Robert Jansson explains that "When I drop my wife off at the train, then I come home. I get dressed, I get dressed for work, as it were." In fact, Robert treats his time in his basement office from about eight thirty in the morning until four in the evening each day, with a half hour lunch break, as time when he is off-limits to his children who are with the babysitter. Todd Baron too explains how his presence at home too is a clearly demarcated presence. Just because he is at home, it doesn't mean he is not working:

> The other day I was on the phone and [my ten year old son] Eli came into my office…And he opened the door, and I was doing a networking call and going like 'Shut the door!' And he didn't get it. So even at ten years old he's coming in, he wants to talk to me. And I walked out and said 'You guys can't, when I'm on the phone and you see me on the phone, you can't come in.' They're still learning that."

For these unemployed men the space of their office is important in signaling to their family members that they should not be disturbed because they are hard at work trying to

find work. As I discuss in a later section, at times this philosophy that enables men to center their days around job-searching comes into tension with divergent expectations about the division of household labor while men are unemployed.

Dave Dunn, a writer and editor, lost his last job as the editor for a company that puts out written medical materials intended for physicians and medical personnel, including specialty medical journals. Not finding any luck with a full-time job, he had taken up a contract position as a writer just prior to our interview. He describes:

> I spent a lot of time at the computer. Every day I had a routine: I got up in the morning, I read my newspaper, had my cup of coffee, then I would go on and I would search the job boards…I would check out their website and the job boards in terms of like Simply Hired and Indeed – those were the two that were sending information. Like, if I typed in 'Editor,' they would send me anything that had 'Editor' in it; 'Writer.' You know, I had broadened it to 'Public Relations,' 'Corporate Communications,' 'Content Development.' And anything that would come in, OK, I'd look at it…I would use that as kind of a vehicle to see, "Is there something that I might…? Could I do that job? And if not, is there something else within the company? Is there somebody there that I could make a contact with?" I mean, I spent thousands of hours on my computer doing job search stuff.

While many men like Terry and Robert focus on job-searching by working from home, other unemployed men choose to start off their day by attending networking meetings. These are peer-led networking meetings comprised of other unemployed individuals of similar levels of professional background. The meetings take place in coffee shops,

usually in upscale suburban areas convenient to the participants, not more than a 20-minute drive from the participants' homes. At the meetings, participants update each other with their progress (interviews, leads, job offers) and try to help each other out with interviewing and resume advice, as well as trying to connect each other with networking contacts. Scott Mandel, in his early 50s, is a tall and trim project manager who worked in the pharmaceutical industry before losing his job six months ago. While Scott also centers his day around job-searching, he chooses to mix job-searching at home by himself with frequently attending peer-led networking meetings. Scott explains:

> But [the meetings] are consciously structured for 9-11am so that you have a reason to shave, get dressed, even though you're just going to meet people for coffee…Some people show up in shorts and flip flops. But for me it's a reason to get dressed.

Scholars studying unemployed men in earlier decades have pointed to the importance of getting dressed for work for men (Newman, 1988). Katherine Newman, who studied middle-aged unemployed executives in the 1980s, pointed out how the stigma of being unemployed meant that these men often refused to reveal it to their family members. They shielded it by getting dressed for work – suit, tie, and a briefcase – and spending their time in public spaces such as coffee shops or libraries. Cultural norms have shifted since Newman's seminal book. Still, they have not shifted as much as empirical shifts in actual breadwinning within families would predict. Men's identities have traditionally been tied to being economic providers, and this persists even as the structural shifts in the American economy weaken the conditions under which these norms had flourished. For professional-managerial men, such as those in my sample, occupational status is evident

in part through their clothing. In her recent *Job Loss, Identity, and Mental Health* (2016), Dawn Norris too studies unemployed white-collar individuals. She too finds that dressing as though for work is an important ritual for many unemployed people in her sample, often serving as a prop that supports their fragile identity as skilled workers and employees at a time when that very identity has been threatened. For many men in my study, such as Scott Mandel, Robert Janssen, and Doug Easton, dressing in the way they did for their workplace is an important way of holding on to their identity as skilled professionals.

If they can't be employed, these men feel that they will do the next best thing: find good employment as soon as possible. The stigma of unemployment has undergone a subtle shift in the US since books such as Mirra Komarovsky's *The Unemployed Man and His Family* (1940), and Katherine Newman's *Falling From Grace* (1988). In these earlier days, particularly during Newman's study, the very fact of unemployment for the professional-managerial class was stigmatizing. For the respondents in my study, unemployment - even for this educationally privileged and professionally skilled, group – in itself is not stigmatizing. Instead, losing a job, being eliminated or terminated is seen as a rite of passage that most go through. What can be stigmatizing is the length of time it takes one to find a new job. Under the new economic conditions of eroded employer loyalty to employee and general employment precarity, your resilience, measured by the time between job loss and re-employment, becomes a primary marker of stigma (Sharone, 2014).

Given this background, it is unsurprising that for the unemployed men in my sample it was important that their wives in particular realize that they are doing their

utmost to find a job. James Peterson, who has worked as a senior project manager in the pharmaceutical industry, defiantly explains, "I'm not playing golf, racquetball, taking a walk in the woods, building a hobby car, okay? I'm working to resolve this search promptly." For James, as for the other men I spoke with, "resolving" his job search is important because it is the primary way he contributes to his family. He explains the difference between his role and his wife Karen's – who works full-time in healthcare administration earning about $80,000 a year:

> Karen provides but it's more on an intangible. Her voice with our sons to tell them it'll be okay when they were three and they got sick to their stomach, Okay? She told them it'll be Okay…For males it's somewhat of a tangible measurement, Okay? No matter if somebody measures it at $20,000 a year or $20 million a year, it's tangible.

For James, how husbands and wives contribute to their families is intrinsically gendered. Because he puts great importance in seeing himself as someone who provides the "tangible" for his family, it is imperative that he resolve his unemployment situation quickly. To emphasize his frustration that he is not providing for his family on a tangible level, James brought out a small, dark brown leather card holder. He struggled to pull out one of the cards that was stuck amongst many others. He sat up, leaning forward towards me in his seat, with his body bent at a steep 45-degree angle toward me. He held up a card to me at the same level as my nose to show that it was a health insurance card. Emphasizing each syllable of the word "tangible" he said that the card symbolized tangible goods the he provided for himself and his family. After 23 weeks (of a total of a 30-week severance package) he would no longer have that. While James' severance

package means that his family received an income and continues to receive benefits from his previous employer, he is worried about not being able to provide that in the near future.

John Huber, in his late forties and with straight silver hair that sticks upward from his head and a noticeable silver chain with a crucifix hanging around his neck, worked in bio-chemicals. He explains the importance of making sure his wife doesn't think he is slacking off, "My contribution is I'm just trying to gainfully get work. So that's my role: is to demonstrate that I want to work and that I am doing everything possible to get work." Wives too are acutely aware of this shifting basis of where stigma relating to unemployment is vested. Sandy Clarke, a paralegal married to Terry, explains that, "The only thing that I know that I do is I try to show people that he's really trying hard to find a job. 'Cause I don't want them to think that he's a slacker."

Of course, unemployment and job-searching are anxiety inducing. It can be difficult to remain structured and focused on job-searching at all times during such an emotionally trying time. Some men explain the difficulties of continuously job-searching and proving to their wives that they are doing so. Brian Bader has blond hair so light that it's almost silver. His clean-shaven face is tinged pink, turning red when he recounts the difficulties of job-searching. Like other men I interviewed, he was dressed in smart casuals – a light grey Ralph Lauren long-sleeved polo over khakis. Brian has been on medication for depression since he lost his job about four months ago and has regularly been seeing a therapist weekly. He says:

> I have to tell you, I probably just kind of procrastinate and waste some time sitting in front of the computer...I wish it was a little more organized and

> regimented…But I sit down to do what I'm supposed to do and then I can't always get myself to do it, so I have a little problem with that.

Amelia Radzik is frustrated with her husband Jim whom she sees as being self-indulgent in tending to himself instead of job-searching, "I'll call when he's taking a nap. And there's always a reason. 'Oh, I didn't feel good.' Or, 'I didn't sleep well last night.' Well, I didn't sleep well last night. I still have to go to work!" Todd and Kimmie Baron have also had some disagreements over how much Todd should be job-searching. Still, Todd is thankful for what he sees as Kimmie's patience with him: "She's been patient. I mean, she could be much tougher knowing that, you know, that I haven't done a lot. I've had a friend who's been laid off. He's working now but his wife was on him every single day." In a later chapter I discuss the emotions and emotion work surrounding unemployed men's job-searching activities and experiences. These instances of procrastination and disorganization in job-searching do not reflect the majority of the time that unemployed men spend at home, nor the majority of their interactions with wives while they are unemployed.

But if unemployed men and their wives' privilege men's space and time as much as this data suggests, what does this mean in terms of the household division of labor? How is this configured during men's unemployment? The next section examines these questions.

Persistent gendering of division of housework during men's unemployment

It is eight one fall evening and the Jansson home has been a flurry of activities starting from five in the evening onwards. The babysitter leaves at five, and Robert starts

dinner preparations around then. Laura too returns home from work. The dinners themselves are frenzied affairs – with Robert and Laura trying to have a conversation (usually about Robert's job search, Laura's work, or kids' scheduling). Today is no different, and as usual Robert and Laura's conversation is punctuated with directions to Tessa to eat the food on her plate, and getting up intermittently to watch that Taylor too was eating properly in his high chair. Now, at eight in the evening, Laura has bathed the two kids and put Tessa to bed. She and I have come to the kitchen while Robert is still putting Taylor to bed. We hover near their microwave where Laura is boiling water in mugs for tea for us. She explains her daily routine to me, "Usually I cook on the weekends and that way we have two or three meals ready for the week. But this past weekend we had to go to three birthday parties." She widens her eyes and shakes her head as she looks to me for a reaction which I gave in the form of an "eeek" face. "So, I hadn't been able to make anything. So this morning I got up, went for a run, and ran by the grocery store where I picked up the ingredients for tonight's enchiladas, made them using Robert's mom's recipe, and then left for work by eight." She again looked at me expectantly and I widened my eyes in response and shook my head to highlight how I thought that was a crazy (in an amazing sort of way) day.

Laura's description is indeed amazing: it illuminates the lack of a drastic shift around household chores while men are unemployed. Yet the Jannsons experience is not an anomalous one. My interviews with these unemployed men and their wives revealed that while men are unemployed, the division of housework is neither drastically overhauled nor particularly de-gendered. While men do contribute to household chores somewhat more than when they are employed this contribution comes with several

caveats: first, unemployed men continue to protect their time, using the adage that searching for a job is a full-time job. Any contribution to household chores usually come second with the understanding that housework is not men's priority, nor their obligation, while unemployed. Second, the division of household chores is not de-gendered. While men do spend more hours on chores, these tend to be chores typed as "masculine" and were usually the men's responsibility anyway. Usually these are household maintenance chores, for example overseeing the remodeling of a basement, working on the family's outdoor deck, or fixing bathroom leaks. Last, although men also do more of the chores usually typed as feminine – for example, childcare and indoor house cleaning - they usually don't take ownership of these chores. The idea that men are "helping out" their wives continues to prevail; and wives remain responsible for the mental planning – for example planning meals and children's schedules – while unemployed men follow their wives' instructions.

Scholars continue to debate the relationship between income and housework. One frequent explanation for why women tend to do and be responsible for much more housework than men is that within families, wives earn less than husbands. So, while husbands' earnings buy them out of housework, wives' lesser earnings make them responsible for housework. Yet, time and again studies have refuted this explanation. While all unemployed individuals increase the number of hours they contribute to household chores, unemployed men increase their contribution by only half as much as unemployed women (Gough and Killewald, 2011). Additionally, when men are economically dependent on their wives, wives do *more* housework (Bitman et al., 2003), in order to compensate for their gender deviance in earning more. A qualitative study in

the UK found that unemployed men are reluctant to increase their number of hours for housework, and wives don't expect them to since finding a job is seen as paramount (Gush et al., 2015). Still, most of these studies explaining the persistence of the unequal division of household labor even during times when women contribute more economically to the household have relied on quantitative data and so been unable to explain the micro-level interactions and processes through which the unequal division of household labor continues to be upheld. In this section, I discuss some of the negotiations around the household division of labor and the gendered understandings which enable its persistence.

"I'll help you out": how men, and their wives, approach men's presence at home and household chores

In an earlier section of this chapter, I explained how men, and frequently their wives, agree that for unemployed men the priority is to find their next job. So, unemployed men and their spouses often create a separate workspace in the home to enable men to job-search. It is understood that men's days are centered around job-searching activities. Thus, although unemployed men might be at home during the day, that time tends to be treated by men and their wives as men's time. Terry Clarke explains the brief exchanges he has with his wife about household chores, "Well, sometimes she'll say 'Can't you do this?' And it's like 'Well, maybe,' but I'm not really home to do that…I mean, I'm home to find a job. I'm not home to do that." In her own interview, Terry's wife Sandy leaned towards me, her head lowered in my direction as though she was going to say something conspiratorial. She added that while she understands that

Terry's job is to look for a job, he could still do more since he is at home. She raised her eyebrows slightly as though questioning her husband's point that all he does at home is look for work and that he could not help out more than he does. She quickly added that her husband does actually spend most of his time at home productively looking for work:

> 'Cause his view is: 'I may be home but I'm getting a job,' you know. 'That's my job: is to find a job.' And he really does that, he really spends a lot of time preparing to do things in that way. Whereas I'll say to him 'You know you could've unloaded the dishwasher,' or whatever. It's just that I feel in some ways that he should be contributing more to the support of the household because he's home. But he hasn't changed, it's still about the same…That hasn't changed as much as I'd like it to.

Rakesh Bhushan, a former vice president of a corporation married to an engineer, explains how his presence at home did not really translate to a greater availability for relieving his wife of household chores. Rakesh is an American citizen of Indian origin who moved to the US for graduate school. His marriage with his wife, who is also Indian, was arranged and she moved to the US after their marriage. Rakesh's family in the US consists of his wife, his two elementary-school aged sons, and his elderly mother who lives with them. Rakesh attributes the lack of a shift in the division of labor to their Indian heritage, saying:

> Some of the things that you would normally see in a typical family where husbands are doing the dishes and she's doing the cooking, or husband's doing the cooking and she's doing the dishes. We tried that initially and she and my mom, they all felt bad. 'Hey…you're kind of the figure-head

> of the family so we don't want you to be doing dishes. So we would feel much better…' So from that perspective…our family is more ingrained in traditions so to speak.

Rakesh is not oblivious to the inequality of this, since his wife works full-time, although she earns about $90,000 a year to his income which could reach anywhere from $350,000 per year to half a million depending on bonuses. Rakesh adds, "So now that does put much more stress on my wife, 'cause she has to work and then do the cooking...But, I think that's the way she probably prefers." Rakesh explains how this division of labor did not change even when he lost his job and was unemployed for nine months:

> Look, I think a lot of credit goes to my wife. Despite the fact that I was at home and I was available, she kind of made sure that my lifestyle did not change a whole lot than it was when I was working. So I would actually say 'Hey, I'll do the groceries.' She would say 'No, it's next to my work, so why spend money on gas?' So she'll come up with an excuse that I can rationalize. So…she tried to keep me as much normal as she could.

Rakesh explains this lack of change as a desire on his wife's part to keep up their normal routine. Still, he adds that she did give him some minor responsibilities, especially regarding their two sons, to relieve her schedule a bit:

> Yes, I did get the responsibility of instead of asking a neighbor to pick up the kid from the school, I'm here so I'll do it. In fact, you know what, that neighbor has been helping us out so I'm gonna pick his kid up as well. So, we did some of those kind of adjustments.

Still, for Rakesh and his wife, his job-search remained paramount:

> But I think she understood that once I was kind of in the full swing of this transition, and networking, that I'm more busy than I was when I was working. Because when I was working, six o'clock and that was family time. And here I'm networking, if the guy wants to meet me at six-thirty in the evening or seven o'clock, I'm not home till eight-thirty.

For Rakesh and his wife, his unemployment was not a time to initiate a major renegotiation of household chores. For them, the priority remained that Rakesh should find a job. Rakesh attributes this to his cultural heritage, but also to the gendered role of breadwinner that he sees himself fulfilling: "I'm the primary earner; I'm supposed to provide for the needs and wants of my family…My job is to make sure they get the best food, the best education, everything." As Rakesh indicates, his unemployment does not mean that he is has forfeited his identity as the primary earner of his home. He, and his wife, continue to see this as his master identity and as such they both work together to enable Rakesh to regain the employment which will allow him to fulfill this gendered role that has been established in his family.

Similarly, for other unemployed men, the period of unemployment, even when it endures into months and years, does not mean an automatic renegotiation of their gendered identities as workers and providers. Dave Dunn's last full-time job was working as the editor of a company that publishes medical literature. Dave explains the lack of a shift in terms of taking over household chores, "I never shifted in my mind, 'Well, I'm a stay-at-home dad now. I'm gonna do all the cleaning'… I was like, 'This isn't gonna be long.'" He adds that he and his wife had always shared household responsibilities, and that division remained intact even while he was unemployed. "I mean, even like cleaning

and stuff like that, that was split, and that stayed split… So, I mean, we split responsibilities."

As Dave suggests, for many of these families of unemployed men, the division of labor wasn't drastically altered. Karen Peterson, married to James Peterson says about the division of labor in their home: "I can't say it really changed a whole lot. If anything, James was available a little bit more if certain errands need to be run during the weekday. You know, like those businesses or things you have to do that are only open during weekday hours and you can never get there because you're working yourself." Karen adds though that this is not much of a shift for them because "He's always been somewhat helpful with the cleaning and laundry and the house, so that really didn't change." While Karen doesn't seem particularly perturbed by this lack of a shift, other wives, about a quarter, expected and hoped that being unemployed would mean that their husbands would take more responsibility for household chores.

These wives and husbands often had to manage a delicate, at times fraught, negotiation over household chores. Because being at home while unemployed is seen, certainly by men and often by their wives as well, as a time when men need to focus on job-searching, wives report having to frequently nudge men to take over chores. Emily Bader laughingly explains the somewhat dramatic measure she took to make sure her husband Brian contributed much more to household chores:

> I decided, since he's home, he was going to do a lot more. So I literally stopped cooking. He cooks every single dinner. If I need to, I'll go hide in the bathroom till he makes dinner. And he took over the grocery shopping.

Emily adds that getting Brian to do more was not challenging, because he has always

been helpful around the house, "But, this is something I want to say about Brian, we always shared chores very liberally. Even though I was a stay-at-home mom with the kids, I probably did a lot back then." Here, Emily is referring to the several years after the birth of her two sons when she stopped working and stayed at home full time. Since their eldest entered middle school several years ago, she re-entered the workforce, albeit in a flexible job that allows her to work from home when she needs to. She adds,

> But then as they got older. Brian's always done everything. He does laundry and he does the dishes, he cooks and he'll do the yard work. He's handy, he fixes everything. Yes, in the last six months, I've stopped cooking. He cooks. He does most of the grocery shopping.

Emily appreciates that Brian has stepped up in terms of doing more household chores. And Brian agrees, explaining:

> Well, I still did all those things but to a lesser degree because I left it for my wife to do a lot of the time…But I still helped…But I am doing more: I get up and make breakfast for my kids before they get on the bus. I do their laundry if I'm sitting there working and, you know it's easy to just throw in some laundry and hit the switch, right, so. But yeah, I'm definitely doing more of that.

Other unemployed men too insisted that they did more. Kevin Goldberg who was unemployed explains, "So you know I've always chipped in. We have a pretty equitable relationship… My wife has done the cooking, but I help. There are certain types of cooking that I think men typically do, you know like out on the barbecue grill." Kevin again explains that his contribution comes in the form of "help" to his wife, especially in

gendered terms where he takes over chores, such as grilling, which are typed as masculine anyway. Tamara Goldberg, a tenured professor in the arts, and Kevin's wife, disagrees with his somewhat rosy picture of an equitable relationship. In her interview, she explains that, "He used to very much resent helping around the house. He would do it, but he felt like he was doing something exceptional that he needed some kind of an award for." Like other wives, Tamara explained that being unemployed, spending time at home, seeing the effort that working, running a home, and tending to children's constant demands takes has given Kevin an appreciation for all that she does. She explains that Kevin's resentment about having to do any chores at all is "really gone." She adds that "Being on the other side of that, trying to navigate and apply for things and interview and having to navigate the responsibilities of the house…I think it gave him a bit more empathy. A bit more understanding of what that's like from the other side. So that was a shift that he went through."

Nate Gura, an unemployed executive concurs with this, saying:

> I now understood when women on TV say 'Yeah he goes out but this is a job, being a housewife is a job.' I now understand what that means… [The kids] all play sports. So it's a school pickup and then one's gotta go over here, but at the same time gotta be over *here*, and the other one gets picked up here and then the little one goes here. and then they don't go to playgrounds in the summer anymore: they have play-dates! So they go play-dates. So you run all over the place and I would say, excuse my language, how the fuck does she do this?

Unemployment often demystifies their wives' lives for unemployed men and gives them

an appreciation of the second shift (Hochschild,1989) that working women pull. Similarly, wives try to feel gratitude that their husbands at least contribute something to the household chores while unemployed. Yet, there can still be dissonances between expectations of what the division of labor will look like when men are unemployed and the reality. The negotiation is a delicate business. Connie Mandel says, sighing, of her husband Scott, "He does more around the house. Not much more though. I mean maybe a little bit more cooking…I mean he will go out and buy the pizza." Looking incredulous, Connie adds how the division of labor in her home has not really shifted: "So I was coming home at eight or nine [at night from work]. They're waiting for me to cook dinner. That's what was going on at my house when my husband was unemployed! That was really bad."

Like the Mandels, the Eastons too faced a less sanguine negotiation over household chores. Doug, unemployed for two years at the time of our interview, explains that for Christmas in the past year, just a few months before our interview, he gave his wife, Alice, coupons where he vowed to help her out with chores: one coupon said that he would get up with their son and get him ready for school for one week; another coupon said that for another week he would do all the grocery shopping, plan, and prepare the meals. The Eastons have a very traditionally gendered division of labor, in part because Alice only re-entered the labor force about five years ago. She had taken time off once they had children – their 16-year old daughter, and 11-year old son. Doug explains the tension that can arise at times given this pattern of housework in their family – where it has usually been Alice's responsibility:

> Just as a simple example: we've divided up the dishwasher duties. I unload the dishwasher, she loads it. And she was away all weekend doing a gymnastics meet [with my daughter]down in the City. I had loaded the dishwasher and I had yet to unload it. There's a lot of dishes accumulating to be put in. So this morning she asked me could I unload it. And I know that she doesn't like [asking me to unload it] because she knows that it annoys me that she asks me. Because I know I have to do it. Like normally, nine times out of ten, as soon as the dishwasher is done, within a couple of hours I have it unloaded. And we just don't have to talk about it. But I know that I irritated her by not having it unloaded. Whereas before when I was working, she would have done both of those things. It's kind of like, 'OK Doug, you don't have a full time schedule every minute, you can do more things around the house.' You know?

As Doug explains, fairly minor incidents centered on his contribution to the housework are replete with significance, particularly given the length of his unemployment. His wife Alice explains her take on their division of chores:

> So I'd say he's taken on more: he has been helpful in terms of shuttling kids around, driving them to things; he's been more helpful in terms of if we have a required volunteer expectation, like for my daughter's volleyball team or whatever, if I'm not able to make it, he'll go in my place. In the house, he does his own laundry, I used to do the laundry for all of us, but he does his own as well. We split the cleanup duties in the kitchen, so he's taken on more there. I'm still doing the grocery shopping

> and most of the food preparation, but he does get up with the kids some mornings, so I don't have to get up with them early every morning…I'm certainly happy to share more.

Alice explains that Doug's stepping up to do housework has been important "because I think I would have become a lot more resentful if I had to maintain my level of care and didn't get the extra support with him not having job responsibilities." Alice hits on an important point: the notion that if men are not contributing by being employed they need to take on more housework. These negotiations, as Alice's case illustrates, don't mean a wholesale overhaul, but wives do expect that unemployed husbands will do more than they did while employed.

Yet, at times these minor negotiations and reminders can rankle unemployed men. Unemployment is a time ripe for threatened masculinity, and exhortations to contribute to housework can exacerbate anxieties, especially about spousal relationships. William Smith for example points out how for him his wife's well-meaning, regular conversations can take on a tinge of hostility:

> Like if she asks me to do something I'm like, 'You're not at work anymore bossing everybody around'… Like if she'll come home and say 'Hey can you get this done?' I'll probably react probably a little bit harder than I would under normal circumstances and I think it's because I feel a little weird about the dynamic of her being the breadwinner and me being the homemaker. You know what I'm saying? And it just feels weird. And I feel weird sometimes…and it bugs me a bit. And, I will, every now and then, I'll do little passive aggressive stuff.

William takes issue with what he perceives to be his wife's bossiness - particularly that just because she is in a position of authority at work, while he is not, does not mean that that translates into authority at home and over him. In his follow-up interview, at which point he was employed, Robert reflectively explains, "one of the things you feel when you're unemployed is you're hyper sensitive to disrespect much more because you're feeling like you're not appreciated. You're not respected because clearly nobody wants you on the [job] market, right? You're unemployed. You're constantly struggling with self-respect, identity issues on a daily basis." In framing his sensitivity as due to the issue of respect/disrespect Robert implies connections between unemployment and normative masculinity.

For her part, William's wife Shannon vents her frustration over their division of labor, which she sees as inextricably gendered:

> Like I think if he's at home he should do everything at the house. He doesn't…He does a lot, I can't complain - for the typical man. I just know if I was at home I would have to do everything. I still have to come home, I still have to clean the bathrooms, I still clean, not as much as I did before, but I still do the laundry I do all that…I mean if I need help I try to ask him, and he will. He typically, unless he's in a bad mood, he'll do whatever I ask him to do, or help.

Like many wives here, Shannon is trying to be grateful that her husband contributes more than what she assumes other men do. Yet, the discrepancy that she imagines between her husband's contribution currently and the hypothetical scenario of a reversed situation, still annoys her:

> ‘Cause if I was a stay-at-home mom I would be expected to do everything. And not that I would expect him to do everything, just because I know he wouldn’t, ‘cause he’s a man, but he would have to do more. Like now when Alex goes to school Monday, Wednesday, Friday, I’m the one that gets him up, gets him dressed and drives him to the day care. Will should be doing that. I mean there’s no reason why he should be lying in bed while I’m trying to get Alex out the door and get to work. So just those are the little things that frustrate me.

As I’ve described so far, the expectations for how much unemployed men should contribute to housework is not as much as it could be if the division of labor was primarily a function of who is earning more. Rather, men’s time at home while unemployed is protected by the entrenched idea that the primary way in which men, even in these dual-earner marriages with equally successful wives, contribute is through being employed. Like other wives, Alice explains that rather than a steep change in how they divide up chores, the main change is that Doug is available somewhat more often. This is important because it highlights that for men housework is incidental to their staying at home. This is in sharp contrast to the experience of unemployed women as the next chapter illuminates.

Sometimes however, wives can be resistant to the idea of protecting men’s time. Amelia and Jim Radzik are a case in point. Agitated, Amelia Radzik explains:

> I leave the house at quarter-to-six every day. I get home generally around 6:30, 7 o’clock every night. Some night’s it’s longer hours. Dinner’s not cooked when I get home. So, it’s like, really? Like, ‘You’re home all day.’

> And he's like, 'Yeah, I'm busy. I'm doing things.' Well, it's busy work. Anybody, *anybody*, I don't care what you do, you can stay busy on the internet eight hours a day.

As Amelia explains, she does not buy into the notion that Jim is legitimately busy with job-searching work the whole day to the extent that he does not have time to cook dinner. At times, wives, like Amelia, questioned this in their husbands. Jim agrees with her assessment to an extent:

> There are some things that I just would like to do a better job of embracing, but I'm just not programmed that way. I'd like to cook dinner. My wife wants me to cook dinner. We eat out five nights a week. We eat out five nights a week!..I'd like to do more of that. I just, you know, I get involved with what I'm doing in the den. I walk by the kitchen 20 times a day and it doesn't cross my mind to take something out of the freezer. And it pisses my wife off.

In his defense, Jim adds that Amelia is so focused on what he doesn't do that she neglects to appreciate the contributions he does make:

> I did take on more of the household stuff, and I do it now. You know, I'm the guy who goes to the dry cleaner. I go to the post office. I take care of the dog. If the dog needs to go to the groomer, or if the dog needs to go to puppy daycare to socialize with other dogs, I take care of it all.

Like the Radziks, the Barons are also encountering tension around divergent expectations. Kimmie Baron has wavy brown hair and pale skin. She drives a large SUV which contrasts against her petite frame. Her face seems tired – perhaps the fallout of

having three boys under the age of ten. Kimmie seems visibly fatigued as she snidely recounts the expectations that she thinks Todd is placing on her whilst shirking any work himself:

> [He's asked me to] take care of [things] because [he's] too busy looking for a job - that he can't handle these things. But he hasn't taken any relief off me with the kids. Plus I'm working. So this is me. This is what I do. I handle all these… Everything!...It's a lot.

Disgruntled, Kimmie explains how it irks her that Todd does not contribute more to housework, and leaves everything in her care. Speaking about their division of labor she elaborates:

> It hasn't changed. As a matter of fact, this morning he walked in while I was getting ready for school and said, 'What can I help you do?' And I said, 'You're a little late, because I just finished doing the lunches.' Opening the juice boxes, I popped two of them and spilled everywhere and cleaned it all up. I said, 'I made all the breakfasts and I signed all the books for school, so you walked in at the most inappropriate time, because everything is done.' That's pretty much how it's been.

For his part, Todd too is well aware of this simmering tension between them "That's been a little bit of a sore spot, because she's been looking for some more help from me."

Yet, Todd feels that Kimmie adds more work for herself than necessary, "The problem is in the morning, they just like her doing it. She will make them a little bagel or a sandwich. They can buy lunch at the school at a reduced rate because of my situation." Todd disagrees with the extra work of making lunches, and because of this he feels that if

it's so important to her that she indulge the kids, then he doesn't need to participate in this by inconveniencing himself:

> I constantly tell her: 'Just make them buy lunch. It's cheap. It's like $1 or $2 for each kid.' She's like, 'Well, they don't like the lunch.' I say, 'So now we're spending money and you're spending time every morning pulling your hair out, because they don't know what they want? And then you're making the lunch. Just have them buy the lunch at school.'…But she won't do it…I'll say to her, 'Even if they don't like it, there's different choices every day. There's got to be something every day that each of them can eat.' They're not that picky.

While Kimmie is frustrated that Todd won't help her run their home the way she is used to, Todd is unwilling to do extra work, even if just to assuage her. Still, in most of these couples while wives did want their husbands to help out more, they did agree that job-searching is time and emotion intensive and so unemployed men need to focus on that. The expectations for how much men should contribute more to housework was tempered by this understanding.

In a slightly different vein, Laura Jansson reflects on how she had to learn to better vocalize her needs in terms of the division of labor while Robert was unemployed:

> I think I was expecting him to just kind of figure it out, which doesn't happen. Because nobody's a mind-reader. I think by saying, 'I need help with the laundry,' or 'I need help with the dishes,' I feel great about our balance most of the time.

While Laura expresses satisfaction, it is important to note that she also frames their

household chores as her responsibility which Robert can help out with:

> I think most of the time I just need to ask and he's more than happy to help out…I don't know if this is a male thing, but he's not automatically going to take the laundry down when the hamper is full…But I know that I can ask, 'Can you throw a load of laundry in?' And he's happy to do it. He's happy to get dinner started…he will do his best to make it happen and I appreciate that.

In contrast, Robert has a slightly different take on their negotiations over household chores. While Laura frames these as discussions, Robert senses a hint of frustration and nagging in what he perceives to be Laura's admonitions that he needs to do more around the house since he is unemployed. He too talks specifically about the laundry: "She gets a little frustrated with the laundry. Like, 'Really? You couldn't throw in a load of laundry while you're sitting?'" Chuckling, he explains:

> Because the laundry is like 20 feet from where my office is…So I think that comes up: 'You couldn't throw in a load of laundry while you're working downstairs?'…Like she's frustrated today because the laundry had built up to a certain point. So I think I probably should do more and she gets a little more frustrated if I'm not doing more on those fronts.

Like Robert, husbands explain that they often rely on directions from their wives as to where specifically they should help out. Dave Dunn says, "So it was more the things where, you know, if something was going on at school, I could go because I was home. If they needed to go to the doctor's, yeah, I was home; I could take them." As Dave explains, men's chores are often incidental to their time at home rather than central in

shaping their time at home – as we'll see in the next chapter on unemployed women.

Mitchell and Viktoria Lazovert are Americans of Eastern European origin who both grew up there, moving to the US as young adults. They both have college degrees and share two elementary school aged sons. Mitchell, who was unemployed for about four months explains, "I actually did more laundry. Before that, I didn't do much. But I kind of learned from my wife how to do laundry." Prior to his unemployment, laundry fell to his wife Viktoria, who earns as much as him and works full-time. Still, Mitchell had to learn from her how to properly do laundry before he could start doing it.

Husbands often have to also learn to make room for non-work obligations. Amelia Radzik doesn't think Jim is a thoughtless husband. In fact, she describes how he expresses his affection by buying her flowers on occasion and in his willingness to accompany her to quilting exhibitions, since quilting is a longstanding hobby of hers. Still, she explains how it doesn't occur to Jim to prioritize other obligations, such as care-work responsibilities that routinely fall on women, even while he is unemployed. She recounts a recent incident:

> I have a medical procedure on Tuesday coming up, and I've told [Jim] about it. I've said, 'You know, I need you to take me. I can't drive.' So he says to me, 'Oh, I might not be able to take you on Tuesday. I was invited to a networking something-something.' I said…'I told you I needed you to drive me. So, I don't ask you to do that often, so how important is this versus that?' Right? And then, like, I called my mother today, and I said, 'Mom, you might have to take me home on Tuesday.' I'm like, I shouldn't have to call my mother to take me, you know, to a procedure. He should

be doing that…I told him about this weeks ago.

What this example represents to Amelia is the priority that Jim gives to his job-search even when she thinks she should be the priority. In fact, as the next chapter suggests, unemployed women's job-search is indeed frequently interrupted by precisely these kinds of care-work services they provide to close family members.

The above examples illustrate how unemployment for men does not translate to a dramatic overhaul of household chores. I assert this despite the fact that the unemployed men in my sample *do* spend more hours on household chores. While men do spend more time on more feminine-typed chores, these chores are incidental to the men's days and they do not take ownership of chores, unlike women – employed or otherwise. I find that unemployed men eschew full responsibility for housework. Yet, as I discuss below, these men do see their unemployment as an appropriate time to accomplish more masculine-typified chores which are their responsibility regardless of employment status. These tend to be bigger projects involving the home, and usually relying on skills like carpentry or home maintenance.

Doing home projects

Overwhelmingly, when men explained that they spent more time on household chores, this meant that they spent more time on home projects. The norm in this sample is of a gender division of labor where "I do the outside and she does the inside" as most participants put it. Indeed, this has historically been the case (Hochschild, 1989). Terry Clarke says the same, explaining that he understands that this is not an equitable division: "I take care of everything outside. And, I don't think it's fair to say 'I'll do outside and

you do inside' because there's a lot more work inside. So I get that." This norm is so entrenched in this entire sample that Sylvia Neals laughed as she described the oddity of a reversed situation in her home as, "We kind of have role reversals, if you will. Traditionally you would figure the female would cook and clean and the man would fix stuff. It's opposite for us. I'm the fixer, he cooks and cleans."

And so, men spent time finishing up home projects that they had been lagging behind on, or had been unable to start because of the time-intensive nature of their work. Peter Scotts is a project manager with an MBA who was unemployed for five months. During this time he "kept myself busy." He adds, "So I basically got a year's worth of projects done in about three or four months…Yeah, so I repainted our kitchen, family room, guest room. It was just a lot of work like that…All kinds of maintenance. Cleaning windows." Doug Easton explains that he focused on:

> Fixing household problems. Like pipe leaks. I would see that that got fixed. Or you know we have a downstairs bathroom, the pipe broke and it stained the cedar paneling and replacing that, for example. So household chores that required carpentry skills or you know painting my daughter's bedroom, so more of the household projects as opposed to the other stuff.

Brian Bader similarly explains:

> We have a bathroom where the shower is leaking on the floor and it took me a while to figure out where is the leak coming from. Like is it in the walls? I finally got a hold of that, you know, I got that under control. It's not totally done yet. but we have a swimming pool and every season I have to close it. I have to put chemicals in, close it down. You have to get

> all the water out of the pipes or they freeze in winter and it ruins the pipes.
>
> I've got to mow the yard every week.

John Huber focused on one main project: "I stained my deck. And that took a long time, because not only did I stain it, I sanded it. And then I re-stained it. So, I did a lot of power-washing, and it took, like, a week to do." Similarly, Robert Jansson explains that while he hasn't taken on a major home project during his current period of unemployment, in the last one which occurred several years ago, they:

> Were able to work on the house…During my last one we actually redid the basement. And I had the ability to kind of project manage that job because I was unemployed. Had I been employed, it would have been much harder to remodel the basement, because there were so many decisions every single day with different people that had to come through, contractors, inspectors, whatever. It takes a lot of effort.

As these example indicate, these men were not focusing their time and effort on chores that were particularly new to them – as men they already had the gendered responsibility for these chores. Their unemployment expedited the inevitable, but did not drastically transcend the boundaries of the kinds of chores men took responsibility for while unemployed. Gender can only be meaningfully "undone" (Deutsch, 2007; Risman, 2009) in terms of household chores during men's unemployment if chores are not so distinctively gender-typed, and if men take more responsibility for various kinds of chores – rather than only chores that are seen as requiring masculine skills. By focusing on larger home projects these unemployed men are not breaking any gender norms – they are clearly fulfilling them. Next, I explain how even as men take over some chores, they

resist taking ownership of these chores. Wives remain responsible for the mental planning behind chores which are necessary to the upkeep of their lives and homes.

"I can cook the meal if you've assembled all the ingredients": ownership of chores and the work of planning

Laura Jansson had scheduled their son Taylor's haircut for one-thirty in the afternoon on Thursday. As she was bathing Taylor and Tessa, Robert came up the staircase, having filled Taylor's sippy cup with water and placed it in his room. Laura told Robert, "So Taylor has his haircut tomorrow. Either you or [the babysitter] can take him." Robert, who was standing in the doorway to the bathroom, holding the sippy cup asked "What time is his haircut?" Laura responded "1.30." As she continued bathing the kids, she added "I scheduled it then so that [the baby-sitter] could pick up Tessa from the school and take Taylor to the haircut place straight from there." Robert nodded and then asked, "So you don't really need me to go there?" Laura, still bent over on the covered pot where she was sitting, bathing the kids, replied "Well, no. But he doesn't like haircuts so it might be good for you to go." Robert nodded again, saying "I'll be there. I'll go straight to the haircut place so that [the babysitter] doesn't have to swing by the house. And I can meet them there and be there for the haircut." Laura nodded, saying "Yeah."

A persistent theme in the earlier sections has been how unemployed men see their contribution to household chores as "helping" out their wives. There is an ambiguous sense of obligation in unemployed men's narratives – while men do feel that they should contribute more to the home, they also feel that they need to protect their time,

prioritizing job-searching above all else. Their wives too deal with competing expectations: understanding their husband's perspective on the importance of saving time for job-search related activities, and yet wishing for more help to alleviate some of their second shift. Yet "helping out" wives means that husbands expect wives to retain ownership of household chores – seeing themselves only as temporary executors of these chores. In the above example, it is Laura who has scheduled Taylor's haircut appointment and coordinated it with the babysitter. Robert will merely follow her instructions as to what time he should be at the parlor. This can, at times, be frustrating for wives. Just as wives are looking for more help from husbands, they are also looking for husbands to take greater ownership of chores. The mental planning behind allocating chores is exhausting, and often irritating, for wives. This aligns with much previous research. In her study of married couples where wives earn significantly more than husbands, Veronica Tichenor (2005), found that gendered norms remain so strong that while husbands did contribute more to household chores, wives continude to remain responsible for the tasks of planning, organizing, and scheduling the running of the home. Husbands expected wives to instruct them, and do the mental work while they themselves executed the tasks at hand. As Tichenor (2005) argues, this mental work, which tends to fall on women, is both time and emotionally consuming.

In the study here, Connie and Scott Mandel have butted heads over this. Connie, a slim, petite vice president at a bank is dressed casually in light blue jeans and T-shirt with peach-tinged pearl-earrings over which her light-brown shoulder-length hair messily falls, says "He still is looking to me to plan dinners… I still don't think he cooks a meal unless I have all the ingredients put together for him." Exasperated, Connie adds that,

"Even if I bought the ingredients, he wasn't cooking it. I think he just doesn't know how to do it…I'm just like 'just go figure something out! Stick the chicken in the oven. It's not that hard! Read a cookbook!'" Connie laughs as she shakes her head adding, "But he never did you know."

Scott has a somewhat different take on this situation, and he emphasizes the work he does do, neglecting to mention how he looks to Connie for minute instructions. With a twinkle in his eye, Scott smiles and says, "I think she's gleefully taking advantage of it 'cause she knows it's going to run out sometime. To be honest I mean I would too." Proudly he adds, "I mean seriously, I do all the shopping, I take care of all the dinners." Tellingly, Scott admits, "Well most of the time, at least for the cooking end of it." While Scott emphasizes that he cooks, for Connie it's important that he take ownership of the meal entirely – from buying the correct ingredients, to varying the menu at home, to cooking.

At times, men frame their inability take ownership over specific chores as their personality. Jim and Amelia Radzik have had altercations over cooking in specific. Jim explains how he continues to look to Amelia for cooking dinners:

> Amelia has finally accepted that it just doesn't occur to me to prepare dinner. Even though my home office is right next to the kitchen, I'm just not programmed to think about maybe I should take out steak for dinner…I'm not programmed that way…And she will say, she might text me and say, 'Take chicken out of the freezer so I can cook it tonight.' She'll come home, a long day, she works a very long day. She'll cook and I'll clean up.

Jim acknowledges Amelia's long workday. But to him his own explanation of not being "programmed" to think about preparing dinner is a legitimate response to not taking ownership of this chore. Men's reluctance to take over cooking can be seen as a problem of "stickiness" (Gough and Killewald, 2011) where because each spouse specializes in a specific chore, taking over new responsibilities entails more time commitment than one individual, or perhaps both, may consider worthwhile. Amelia explains what this stickiness of chores means in terms of trying to negotiat a new, more equitable, division of labor now that Jim is unemployed and spending more time at home:

> Like, there's dishes in the sink and you've been home all day? Like, for real? You couldn't put them in the dishwasher? Or the dishwasher needs to be emptied – you couldn't empty it? [He says] 'I don't know where things go.' I go, 'Guess what? You're home all day rearranging cabinets so you know where stuff goes, I really don't care.' So, he gives like a reason why not, but then I give it right back at him and say, 'Then rearrange the cabinets. I don't care.' And he doesn't. But don't give me an excuse why you can't empty the dishwasher!

Unemployed husbands often look to their wives for instructions. Doug Easton for example says, "She knows that I'm glad to do whatever she wants me to do." Yet, their husbands' need for instructions underscores how husbands don't take ownership of chores and this can be frustrating for wives. Amelia describes her response to Jim's need for instructions from her:

> I came home one night from work…and I just started slamming every cabinet door and banging all the pots around as I'm putting them away,

> and you know, yelling at him. And he's like, 'Well, why don't you just tell me what to do?' And I said, 'I did. But until I yelled at you, did you realize that maybe she's right?' Like, where do you think the freaking box goes? In the garage. Like, do you think it just sits in the middle of the kitchen? No. But do you think I want to walk and pick it up and then go out to the garage? No. I'm tired. I'm physically exhausted.

While husbands' need for instructions can be attributed to the stickiness of the prevailing division of labor, on the other hand, it can also be seen as a performance of gender. In her study of women partners of transgender men, Carla Pfeffer (2010) explains that part of visibly performing masculinity means exuding "boy energy" including in terms of expressing emotional ignorance as well as domestic messiness. In contrast women partners are expected to be emotionally nurturing as well as in charge of the domestic realm, including cleaning and taking care of the home.

This "boy energy" can be seen as a way of having been socialized which absolves men of the responsibility for the domestic realm. Incisively, Connie Mandel points out:

> [When you go on vacation] you're lucky if the husband packs for himself. But the mother is packing for all the kids…If there is something that has to be put away, the husband will put his own stuff away but he'll walk right past the shoes for the kids that need to go upstairs. That's the mom's job to do.

Shaking her head in exasperation, Connie concedes, "And Scott's probably less like that than most men. But you know, I would get angry that he didn't know that he was supposed to pick up [our daughter]!" Connie is referring to a recent incident that still

rankles her, and highlights how Scott, like most men in this sample, did not take ownership of household chores:

> But it used to make me mad though when he would say 'Well, I'm having coffee with my friend.' [Our daughter] is waiting to be picked up. How could you be having [coffee]?...He just wasn't used to having the responsibility of watching the details of the kids' lives… And then somehow in between my meetings and everything else I was doing, I was supposed to know that he went out for coffee?

Somewhat defensively, Connie adds, "It's not my *problem* that [our daughter] didn't get picked up." She elaborates how, in her mind, the fact of Scott's being unemployed should translate into a much larger shift in how they divide chores:

> I know that for a long time you were the primary job and it was me. It's not me anymore. You need to take ownership of this. And you need to know the schedules and you need to - it's not me anymore. Until you get a job, you're taking ownership of all this stuff. If you need my help, call me in. But it's not that you're helping me out. I'm helping you out. And that was a very hard conversation.

This "boy energy" was palpable amongst the families of unemployed men that I observed. Wives were sensitive to it and it niggled them. I observed the Jansson family one evening as they went about bathing their two kids. Robert, the unemployed father, had put the toilet seat cover down and was sitting on it as he gave his two-year old son, Taylor one last quick pat-down with the towel. Robert then got up, holding Taylor in his arms. He took Taylor to his room to change his diaper and get Taylor dressed for bed.

Taylor's towel that had been on Robert's lap fell down when Robert got up. Robert did not notice and the wet towel lay on the bathroom floor. Robert and Taylor were in Taylor's room when a half minute later or so Laura emerged from her bedroom and went to the bathroom. She paused at the bathroom door, shaking her head. She heaved an audible sigh as she looked on at the towel lying on the floor. She then gingerly picked it up, rolling her eyes, clearly annoyed. She closed the door, so that she could hang the towel up on one of the hooks behind the door.

Contested ownership over housework

Robert Jansson was preparing dinner for the family. He had the water on to boil for the pasta on the stove. He had chopped up some broccoli which he was going to steam. Next, he took out a loaf of garlic bread from the kitchen. The loaf, a large baguette, was wrapped in aluminum and labeled in maroon. He held the loaf with one hand and dipped his head to check if there were instructions for heating underneath. He couldn't find any, so he quickly scanned the rest of the loaf to see if there might be instructions elsewhere. He put the loaf down on the table and sticking out his lower lip, shrugged his shoulder and said to himself, "I guess it'll go in like this." ("This" meant wrapped in the foil). He opened the oven door and put it in. At this point, his wife Laura came into the kitchen to check on things. She opened the oven door, and furrowed her eyebrows, in irritation, "You put the loaf in with the wrapping?" she exclaimed in annoyance. Laura bent down to the oven and Robert was facing her. He took a slight step back, looking askance. Regaining composure in less than a second, he defensively said

"Yeah, that's how it's supposed to go in." Laura straightened up and raised her eyebrows skeptically saying "OK."

In the first section of this chapter, I described how unemployed men frequently feel like trespassers in their home. Feeling uneasy at home, in the domestic realm, is a way in which men can resist a drastic re-division of labor. As this chapter has illustrated, unemployment does not particularly overhaul men's role in the home – either in terms of the housework they do, or how much they do of it. Changes are temporary, and as both unemployed men and their wives' narratives explain, they are also limited. Specifically, much of the contention between unemployed husbands and wives is vested in that men do not take ownership of household chores. I have shown how taking ownership of specific chores can be difficult for unemployed men, in part because of their wives.

As this incident from the Jansson's illuminates, although wives express wanting husbands to take ownership of chores, they also want husbands to do certain chores in the way they prefer. Wives can at times, implicitly, claim the domestic sphere as their own, presenting their way of doing specific chores as superior, thus discouraging husbands from them. Amelia Radzik for example has been vocal about her husband Jim's shortcomings in terms of taking over cooking. Yet she concedes that "A balanced meal is not his thing. So that's the other thing: I get home, and I go, 'Where's the vegetable? Where is the grain?' And he's like, 'Really, you can't just be thankful I made dinner?' And I'm like, 'OK!'" Amelia explains how she needs to be reminded by her husband to appreciate what he does, instead of expecting him to do it in her way. Similarly, Karen Peterson dismisses her husband James' attempts at cleaning their home, and has re-taken the responsibility for it from him, explaining, "His version of cleaning is just to vacuum

the floors and not much else. I'm still doing the bathrooms and the dusting and the heavy cleaning every now and then." Similarly, Maeve Gura explains how she discouraged her husband Nate from taking over select chores – in their case, managing the pool:

> I'm so afraid that he's going to screw it up that I don't let him play with it. Because it's a chemical balance…He has no clue how anything works. I can troubleshoot if the spill doesn't work. He'd be like calling someone. No! Don't call anybody. Just listen to what they tell you to do and you can get it working again.

Conclusion

This chapter has argued that men's unemployment experience is central; it dominates family life. I started off by showing how men feel as though they are trespassers in their own home, who do not belong there during working hours. This sense of unease is vested in the idea that it is economically, socially, and emotionally important for men to work outside the home. To resolve this problem of men's unemployment, unemployed men's families frequently reorganize the space of the home, for example, creating a home office from which men can job search. The dominance of men's unemployment, and its framing as a family problem that needs to be resolved as quickly as possible, means that unemployed men and their wives more or less agree that men's time needs to be devoted to job-searching activities that will give them employment. The marital dynamic within the couple shapes the idea of the importance of men's paid employment, and these unemployed men and their wives thus end up redoing gender

rather than undoing it (Deutsch, 2007; Risman, 2009) as they fall into gender-traditional behaviors and beliefs.

I then explained why men's unemployment does not translate into a more gender equitable division of household labor. I explain that the idea that men's priority is job-searching helps buy men out of housework. While some research has suggested that men's unemployment may help undo traditional conceptions of gender, I further explain that the division of housework does not undergo a drastic overhaul. In fact, the chores that men spend more time on are masculine-typed chores, usually large projects pertaining to maintenance of the home. Thus, while men do put in more hours toward the home, they do so in a way that maintains a gendered division of tasks within the home. When men do contribute more to more feminine-typed household chores, such as looking after children, cooking and cleaning, they do so only as long as chores don't get in the way of job search related activities. Lastly, I explain how wives of unemployed men also tend to retain ownership of the chores. That is, wives continue to be in charge of planning, scheduling, and organizing the home and the kids' lives, while men execute tasks on their wives' instructions. This way of redistributing chores does not particularly challenge gendered notions of divisions of labor.

By focusing on this experience of men's unemployment, and the interactions between the couples, we thus see how traditional notions of gender, where paid employment is intrinsic to masculinity, are reproduced. This is not inevitable by any means. Indeed, given that the wives of many, if not most, of these men are also in highly-paid professional positions, it is surprising why alternatives to full-time paid employment

for men are not more deeply considered here. This has sobering implications for gender progression for this group of families.

HOW WOMEN'S UNEMPLOYMENT IS PERIPHERAL

How unemployed women spend their time on children, housework, and gendered carework

On a cool April morning, I sit with 53-year Darlene Bach at her kitchen table. The square shaped kitchen has a skylight and the sunlight streams in, falling in shafts on the table and Italian marble tiled kitchen floor. Darlene's slim, A-4 size leather-bound planner is spread open in front of her. There is a spacious block of time for every hour in the planner, so she can write down meetings for each hour. Her days are densely dotted, in color coded dots. There are brunches and dinners with friends and mom's groups, activities such as talks and theatrical productions at her son, Parker's, high school, as well as picking up Parker from sports meets.

Darlene holds a pen in her hand, poised above the planner, as she consults it while we discuss the times I can visit her family during the next week. "I have a dinner on Tuesday with a friend at six in the evening, but Larry and Parker will be home. On Wednesday," she turns to look at the wall calendar next to her where there is a note in her handwriting about her husband, Larry, having a dinner with a friend, "Larry has a dinner out but I'll be here and so will Parker. My Thursday's pretty open. I might make something to take over to my brother-in-law, something they can keep in the fridge, but you're welcome to be there. On Friday I have squash with some women at the club at 7.45am, and then a talk after that." She holds the pen up to her lips as though thinking and adds, "But the talk is for something you have to pay for, and you have to be a member first in any case so you wouldn't be able to come there."

As we continue discussing the days I can visit her family, Darlene concentrates on her planner. She opens her iPad again and swipes at it a couple of times. After a minute or two she looks up at me and says, “Parker has a track meet, but it’s at home. So that’s good.” She pauses for a few seconds considering the scheduling further, “So if you come at 3.30pm that’s perfect, because we can just go over to the school soon after and watch a bit of the meet.” She pauses, and resumes talking, more to herself than to me, “I hope the meet finishes at 4.30pm because otherwise we might not be able to make Parker’s squash lesson at 5pm at the club.” She pauses again, unable to resolve this potential conflict in her 15-year old son Parker’s schedule and continues, “And after the lesson we’ll be home for dinner, although Larry won’t be here for dinner.”

Darlene has enjoyed a long career as a marketing executive in a variety of industries. Darlene is 5’6” with wavy strawberry blond hair curling just above her shoulders. Her hair is parted to the side, and she has bangs that softly frame her face. Her eyes are a clear hazel and her resolute mouth has a slick of frosted pink lipstick. Darlene exudes an air of primness, keeping her mouth pursed at times and her face stoic. She has been married to her husband, Larry, an administrator at a local public university, for 20 years and they have a teenage son, Parker. At 58, Larry is clean-shaven with thinning, neatly brushed dark brown hair that is sprinkled with silver. He has a thin, wide mouth and expressive brown eyes which he frequently rolls and uses to exaggeratedly express disbelief and astonishment. Lurking underneath his expression seems to be a playful yet sardonic smile as though he is consistently amused by the world, and never more than by Darlene and Parker.

Through the entirety of her married life, Darlene has been the primary breadwinner, usually earning three or four times as much as Larry. While Darlene averages about $200,000 in her annual salary, Larry has been bringing home a steady paycheck, but in a more modest amount of about $50,000 per year. Four months ago, Darlene was let go from the family-owned corporation where she had been working for the past two years. The process of being let go was painful and Darlene sobbed as she recounted it to me in our interview. Yet, staying at home and involving herself more in volunteering, household chores, and her son Parker's life, has provided Darlene with an alternative, and meaningful, way of recalibrating her identity: from a rejected worker, to an involved wife and mother (Norris, 2016).

The unemployment experiences of these professional women show how the norms around paid employment, which shape their unemployment experiences, frequently treat both their paid employment as well as unemployment as peripheral to their roles as women, wives, and mothers. These norms become apparent after women lose their jobs and as they spend time at home. Focusing in on the case of the Bachs, but drawing from in-depth interviews with other unemployed women and their husbands, I illuminate how these women, who had powerful, professional and often high-earning positions, do a very traditional femininity during their unemployment. First, I show that women center their days around their children, performing "intensive motherhood" (Hays, 1996). Second, other activities such as cooking, housework, and carework too become far more important to women during this time than when they were employed. All of these are ways of highlighting typically feminine roles. By focusing on cooking in particular many of these women do a traditional femininity where women show care and

love through cooking (DeVault, 1991). Tha majority of these women thus end up doing gender in a relatively traditional way, encouraged in part by their near and dear ones, especially husbands. Yet, there are still tensions. For these women who grew up in the post-feminist revolution decades, there are also competing norms around gender equality in marriages and how women's employment and professional status is a way to achieve this. As such, even as these women do gender in a traditional way, there are indications that they consciously seek to limit the extent of gender inequality linked to their performance of a more traditional gender identity.

The Bachs

Even though Darlene is unemployed, her days are busy and filled with activities, many of them revolving around her 15-year old son Parker. Research on unpaid work in the home distinguishes between housework and child-care (Ridgeway, 2011). Housework includes the core tasks of cooking, laundry, washing dishes, cleaning the house and grocery shopping. These tasks are frequent, done on a daily basis and tend to be the responsibility of women in American households. Less routine housework tasks include things like home repair and yard work which are infrequent and tend to be done by men. Broadly speaking, childcare means the total amount of time spent taking care of children. Quantitative research has shown that unemployed women increase their contribution to household chores when unemployed by twice as many hours as unemployed men (Gough and Killewald, 2011). My in-depth data presented here explains how and why American women, who do about twice as much housework and childcare as men even when employed (Bianchi et al, 2006; Ridegeway, 2011), nevertheless increase their

contributions during unemployment even more. In other words, my data helps explain the micro-level interactions and meanings that shape this unequal outcome in the division of housework during unemployment.

Darlene, who has had a career as a high-powered executive for nationally recognizable corporations, has embodied the look of a quintessential suburban mom with an SUV. Instead of business outfits such as sheath dresses with a statement necklace, and two inch heels she used to wear for work, she now dresses in casuals: black yoga pants, comfortable sneakers, and soft fleece sweatshirts in colors like baby blue and hot pink. Her nails are well-manicured, and she has on a slick of pink lipstick and a touch of rouge on her cheeks. She is perfectly at home being at home during the work week.

In her last job, Darlene had a 90-minute commute, and her day started early so she could be in her office before nine in the morning. Nowadays, Darlene's day still starts early. It starts when she leaves her home at about six-forty five in the morning, to drive Parker to his school, which is a 20-minute drive away. Darlene's days, like the days of other unemployed women, are highly variable: comprised of a mix of job-searching activities, household errands, and carework. After dropping off Parker, Darlene returns home, taking a nap for an hour or so, getting dressed and ready for the day between eight and eight-thirty in the morning.

Sometimes Darlene participates in workshops geared toward unemployed job-seekers or peer-led networking meetings that are held in different suburban locations, a 30-minute drive from her house for the farthest. These events usually take place from nine to eleven on weekday mornings. This timing is deliberate, in order to provide structure to the days of unemployed job-seekers. While workshops take place in spaces

rented by career coaches running the workshop, peer-led networking events take place in a coffee shop or restaurant like Panera. These are meetings of other professionally qualified, unemployed job-seekers in the area who meet to network with each other, share tips about job leads, and at times function as an outlet for disappointments and frustrations in the job search process (for more on the world of white-collar networking, see Sharone 2014; Smith 2001; Ehrenreich 2005). After these meetings, Darlene either grabs a soup and sandwich from the restaurant as her lunch or goes home to fix herself a light lunch. These meetings occur every weekday, but Darlene only goes once or twice a week, because, as she explains "really what you have to do to find a job is to do one-on-one kind of individual meetings."

Darlene's weekday afternoons are spent in any number of ways: 1) household errands; 2) job search related activities; 3) volunteer obligations. In terms of household chores, Darlene has taken this involuntary time off as a sign to get different aspects of her home organized, such as filing old papers, discarding clothes, and other miscellaneous items. At other times household chores might involve picking up groceries for the evening dinner from a nearby Whole Foods, or dong a minor household repair, such as fixing a door handle that is broken. Job-searching activities that Darlene may do in the afternoon range from meeting a networking contact for a coffee, meeting her outplacement career counselor that she was provided by the last company that let her go from, or collating application materials for jobs. Lastly, some of her time is also taken up in volunteer-work as an alumni mentor in her area for the sorority she had been a part of during college. She started this when she lost her job. This volunteer position requires her to participate in and organize social events, such as a recent meeting, for which she

ducked out one afternoon to purchase gold foil paper, photo frames, and streamers from a nearby crafts store.

Darlene's time to herself ends at about three-thirty in the afternoon when drives to Parker's school to pick him up from after-school sports practice. On days when Parker has squash lessons, Darlene does a substantial portion of the prep work for dinner before leaving the house. On one of the days when Parker had a squash lesson for example, Darlene and I sat in the kitchen before driving to Parker's school. She busied herself in the kitchen as she talked to me: opening the oven and, with oven mitts on her hands lifting out a shallow glass dish lined with bite-sized chicken pieces. She lifted up one piece of chicken while balancing the dish with one hand and twirled it on a fork trying to check if it was done. The chicken looked fairly done and had some pepper on top. She put the glass dish on the counter and then absentmindedly picked up a white ceramic plate lying on the counter and placed the piece of chicken she had forked to get a better look at it. She poked the piece of chicken on the plate. Satisfied with the result, she moved the rest of the pieces of chicken from the glass dish to a plastic plate. Efficiently she whipped out cling-film, wrapped the plate with it, and opened the fridge to place the plate of chicken inside. The chicken, as she informed me, was dinner. Their fridge was stuffed, with salads, fresh fruit, vegetables as well as gallon bottles of milk, juices, and salad dressings. She bent over and tried to find a place for the chicken while continuing to talk and finally, after moving some things around, she did.

The sport Parker participates in varies with the season. At the time I observed the Bachs it was track season. Twice a week Darlene takes Parker to his private squash lesson at their country club. In the car from school to his squash lesson, Parker eats a

healthy snack, such as sliced apples, a box of orange juice, and cashews, which Darlene has packed and brought for him. Parker's squash lesson lasts for an hour, finishing up at five-thirty in the evening. During this time, Darlene might also exercise at a treadmill at the club's gym, or work on some job applications. On other days they come straight home and Darlene fixes Parker a plate of snacks which he eats sitting at the kitchen table, galloping off to his room to do homework as soon as he is finished eating.

On any one evening, after bringing Parker back from school, Darlene spends her time juggling a variety of activities: from keeping an eye on Parker, to preparing dinner, and keeping updated with household chores, especially laundry. In just one evening for example, in between cooking dinner for the family, fixing the fused light-bulb on their landing, trying to fix the jammed door handle of their front door, Darlene also did laundry. She carried piles of laundry up and down the stairs and then asked Parker to bring his laundry, specifically his squash whites which had to be washed in a separate whites-only cycle. Parker wasn't listening to her, so she had to tell him a couple of times to do this. To remind Parker, Darlene would go up to his room, knock on his door, talk to him for a few minutes and then come back downstairs. In the intervals between, she busied herself with chopping vegetables for dinner and rinsing the dishes and utensils that she was using to prepare dinner so that they were dishwasher ready.

Parker, gangly with thick, unruly, chestnut brown hair, pale skin and clear, brown eyes underneath bushy eyebrows, finally came loping down the stairs after Darlene had made three trips to his room to remind him to bring his laundry. His arms were laden with his white gym shorts and white t-shirts. Darlene's day, even when unemployed, was bustling with activities and interactions.

Larry gets home from work between six and six-thirty in the evening. The Bachs usually sit down to dinner at around seven. Darlene does most of the cooking while unemployed, in part "because [Larry's] got like three things that he makes." The conversation around the dinner table often involves discussions about Parker's school activities, and college admission (although Parker is currently only in the ninth grade). One day for example, Darlene recounted the recent story of a local teenager who had applied to and was accepted to all the Ivy League schools. He had a 2250 SAT score, played the bassoon, and was a shot-putter. In the midst of the conversation around their dinner table, Darlene said in an offhand way, "you can't just do those things, you have to be good." Parker was busy eating his food, and concentrating on Larry. He directed his comments at Larry, laughing and smiling at the exaggerated, curmudgeonly statements and facial expressions Larry made. Parker was decidedly chirpy today. He wolfed down his chicken, bread rolls, and cherry tomatoes (no salad for him) while Darlene and Larry were not even halfway through the food on their plates. Parker went into the kitchen and brought out three bars of KitKats. He held the three chocolate bars splayed out like a fan in his left hand, and deftly unwrapped one with his right, munching through it quickly. He had already finished one bar when Larry and Darlene noticed and looked shocked at how much chocolate he was eating. Parker remained silent but smiled mischievously as he stuffed his face with the KitKats, eating all three bars in less than five minutes.

Darelene's days, like those of other unemployed women, are constituted of a variety of activities. Some of these are related to job-searching, but many involve taking on more household chores. For unemployed men we saw how their days centered around job-searching. For most unemployed women, as I detail below, job-searching becomes

peripheral.

How unemployed women job search

I explained in an earlier chapter that both unemployed men and unemployed women use the mantra that "Looking for a job is a full time job!" as one participant explained. White-collar job searching is time- and emotion-intensive (Sharone, 2014; Ehrenreich, 2005, Smith, 2001). Unemployed men, as I showed in the previous chapter, are able to marshal the above mantra to their benefit, buying themselves out of household chores and protecting their days to job-search. Unemployed women, on the other hand, do not protect their time. Their job-searching activities, for the most part, tend to be fragmented. Darlene explains her day of job-searching:

> I haven't really been truly into the swing of this solid rhythm which you need to get into to look for a job. Looking for a job is a job. You get up; you don't sleep in. You get up, and at 8.30am you start planning out your day. "This is who I'm going to contact, this is what I'm going to do." Get my binder together, my follow-up notes, figure out my networking. Planning all my lunches and coffees with people. I'm not to that point yet, and that's where I need to be.

Darlene is fully aware of what a white-collar job-search entails – in part because she has gone through it before, but also because this is the informal knowledge about working life that all white-collar workers have either already internalized, or do so quickly once they are job-searching. Darlene currently fits in her job-search between her household and Parker-related chores instead of prioritizing it. One swath of time that Darlene

snatches for job-searching is when she waits for Parker at his private squash lesson.

One such day, for example, Darlene shows me around the club where Parker has his lesson. Another boy who is a year or two younger than Parker is having a lesson in the next court. A court perpendicular to these two has two children, a boy and a girl who are around seven or eight years old. They seem to be on their own, although an elderly lady, perhaps a grandmother or maybe a nanny, watches over them. Darlene sits down on the white mini-bleachers, covered in grey carpeting, right by Parker's squash court. She can keep an eye on him and check his progress, but she has also brought along her laptop. She has a small Verizon device with her that can create a hotspot wherever she is. She places this next to her, and opens her laptop to resume work on an incomplete online job application. Like Darlene, other unemployed women also fit their job-search into small snatches of time.

Eileen Boyle is a 49-year old who worked in the insurance industry as an investigator. She has curly dark blond hair that frames her face and nestles at the base of her neck. Her eyes are pale blue, and she has pale skin. She is dressed casually for our first interview in the middle of a sweltering summer, wearing light blue jeans and a loose white T-shirt. She has on a four-strand silver necklace with charms dangling off of it. Eileen was with her company for 27 years before they parted ways three months earlier. While Eileen has a college degree and earned close to $100,000 a year in her salary, her husband dropped out of high school and currently works as a custodial staff member at a nearby school. Eileen has been the breadwinner throughout their marriage, since her husband earns, at the best times, a third of her income. One may think that this fact would put excessive pressure on Eileen to focus on job-searching. Yet, Eileen describes her own

job-search as more fragmented than the descriptions we saw from unemployed men.

> Now I get up, take [the kids] to school because neither of them like the bus in the morning time, and that's just something we fell into doing...I pick my daughter up from school. If she's working, I get her to work. Depending on what shifts she's working, there are times I'll just bring my laptop and hang out in the café and do job searches, send out resumes, send out applications, that sort of thing. My son has football, so if my husband can't get him - it's actually – as horrible as it sounds – been really convenient because their schedules this fall have been so horrendous, I don't know what I'd be doing if I was working (chuckles). So get him from football. He has Scouts one night a week, so take him to that. Just do the normal stuff around the house that I did anyway.

Eileen pauses to catch her breath from having rattled off this long list of chores and activities which keep her occupied before delving into explaining how her time disappears between household chores and job-searching:

> But…things like…hours of searching for a job or going to, resume-building workshops, interviews, or preparing for interviews, are taking chunks of time. So if I get an interview, I'll spend, I don't know, eight, ten hours preparing for the interview. So that's pretty much how I spend my day. People are like, 'Oh, are you getting projects done?' I'm like, 'No, I'm not.' Like I think I have less time to clean now (chuckles) than I did when you're on a work schedule. So it's just - and every - you look at any opportunity. Like you might not want to go to that meeting, but you don't

> know who you're going to meet or what's going to happen when you drag yourself out at 7:30 at night after, you know, doing 20 things that day.

Other women's time is consumed not just by household chores but also by carework activities which leave them very busy. Shira Koffman, a 5'2" lawyer with wavy, chin-length brown hair and green eyes explains how she hasn't been able to pay attention to her job-search recently:

> The week that I met with [a job counselor], my mother-in-law fell, broke her hip, and then my father-in-law died. So I really haven't even touched the folder that I brought with me to work on my resume…. I can't go home right now and work on my resume because I've got all this other stuff with my family going on…But I'm very scared about the whole process. I'm scared because I'm feeling somewhat burnt-out.

White-collar job-searching in the US can require a lot of mobility, particularly in terms of networking with contacts who may provide new job leads. Yet women's household responsibilities can constrain their mobility. Chuck Mason a tall and lanky 36-year old with a shaved head is married to Rebecca, who is well over a foot shorter and far more rotund than him. Rebecca, a 35-year old unemployed woman who is currently looking for a job, routinely dresses in black calf-length yoga pants and a loose T-shirt. Her T-shirts have logos of beer companies whose product she likes, and at other times they have funny slogans. These T-shirts match her gregarious personality. Her wavy brown hair is usually pulled up into a messy ponytail, and she keeps her hair off of her forehead by also wearing an elastic headband. Together, Chuck and Rebecca have a one-year old daughter Ellie. Rebecca is looking for work as an audio-visual technician. Chuck exasperatedly

explains how Rebecca's day seems to disappear into activities that are not related to job-searching.

> One of my best friends from Villanova runs an editing company that does commercials for Drexel and Temple and Under Armour, and the NFL. And, early on, I encouraged her, "Get in contact with this person. I will get in contact with them. You have to do the follow-up. This is exactly what you want to do." And there was no movement on her end at all…As a tangential point, it kind of goes along with raising Ellie…So, I've encouraged, encouraged, *encouraged* Rebecca to go out, meet people, go to these things, you know, go to whatever. When I'm home, I'm home. And Rebecca can go out and be social, you know? Because she's at home with Ellie all day, and that's not professionally developing, you know? It doesn't build any skill set.

Chuck acknowledges that Rebecca is doing a lot of unpaid work by taking care of their home and daughter. Yet he is still angered by what he sees as being Rebecca's lackadaisical approach to job-searching:

> Well, it makes me extremely angry. And it makes me disappointed, and it makes me upset. And it makes me question whether I'm making too much of a sacrifice in having someone who's my partner who's not willing to put out the same sort of professional motivation that I am. There is a disconnect there. So, it's really uncomfortable for me, often.

As frequently happens in marriages (Bernard, 1972), Rebecca has a somewhat different interpretation of her job-searching. Like other women, Rebecca highlights how her

default role of caretaker for her daughter - not a lack of motivation to network - is not conducive to job-searching:

> But you have to [job search] while she's sleeping… Sometimes they can take a while, online applications. So I would start it, and then if she woke up, if I wasn't done, get her, do whatever, nap again. Go back to it. So it was very segmented…When she was younger and not as mobile, I'd be able to lay her down and maybe take ten minutes to do something quick. But mainly while she was napping, because that's when my brain can fully focus. If I was doing stuff while she was up, it'd be like: do stuff, look over, is she OK? It's not really full attention to the application or the search. It's split time.

Like women such as Eileen and Darlene, Rebecca paints a picture where job-searching – while a constant backdrop – isn't always the main focus and so is often done in a fragmented way. Additionally, while Chuck attributes Rebecca's lack of networking to an absence of motivation, Rebecca also explains it in terms of material constraints:

> You know, going out, going to stuff, it's hard. So we have one car, and a lot of those things are not [nearby]. As far as I can go with [Ellie], is the easiest to get to. Because of Chuck's long commute, he's usually back by between six and six-thirty. I've googled stuff and everything that's come up has been, like out in the suburbs, or it's at four o'clock. And how do I get there without a car? Or you know, it's seven o'clock. But Chuck's not back till six-thirty and I wouldn't get there until whenever. And it's just hard timing, to go out to things.

Rebecca's inability to network effectively is shaped by her mobility constraints: first, she takes care of Ellie while she is unemployed. So she needs to be able to take Ellie with her to any networking event – a difficult task with a one-year old child. Secondly, many of these networking events take place in suburbs, often where many professionals with families live. As a young family, Chuck and Rebecca still live in a bustling city, surrounded by the option of walking or taking a well-connected system of public transportation within the city. While the city is connected to the suburbs as well, this usually requires taking multiple modes of infrequent transportation, pushing Rebecca to say "So it's just not worth it, really."

As Darlene, Eileen, Shira, and Rebecca explain, they have many non-work obligations which can make it difficult to devote time solely to job-searching. This has both positive and negative impacts. Darlene, for example, highlights that this is much needed time off from a career and former job which has left her with a sense of betrayal and lack of worth. In this way, Darlene's explanation for her focus on home rather than paid employment echoes narratives of women in other studies (Damaske, 2011; Stone, 2007) which showed how women frame their decisions as being "for their family" (Damaske, 2011), when often they are because of unwelcoming workplaces and negative work experiences (Stone, 2007). Yet, slipping so readily into household activities means that women don't protect their time to focus on job-searching – which is widely understood to be important for a speedy re-employment. Instead, these women, as I show below, do gender in a way that highlights their femininity, especially their status as mothers.

Being a stay-at-home mom and slipping into housework

Darlene had enjoyed her work, despite the brutal 90-minute commute each way that she had for her most recent job, the business travel she was required to do which kept her away from her family, and other extensive demands which have become normative amongst professionals (Jacobs and Gerson, 2004; Blair-Loy, 2003). During lunch with a friend who has taken early retirement, over bowls of steaming hot and sour soups, Darlene wistfully explains to her friend what losing her job means to her. Leaning back in her wooden chair and tilting her chair so that she can crane her neck and rest it against the wall, she bends her chin down, saying "The sad thing is I loved my work. I liked the people I liked the job. So to have that taken away…' she trails off, as her friend glances over and nods sympathetically. Despite her pain at her job loss, Darlene reminds herself of the demanding nature of her job and especially how that impacted her son:

> And in fact I came back from one of the trips and that was the one time he said to me, and he's never said that before, 'Please don't, promise me you'll never go on another business trip.' And I was like 'Whoa!'…He would, I was working in the bedroom upstairs, and he would come up and he would say 'Hello' to me. And it was like he was checking to make sure I was there. And then he would go downstairs and he would do his thing. So it's like he didn't even need to interact with me. He just needed to know I was there.

Darlene here relates a sentiment felt by a lot of working women who find themselves caught between the consuming demands of competitive workplace cultures which expect employee availability and the time-consuming cultural demands of intensive mothering

(Blair-Loy, 2003; Hays, 1996). Because they straddle two demanding institutions, research has shown that working mothers continue to feel as though they are coming up short in at least one if not both of their roles as mothers and workers. Grace Blum, an urban development specialist who worked for the city government, is in her early forties and married to a lawyer who also works for a city government. They have two elementary-school-aged daughters. Before she lost her job, Grace and her husband, Finn, had both contributed equally to the family's finances, with each bringing in about $70,000 per year. Grace explains what her job loss a year ago means for her home life:

> It's just been, honestly, it's been freeing for me. It really has been…When I was working, I felt like I tried to hold on to things that made me a mom. And felt frustration that there were just things I couldn't do, you know? Like I couldn't pick my kids up every-day, or go on the field trip, or do this after school activity, or this play date, or just be there at like three o'clock and we're hanging on the playground…It really was liberating for me in that respect that I just thought this will probably not happen again, where I can just stay home and just do this one thing, you know? And take care of my household.

Unemployed women don't encounter a gaping hole in terms of how to occupy their time, nor do they feel a sense of unease at being at home during the day in the work-week – when they would otherwise have been in their offices. Instead, unemployed women often slip into a routine centered around taking care of their children's needs and housework. The pain of their job loss is blunted by the fact that they can now be available at home, especially for their children. These women have not chosen this time off from paid

employment. Yet, it affords them an opportunity to be at home and to fulfill the culturally demanding role of being a mother in ways they couldn't when they were employed. Darlene says, "I have always felt that being a working mom has always made me feel like I have to choose. That I'm not as good of a worker as I could be and that I'm not as good of a mom as I could be." Yet, now she describes her life, while she is unemployed and job-searching, in surprisingly confident terms:

> So there's sort of a downside of 'I have to look for a job' But like, honest to God, I thought this is going to be awesome because I will have the time to do all these things for my son that I wouldn't normally have time to do…And part of that makes me feel like 'OK! I'm superwoman. I can get my son at school, and then I can take him to the violin lesson, and then I can drop them off, and then we can go to parent-teacher meeting, the open house and I can get it all done and get dinner ready.' So now my husband doesn't have to do as much of the during the week shuttling back and forth. Like he doesn't have to pick my son up from squash. I can go get him from squash.

Although she is unemployed, Darlene still feels like she is a "superwoman," in stark contrast to unemployed men. For Darlene this means prioritizing her identity as a mother instead of an unemployed worker. She explains what her unemployment and involuntary time off mean for her:

> It was great to be able to do the things that I didn't have time to do before. Like participate more in school things. I felt happy. I felt really happy about it, 'cause it's like this is a taste of what it's to be a stay-at-home

> mom. That you can show up at school and hang out there for three hours, working on a fund-raiser and selling donuts and Swedish fish to kids to make money for the school. And I was able to actually learn a lot of things. They would be telling if a teacher walked by 'Don't get that teacher. If you get that teacher for math, immediately transfer out. They're horrible.' And I'd be taking notes [chuckles] 'OK, what was that person's name again?' So there's like a whole other network. They're very welcoming. So that part I felt good about.

Being at home is easier for Darlene than for most unemployed men because of the networks that she is welcomed into by virtue of her role as a mother. Instead of being an *unemployed professional* Darlene can instead be a *stay-at-home mom* – a culturally legitimate, alternative identity which is not as readily available to unemployed men. Darlene's husband Larry also explains that, "She actually enjoys not being at her job because she gets to be a mom. You know, she gets to go meet the other ladies at the squash club, mothers of the squash team and sell donuts at breakfast for the squash team." Larry adds that he would "be perfectly happy to have her just sort of hang out and enjoy life." This is surprising because although Larry has been stably employed for over 25 years at the same place, throughout the course of their marriage Darlene has made substantially more money than he has. Their lifestyle, replete with annual international holidays, domestic vacations, a home in one of the nation's most upper-middle class suburbs, and Parker's aspirations to attend not just any Ivy League university, but Harvard, Princeton or Yale depend on Darlene's income.

Empirically, the norm of the male breadwinner is eroding. In American families

with children under the age of 18, 40% of households report a female primary breadwinner (Pew, 2013), where the female earner brings in all or the majority of the household income. There is also some evidence that this empirical shift is loosening the cultural norm of male breadwinner families, such that, for example, there is a rise in stay-at-home fathers (Pew, 2014; Chesley, 2011). As this data shows though, cultural norms around the male breadwinner ideology still reign strong. Although Larry frames his suggestion that Darlene could even stop job searching altogether as a function of financial feasibility, this is clearly not coming from a financial calculation. The reality of their present lifestyle and their future goals belies the financial framing for why Darlene can quit her career altogether, as does Darlene's own financial concern. This is most palpable in her follow-up interview, at which point she had been unemployed for nine months. Darlene raises her right arm and lowers her left one diagonally either side of her. She waves her right arm as she explains how she and Larry had thought that their finances were 'up there.' She then waves her lower arm to explain how their finances are actually 'down there,' saying:

> [We did] an assessment of our finances…in the late spring, so we went to the financial planner, and she ran all the simulations. She said, "OK, you guys are fine." They do these Monte Carlo simulations, and they figure out, you know, what your needs will be, and assuming that you're gonna live until you're 93…So I think we were deluded into a sense of security.

Darlene concedes that their finances are not currently terrible, but explains that if she remains unemployed for much longer they will have to start dipping into Parker's college fund. Larry's assertion that Darlene doesn't really need to be employed was shared by

several of the other husbands, including those whose wives had been breadwinners when employed. I also found that husbands themselves as well as unemployed women reported that husbands were often far more relaxed about the timeline of when their wives should be re-employed than unemployed women were. Gina Forrester, an MBA married to a policeman explains that her husband was "very much" supportive of her decision to take her layoff as an opportunity to discover her vocational passion:

> And what he said is: "Well, you have a pattern. You'll work for a few years – three or four years – and then you'll decide, 'Oh, OK, that's not what I want.' There's a level of dissatisfaction. So, you really need to pursue what it is that you're passionate about." And so I really felt like I got the okay. And that was important to me that I had his support…And he really made all the difference, because I probably wouldn't have if there was a different message coming from him.

The responses that unemployed women get about staying at home from their husbands are often supportive. These responses appear to be shaped by cultural norms around femininity, specifically motherhood. Even in families like Darlene's where she earns unquestionably more than her husband, with their upper-middle-class lifestyle and aspirations for their son's higher education revolving around her potential to earn, the option of not working is still posed as a legitimate one by her husband. There is almost no pressure from Larry toward Darlene in terms of finding work, even though in terms of breadwinning Darlene is comparable to many of the unemployed men of the previous chapter. This decidedly gendered response to Darlene's unemployment, as more than half of the women I interviewed also encountered from husbands and others, illuminates the

power of cultural norms which continue to frame women's paid employment, even those of high powered professional women, in a qualitatively different light.

Still, even amongst unemployed women there were a few exceptions. Padma, currently unemployed and toying with the idea of dropping out of the labor force until her two elementary-school-aged sons enter college, explains how she and her husband disagree on this:

> [My husband] doesn't see the value in all of that:…being mentally prepared as a mom when your children come home. We have to do homework, you know, we have these activities. And being mentally free from a full time position to do that. I'm not babying them but just being available and not preoccupied.

Previous research has suggested that childcare itself can be divided into two forms: routine child-care and time spent with children in interaction to aid their development and enrichment activities (Ridgeway, 2011). For Padma, managing the routine childcare itself even when she was employed was not an issue – she had the financial means to afford paid childcare, as well as a close-knit family of parents and in-laws available to help. Padma's focus, instead, as for many upper-middle class women (Cooper, 2014), is on providing her children with enrichment activities, particularly through her own participation in their lives. She explains that, "I don't want to outsource them. I've done that before: to the camps…and grandparents. I don't want to go there." This time off from paid employment is important for Padma as she grapples with how she wants to proceed with the competing demands of paid employment and "intensive mothering" (Hays, 1996). In her seminal book on contemporary motherhood, *The Cultural Contradictions*

of Motherhood, Sharon Hays describes intensive mothering as having three components: 1) that mothers are primarily responsible for childcare; 2) that proper childcare is child-centered, emotionally absorbing, and expert-oriented; 3) that children, and consequently their care, should be seen as outside of market valuation because children are sacred. Right now, for Padma, this conception of motherhood influences her experience of being unemployed and staying at home. In fact, Padma herself sees her husband's perspective as anomalous amongst American men, and suggests that it might be related to their unique position as second generation Indian Americans.

> He was raised with mom always working and mom in his house was the big bread-earner compared to father, even though they're both Ph.Ds…It's a little bit of the Indian thinking and philosophy of no one person should have any burden of all the income.

In the cases of most of these unemployed women, and their husbands, the idea of these women, many of whom were the primary breadwinners of their family, staying at home is not seen as a cultural or social problem that must be immediately rectified. Instead, staying at home, focusing on housework and children while the job-search takes place in the background, is most frequently understood as an opportunity to fulfill the gendered role of motherhood which their employment and high powered careers often make difficult.

For Darlene, these initial months of unemployment have centered around Parker and his school activities. As previous research on parenting behaviors and beliefs of American middle-class parents has shown, these parents' child-rearing approach of "concerted cultivation" (Lareau, 2011) means that children's leisure time is meticulously

organized and orchestrated by parents, with children usually being involved in multiple athletic, artistic and/or scholastic activities. When Darlene was working, Parker used a combination of taking the school bus back home, or being driven by someone in Darlene's "Mom's Group" to his after-school activities. Shrugging her shoulders, Darlene sheepishly explains that she picks and drops him up now because "I don't have to, but since I can now, I like to indulge him." Larry has his usual dry take on the fact that Darlene has taken on more chores related to Parker that eat into her time, saying, "We've never had a discussion about realigning chores…Generally, a lot of them could be avoided."

When employed, women like Grace and Darlene had still borne the brunt of participating in school-related activities for their children, as a culturally ingrained part of what middle and upper-middle-class American mothers do. When unemployed, these same activities that were otherwise peripheral to their busy schedules, became central to them, in part because, as these unemployed women explained, they had an opportunity to experience a different kind of femininity, one which had always seemed out of their reach when working.

Like the other women I interviewed, when unemployed, Darlene falls into a pattern of upper-class stay-at-home mothers identified by Marianne Cooper in her book *Cut Adrift* (2014). In her qualitative study of families of different social classes living in the Silicon Valley, Cooper explains that the "security strategies" of different families are shaped by their social class, as each family strives to shore up a sense of security. For upper-class families in her sample, like the Bachs here, parents expend a tremendous amount of time and effort in ensuring the educational success of their children. Mothers

in particular keep a vigilant eye on children's performance in school, dissatisfied with anything less than stellar grades and exceptional social skills. They worry about their children's economic future in the face of global competition. As Cooper puts it, these parents focus on achieving "'perfection' in their children's lives" (Cooper, 2014: 99). In Cooper's upper-class sample most of the women had drastically curtailed their work hours in order to focus on their children, with only two out of the sample of 16 mothers working full-time. Darlene is different from most of the mothers Cooper interviewed because she has never sought to curtail her work hours, including when she was a new mother. Still, while unemployed, Darlene falls into a pattern of activities – revolving around Parker's educational and social development - which mirrors those of other highly educated women who stay at home before their children go to college (Cooper, 2014; Stone, 2007).

Darlene too is concerned with "perfecting" Parker's academic and social life, especially now that she has the time to do so. She proudly explains how Parker is a driven student, relating a recent anecdote when he told her that he didn't get a 100 on a history exam. Darlene replied "that's fine" to Parker, who then mischievously responded with "I got a 102!" Initially pleased with his performance on the test, Parker was later displeased because he found out that another student received a 104 on the same test. Darlene attributes his studiousness and curiosity to "Larry's side of the family." She explains her focus on perfecting Parker's life:

> I only have one son and I want him to have a great life and I want to give him all the opportunities that I can give him…If I have to pay for a tutor so that one day he can have more choices of which college to go to, I'm

> going to do that. If I need to pay for him to go to Stanley Kaplan SAT prep course. You know any of that stuff that is like $800 here, $800 there. It's a lot of money, but you want to be able to do that for your kid.

As in the upper-class families in Cooper's study, the families in my study also worry about their finances in terms of providing for the children's future. Their privileged class position, even when unemployed, does not raise alarming questions about financial setbacks. For Darlene her income is particularly important because of what it provides for Parker in terms of opportunities. Now, when unemployed, she is shifting her focus on getting even more involved in his educational and social development. Darlene had mentioned that Parker, a ninth grader, is a strong student, particularly interested in the sciences. One afternoon, for example, before going to pick up Parker from track she lays out a white A4 sheet of paper, and a sheaf of about 15 papers stapled together. The first is Parker's grade sheet, while the second contains detailed information about "executive functioning" in children of Parker's age. Parker's grade sheet has a list of columns, with the class adjacent to each assignment. Parker has As in most classes, including 100% on most assignments. He has a B+ for an assignment in one class, as well as a D and C+ for an assignment and a test in Biology. These anomalous grades have been thickly highlighted with a yellow marker. Although Parker also has a D in gym, this is not highlighted.

Today is one of the days that Darlene devotes to learning about how to help Parker be the most able student. The sheaf of papers about executive functioning is her reading before she attends a seminar at Parker's high school on the same topic at seven this evening. Darlene explains that she and Larry have taken Parker to therapists and he

has been on medication to help control his intermittent emotional outbursts. Parker is not always happy about going to therapists, and he stopped the medicine because it made him feel bad after a while. Darlene is dissatisfied with this, and sees Parker as having problems that must be corrected. She explained his shyness toward me as a social problem of being around girls. She recounts how at the beginning of this school year she had asked him who the students in his class were and he had rattled off boys' names. She had asked him "What about girls, aren't there any?" Darlene describes that Parker looked stumped, hesitated, before finally saying, "I don't know, there must be." As she described this, Darlene frames her eyes with her hands to indicate how Parker has blinkered vision and tunes out girls.

Beyond girls, she is also particularly concerned about his social life. Parker had gone to a different middle school than most of the children in his high school. Whereas other students at his high school have known each other from middle school, Parker hasn't. On one family visit, I tag along with Darlene and Parker to their small neighborhood grocery store after school. Darlene is picking up some broccoli and a baguette for dinner. Our cashier at the checkout is a young boy who says "Hello" to Parker. Darlene looks surprised, saying, "Oh do you two know each other?" The other boy, dressed in jeans and T-shirt over which he wears an apron, nods and pleasantly says, "Last year Parker and I were in a couple of classes together." Parker doesn't verbalize a response and lurks behind Darlene. He acknowledges the other boy's presence with a nod of his head, but does not say anything to him. When the groceries are bagged and everything had been paid, the cashier says good-bye to us, singling out Parker and saying, "Bye Parker. See you in class." Parker nods in response. Later on Darlene says to me in

their kitchen, “I thought it was nice of that kid to say hello to Parker and to recognize him from classes…” Her voice trails off, as though a classmate from school recognizing and acknowledging Parker is an unusual occurrence.

Darlene is concerned about Parker’s social skills and wants him to develop these, and now she has the time to focus on this. Parker’s high school is putting on the musical “Godspell” and Darlene bought tickets for herself, Parker, and Larry. She also bought an extra ticket, in case Parker wants to bring along a friend. A few days before the play, when Darlene picks Parker up from school, she asks him if he has asked anyone if they want to see the play with him. Parker rattles off a list of four or five boys’ names whom he has asked. He explains that all have said no. But in a chirpier voice he adds, “We get extra credit for going to the play for Orchestra and English.” Darlene says, “Oh that’s great.” Clearly concerned about why the boys Parker had asked replied no, she tentatively suggests, “Maybe that will be make the other boys want to come?” Parker grunts to say “No.”

In these first four months after her job loss, Darlene has quite enjoyed being a stay-at-home mom. She lost her job in January of the year and she has given herself until the end of the summer, about August or September, by when she absolutely needs to be working. She continues job-searching, but for now that has receded to the background as she immerses herself in domestic activities, mostly revolving around Parker. For unemployed women, being a stay-at-home mom is an alternative source of identity.

Cooking

As for Darlene, other unemployed women I spoke with also fell into

quintessentially maternal activities, prioritizing their feminized identities at this time. Claire Frankel is a petite brunette who dresses stylishly. When we meet for our interview she is wearing a black woolen skirt, knee-length black leather boots, and a sparkling statement necklace. She has sharply defined features and her dark brown, shoulder-length hair is carefully styled with bangs framing her elfin face. Claire lost her job as a TV producer for a national television channel. Claire has two advanced degrees from two Ivy League universities. She is married to Elliot Frankel, a lawyer who works in the not-for-profit sector. In their marriage, Claire has usually earned about twice as much as her husband, and combined they average a comfortable income of about a quarter of a million dollars per year when both are employed. Claire's job loss has been devastating to her, partly because she loved her job but also because the television industry has been volatile, particularly at the executive level where Claire worked. She has experienced three layoffs in the last four years, which has been exhausting. She is worried about when and what sort of a position she will gain when she is re-employed. Claire explains her feelings about being unemployed:

> Unfortunately, the thing that makes this harder is that you need money to survive. But if you took that out of the equation, the chance to explore who you are and what you want to be and where to go forward now, especially at 40ish, you know is amazing. It's just the financial pressure that makes all this bad.

Claire is intent on finding a job, particularly because the Frankel's lifestyle includes owning a home in a pricey real estate area as well as two elementary school-aged sons who are involved in various extra-curricular activities such as soccer, piano and Hebrew

school. Despite her resolve to job-search, Claire finds herself spending more time at home on housework related activities. For Claire, being unemployed is, in some ways, an opportunity to explore some of her hobbies deeper. Specifically, Claire is using this time to cook more than she did when she was employed:

> I love to cook. I *looove* to cook. I got to be a little bit more Betty Crocker-like. I mean [my sons and husband] are pretty much used to now coming home where there's muffins and cookies and, you know, homemade meals. We don't go to Trader Joe's as much. I didn't cook this much.

Cooking has long been understood to be a key way in which women "do gender" by expressing their feminized role of a caring mother and wife who expresses her love for her family through food (DeVault, 1991). For many unemployed women, cooking as carework, especially for their children, highlights their usefulness as mothers, deflecting, even if temporarily, the alternative option of an identity as an unemployed worker. Claire says:

> It's something you can see from beginning to end and then there's a completion reward. I'm in *complete* control…So there's a satisfaction. I'll admit: I'm a "thatta girl." Like I love a good "thatta girl." My whole career, the bosses that took the time to say, "You did great!" they got the best out of me. Those who didn't, still got the best out of me 'cause I was trying to prove myself. So I look for that.

Cooking gives Claire a sense of accomplishment which she used to get from her work. Instead, that sense of accomplishment while she is unemployed comes from her feminized identity as a mother and wife, expressed through cooking. Claire's husband,

Elliott, a tall and trim 43-year old, explains what Claire's cooking while she is unemployed means for the family:

> Claire would sometimes cook on the weekends and then freeze it. And then during the week I'd put together dinner either from what she made over the weekend or from stuff we'd bought. I wouldn't say I cooked, I'd say I assembled…But while she's been out of work, she's been cooking like I've never seen…She has a sort of wheelhouse of things she always would do, but she became a lot more outgoing in terms of just finding new things to do. So she had a whole Indian food night. I'm a vegetarian, so she had all kinds of different vegetarian dishes she'd never made before. She would have like sort of the same rotation of maybe a dozen vegetarian dishes she would filter through. And she's added like a whole separate dozen she's created. She's been a lot more interested in not just finding new recipes but sort of creating things on her own. I mean that part's been fantastic. Everybody loves to come home to a huge home-cooked meal, so that's been great.

As Elliott explains, Claire doesn't just spend time cooking, but her time when unemployed also goes into finding and creating new recipes. Grocery shopping, another food related activity, which would be done efficiently, and in a perhaps somewhat frenzied manner, becomes another time-consuming chore for unemployed women, albeit one which can, even if superficially, conceal the pain of unemployment.

Darlene describes how she spends more time considering the menus for the dinner she makes for her family, keeping her son Parker's preferences in mind. One day for

example, before picking up Parker from squash practice, Darlene makes a quick stop at the nearest Whole Foods, an up-market grocery chain. At Whole Foods, Darlene spends considerable time deciding on the dinner items for that night, especially the fish that she wants to cook for Parker. She surveys the fish in the counter, walking to and fro, and then inspects the shellfish preserved in ice and displayed on top of rustic, wooden barrels, right next to the fish counter. She peers over to check out the fish so she can examine them better, hunching down close to the counter, with the tip of her nose perilously close to touching the glass. She bobs her head up as though trying to see across the counter and into the rows of fish. Darlene smiles saying, "Parker's really fussy about his food. He doesn't like this, he doesn't like that. They get 30 minutes for lunch at school, and if you are buying lunch in the cafeteria then you can easily spend the better half of the 30 minutes in a line, with very little time to eat. So he often takes something from home. But he doesn't like sandwiches, or other things like that." She shrugs her shoulders and frowns with one side of her mouth after saying this. "I like to buy the fish from Whole Foods when I can because it's fresher than fish elsewhere." She then resumes looking at the fish. Turning to me she adds, "So fish is the one thing that Parker loves." She shakes her head in mild exasperation, and as though taking me into her confidence, says, "He could eat fish all day if I let him! So I like to make it for him when I can."

Darlene eventually selects tilapia, one of the more expensive fish on display, at $16.99 per pound. The fishmonger, a young man in his early twenties with a dark brown beard and a dark green apron, asks her is she knows which one she wants. She pauses, and then says, "Yeah," pointing to the tilapia. He picks up a piece of it, about the length of his forearm, and it flops down onto his glove-covered arms. He places it on the scale.

He asks Darlene if that is enough for her. She steps back from the counter, and appraising it, takes a few moments to decide. Shaking her head, she indicates 'no.' The fishmonger adds another similar sized piece. That was over two pounds of fish, so Darlene says, "I need a bit more than the one piece, but not as much as you have there." He nods and deftly places one of the pieces back onto the counter. Gliding his hand into the back of the counter, he picks up a piece of the tilapia that is about a third the size of the first piece. In total there is about a pound and a half of tilapia. Darlene clicks her tongue in agreement, and the fishmonger wraps up the fish neatly in some brown paper and hands it to her. She places it in the top of the cart along with the sweet potatoes and we zoom along into the express line. The tilapia and sweet potatoes are for dinner. Darlene likes to roast the sweet potatoes at a very high temperature so that the top crystallizes into sugar and one doesn't need to add any butter or sugar.

For these unemployed women, cooking was often a chore they did even before they became unemployed. Yet, when unemployed, these women spend more time cooking, shopping for ingredients, and planning menus. These activities become a way for women to do femininity, enact motherhood, and gain validation from these gendered pursuits at a time when they don't have it from their careers.

Grace Blum seems puzzled as she explains how her days are busy and seem to vanish quickly even though she is unemployed:

> I needed to go food shopping, or I had to do laundry, or wash the dishes or you know, household things. So, the days just went really quick. It was surprising how quickly they went and then it's, you know, two-thirty and I gotta get back to pick my kids up. I never felt like there was just time to

> kill. It was always, 'I only have a few hours, I gotta finish all this stuff.' And it made me really think 'How did I do all of this when I was working full-time?' Because I could barely do it with my free days. I felt like I was barely able to get the shopping done and the laundry. And people would ask me, 'How is it being home' and I said, 'I'm a lot less efficient.' Because I would go food shopping and I realized I forgot this or that and I'd have to run out to the market the next day.

Grace doesn't feel particularly regretful about her days disappearing, and doesn't put pressure on herself to find a job, any job, as quickly as possible. Instead, she appears content as she explains that even now, a year out of paid work, she continues to enjoy this involuntary time off. She explains that, "I'm not checked out of the work-force forever. I'm sure I'll go back sometime more full-time. But what's been an eye opener for me is that I kind of see how working moms view moms who aren't working. And I probably viewed them that same way because I was always so jealous of those non-working moms, 'cause I wanted to be one! And now I am one." Grace's husband Finn, who had also gone through a lay off a few years ago for the better part of a year, but who has since been stably employed for the last two years, contrasts how Grace feels about being at home and unemployed with his experience: "For me, for when I was home I think it was a more difficult time…I didn't want to stay home with the kids. I hate saying that but I don't know if I could deal with staying home with kids day-in day-out all summer. Grace loves it and relishes it and would be perfectly happy I think doing that forever really. So I think my layoff was harder than hers." Finn's unemployment experience was characterized by an unease at being at home and restlessness about finding another job, echoing the

experiences of unemployed men discussed in the previous chapter.

Time spent in cooking meals and the extensive planning that entails in the form of the "invisible" work (Daniels, 1987) is one way through which unemployed women do a very traditional form of gender by highlighting their identities as women and stay-at-home moms during this time. There are additional ways through which these professional women cede their unemployment to the background, particularly in the initial months of unemployment as they strive to make the most of what many consider an opportunity to be the kind of involved mother they could not be while employed.

Other housework, carework, and volunteering

Beyond errands centered on children and cooking, unemployed women also find their days taken up by more mundane household chores such as cleaning the house and doing laundry. Padma Swaminathan details how all the chores that keep a house running are time-consuming:

> There's so many things: laundry and household cleaning. Like my cleaning ladies, they [could] do the entire house in two hours. I don't have those abilities. So I have to go room by room. So this week, for example, my goal was the first floor, the kitchen, the family room. And then every day I have to do the bathrooms 'cause I have boys, three boys, right, in a way. And my dad too. So it's four boys. That's what the days occupy, so technically it's like nine to about two…And then I go to pick up the older one even though he can take the bus to use that time to talk or pick up stuff if we need through school. His dismissal is 2:30. And then it starts.

> Then he comes home, snack, the little one gets off the bus, his snack.

Since most of the families I interviewed were in the middle and upper-middle class, they did not report making drastic lifestyle changes. Still, many did make minor adjustments, for example, reporting that they went out to eat less, or that they somewhat altered how they shopped. Eileen Boyle describes how she started paying more attention to grocery shopping, which made this a longer activity:

> I have more time, so I can take longer in the grocery store to shop for bargains and coupons and stuff like that that we really never did before. When you work full time and you have a family, you do other things, like you pay for conveniences. I guess that's how we were living in many ways.

Grace Blum similarly adds how her being at home saves them a little bit of money, but does so at the cost of her time. She explains how they spend less on eating out:

> I mean I don't think I ever brought lunch [when I was working]. I wouldn't always spend $10, sometimes you just go out for a $5 lunch. But, he now brings lunch. I make it. It's usually last night's left-overs, or you know it's maybe a sandwich if we don't have any leftovers. But I am now like, you know, the provider of the lunch…

Grace was the main grocery shopper for their family before, and she remains so now. Yet, now she comparison shops more, which makes shopping a more time-consuming activity:

> I've tried to more comparison shop a little. Where before it was a time thing, I don't have time to go from this supermarket to that supermarket

> seeing who has the best deal on ground meat or whatever. It was just, I need this, I go to Trader Joe's, that's it.

As for groceries, she also comparison shops for clothes and toys for her children:

> I stopped shopping so much for things that we don't need, like a cute pair of shoes for my kids… I started going to thrift stores a lot more… if my kids need a particular item of clothing, I will go check a thrift store before I go to Target. Because I know I can go buy this for $3. It's just as good, and they're only going to wear it for like four months, or get holes in it.

Grace explains that this shift is enabled by a shift in how she allocates her time:

> And I have the time. Whereas before, when I was working, I didn't have the time to go you know, 'let me check this thrift store, or that consignment shop,' or whatever. I just knew that I'll go to Target if they need sneakers, or a winter coat. Now I have the time, I can run out to that store, this store, without spending as much. And they love it. Because they know when I come home with a bag they're getting new stuff…My older daughter *loves* going to thrift stores because she can buy so much stuff for very little money and she's kind of a little fashionista, so she thinks it's great.

These savings are not extensive, yet being unemployed means that women often end up following these strategies to cut costs. We saw in the earlier chapter that unemployed men did not particularly try to cut costs through contributing household chores. Indeed, families of unemployed men often continued spending as much as they had on childcare to safeguard men's time, and sometimes had additional expenses as they set up home

offices for men. The flow of material resources was to men. These unemployed women try to contribute in these ways to the family at a time when they are not contributing financially.

Almost all of these unemployed women, as well as their husbands, reported that women usually did more housework before they lost their jobs, and increased this even more once they lost their jobs. Gina Forrester for example says, "My husband, he's probably doing less cooking than he did. I would say that he used to cook maybe 25% of the time, and now he's definitely doing less of that. Laundry is kind of 50-50. Maybe I'm doing like 65% now." Elliott Frankel, another husband says, "We have the nanny do the cleaning when she's there. And the rest has always been sort of between the two of us. Mostly her, quite frankly." One of the ways in which unemployed women seem to increase the number of hours dedicated to household errands is not just doing more of these errands, but in spending *more* time in doing each errand as the above examples from Grace and Eileen suggest.

Being at home also doesn't feel so very anomalous to these women as it does to unemployed men, because unemployed women often find themselves pulled into other highly gendered activities, particularly providing carework for family members. In the previous chapter we saw how unemployed men exhibited a sense of "trespassing" in non-work spaces, including their own homes, during weekdays. Unemployed women, on the other hand, feel welcomed into these gendered activities. Gina Forrester explains that a while before she lost her job her elderly mother had been diagnosed with Alzheimer's. Gina and her mother are close, and Gina says that during this time her mother "had really kind of come to me and asked me for help in a way that she hadn't really approached my

other siblings." Wondering about this to herself as she recounted this to me, Gina adds, "She raised six children… I think she has a different relationship with everyone. So I'm not sure what it was." Regardless of why her mother asked her and not her other siblings, she wanted to help:

> I think I was in a place where in terms of the things that were important to me, she certainly was one of those things. So, she actually moved in with me…So there was a point where I wasn't incented, because she was there. I didn't want to go back to work. And I thought, well, this is what I need to be doing now while I can do it.

Most of my participants are in their forties and fifties and have elderly parents, many of whom need intermittent help. Within families, caregiving responsibilities tend to fall on women (Conlon et al., 2014; Gerstel, 2000). This is evident of course in the carework that women do for their children. But even inter-generationally, on the whole, daughters tend to provide more support to their elderly parents than sons. The concept of "carework" is often used to refer to the unpaid work, most often done by women, for family members. Carework is usually divided into emotional and instrumental help. Daughters provide instrumental care by organizing and keeping track of parents' medical appointments, frequently taking them to these appointment and they also do the work of providing emotional care and comfort to parents. Indeed, for a handful of the unemployed women I interviewed, their carework responsibilities were dominant rather than unemployment. For most other women, carework, while a part of the chores they do, is not central to their days.

Gina here is an example of these women for whom carework became a primary

focus during their unemployment. For Gina the obligation of carework allows her to shift her focus from constantly thinking about her job-search, as unemployed men do, to caring for her mother. Research suggests that carework for elderly parents is emotionally draining as middle-aged children are reminded of their parents' mortality (Fingerman et al. forthcoming). Depending on the type of carework parents need it can also be physically draining.

Shira Koffman details the extensive amount of time that caring for an ailing parent can take. She seems perplexed as she thinks about where she spends her time each day: "I don't know, somehow every moment is filled. My son sometimes asks me the same thing." Resting her elbows on the table, spreading her palms out flat on it, Shira gazes into the distance as she mulls over this question of how she spends her time. She adds, "I think, because my dad's in the hospital, and that has to be priority. I spend a lot of time at the hospital, so it wasn't like I was all of a sudden having nothing to do or anything like that." Shira's father has been constantly in and out of the hospital for the past several years and was hospitalized when I met Shira for the interview. She explains what this means for her days:

> Like this morning, I spent an hour and a half on the phone with people calling me – not just always me calling them. A medical student calls me every morning and every night…And I call the nurse every morning to find out how he was overnight…

Providing carework for her father doesn't mean that she is always with him. Rather it also means that much of her time goes into phone calls and keeping tabs on the quality of medical care her father is receiving:

> When I say to you, we kept my dad alive, I mean, we really have…And you always see people in the hospital that don't have family with them…And my dad at this point, I mean, he's pretty much together, but his mind isn't what it was…So he had this procedure yesterday, and I learned about it by accident, and he couldn't tell us anything about it. And he had said OK to it. But I called the [doctor] and I said, 'I'm down as his power of attorney, and you really need to let me know what's going on, because he may sound fine with it, but he can't even tell us what it is.' You know, that kind of thing.

Shira sees herself as well as her family, beyond just the medical experts, as having provided invaluable care to her father. For these unemployed women the gendered obligation of carework often takes a lot of their time. This has two implications. First, as when unemployed women center their days around their children, providing carework is an alternate, culturally legitimate source of identity. By focusing on this aspect of their lives, unemployed women can explain that they are more than just unemployed workers. As we saw in the previous chapter, this explanation and source of identity is not as readily available to unemployed men. Second, carework is also time-consuming, taking time away from women's job search. I discuss in a later section how unemployed women job-search given the competing pulls on their attention and time even when unemployed.

While unemployed men in my study and in studies previously (Newman, 1988; Komarovsky, 1940) experience staying at home as stigmatizing, this experience is qualitatively different for these unemployed women. Given gendered notions of parenting, especially the prevalence of intensive mothering, as well as of carework, for

unemployed women, being at home can at times highlight a culturally legitimate way of performing femininity instead of just being a stark reminder of a somewhat stigmatized status as unemployed workers.

Fighting the housewife mode: reciprocity, its limits, and conflict

Staying at home and centering their days around their children and housework enables many of these unemployed women to focus on a positive aspect of their unemployment rather than emphasizing their identities as rejected professionals. These aspects of unemployed women staying at home are mediated by another: the norm of reciprocity. Central to the norm of reciprocity is the idea that any gifts must be acknowledged and returned in kind (Mauss, 1923). One-way flows of gifts can upset the power balance of social relationships. Unemployed women in my sample are no longer contributing money to the household. The issue for them is: to what aspect of the household can they now contribute? The answer: chores. Yet, it can be a complicated answer because in keeping with continuing gender norms around household chores (Ridgeway, 2011) most of these women were doing more chores than their husbands even prior to unemployment. Nevertheless, as I show below, after their unemployment most still felt as though they were compelled to do more, even if not all, of the housework.

Shira Koffman, a lawyer in her early fifties who has been out of work for close to two years, explains that earlier she also "would have to do everything: household chores. Sometimes the boys help us out. Our oldest son now mows the lawn. They help out with cleaning around the house." Still she adds that despite having done the majority of

housework before, "I do a little bit more now. I don't ask as much of [my sons], because I do have the time and *I feel like I should*." Unlike unemployed men who protected their time from chores, Shira clearly feels as though being unemployed means that she must do whatever chores she can. She adds, "But sometimes I'll ask favors if I need to. If I don't need to, then I want to save them up for when I need those favors." Although Shira demonstrates a sense of resignation and obligation – that it is now through taking on most of the household chores that she contributes – other women are less resigned.

Cheryl Stanley too feels a compulsion to take on more housework, but she expresses dissatisfaction and frustration that her efforts are nevertheless often unacknowledged. Cheryl, in her early 60s, is tall and statuesque, with short, dark blond hair. She wears a pair of wide glasses. Cheryl lost her job after working in higher level hospital administration for over 20 years at the same company. She and her husband have been married for close to forty years, but had a child later in their marriage so now they are parents to a 15-year old son. Cheryl feels unappreciated by her husband in particular for the work she has been doing around the home while unemployed.

> But I don't think [my husband] really acknowledged or understands the frustration…He knows I'd like to be working but I feel like Hanna Homemaker taken for granted. The nights that I make a dinner for the three of us…he comes home and he doesn't feel like whatever I have. I don't even get a thank you because I made the effort. And then other times he hasn't called to say when he's coming home…But when you don't let me know and we've just finished eating and you walk in the door, why can't you like, once or twice a week, come home 30 minutes earlier and

> the three of us could have dinner together and talk more? So we're kind of isolated into, you know, me and [our son] and him and that's a different dynamic than three people at their evening meal. And supposedly all the studies say that if you share your evening meal and you're talking during your evening meal that's an important part of family time.

Although Cheryl has taken on responsibilities which she ascribes to a more traditional home-maker roles during this time, she expects her husband to more overtly acknowledge and appreciate this. Cheryl herself implicitly acknowledges that the norm of reciprocity has shaped her into the "Hanna Homemaker" role. She does not resist having the majority of the household chores fall on her during this time. Yet she does want acknowledgement, which she makes explicitly clear as she describes how she feels about the shift of most of the household work onto her during this time:

> Well, he would take more turns doing things [before]. Like he would help with the dinner, meals, or cleaning. Now that I'm not working, it's not even the realm of even anything he's thinking about. He doesn't think about, well, maybe he could help clean the bathrooms, or he could run the vacuum, or he could do some shopping.

On top of this, what bothers Cheryl is the disinterest her family displays in her relatively recent attempts to do more of the type of household chores typically associated with feminine caring. In the section on cooking, for example, I explained how cooking and selecting favorite ingredients has been a significant way of doing motherhood. Cheryl's experience in this realm has been exasperating for her:

> I keep saying, 'Okay, I'm going to the store. What do you want?' Nobody

> can tell me anything. I said 'if you want something, put it on the list.' Nobody puts it on the list so I go to the store and I bring stuff home and he stands in front of the refrigerator and it's like 'there's nothing here.' Well, I asked. Nobody told me.

Unlike many other women for whom being a temporary homemaker was a novel activity, for Cheryl it is an uncomfortable one.

The norm of reciprocity which frames the shift of more household work onto women, also shapes how unenthusiastically husbands of unemployed wives view any requests or demands from unemployed wives to contribute to housework. Tate Eklund, a real estate agent in his mid 30s, is married to Kiara, who lost her job four months ago. Together they have two young daughters, a four year old and a nine month old. Tate explains how he feels that Kiara flouted the norm of reciprocity at times:

> It would just be times where I was doing all I could, and working longer and harder and being real focused on making sure sufficient income was coming in steadily. Because I don't have normally steady income, it normally comes in spurts. So to make sure I was focused really, solely on that almost. I didn't have all the attention to be able to give at home. I would get frustrated at the times where it was pointed out in my shortcomings at home versus the things I was doing outside of the home.

The loss of Kiara's job, which had provided the family with health insurance, means that the Eklund's now rely only on Tate's income, averaging around $100,000 per year at the moment, while Kiara had brought in an additional $60,000 per year. In the above quote, Tate is explaining that in response to the absence of Kiara's income he is focusing on

trying to build up his own business. At this time, any comments by her that he should be more involved in the housework, and especially with their kids, is annoying to him. In her own interview, Kiara emphasizes a moment where her husband casually said that until Kiara started working he would have to find more work. Kiara describes calling him out on it: she slides her right hand across the palm of her left hand as she says, "I'm not one of those wives that won't call my husband out." She laughs and snaps her fingers to show that she pointed out to him that even if he didn't realize it, that was an insensitive thing to say because she is trying to find a job.

Like Kiara, Anne Davis, heavily pregnant at the time of our interview, laughs, as she describes that she argued with her husband after she lost her job. They argued over household chores:

> I was doing everything and he wasn't doing anything! I mean the arguments were about just the unevenness of it. He's really like the outside the house person. I'm the more inside person. And then the other piece about it too is he's just messier than I am so his tolerance for mess is different than my tolerance for mess.

Anne, like many other women in my study, attributes the different contributions they make to household chores to a combination of gendered distributions and personality differences.

Still, at times some husbands are also conscious that things shouldn't get too skewed when it comes to housework. Daniel Lenoir is a chemist with a Ph.D. married to Nicole Lenoir, who also is a chemist with a Ph.D., although without a job currently. Daniel says:

> I don't have to do laundry as much anymore. I'd *want* to do, because I feel bad. But she just has it done before I can even have a chance to offer. And she doesn't even want me to, because she says, "No, you're focusing on work, and you're doing a great job at work. Just, just keep that up." Because she knows that laundry is the bane to my existence, although I do fold. I do fold at night, so that's good. I help her folding at least. But again, she has most of it folded anyway.

Daniel explains that the notion of reciprocating for his role in keeping their young family of three financially afloat while Nicole job searches, means that Nicole takes on more of the housework as her responsibility.

Despite the norm of reciprocity, for many women chores that are not directly related to their children's needs can become a source of tension, within unemployed women themselves as well as amongst the couple. Many of these unemployed women are concerned that taking on all of the household chores when they are unemployed will set in motion an even more unequal pattern of the division of housework in their relationship. Women, even when employed, still put more hours into unpaid work in the home, although that gap has been closing over the years (Bianchi et al., 2006). Still, the types of chores that men and women do tend to be differentiated. Core tasks, such as cleaning and cooking, are conducted on a daily basis and usually by women. Other, less routine, tasks, such as taking out the trash, are infrequent, and so less burdensome, and usually done by men. In this context, it's unsurprising that these women recognize that even prior to unemployment they often did more than their fair share of household chores (Hochschild, 1989). When unemployed they are often resistant to taking on a larger

burden. Grace Blum, formerly a full-time employee at a government agency, explains that she now wants to work the "mommy hours" from nine in the morning until two in the afternoon so that she can focus on her children. Even so, she resolutely describes her resistance to being saddled with most of the chores. She explains her perception that she did far more even when she was employed: "I think when I was working I probably did 75% of the household chores to begin with." Grace adds:

> For me, I'd say it's coming from the presumption that I will do everything because I'm home all day. And for me back to him it's like 'I am home all day, but you're also a member of this family… The trash is once a week and you mow the lawn every two weeks. Those are not the equivalent of dishes every-day, bathing the kids, most of the time putting them to bed. There should be more of a split. And…there wasn't always such a split before, and I try to keep that in mind. Like I almost always, I *always* bathe the kids. I almost always did bedtime. He always did like the trash and the lawn. And then maybe like the dishes. Like whoever cooked, the other person would do the dishes. So I always cooked, but now I always do the dishes too.

Grace here highlights the gendered discrepancy between core and other housework tasks (Ridgeway, 2011). Even though at this point Grace is arguably more invested in considering staying at home a more viable option than many of the other women, she is still unwilling to bear the entire burden of housework. Other women were less invested in staying at home as a long-term option, and they too resisted taking on specific types of chores. Elliott Frankel, whose wife Claire lost her job four months ago, explains what he

sees as his wife's resistance to taking on some of the chores he does, in a somewhat perplexed way:

> I think she did have a little satisfaction over sort of this transition to home…There are certain things she did because she *loves* doing them – like cooking. But other things I think she didn't do even though she really had the time to do them. Because she couldn't wrap her mind around taking over some of those things…. You know you'd come home from work and there's no milk in the house. You've been home all day, you can definitely go get some milk! But that was never something she did. I was the one who'd stop by the market on my way home from work and got milk, so I felt like it was her, she had now the time and ability to do it.

Gina Forrester, is a 47-year old woman who lost her executive level corporate job about 18 months ago. Gina dresses fashionably and professionally even while she is unemployed. When I met her for her interview Gina dressed in black silk pants that were loosely tucked into black booties, a maroon cardigan with a silk-printed scarf casually knotted at her neck. She had on small hoop earrings and two delicate gold rings on her fingers. Gina has advanced degrees from two Ivy League schools, including an MBA. While Gina's annual salary was about $200,000, her husband, a policeman, commands an annual salary of about $100,000, some of which he gets through working overtime. Although Gina was the breadwinner in one sense, she and her husband maintained separate bank accounts, splitting their joint expenditures – for example their mortgage, utilities, groceries, children's education and so on quite evenly. Gina explains that her unemployment means that "there's a raised expectation for certain things. I tend to be the

one who's trying to keep things, you know, the house looking halfway clean…Where he'll come in and throw things down and I end up cleaning it up." She is both saddened and annoyed by the expectations that she will take on most of the household work while she is unemployed, explaining that: "And even in this space where I'm trying to figure out what my next vocation is going to be, and sort of feeling like what I'm doing is not valued as someone else." She adds,

> So, clearly, and this is something I've kind of railed against, this idea that I'm home and so I'm responsible for the management of the household…So we've had some conversations around that where I've said, "OK, well, I won't be able to cook and do all of these things." But also…not wanting to be defined by those things, right? And so I'll say, "Well, I'm not just someone who keeps a clean house."

Unlike someone like Grace Blum who resists taking on all household chores yet is more comfortable with having an identity as a stay-at-home mom, Gina resists this identity too. Although Gina is also staying at home because she is unemployed, she sees herself as "trying to figure out what my next vocation is going to be." Gina has a vast safety net in terms of savings that amount to several hundred thousand dollars, as well as savings her husband has. In comparison to the professional, unemployed men in the previous chapter who displayed a frenzy in terms of finding a job quickly, Gina is more relaxed and choosy, explaining that she is focused on finding a job that is meaningful. As such, much of her time now goes into working on a website she launched about diabetes, and into the responsibilities she recently took on by becoming the financial officer for her church. She explains how her family responds to these activities:

> So even with the non-profit and with the church, there is this piece that I'm putting in too much time there. So that's something that's begun to kind of strike, you know, that's cause for a little bit of frustration. I mean from my children and my husband. There's, "Oh, you're going back to the church again? Oh, you're going to the church again?!"

As I earlier described, Gina's husband has given her his blessing to take this involuntary time off to figure out the direction she wants her career to take. Still, the implicit expectation that her husband and children have of her is that there are two legitimate ways in which Gina can spend her time: first, job-searching; second, spending time on housework. That Gina is spending this time on other activities which she finds meaningful is a bone of contention in her household. In comparison to unemployed men, as we saw, from whom it is expected that their time will be devoted to job-searching, Gina nevertheless does have more flexibility. In our interview, Gina expresses satisfaction with her relaxed approach to figuring out her next career steps, and using her job loss as a time to think more deeply about these issues. Gina describes her own career as being "mommy track," explaining that her career has been riddled with gaps, for example immediately after the birth of both of her daughters, aged 21 and 15. While she is comfortable with these gaps, she feels dejected at times that her husband and children don't recognize her efforts at finding a meaningful career, saying that she feels like "what I'm doing is not valued as someone else."

For women both paid employment and unpaid work at home remain culturally legitimate ways of contributing to the family (Damaske, 2011), although some suggest that solely unpaid work at home is becoming much less legitimate (Ridgeway, 2011).

Still, lack of acknowledgement over their increased efforts and feeling as though they are pushed into a traditional role makes most of these women uneasy. The norm of reciprocity can also make it challenging for these unemployed women to ask their husbands to contribute to their chores as they had previously. These are markedly different experiences than those of unemployed men and their wives.

Women who don't and women who can't: disconfirming evidence

For most of the unemployed women I talked to, the gendered demands of housework, children, and care-work functioned as a buffer. Unemployed women find their days, especially in the weeks and months directly subsequent to losing their jobs, disappearing into these gendered activities. They do not immediately focus on job-searching, and their job-searching is far more fragmented than that of unemployed men. Yet, these gendered activities also served as a helpful distraction to these unemployed women who gain a sense of cultural legitimacy by emphasizing their gendered identities as mothers and women, rather than their identity as unemployed workers.

Yet, amongst the women I interviewed there was a small subsection, less than a fifth of the unemployed women in this sample, who, from the very beginning of their job loss, approximated the behaviors of unemployed men discussed in the last chapter. These women did not take up this gendered mantle. Their job-search and gaining re-employment was by far the biggest priority, while for others the emotional toll of the job loss was too much to bear. Caroline Anderson is 5'10", slender and blonde. Her face is scrubbed clean, and strikingly beautiful. She has large blue eyes, and prominent cheekbones. Dressed casually in blue jeans, flip flops and a snug zip-up hoodie which

rests just above her hips, she turns heads when we walk into a diner for our interview. Caroline, who works in the health industry, has been married to her husband Ben for over 17 years, and together they have two teenage sons. Amongst the unemployed women I interviewed, Caroline was truly an exception in terms of being entirely focused on her job-search to the extent of letting any household chores fall entirely by the wayside. At this point, Ben's work keeps him away from his family for about half the week, as he travels for work from Monday to Thursday each week. Caroline is busy with activities related to her job-search in the financial side of the health industry:

> Usually I'm at the computer… I contacted this person, I contacted that person. I spoke to this person on the phone. Really trying to "work my network," because I saw a job here or there or whatever it was. And so I got a phone number of someone I had been trying to get in touch with and I was on the phone with that person for a while, so I feel like I was working a full day. It was all job-search related.

Like the unemployed men earlier, Caroline has tunnel-vision when it comes to job-searching. Her husband, Ben, finds this problematic. Mimicking Caroline, Ben hunches his back, staring at a spot on the table in front of him and furiously miming typing on a keyboard. He stops and explains:

> She's on her computer morning, noon, and night. It's a big distraction to me, to my kids, and to the house, and to our way of life… She's kind of obsessed. Obsessed is a strong word, but I don't know how else to say it other than if you can be strongly determined, she's like ten blocks beyond that. To me she's obsessed with trying to get a job, any kind of training

> that will better her. She looks for anything all day and trying to make connections with everybody.

In their respective interviews, Caroline and Ben continuously compare how Ben had handled his own unemployment several years ago quite differently. Ben suggests, for example, that Caroline could cook more for their sons during the week since she is at home. Caroline explains her response to his suggestion:

> I agree with him, but I don't like agreeing with him. It's not my focus. He feels that part of us as parents should be home cooked meals, and I guess I get so enthralled in other things that I don't make spending an hour on dinner a priority and I should. I really should do that more often, because then they might eat a little better...

Indeed, Caroline sounds somewhat similar to men like Todd Baron and Larry Bach who think their wives take on extra and unnecessary chores. Caroline's behavior is not aligned with intertwined cultural expectations about motherhood. While being employed can culturally buy her out of these displays of maternal affection, being unemployed reinforces them. Caroline agrees with Ben about the cultural ideal of what she should be doing with her time when unemployed. In his own interview Ben explains that Caroline's lack of attention to their sons, especially around cooking, has bothered him while Caroline has been unemployed. He tries to handle it delicately:

> Well, I do address it, but I don't do it like a supervisor. I don't want to seem like a supervisor, because I know she's very capable of handling all the situations…Like I look at meals as if I'm home all day, I'm going to make a nice meal for the family. I find out that she would take shortcuts

> with meals and I'm like, 'Why? You had the opportunity all day to make something nice and you're feeding them this junk out of a box?' And I would get upset about that…

As I discussed in an earlier section, cooking for your family is a particularly gendered and emotionally-laden activity (DeVault, 1991). For Ben, cooking for their children is an important component of carework, although in the case of the Andersons, this is gender reversed. Caroline highlights what things had been like when Ben was unemployed:

> When he was home, he cooked every single day. He would cook, and I think that's part of the difference that he sees: I am home, why am I not making dinners like he did when he was home? I completely agree with him. I guess I'm just not as much of a cook. When I was working and he was away, a lot of times I would be like 'Alright, how do you guys feel about Taco Bell for dinner?' I would swing by and pick up Taco Bell and that would be our dinner…I should make that more of a priority.

Beyond showing care through cooking at a period when Ben thinks Caroline has the time to do so, he also wishes that Caroline would see the inadvertent time off that her unemployment gives her as an opportunity to spend time with their kids:

> I did bonding time with my children. And when I look back on it now it was a blessing in disguise. I loved bonding with my boys. It was the best time I had with them…The two little knuckleheads and I'd have a lot of fun. She never got that opportunity. One of the first things I told her when she got laid off, I said, 'I don't know how long you're going to be laid off, but you now have an opportunity to bond with your kids. Get

> involved in their life.'

Ben rues for Caroline in part because he thinks she may regret the fact that she didn't use this time to spend with her children. He is miffed as he explains that despite the fact that Caroline is unemployed and he spends half the week away from the family, he is still in charge of making sure that Caroline takes care of their kids:

> I said, 'I need you,' because I travel for my job, 'I need to make sure that when I'm away, you're getting the boys up on time.' My one son has to get up at 6 am every day. Well, that means we have to get up at 6 am…I would actually be in another state, in another city, in my hotel room…but I would set my alarm for 6 am and call the house to make sure they got up.

He adds about a recent occasion that really struck him:

> So last night was my son's birthday. I was away…I knew when he got home from school nobody would be there. My wife was going to be out all day with her mother. I don't think it had to take all day, but she was. So when my son got home from school, on his birthday, he came home to an empty house. And I feared that would happen. So I left him a note, big note: 'Happy fifteenth birthday, buddy. See you for dinner.' And it said, 'Love, Dad.' I knew as soon as he walked in I could put a smile on his face. I feared that she wouldn't be there. She wouldn't think to be there.

Most of the wives of unemployed men in the previous chapter accepted that their husbands' priority was to find a new job and so they would not take over household chores to a substantial extent. Still some wives, like Connie Mandel, had expressed frustration that they still remained responsible for organizing their children's schedules

and days, when they thought their unemployed husbands should do that. For the Andersons, a definite outlier in the case of unemployed women, Ben echoes similar sentiments. He continues with relating the birthday anecdote:

> I had to go get a cake. On my way home. I had to get a cake and a card for my son. I didn't get into it with her, but I tried to allude to her: 'I thought you would have taken care of this. I'm working. You're not working. You can choose what you get involved in and what you don't get involved in.' I said, 'You weren't here when he came home, were you?' 'No.' I said, 'Well, I'm glad that I left him that note so that at least he was greeted when he got home.' I left that at that.

Ben's objection to Caroline here stems from two inter-related aspects. First, by not doing more housework while unemployed, Carline is not fulfilling her obligation of reciprocity. Second, this is doubly problematic because Caroline is also veering away from the cultural ideal of motherhood. American ideals around parenting are highly gendered: women's carework for children is seen as routinized, ordinary, and expected from them in their normative roles as the primary caregivers even when they work. Ben is both annoyed at Caroline, and pleased with the contrast of his own concern for their son, which he holds up as an exemplar to Caroline. Conceptions of fatherhood have been shifting, from a stoic father-figure to an emotionally available and "involved father" (Wall and Arnold, 2007). Despite this shift, fathers' care of children is seen by fathers themselves as well as others as extraordinary (Garner, 2015).[12]

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[12] In her ethnography of parenting in the public sites of museums, Betsie Garner finds that while mothers and others think of mothers' visits with their children to museums as routine events, yet fathers' see these

For Ben, who is certainly an involved father, the above types of instances are important in terms of reminding his wife to "Get involved in your life. Enjoy your life. Enjoy the people that are in your family. That's my goal." Much as other unemployed women viewed their unemployment as a chance to be the kinds of involved moms they wished they could be while employed, Ben emphasizes that Caroline isn't making the best use of her bout of unemployment. Still, he explains her focus on job-searching as rooted in a sense of stigma she feels:

> I think she likes working. I think she misses it. She hasn't said to me there's a social aspect, but when she gets into conversations with people, 'What do you do for a living?' and she can't come back with a, 'Oh, I do this.' She has to say, 'Well, I used to be in this. I'm unemployed right now.'

Even though Ben emphasizes that Caroline has never discussed the sense of social stigma, he suggests that it may be playing a bigger role than Caroline lets on. Ben goes on to compare Caroline to his brother, who also is unemployed. Ben's own analysis of the situation genders the difference between Caroline and his brother: "Now my brother on the other hand, it [social stigma] is a big issue. But I think that's because he is a guy. He's got the ego. He doesn't want to talk about it. So I haven't talked to him about his

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same visits as special occasions. This difference manifests itself in many ways: museum staff and other visitors castigate mothers if a mother loses track of her child's whereabouts even for a few minutes; in contrast the same people smile indulgently at fathers who lose track of their children, implying that while mothers should take better care of their children since they do so all the time, fathers are, of course, hapless in these situations. Additionally, Garner explains that because these visits are seen as special events by fathers they practice "symbolic indulgence" for example by buying their children toys or candy that children demand. Because mothers view these trips to the museum as so routine, they practice "symbolic deprivation" by disapproving of gift shop purchases and feeding their children packed, healthy snacks. Through these gendered forms of parenting, mothers, fathers, and bystanders create a frame where mothers' parenting, even now, is seen as the norm and fathers' as extraordinary.

job situation in over a year because he gets upset about it." Amongst the Andersons the bone of contention is over Caroline's intent focus on job-searching – something that she shares with unemployed men rather than unemployed women - instead of using this time to do more in the house than she may do when employed.

For a handful of other unemployed women in my sample the emotional toll of job loss prevents them from being engaged in their home, or in the job search. Mary Louise Muller, a nurse anesthetist, says

> Like for instance, [my husband] would come home every day: 'What did you do today?' Like I made sure that the house was clean but I was in such a state of depression, honest to God, even getting dinner on the table was a struggle. And ironically I like to cook.

Unemployment has been associated with depression as well as decline in general well-being (Young, 2012; Thoits, 1986), although this relationship is more extensive for men than for women (Thoits, 1986). The impact of unemployment on well-being means, for the division household chores, that the reciprocal obligation on the unemployed partner to take over more chores can be challenging. This was the case for a few, less than a quarter, of the women in my sample.

Christina D'Angelo explains that the intense emotions around her job loss made it difficult for her to both job-search or do household chores: "We just get mad that it never gets done. My husband usually just gives up and he's like, 'God dammit! All right, I'll do the laundry.'" Christina's husband, Aaron is understanding of the emotional toll that job loss and being unemployed has taken on Christina. He understands that Christina, who has been dealing with physical ill health now also is prone to bouts of depression.

Aaron is a short and slight man who dresses casually in shorts and a tattered T-shirt. He is a chef currently working at a gourmet bakery. Christina's career too has been in the food industry, although on the managerial side of restaurants. The two of them met and started dating when they were working at the same restaurant in the late 1990s. Despite his understanding, the lack of any help around the house from Christina because she is depressed is difficult for Aaron, who says:

> I would come home and the place would be a mess…it would be like a bomb went off. Maybe it should be cleaned a little bit. It would be tough for me to come home …But I would try to remember to say, 'Look, it stresses me out to come home to a place that's just a nightmare.' I would, verbally, I would shut down, and I would just start cleaning. And it was probably pretty obvious that I was a little bit annoyed. And sometimes she would ask, sometimes she wouldn't. And if she asked, I would have the ability to say, 'Look, I just—I can't! If I come home and it's like this, it stresses me out. I can't deal with it.' And she would feel bad about it and she said, 'I'm trying the best I can.' So not much I can say about that. I mean, you say you're trying the best you can and I know she is.

I had interviewed both Christina and Aaron in their home, on separate occasions, and I too had found the condition of their home noteworthy, writing down:

> It's not that their house is shabby (although it is in that hipster sense of preferring flea market finds etc). I don't think it was actually dirty, but it was FILLED with stuff. To the right of the hallway that led to the kitchen and drawing room, there was a large room with a small pet/baby door.

> This room was just a jumble. There was a fridge in the corner. I couldn't see any furniture, but I knew it must be there because there were books, papers and other paraphernalia balanced precariously all over the room. It was a mess.

There is yet another aspect to women'd who can't or don't do housework. For about half the women who had initially enjoyed the opportunity to be stay-at-home moms, this becomes less novel as time goes on and they remain unemployed. Instead, they experience irritation once the set period they had imagined passes by without them being reemployed. We had started this chapter with Darlene Bach – the primary breadwinner in her family who strongly identifies as a career-oriented woman, but who had nevertheless appreciated the opportunity to be, as she explained, a better mom in her involuntary time off from work due to being unemployed.

Yet, when I meet Darlene nine months after she has lost her job (five months after our first interview), she now has a sense of urgency. She is past her deadline of when she wanted to be re-employed by. To make matters worse, her husband Larry too has been laid off from his job where he had worked for over 20 years. At the Bach home, there was more friction and tension palpable in the air, especially between Larry and Darlene. Larry attributed it to Darlene's unease with both of them staying at home: "one of the things that she doesn't like is the fact that I'm not away from her. I don't care. But she doesn't like the fact that she doesn't have time to herself." Before dinner one evening, I note that when Larry returned from running some errands, he seems more quick to irritation than I've seen him before. He comes in to the kitchen and gets himself a glass of water. Darlene is sitting at the kitchen table and I am next to her. She and I talk

intermittently as she works on her blog for the veterinary organization she is currently volunteering for, at a little less than 20 hours a week. Larry, standing near the sink, as he drinks water pauses to ask Darlene, "So what are we doing for dinner?" Darlene looks nonplussed and glances over at the microwave clock, turns back to her computer before turning to Larry, who continues looking at her through the five seconds that her movements take, saying, "Well I was going to get dinner started but I haven't because I didn't know when you were going to be back, whether that would be now or later." Larry just keeps looking at her, somewhat skeptically, before seemingly bursting in irritation saying, "But you still haven't answered my question! Are you cooking, am I cooking, are we going out, are we not eating at all? "Darlene looks a bit taken aback and calmly says, "No, I'll cook." Larry, still standing at the sink, mumbles, "I could eat some popcorn." In a cutesie voice Darlene admonishes him, "And ruin your appetite?" to which Larry shrugs in response, but does not eat popcorn.

Household chores are often a burden. Darlene had been on top of chores just a few months earlier. Then, as for many of the unemployed women, the ability to do chores leisurely was a form of novel luxury in the initial months of unemployment. This was especially so when the chores entailed taking care of their children. While Darlene had relished having the time to pick up and drop Parker to his various activities during the weekdays, that appreciation has ebbed. She has come to agree with Larry's assessment that driving Parker around is mostly unnecessary, exasperatedly explaining that "He's 15! He needs to be more independent." She frowns and shaking her head resolutely says, "There's no reason why I should get his breakfast ready, pack his lunch…" The novelty of prioritizing school-related and extra-curricular activities can wear thin after a while for

these women who are keen to get back into the workforce, and who, as discussed earlier, do derive a strong sense of satisfaction and identity from their work.

In this section I have discussed cases of women who don't, women who can't, and women who stop taking on housework as a reciprocal obligation of being unemployed. What is evident through these cases is the expectation by both unemployed women and their husbands that unemployed women *should* be doing housework, and ideally more of it. This is in stark contrast to the case of unemployed men, where the expectation was that unemployed men should spend the bulk of their time job-searching rather than taking over household chores. Finally, what is evident is that staying at home and focusing on housework, children, and carework can provide women a source of culturally legitimate alternative identity at a time when their identity as a professional, an expert, is under threat.

Conclusion

Darlene Bach's story, as well as the stories of other educated and professional women discussed here, serves to highlight how women's days when unemployed are shaped by gender, and they also shape gender. We saw here how Darlene relishes, at least initially, finally being able to practice intensive mothering, which is culturally mandated (Hays, 1996), but which workplace norms make unfeasible (Blair-Loy, 2003). These unemployed women do gender in a relatively traditional way during this time, slipping into daily routines centered on their children, as well as other gendered activities such as carework for elderly family members, which is expected more of women than of men. An alternative behavior for these women who have professional careers, would be to focus

on job-searching and to keep sharp boundaries around housework as we saw with unemployed men. This would be a way of undoing gender (Risman, 2009; Deutsch, 2007). While some women do this, as I showed, most do not. Indeed, for most women, spending more time on housework and their children comes from a sense of obligation. If they no longer contribute financially to the family, they feel they should contribute by doing more housework, and freeing their employed husbands from this burden.

Still, these women are conscious of the skew in the division of housework - a skew that often pre-dates their unemployment, but is also exacerbated by their unemployment. So, I find that many of these women place limits on their housework while unemployed. While they relish housework directly related to children, other housework does not become a priority during this time. These women discuss their concerns that their unemployment will set in motion a gendered pattern of the division of labor which places an even larger burden of housework on their shoulders. So, at times, some women are adamant about placing limits. A small subsection of women do *not*, and at times cannot, do more housework even when unemployed. Yet, their behavior, which is actually very similar to the behavior of unemployed men discussed in the previous chapter, is seen as highly anomalous where the same behavior by unemployed men is seen as normative.

This chapter thus helps explain quantitative findings showing that when they are unemployed women increase their number of hours of housework, and also do more housework than similarly unemployed men. The qualitative findings in this chapter explain *why* unemployed women spend more time on housework than unemployed men. Combined with the findings presented in the earlier chapter, these findings also explain

why women spend more time on housework than unemployed men. Of course, as I show, the time spent on house and child related tasks takes away from time for job-searching. For the most part, job-searching related activities for women are fragmented and fitted between other activities, unlike for unemployed men. This also helps explain why unemployed women, on average, take several weeks longer than unemployed men to find a new job after a period of unemployment (Farber, 2015). Additionally, as I discuss in a later chapter, it also helps explain why men and women re-evaluate their professional aspirations when unemployed in a divergent manner.

EMOTION WORK DURING SPOUSE'S UNEMPLOYMENT

How couple-level interactions push men, but not women, toward re-employment

This chapter illuminates the emotional dimensions of how couple-level interactions around unemployment and job-searching are significant in pushing unemployed men and women toward doing gender in a more traditional way, rather than in undoing gender. I explain here how unemployed men and women actually experience a fairly similar range of emotions, from grief and resentment to self-doubt. Yet, the emotional support that their spouses provide varies, and is inextricably bound into gendered ideas of employment and economic provision within marriages.

For unemployed men, wives focus on encouraging and motivating husbands to remain persistent in the job-search process – because finding a job is seen as paramount for how these men are expected to do masculinity. This shows yet another dimension of how men's unemployment experiences are central to their families. For unemployed women, when husbands provide support they do so primarily by assuring women that re-employment is neither paramount nor, at times, necessary. Indeed, husbands provide emotional support to wives by assuring them that they can, if they choose, opt out. These emotional interactions reveal how women's unemployment experience is peripheral – where being employed is one amongst several legitimate options for them, rather than central to how they must be. Opting out is not seen as a viable option for similarly unemployed men and so their wives' emotional support is vastly different.

Unemployed men's emotions

Unemployment is emotionally fraught. Previous research (Sharone, 2014; Ehrenreich, 2005; Newman, 1988) suggests that unemployed Americans, particularly white-collar workers, deal with feelings of rejection at being unemployed, which is compounded the longer it takes them to find their next job (Sharone, 2014). In my sample, the feeling of rejection, particularly feeling professionally inadequate, mingled with feelings of inadequacy as a man because of unemployment, and difficulty in remaining motivated to continue job-searching. Dave Dunn, a respondent who has decades of experience as an editor explains how the rejections he faced in his job-search shook his confidence:

> I had gotten to the point where I was just starting to question my experience...I started going "Did [my editor] assign things to me and then just redo everything because it was so shitty? And I didn't really do that good of a job for twelve years?" No, I mean, that wasn't the case. But you start questioning: maybe I really don't know how to do this.

For these men, their professional worth is also tied to how they feel about themselves as husbands and fathers. In normative ideals of American masculinity, men enact their fatherhood and their roles as husbands by providing financially for their families. Even now, in the 21st century when there certainly is evidence of stride toward gender equality, these unemployed men question their value to their family and their place in the world. Jim Radzik, who has been searching for a position as a marketing executive for the past year, notes wistfully that he "[wonders] if there's a place in the world for [me] to embrace." This unmoored feeling was common in my sample of unemployed men. It was disorienting for men as they struggled to think of themselves as unemployed professionals. For some this sense of displacement was experienced very concretely.

Marcus Neals, an IT professional with an MBA from a top-20 business school and two children in elementary school says:

> I kind of feel that I'm kind of failing in my part to provide for my family because we're just relying on my wife's salary and her health care and everything. And I'm not really providing anything financial…for the family. So I feel that I am failing in a sense by not having a job and providing for the family.

Even though these men are questioning their own professional capabilities and their sense of self, in the American context of job searching they are expected to exude optimism and cheer (for details on the American job search process see: Sharone, 2014; Ehrenreich, 2005) as they try to convince potential employers that they are the perfect fit for a position. Gary Archer, a chemist who was out of work for five months, explains that, "You have to be in the right frame of mind to actually persuade people to hire you. You have to be energetic and up-tempo." Because job-seekers are usually not particularly cheerful or positive during this time period, projecting cheer becomes challenging. Brian Bader, another respondent, is visibly annoyed at the presumed importance of networking, saying that "[You have] to sit there in an interview and try to bullshit why is Brian the greatest employee ever? That part just for me is very probably the worst part of the whole thing." He adds that he can only network "On a day when I feel good about myself." Brian acknowledges that networking only on days when he feels good limits him, explaining, "So I've got to work on that."

The unemployed men in my sample thus experienced a variety of emotions. Prominent among these are sadness, despair, shame, discouragement, and a lack of confidence. These emotions were detrimental to the men's overall sense of self and were

also obstacles to remaining motivated in searching for a job. Wives' emotion work is in response to their husbands' emotional state, and, as I discuss below, is driven by the underlying emotion of fear. Wives explain that their emotion work is meant to help their husbands become and remain motivated to job search and thus end this period of unemployment as quickly as possible.

Wives' emotion work

Wives of these unemployed men do emotion work primarily in an attempt to encourage their husbands to continue job searching. Although wives are also concerned about the general mental well-being of their husbands and with maintaining an emotional equilibrium in their homes, their emotion work is focused on encouraging husbands to remain cheerful and optimistic in the face of rejections that are endemic to job searching in the American context.

Wives do both other-focused and self-focused emotion work for their husbands during this time. Their other-focused emotion work seeks to actively encourage their husbands to persevere in job searching, specifically by reinforcing professional worth and utilizing an emotional partnership approach. Wives' self-focused emotion work aims to ensure that husbands are free to focus on their own emotions and emotional well-being rather than also worrying about how their wives are emotionally faring during this time. Specifically, wives try to conceal their own concerns and give space to their husbands. While the emotional costs to wives of self-focused emotion work are apparent within a few months, the costs of other-focused emotion work appear to bear out in cases of long-

term unemployment. I highlight this in my analysis of when wives do not perform emotion work.

Other-focused emotion work: actively encouraging husbands to continue job searching

As described above, one of the key emotions that unemployed men face is a lack of confidence in their professional abilities. Although lacking self-confidence is unfortunate in itself, a practical consequence for these men is that it can be an impediment to remaining motivated to job-search. Wives do other-focused emotion work by trying to alter their husbands' feelings to being cheerful, confident, optimistic so that they can job-search effectively. This overarching category of other-focused emotion work took two linked forms. First, wives attempt to encourage their husbands by reinforcing their professional worth. A second way in which wives encourage their husbands to continue job searching is to create a sense of partnership – that the emotional and practical challenges of job-searching are for the couples to bear together. The partnership approach emphasized to unemployed men that they are not alone in their unemployment, and that they can lean on their wives.

Based on the reports of unemployed men and wives, wives step in specifically to reinvigorate their husband's lost confidence. Indeed, about two-thirds of wives did this at some point during their husband's unemployment. Tamara, an associate professor in the humanities, is married to Kevin Goldberg, who was a manager in a pharmaceutical company. They are in their 40s, have been married for 17 years and have two children, a six-year old daughter and a 13-year old son. In the job he lost, Kevin had earned $150,000 per year, along with a sizeable, performance-based bonus. Tamara brought in

over $70,000 per year from her own, highly secure job as a tenured faculty member. Because of Tamara's job they still have access to health insurance. Tamara reinforced to Kevin that losing his job was not his fault, and she continued highlighting his professional skills to him as Kevin went through rounds of job applications and interviews. Tamara consciously strove to boost Kevin's self-confidence by playing up small victories to highlight his professional skills. This was a means of making sure that Kevin stayed engaged in his ongoing job-search.

> I would say to him all this time 'You know…all these people said they applied for things for months and months and months they don't even get a callback. So clearly you're doing something right. Clearly you have skills. Clearly you're valuable because these people call you back and you go in for interviews. It's just you haven't found the right thing yet.' I would always try and talk him through that… 'This doesn't mean you're not getting anywhere.' And I sort of tried to help him see incremental progress.

Tamara views this other-focused emotion work she does for Kevin as gendered and an intrinsic part of being a wife. She explains that

> …If you're going to be married and you're a woman, you just better be prepared to be the one that is the linchpin because, fair or not, most women that I know, that's the way it is. So I sort of knew that things were going to fall apart if I didn't hold them together …

Like Tamara, women view their emotion work as practically necessary but also as a wifely obligation. On his part, Kevin describes how it was helpful for him that Tamara

worked emotionally through every step of the job-search process with him, supporting him:

> …Often I'd make it all the way into the final interview and at that final interview they would just make some other decision. But she has offered…unfailing positive support. I think that's really what's gotten me through. I've shared my plans, what I was doing and planning to do, to navigate through this thing. And it was…a team effort and we managed it together.

This data cannot reveal whether there is a direct link between Tamara's emotion work designed to reinforce Kevin's professional worth and the ultimate outcome whereby Kevin gained a lucrative consulting position which offered him a similar remuneration to the job he had lost. What this data tells us, instead, is that for Kevin, Tamara's emotion work was instrumental in instilling professional confidence which he feels he needed to continue job searching.

Emotion work in the form of reinforcing their husband's professional worth is not always as smooth, and ultimately successful as for Tamara and Kevin. Emily Bader is married to Brian a product manager who has been out of work for four months. Brian, quoted earlier, is feeling particularly discouraged as he job searches, something that is concerning to Emily: "He doesn't have the get-up-and-go to go do it [the job-search]. 'Cause he's in such a dump. So I am trying to still be very positive." Emily explained her concerns about Brian's attitude, saying that she tries to convince him of his professional worth by telling him that "He has many skills. He's *so* dedicated. He's *so* loyal. He works

really hard and any company would be happy to have him." Like other wives Emily expects that she can play a role in shaping his feelings into positive ones:

> So recently I told him I said that I was worried about his inactivity and I felt like his search is too passive. You can't just sit at a computer. But I always have to do it in like a positive way, right? So I always say, 'Oh I heard you talking on the phone today. That's great! You need to be talking more. You need to talk.'

Despite this, Emily adds that:

> I'm very worried about him. I am. If he thinks that he's non-employable, then he won't be. You are what you think, right? So if he thinks that, he projects that, it's not going to happen…It's very scary. I sit up in the kitchen and I think 'We're going to have to give up this house,' you know what are we going to do? We're going to rent some shitty little apartment?

As she explains, for Emily the material stakes are high if Brian continues thinking of himself as non-employable. As professional workers and a dual-earner couple, Brian and Emily, like all in my sample, do not face destitution. What worries them is the potential for some, even if minimal, downward mobility, and the possibility of a diminished lifestyle. Additionally, for Emily, Brian's way of job-searching and his emotions depict a lack of manliness:

> But he is not a strong like a *man* like who just says, 'Oh I don't care. I've been fired? I don't care. Screw them. I'll go find another job.'…He

> is very sensitive and emotional. And he's like a girl! Like man up!...Be stronger. Have a harder shell. Let it roll off. Have confidence.

As Emily's quote illustrates, wives' emotion work here also aims to encourage a more stereotypically masculine response of confidence despite the rejections that these men face. By worriedly questioning "How're you going to find a job when you have no confidence and are very emotional?" Emily draws an explicit link between Brian's feelings and his success in finding his next job.

Pierre Miot, who has a background in finance and worked at a bank, similarly explains how it is encouraging to him when his wife expresses her conviction of his professional abilities: "My wife will say 'you will find a job. You will get a job.' It's encouragement." His wife's encouragement is important to him because Pierre already feels an immense amount of pressure to find a job, saying, "The pressure I put on myself and the society already puts it on me, that I need to find a job." Pierre alludes to the idea that his professional self-worth mingles with normative ideas about masculinity to make the experience of job-searching high-stakes.

Other wives, but only a about a third, take a partnership approach. When Terry Clarke, an engineer in his late 50s, lost his job six months ago, it was so emotionally difficult for him that he compared it to death, saying, "There's the discouragement part because it's [being unemployed] dying in a sense." After he lost his job, Terry apologized profusely to his wife of 27 years, Sandy, a paralegal-cum-office manager, telling her, "I feel like I've failed you." Although Terry alluded to his sense of failure in providing for his family, his wife Sandy responded by reassuring him, saying "Well, I don't view it that way at all. I don't see that you have done anything that would have caused me to see you

as a failure. It just happened." For Sandy, Terry's honest apology was an important turning point toward openness in discussing Terry's unemployment. This motivated Sandy to do emotion work for her husband. Sandy's emotion work aims to protect Terry's masculinity by encouraging him in his job-search, and doing so in a way that reassures Terry that in her eyes he was no less a man, a husband, and a provider than he had been.

Sandy contrasts this layoff with a layoff Terry had undergone five years ago, explaining that then she had to "be very guarded in what I [said] to him. But now I really feel that there is far more freedom because he's willing to talk about this job loss. So I feel like I'm more an ally to him than I have been in the past." By being an ally, Sandy metaphorically holds Terry's hands as he goes through the ups and downs of job-searching. Sandy and Terry both agree that this time around their marriage is stronger than it was prior to Terry's unemployment. This has shaped Sandy's ability to deploy the partnership approach, as well as Terry's ability to respond favorably to it. Terry says "I would say [our marriage] was stressful… it was just living on the edge of anger. I think that's mellowed over time… [Now] it's consistent, it's positive. Our relationship is better now than it's been in a long time…In this time of stress she has been perfect." When Sandy's workday is over and she is driving home from her office, she calls Terry from the car to catch up on what he has accomplished in his job-search that day. She says,

> It's kind of like taming the little creature in *The Little Prince*: you meet at the same time every day and you're expected to be there. I don't know that I've tamed him or whatever [chuckles] but [the call] is something I look

> forward to. 'Cause I like to hear what he has to say. It's an important call for me.

For both Sandy and Terry, this phone call is emotional. In his follow up interview Terry explains that for him, Sandy's reassurance is important in enabling him to remain motivated despite rejections in his job-search. Terry appreciatively acknowledges,

> She was always very, very positive. Frequently she would call me on her way home from work and say, 'What did you do today? How was your day?' It was: 'How was your day?' And that allowed me to, without any defensiveness – she didn't ever put me in a corner – to say, 'Well, this is what I did, this is what I learned, this is who I met.' So, it was always an interchange or interaction that was positive and encouraging. So that was extremely important for me.

For Sandy and Terry, their partnership approach remained consistent through the duration of Terry's unemployment. Sandy and Terry's case also illuminates how forms of emotion work can shift over time.

Scott Mandel, an engineer with an MBA, similarly asserts that his wife's "active interest" in his job-searching activities, was emotionally encouraging to him because he felt that he was not alone as he job-searched. He adds: "It's hard to explain everyday what you're doing and how she can help. But without boring her with all the details [I'll say] 'Well I went to another meeting today,' So she'll help." For these men, their wives' checking in is a form of support. For wives, providing this emotional support is emotion work because it involves privileging their husbands' emotions over their own anxieties. Sandy explains that her daily phone calls to Terry can be challenging for her: "…Being in

the car for the call is good. If it's bad news it allows me to decompress before I get home, so he doesn't have to see me worry." As I elaborate in a later section, wives consciously strive to make sure that their husbands do not see the extent of their worry. At this point, as Terry job searches, Sandy focuses on boosting his spirits, in part because there is a material outcome if Terry gets discouraged in his job search.

Not all attempts at a partnership approach are as successful. Some husbands perceive their wives' check-ins as tantamount to nagging. Laura and Robert have been married for five years and have a four-year old and a two-year old. Until Robert lost his job they each earned a six-figure salary. They live in an upscale neighborhood in a house that Robert bought prior to meeting and marrying Laura. They have a full-time nanny (whom they retained during Robert's unemployment) to take care of their two children from 9-6 on weekdays. Robert, a public relations professional, has been out of work for seven months. Laura, a successful TV producer with degrees from two Ivy League universities, works full-time. Despite her own time-consuming career, Laura too is trying to be emotionally present for her husband and to reassure him that she is there for him. Just as Sandy calls Terry daily in an attempt to convince him of her emotional presence, Laura emails Robert daily. Laura explains that she is going to great lengths to encourage Robert without being overbearing in the process. But this can be challenging. Laura describes a recent conversation: "I was talking about how Samuel L. Jackson accepts every movie offer that comes his way. But Robert took this as a critique of himself." Shaking her head Laura emphasizes that although she had just been making small talk with Robert, he sensitively interpreted her words as a personal critique of his not being proactive enough in his job-search. She explains their misalignment on this conversation

saying, "I was having a *People* magazine conversation, and he was having a conversation on *The Atlantic*!" In his own interview, Robert describes Laura's efforts at emotion work as being "draconian."

Unlike Terry above, Robert is unable to fully acknowledge and appreciate Laura's efforts. Still, despite these glitches in communication, Laura tries to provide emotional support to her husband by "boosting him up" but this means "tempering my normal, blunt way of speaking. This is just how I am – I am blunt so I need to work on it, particularly now." Laura adds that "Robert asked me to be less condescending, he asked me to be more empathetic when I talk to him about the job-search and getting on top of his job applications." She adds that tempering how she talks to Robert about his job-search "takes a lot of hard work!...Being empathetic is not the problem, it's more how I convey it." In his follow-up interview, by which time he had gained full-time employment after being unemployed for a total of nine months, Robert reflectively explains, "One of the things you feel when you're unemployed is you're hyper sensitive to disrespect much more because you're feeling like you're not appreciated. You're not respected because clearly nobody wants you on the [job] market, right, you're unemployed. You're constantly struggling with self-respect, identity issues on a daily basis." In framing his sensitivity as due to the issue of respect/disrespect Robert implies connections between unemployment and normative masculinity.

Unlike the Clarkes, who explained that they had amassed emotional resources in the form of skills and knowledge of how to communicate with each other from previous, more fraught experiences of unemployment, the Janssons lack these resources. In such cases the difference in the couple's emotional wealth seems to shape whether the same

way of doing other-focused emotion work – a partnership approach in these cases – ends up being perceived by husbands as supportive or not. In a later section I discuss the relationship between duration of unemployment and the costs of other-focused emotion work.

Self-focused emotion work: freeing husbands from having to do emotion work

Wives 'do self-focused emotion work primarily so that husbands are free from having to provide emotional support to their wives during this challenging time. This is meant to enable men to direct their time and emotions to being emotionally capable of job-searching. Wives do two types of self-focused emotion work: concealing their own concerns and giving space.

Wives' conceal their own concerns. Wives do emotion work during their husbands' unemployment in order to create an atmosphere that enables husbands to continue job-searching. Yet, they do so frequently despite their own anxieties, which they hide from husbands. This form of emotion work was one that only the interviews with wives revealed. For the most part husbands remained unaware that their wives hid their anxieties. As such, in cases where I interviewed only the unemployed men and not their wives, I did not get data on whether their wives conceal their emotions. Thus, the proportion of wives who conceal their concerns is better understood as a fraction of wives I interviewed. As such, over half the wives I interviewed reported concealing their own concerns about their husband's unemployment from husbands.

Maeve Gura is married to Nate, a former executive at a multinational who has been unemployed for 2 years. Even though the Guras are financially comfortable, living in a million dollar house, with Nate's prior annual income ranging from $200,000-

$300,000 depending on bonuses, Maeve is nevertheless concerned about her husband's re-employment prospects, "I can't control how he's going to take me being worried. So, I don't tell him that I'm worried." Even though Maeve and Nate, like other couples in this sample, are affluent by any standards, they have built a lifestyle around both incomes. Much like the upper-class families in Cooper's (2014) sample, my participants aren't concerned about going without food, heat or electricity. Rather, their "upscaled" (Cooper, 2014) anxieties revolve around maintaining their lifestyles and avoiding "relative deprivation" (Newman, 1988; Elder, 1974).

Connie Mandel too explains that in concealing the extent of her anxieties from her husband Scott: "I get really worried. I internalize stuff." Although Connie's words hint at depression, she herself did not link her emotion work directly to depression. Other wives too discussed emotion work as one aspect among many during this stressful situation that may impact their mental health. Emily Bader explains how she conceals the extent of her worries from her husband Brian as she encourages him and expresses her sense of uncertainty and fright by saying: "He's [her husband] like just this total zombie and I'm riding down the river with him." That wives downplay their own anxieties to avoid burdening their husbands can take a toll on their own well-being. Although Sandy has successfully set up an emotional partnership as Terry job searches – where she reassures him that his unemployment and job searching is something they will get through together – this nevertheless can be difficult for her at times. She softly explains that, "I tried never to really show him when I was having doubts." Sandy privileges Terry's feelings over her own, focusing on boosting his spirits. Sandy elaborates on her anxiety, saying, "There would be days where it would be just hard. And I have a very

dear sister who is able to take me off the ledge. And she would encourage me. I would call her when those days happened. And I would be like 'I just don't know. I don't see anything happening.'" Sandy continues encouraging Terry despite her own misgivings.

That it is important for both unemployed husbands and wives that wives keep their anxieties to themselves is best revealed when wives fail to do so. James Peterson explains:

> I think Karen gets to what you and I might refer to as a little bit of a breaking point. It's not a 100% directed at me. It's directed at the circumstance. So some anger, some tears, some pent up frustration. Really wrapped in the uncertainty. And while those moments are important to her to have, they occasionally are a little bit of an alternative use of time for me.

The cost of husbands being privy to wives' anxieties over their unemployment is framed as the time and emotional energy this detracts from husbands' job-searching efforts, which are themselves framed as intensely emotional. It is this unsurprising that in their own interviews, husbands exhibited a lack of awareness that the encouragement from wives is coming at some cost, particularly the cost of concealing their own anxieties. Shannon Smith reflectively points out, "I mean I don't think Will realizes the impact [his unemployment] has on me." This self-focused emotion work has emotional costs for wives.

Interestingly, wives did not express doing emotion work to conceal any concerns about the persisting unequal division of household labor during this time. Both unemployed men and their wives generally agree that unemployed men's time is best

used for job-searching than for taking over household chores. Robert Jansson explains, "It [division of household chores] hasn't changed as much as you'd think it should." He adds a refrain that I heard from most men and wives that "I deal with all the outside stuff and she deals with a lot of the inside stuff." This lack of a shift in the division of household labor was the norm in this sample. Even Frank Amara, whose pre-unemployment household income of $80,000 a year places him at the bottom of this sample, puts his youngest daughter in full-time daycare that costs $900 per month so that he can continue job-searching. His father, retired and affluent, helps out with the daycare payments. This lack of a substantial shift around household chores for unemployed men is corroborated by quantitative findings (Gough and Killewald, 2011).

Like other men and their wives, Robert and his wife Laura have agreed that Robert should treat his job-search as a full-time job. This agreement between couples like Laura and Robert is a family myth where the couple explains away the unequal division of household labor, in these cases by reiterating a version of what participant Scott Mandel said: "looking for a job is a full time job!" The relative lack of friction over the household division of labor during this time, which has also been found elsewhere (Gush et al., 2015), appears to be mediated by several factors. These couples believe that job-searching at their level is a time- and emotion-intensive process, which requires unemployed men's focus. Additionally, these relatively privileged couples already outsource much of their household work – including cleaning and childcare. Most continue to do so during the unemployment.

In fact, out of the 25 unemployed men and 13 wives I interviewed, I only encountered three cases of wives' emotion work in dealing with the tension of divergent

expectations over household chores. Connie Mandel, married to Scott, a former project manager in a pharmaceutical company where he had worked for over 20 years, explains her feelings when she wanted Scott to take over some of her chores after he lost his job:

> Like, no, this isn't me anymore! I know that for a long time you were the primary job and it was me. It's not me anymore. You need to take ownership of this. Until you get a job, you're taking ownership of all this stuff…But it's not that you're helping me out. I'm helping you out.

Scott isn't fully aware of the extent of Connie's frustrations over how they divide up household chores. In his own interview Scott said that now that he is unemployed he contributes more to household chores and does: "At least one a half times more work. Because you know you're home. You can keep the laundry going, while you're home, do the shopping, while you're home. That's like wink wink, 'I know you're looking for a job but I work out there and you're here.' It's fine. I don't have a problem with it." Connie is irritated at Scott over the lack of a shift in how they divide household work, but her frustration over this is anomalous. Still, even Connie's bigger concern was how Scott's moods might affect their children. Her two children would sometimes ask her, especially right after Scott was laid off, "They would say, 'Why is dad being so mean?' Or 'Why is dad being such a grump?' I'm not sure they said the same thing about me when the stress is bad." Unlike earlier findings (Newman, 1988), in my sample children were a far less important factor in why wives did emotion work. Unemployed men and their wives explained that their financial resources and the fact that they only minimally altered their lifestyle meant that their children were protected from the consequences of their father's unemployment. Peter Scotts says:

> …When the severance package became a reality we sat down with them and we told them all the details…they knew I was going to get paid for such a period of time, we'd have insurance coverage and everything. So that really wasn't a stressful situation at all…for them. I mean they certainly never showed any negative emotions or worry or fear or anything.

The emotion work that wives did was primarily to encourage their husbands rather than also to shield their children from the potential stigmas of unemployment.

Another way that wives try to ensure that husbands are emotionally unburdened is by choosing stretches during which they strategically "give space," to their husbands to deal with rejections in their job search in a way that is helpful for them. About half of the wives in my sample did this. Although wives frequently wish that husbands would continue job-searching without losing time to these emotional setbacks, they choose to prioritize their husbands emotional well-being. Karen Peterson, a healthcare administrator, is married to James Peterson, who had been a project manager in the healthcare industry. Combined they have had an annual income of over $200,000 per year. They are in their late 50s and have two sons whom they continue to support with college expenses. James has been out of work for four months. Karen explains how she gives James space to deal with rejections of the job search process, saying, "So if he had a day where he was dwelling on it, that probably irritated me but not to the point I like really let him know it…Someone's having a bad day, you let them have the bad day." Karen considers it better for James' ability to job-search if she suppresses her own impatience in favor of letting James exhibit and deal with his own emotions, particularly

disappointment – since his emotional well-being is tied more directly to his ability to job-search. Giving space can be seen as one specific way of wives' concealing their concerns.

Shannon Smith elaborates on negotiating the tricky terrain of trying to be supportive and motivate her husband, although also acknowledging his right to be disappointed when job interviews do not translate into job offers, saying, "I always ask him you know 'What'd you do today?' or, but I don't want it to come across like 'Did you do anything to find a job?' you know. And I'm just trying to make conversation, where I'm sure he's thinking 'Just get off my back.' So, that's been hard." In detailing her own way of giving space, Shannon points out how she is conscious of her tone and of trying to make sure she comes across as supportive, rather than haranguing, to her husband, William. William himself did not express any such sentiment, but we did see that in the case of the Janssons. Shannon explains the importance of maintaining a distance from William's job search at times, saying, "I just kind of gave him space. I know how it is to lose a job. [I give him] three or four days, and we do this [for] each other 'All right, it's time to move on' you know." Wives view this as a way of allowing their husbands to recuperate from disappointments in their job search. And husbands were appreciative of this, with one saying of his wife, "She doesn't nag. She doesn't say 'You've got to get out and get a job.' I mean, she could make it very, very painful and she doesn't. And that makes it a lot easier to take initiative and go out [networking]." As the wives' quotes suggest, not nagging, or at least not appearing to nag, requires these wives to suppress their own feelings and to carefully consider their words, questions, and

tone, particularly since this is a time when, as Robert Jansson earlier pointed out, men are especially sensitive.

Abstaining from emotion work: disengagement

"Disengagement" emerges when wives feel the need to protect their own emotional well-being. About a quarter of the wives in my sample reported disengaging at times for their own well-being. Amelia Radzik's husband, Jim, a marketing professional, has been unemployed and job searching for the past year. Amelia is a sales manager at a large, multinational company where she has been employed for over 20 years. Her own salary is about $200,000 per year. Unlike Amelia, Jim has had an unstable employment history over the course of his career. For the last fourteen years he hasn't worked for more than two years at a company, earning over $100,000 per year when he has worked. For Amelia this unstable unemployment history, and the emotional roller-coaster it entails, has made her place limits on the emotion work she does to help Jim. She says,

> And I tell him now, 'I can't get emotionally involved in anything anymore. Like, I can't get excited about an opportunity for you anymore…I said, "I honestly only want to hear, 'Oh by the way, tomorrow, I'm going to work at this company.' I can't take the emotional ups and downs anymore."…The hardest part for me is probably staying positive for him….is that always having to be his support system.

Amelia's case highlights the unsustainability over a longer time of other-focused emotion work, such as reinforcing professional worth or the partnership approach. At these times, wives sometimes thus disengage. Like other wives, Amelia specifically mentioned that

the emotion work that she would be doing for Jim if she did not place limits on her own emotion work comes on top of other responsibilities, "From an emotional perspective, it's really hard on me to always be the positive one for him. You gotta be "on" at work all the time. So then when I come home, I feel like I gotta be "on." So, from a wife perspective, it's very demanding."

Although wives did not discuss emotion work they do for their unemployed husbands as having detrimental consequences for their own paid employment, they did express feeling pressured to make sure their own jobs remain safe and protected while their husbands are unemployed. For Amelia this mean putting up with a boss she dislikes. Sylvia Neals, an upper level manager at a telecommunications company earning a six figure salary, equal to the salary her husband had earned, adds: "I felt the weight of the family was solely on me…The pressure of 'I can't lose my job' because…Both of us can't be unemployed… made it stressful."

Disengagement is often the only way that wives, such as Amelia Radzik, can protect their emotional well-being. Still, unemployed men sometimes experience this disengagement as uncaring. Jim Radzik, for example, says of Amelia, "Her way of supporting and encouraging somebody is probably very different than how you support and encourage somebody and how I do it." Frank Amara, who works in the insurance industry and has been unemployed for four months, elaborates on this by saying,

> And, we can't talk about the employment situation. I can't even talk to her about the frustration of you know, that geez here's a job that I thought I was qualified for, applied for, I can't get called on. So that's

> tough. You sit there sometimes you just have silence. There's nothing to talk about.

Yet, as for Amelia, other wives mentioned how disengagement emerges out of necessity, especially when unemployment becomes long-term, extending beyond six months. Alice Easton, who works for a non-profit, says that her own other-focused emotion work for her husband, who has been out of work for close to two years, shifted back and forth, from trying to encourage her husband to job search to disengagement:

> I guess I would ask questions. 'Did you network today? Did you make calls today?' Just kind of check in and see where he was, what he was doing. It kind of evolved over time where the more frustrated I got, the less I engaged. Because really, ultimately me questioning him, I'd get frustrated enough where I kind of tell him my frustrations. But I've learned to be able to kind of cope with this [by] just sit[ting] back and ask[ing] other people to hold him accountable [for job-searching].

One of the worries of remaining engaged emotionally with their husbands vis-a-vis their unemployment and job-searching is the fear that they will be unable to conceal their own concerns. This disengagement tactic is a way in which wives give much needed emotional space to themselves, often in order to not burden their husbands with their own worries. Experiences with long-term unemployed husbands (both husbands have been unemployed and job-searching for over a year) suggest that the toll of the other-focused emotion work of encouraging husbands manifests in a longer term.

Unemployed women's emotions and emotion work

Unemployed women, like unemployed men, take a hit to their sense of self-worth because of being unemployed. Kelly Varano, a former writer and editor for medical journals, says, "I just felt valueless." Monica Levy, who has a PhD and is looking for an academic position says,

> Academia is demeaning just in general. I sometimes felt really worthless. It really took a hit on my self-esteem. I was just down a lot. You get a lot of rejections…I'm tearing up now even, because it's very hard to just be like putting yourself out there a lot. I guess it also kind of confirmed for me what I had always thought about myself in academia: I'm not good enough for this.

Monica adds how the job-seeking process in particular affirms this negative sense of self: "The job seeking process is just shitty. It's like [my husband and I] are both on these emotional roller-coasters. You're feeling hopeful about jobs and then not, it doesn't come through." Monica's husband Rayan confirms this as well, saying, "Oh, God that was awful. Her sense of professional self-worth was so low." Sighing, he repeats, "So low." Sam Brozek explains how his wife Lisa, who had held an important executive level position with an organization started doubting her abilities, "She second guesses herself where she never second guessed herself before."

While many of the emotions that unemployed women feel mirror those of unemployed men, there is one key distinction. Unlike unemployed men, some unemployed women also described that they tried to conceal the extent of their negative emotions over their unemployment in order to spare their spouses too much worry. Grace Blum for example comforted and reassured her husband that her unemployment would

not be financially devastating to their lifestyle: “I had to confirm for him that we had been through it before and it was OK, and I have one month of severance.” Darlene Bach in turn explained that while her husband Larry is supportive at times, he tends to be distanced from the tribulations of her job search. As she told me about this, Darlene bolted upright and shook her head as she said that in her marriage, “I feel like I have to be the rock.” For Darlene this signifies checking her feelings and not expecting Larry to tend to her emotions. In fact, Darelene says that her main source of emotional support is a group of eight other unemployed job seekers who meet on Monday nights in a neighborhood church. Darlene recently joined this group on the recommendation of a friend, and even though she is not religious she finds these meetings to be a helpful outlet.

Husband’s emotion work

No need to rush to find a job

Husbands of unemployed women most frequently attempt to emotionally support their wives by encouraging wives to take the necessary time to deal with the grief of their job loss. Sam and Lisa Brozek, both in their 50s, have been married for just over a year and a half after several years of dating. This is the second marriage for both. Sam has two teenage daughters from a previous marriage, while Lisa has one. Lisa has been the more financially stable and prosperous of the two during the years they dated as well as through their young marriage, until she lost her job. Indeed, it was Lisa who bore the majority of the cost of their wedding. Until she lost her $150,000 per year job a few months ago, Lisa had been the Chief Operating Officer for a healthcare organization at a

place where she had steadily progressed up the ladder for over 30 years. Sam is a self-employed healthcare insurance salesman, who currently brings in about $80,000 a year, but this can vary from year to year. A stocky blond, Sam's cheeks glow red from walking in the brisk fall air outside when we meet for our interview. He has a wide, affable smile framed by a goatee. He is dressed casually in grey sweats, a letter jacket and a baseball cap on this fall morning. Sam explains how he coaxes Paula to give herself the time to process her grief at this job loss:

> I said 'You were there for 30 years. You've got to get to get through the grief process. So however long it takes - but you've got to get to the other side and then we can chart a path. But you can't do something when you're angry or feel sorry for yourself.'

Sam emphasizes the importance of processing grief as an integral step in his wife's career path: "When there's a loss, whether of a job or a family member, there is grieving involved. Everybody has their own way of dealing with things, but…you have to go through a process." Gabrielle Luna, a petite brunette with daintily defined features, is a lawyer in her mid 30s. Gabrielle and her husband have a toddler. She explains how her husband, a contractor, too has given her "a lot of space to work through my feelings and figure out what I want to do."

Another important way in which husbands of unemployed women give their wives emotional space is by assuring wives that finding a job as soon as possible is not paramount. Indeed, husbands encourage wives to use their period of unemployment to explore job opportunities that wives are truly interested in. Ben Anderson, a devout Catholic who is a regional safety director for a company, and has gone through periods of

unemployment in the last few years himself, explains how he knew from his own experience of unemployment the importance of not pressurizing his wife Caroline to find a job as quickly as possible. Both Ben and Caroline earn about the same amount when they work, and when both are employed their combined annual income hovers at around $150,000. Ben, a trim, clean-shaven man dressed in slacks and a polo shirt for our interview explains,

> I don't want her to feel the pressure of getting a job just to get a job...First thing I told my wife was, 'Do not feel the pressure to be looking for a job and apply to every job that you see. Don't feel that pressure. I'm working. Yes, we need your pay. We can get by without it…but don't get into that frame of mind where you feel pressure and obligations to job search for eight hours a day.'

As Ben elaborates, he encourages his wife to relax in her job search and go easy on herself even though their current lifestyle does very much depend on two incomes. Ben explains, "We need [her to be employed] if we want to have a nice comfortable living." Nevertheless, Ben chooses not to pressure his wife, or even to treat her job search like a full-time job, as was the norm amongst the unemployed men and their wives.

While Ben Anderson focuses on making sure that his wife – who is actually anomalous amongst the unemployed women in terms of her intense focus on job-searching – is aware that she can relax. Other husbands accomplish the same by calibrating their response to their wife's job-search. Tate Eklund, a real estate agent is married to Kiara, who worked in an educational non-profit. Both are in their 30s, and together they have two daughters - a four year old and a nine month old. Tate explains

how his way of emotionally supporting Kiara is to make sure that she does not see any particular job opportunity as high stakes; he wants her to feel that she has the luxury of being rejected by jobs, so that she does not emotionally invest herself in the upheavals of the job-search process:

> I don't hound [her] about not having a job and that's not something I would do…I always tried to provide that type of support where it wasn't like, 'Oh, let's really hope that this comes through.' It was more so like, 'If you get it, great. If not, oh well, that one wasn't for you.' I believe that helped the situation.

Despite these assurances from their husbands, some women nevertheless continue putting immense pressure on themselves about their job search. Gabrielle Luna, a petite, unemployed lawyer in her mid 30s, explains that although, much like Tate Eklund above, her husband does not put any pressure on her to find a job, she herself does: "His approach is different. He's encouraging, but he doesn't push. I feel like I put pressure on myself and if things don't pan out, I beat myself up."

These unemployed women appreciate the lack of pressure on their husbands' part to urge them to find a job. Caroline Anderson for example says, "I thought you were going to ask if he's been pressuring me like, 'Oh, are you looking for a job?' He has not…He's supportive in that he doesn't pressure me. He knows I'm looking." Significantly, despite receiving the leeway from their husbands to take some time and relax from the rigors of the job search, these unemployed women also asserted how they repay their husbands' generosity in giving them the space and the time to find jobs by demonstrating daily to their husbands that they are in fact using this luxury of time wisely

to find a job. Caroline explains, "He sees me and he knows… I'm doing everything I can." Kelly Varano, an athletic blond with a pixie haircut, says that her husband "knows that I'm a hard worker." Similarly, Julia Crouch, an interior designer specializing in bathrooms and kitchens, who lost her job three months ago says of her husband:

> He trusts me. He sees that I'm working. I show him what I'm working on, because I want him to know that I am being productive. He likes that I get up with him every day; that I'm not just lying in bed. He comes home and I'm dressed and I'm sitting at the computer.

These unemployed women, like most of these unemployed individuals, worry about the (unlikely) possibility of never regaining employment. Lisa Brozek, who had a high-powered position as a COO, and earned about twice as much as her husband until she lost her job, describes the fears that she reveals to her husband:

> I'm like, 'What happens if I never get a job?' Like, I go through panic. 'You know, what happens if nobody wants me, Sam? I might think I'm good; you may think I'm good. But you're not hiring me, and if nobody ends up wanting to hire me, then what happens?' And he's like, 'Then, you'll stay home and you'll take care of our animals and the house and everything, and we'll be fine.'…So, he's very supportive. He's very supportive.

As these quotes suggest, some husbands go a step further, and often support their wives emotionally through this tumultuous process by telling wives that "opting out" (Stone, 2007) of the labor force altogether is an entirely acceptable option. Sam Brozek, Lisa's husband, explains that he told Lisa, "I kept on saying, 'Babe, whatever you do, I'll

support you.'" Sam additionally framed this as his gendered responsibility as the man of the house, "It's not big deal. I mean, I work. That's what I do. I work and provide." The problem that Sam is discussing here is Lisa's concern about what her unemployment means for their finances. To assuage her concerns, Lisa says that Sam told her, "'Listen, I'm going to start making more money, and every year my income's going to be increased.' It was just, 'Now, *I'll* support you.'" Sam in turn describes how Lisa expressed her gratitude, "She goes, 'I don't know what I'd do without you. Because if I had to live on this it would just pay the mortgage.'" Sam explains he further comforted her by assuring her: "'Babe, that's why we got each other, no problem. Don't worry about it.'" Sam describes his rationale for this: "In the beginning, Lisa paid for the wedding. Lisa fixed up the house…So I said, 'Don't worry. I got it. Just like you got it back then, it's my turn now.'" Men thus expansively reassured unemployed wives; this reassurance was vested in normative ideas about paid employment and gender.

For many husbands of unemployed women, that their wives may "opt out" (Stone, 2007) of the work force is an entirely feasible option. Daniel and Nicole Lenoir are both organic chemists with PhDs. Daniel, in his early 30s, recently finished his Ph.D. during which time Nicole, in her early 40s, worked in the pharmaceutical industry, providing the bulk of their income. They have been married for five years and have a three-year old son. Nicole has been unemployed for about three months, while Daniel works as an organic chemist garnering an annual salary of $100,000 – equal to what Nicole too commands when employed. Their educational training as well as income earning capability are equivalent. In fact, until Daniel received his Ph.D. just the year before, it was Nicole who had been the primary breadwinner in their relationship. Still, Daniel, a

boyish looking 32-year old wearing baggy light blue jeans, sneakers, a T-shirt, and red baseball cap says, "I just want her to feel good. That's really my main thing." Daniel continues explaining how he thinks he can relieve any pressure about finding a job that Nicole may feel, "I'm saying, basically, 'It's okay if you don't get the job; I just want you to be happy.'" Given the tribulations of the job-search process, the emotional toll of unemployment, and the acceptability of women finding joy and meaning in domestic responsibilities, opting out may even seems like a desirable option as Stone (2007) suggests when she discusses the inflexibility and harshness of workplaces towards working women's needs.

Although for the most part husbands support their wives by giving them time to explore career directions, to the extent of saying they would even support the decision of wives' to opt out of the labor force, at times some husbands do not do this. Aaron D'Angelo, a small-framed pastry chef in his late forties, concocts confections like margarita cupcakes in his spare time. He is married to Christina D'Angelo, a full-figured woman in her late 30s who has shoulder length, wavy chestnut brown hair and large, clear blue-grey eyes behind glasses. Christina too worked in the food industry, albeit in the managerial and production side of things in the course of her career, which has spanned over a dozen years. Aaron is anomalous amongst husbands because he is one of the few who explains that while he realizes that he should "not try to push so hard for her to be looking [for a job]" and instead he should focus on "providing support that was a little bit more gentle," this is difficult for him to do because he sincerely believes that staying at home and being unemployed has a negative impact on Christina's mental state:

I kept thinking, 'You just need to be working somewhere to get some of

> that confidence. It doesn't matter what the job is. You just need to be out working.' And now that she is, she definitely has a lot of that back.

Aaron sounds more like some of the wives of unemployed men in the last chapter than the rest of the husbands above. As this suggests, there is more variation in the kinds of emotional support that women receive from their husbands, linked to a greater range of culturally acceptable behaviors for women when it comes to participating or not participating in the labor force.

Husbands reinforce professional worth

For the most part, when husbands seek to provide emotional support for their unemployed wives they do so by assuring wives that finding a job is not paramount for the family. This way, husbands hope that wives will not feel pressure. Yet, sometimes some husbands also provide emotional support to wives by encouraging them in their job search endeavors. Kelly Varano, a writer and former editor, describes her husband's encouragement in much the way that wives of unemployed men described their own emotional and practical support of their husbands' job-searching activities, "[My husband] used to be a gymnastics coach…[so] he would coach me when I go on interviews;…Coach me on what to say, what not to say. So he kind of guides me a lot." Kelly adds how her husband would encourage her to persevere in her job search: "We talked about it! In fact, I would tell him this isn't going right and he would encourage me and say, 'Kelly, you've got all this experience.' And he would help me…"

Monica Levy has also experienced similar encouragement from her husband, Rayan. Monica has thick, wavy brown hair cut into a shoulder-length bob which softly

frames her olive-skinned, heart-shaped face. Monica has a Ph.D. in higher education and has been searching for an academic job since she graduated from a prestigious private university two years ago. For the past two years, Monica has had periods of unemployment, or, in better times, under-employment where she cobbled together teaching classes at some nearby universities. Her husband, Rayan, too is an academic. But Rayan's professional situation is far removed from Monica's: at 36, he is already tenured at small, private undergraduate college Still, being in the same occupation, Rayan can identify with Monica's academic aspirations. Like the unemployed men earlier, Monica explains how Rayan helped her retain her confidence even as she experienced rejection after rejection in her job search:

> He would just listen to me. I'd be like, 'I'm so just frustrated and I feel really awful about myself.' And he'd be like, 'I know, I hear you. It must be really hard. You're really talented…You're really smart…You're going to get something. You can do this.'

Perhaps most important for Monica was the fact that Rayan encouraged her to continue holding on to her academic aspirations. She explained that, "He said, 'I think you should be in academia. … I have confidence in you.'" As we saw in the cases of unemployed men earlier, Rayan, like the wives of unemployed men, encourages Monica to keep heart despite rejections. Rayan himself explains how, like the wives of unemployed men, he also concealed his own concerns about Monica's career and the well-being of their family.

> Even though I'm supportive and I'm comforting…I still get really scared about her professional life. I say, 'You know academia and how it works.

> You know the game, it takes time…It's not like applying to the Acme.'
>
> So I'm constantly giving her these reassurances.

Rayan adds that he finds it necessary to manage his own fears, and not reveal them to Monica to the extent possible, "Because if her hair is on fire, mine can't be. I'm really aware of that." Nevertheless, although Rayan continues assuring Monica, he himself is not always so confident about her career path – not because he doubts her abilities, as he explained earlier, but rather because he is all too aware of the vagaries of the academic job market:

> But sometimes I'm alone and I think, maybe she's right. Maybe she's lost the opportunity to have the professional career she wants. Maybe all that doubt - there's something to it. Then I start playing the games in my head.

Monica and Rayan Levy's experiences, and Rayan's way of emotionally supporting Monica, was not the norm amongst unemployed women. In fact, their case bears more similarities with the emotional support that wives of unemployed men provide.

For the Brozeks, we saw earlier how Sam Brozek had assured his wife Lisa that should she want to quit working altogether, that too would be a decision he would support. Still, Lisa has not yet made a decision on this and continues job-searching. Throughout this process, Sam also supports her job-searching efforts by reminding her of her accomplishments when she starts doubting her professional skills, as well as her ability to get a job again. Lisa explains how Sam sees her as both a person and employee: "I sometimes feel like Sam has this vision of me – bless his heart – that's so elevated. He sees me as very impressive." Laughing, she adds:

> I mean…when I asked him out…I said 'I was waiting. I kept waiting for you to ask me out. And you wouldn't do it!' He said, 'Oh, I never would have asked you out.' And I was like, 'Why not?' [he said] 'Way above my grade.' That's kind of always the way he looks at me.

Sam's faith in her and continued encouragement is important to Lisa, "Through all of this, he's been very supportive. Like, [he says] 'Whatever you need, I'm here for you.'" Sam himself explains how he tries to encourage Lisa. Sam constantly reminds Lisa that, 'You're smart, you will get another job. It will be okay. You've just got to believe in yourself.' At times, recognizing that although the option to quit working is always there for Lisa, it's not an option she wants to take just yet, Sam takes a sterner tone with her to prod her toward proactive job-searching: "I'm one of those guys that'll say 'Suck it up, you know, get over it.' And a couple times I did tell her. I said 'Put on your big girl panties.' Additionally, Sam tries make Lisa see the incremental progress she makes in finding a job. Specifically, he frames some of her job-searching activities as "wins." He explains, "When she comes home and says 'Oh, I had this great lunch with [a former colleague]!' I say 'Babe, that was a win.' She goes 'Well yeah.'" To convince Lisa that a successful networking meeting should be recognized as what he terms "a win," Sam at times elaborates to Lisa, "'You connected another dot. That's a win. That's a win in my viewpoint and you're one step closer [to a job].'…I see it that way and I point it out." Indeed, for these unemployed job-seekers who emphasize the importance of networking, it is not surprising that minor meetings with professional acquaintances can be framed as significant steps toward re-employment.

This form of providing emotional support is like the support that the majority of wives provide for unemployed husbands. While it is predominant in the cases of unemployed men and their wives, this is not the case for unemployed women. Indeed, this stark difference in the forms of emotional support that unemployed men and unemployed women get from their spouses indicates the gendered experience of unemployment. Because staying at home, "opting out," is seen as acceptable even for these formerly high-powered career women, much of their husbands' emotional support centers on assuring wives of this. For similarly placed men, opting out is still not seen as a socially acceptable. Consequently, the emotional support they receive from their wives is designed to help them get a job as quickly as possible, rather than to contemplate career options, and whether to continue with a career at all.

Husbands often don't know how to be emotionally supportive

Husbands of unemployed wives are aware that this is an emotionally tumultuous time for their wives. They talk about trying to be attuned to the subtleties and variations in their wives' moods. Sam Brozek says, "I have to tread water sometimes. I have to gauge her mood." Tate Eklund, a real estate agent married to Kiara, who worked in higher education administration, elaborates on this concept of gauging his wife's mood: "That's always a struggle for me is trying to be mindful of her emotions…It was a little bit more walking on eggshells…I would try my best to notice her ups and downs."

Despite this sensitivity toward changes in the emotions of their unemployed wives that some of the interviews with husbands of unemployed men revealed, it was also clear that even in these more sensitive cases, both unemployed women and their husbands

often explained that husbands don't know *how* to provide emotional support to their wives, even when they try to.[13] Part of this helplessness in providing emotional support to wives seems to be linked to gendered ideas about men's incapacity for understanding the emotional realm. Even Tate Eklund, who described his heightened awareness of his wife Kiara's emotion state during her unemployment says, "I suppose I could have been more supportive. But I didn't know how." So saying, he cocked his head to the left for a couple of seconds. He slowly, deliberately interlaced his fingers in front of his chest and then turned his hands so that both index fingers were pointing toward him – as though he was accusing himself of a crime.

Tate's wife, Kiara, confirms that Tate does not know how to provide support. Given Tate's explanation of his sensitivity toward Kiara's emotions, he surprisingly at times even comes across as insensitive to her. Slowly sliding her right hand up and across the palm of her left hand she explained:

> Sometimes he might say things, but I check him on it. I'm not the wife that just sits back and lets him say whatever…The other day he…was like, 'Oh, until you start back at work, I'll have to pick up more jobs.' And so I'm like, 'That was an insensitive comment. Don't say that. Because you know that I'm looking for work.'

Snapping her fingers to emphasize how she called out her husband's comment that he would need to secure more clients and sell or rent out more properties at this comment,

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[13] Indeed, some research on emotions and masculinity suggests that embodying masculinity means projecting emotional ignorance. In her study of women partners of transmen, Carla Pfeffer (2010) for example finds that women were expected to provide emotional support to their transmen partners during the challenging period of the sex/gender transition, but transmen were not as sensitive to the emotional impact their transition had on these women. Indeed professing emotional ignorance was a subtle and implicit way of highlighting their masculinity.

Kiara then added, "And that's not even how he meant it - he was just really being honest." But Kiara keeps these kinds of slip-ups in perspective: "So little things like that. But he's human. I think that's the biggest thing that I've learned in our marriage is give each other space to make mistakes and be human."

A key iteration of men's supposed unfamiliarity with the emotional is the disjuncture between men's ideas of what providing emotional support to their wives means in comparison to the kind of support wives want. Husbands of unemployed women describe how their initial reaction is to jump into "problem-solving" mode when they see the worry, concern, and anxiety on their wives' faces. Sam Brozek is matter of fact when he says, "That's what men do. They see a problem, they try to fix it. Men are not like women, or, or I should say older men." Similarly, Larry Bach explains this disjuncture between what he sees as his own, and indeed men's, instincts in contrast to the kind of emotional support his wife needs. Larry says, "I have to be supportive. I have to be a good husband. I have to give her a hug every day and tell her it's going to be okay." Larry elaborates on this, "One of the major sticking points of our relationship is that [I'm] a problem-solving kind of a person…She doesn't like it when I try to help her. That's called," Larry paused, and dramatically raised his hands to his shoulder-level. He bent his index and middle fingers, to fashion air quotes, and then he continued, "problem-solving." Larry added:

> And this is actually something that's now an agreed-upon signal: 'Stop it. You're problem solving.' I'm not allowed to problem solve. I'm only allowed to be supportive. Patting her on the back, giving her a hug, rubbing her shoulders, telling her everything's going to be okay, listening

> so she can talk it out, but I'm not supposed to say things like, 'No wonder X happened because you did Y.' That's off the table…This is what she demands, so this is what I go along with.

Larry explains that he finds this form of providing support limiting, when he sighs and adds, "This is very frustrating." But his wife, Darlene, is quick to check him when he lists toward offering advice and problem-solving rather than just acknowledging her emotions and comforting her. In a higher pitched voice, at a considerable distance from his throaty tenor, Larry wags his index finger as he mimics Darlene, "'Don't you tell me what to do! Your job is to listen. Your job is not to problem solve! Don't you be a problem solver.'"

Similarly, unemployed women describe how this impulse to problem solve can be unhelpful to them. Darlene for example says, "I also would like him to ask me more – you know, 'Hey, what's going on?' He just isn't really that kind of a person… Sometimes I tell him what's going on." Shaking her head emphatically, Darlene continues, "Sometimes that is *not* helpful for me, because then he'll start problem-solving."

At other times, husbands explain trying to accomplish a balancing act between emotionally supporting their wives and tending to their own emotional needs. Rayan says, "It's important to me to be supportive of her." He goes on to add that, "For me it's just about getting the supportive part of me to kind of trump the selfish resentful part." He elaborates on this by saying that because Monica is clearly going through a challenging professional period, much of their daily routine and conversation ends up focusing on her efforts to get a more permanent, academic position:

> Sometimes my impulse is just to stay, 'Just stop. Talk to me about something else. Please talk to me about something else.' It actually begins not only to structure her life, our lives in some material sense, but also in our conversations and then in our day-to-day interactions. When we sit in the car sometimes, she'll get on the phone, 'So this person wrote me back.' It's always something about job-related stuff. 'Oh, that's great.' Just driving along, like fuck.

Monica, understandably, is consumed by finding a tenure track position, and while Rayan tries to be supportive, he explains how at times being emotionally supportive can be taxing for him:

> But that's the contradiction of trying to be supportive. For the three weekends, 'No, honey. Sleep. Here's breakfast in bed.' Wonderful, supportive husband. And then the fourth week I'm an asshole. It's tough because my needs aren't fully being met.

Despite momentary frustrations, he tries to remain supportive to the best of his abilities. He describes what this means:

> We use that language a lot: 'What do you need right now? Do you need me to problem solve or do you need me just for you to cry? Do you need me to shut up about feeling neglected? What is it that you need?'...To me the positive side is being supportive, even the fear and the ambivalence is still a positive thing, because I'm expressing care about her.

Pausing, Rayan reflects, adding how even these more positive moments are punctuated by moments of tension and resentment, "But then sometimes, like I'll say to her, 'I've

gone to bed alone for four nights this week. It would be nice to have somebody beside me.'" Here, Rayan is explaining that because Monica is so consumed with networking and finding a more secure job she frequently works late into the night, by which time Rayan is fast asleep. Resting his elbows on the table in front of him, Rayan bent down his head and held it in his hands, shaking his head. He was expressing shame that he was not able to be consistently supportive to Monica. Lifting his head up he continued in a pained voice, "I'm constantly feeling like an asshole…This sucks, because you don't know what to feel." As Rayan explains, the feeling rules[14] for how he, as a husband, should behave with his wife, and what he can expect from her, are unclear.

Interestingly, Rayan's experience is similar to that of a lot of wives of unemployed men – with one important distinction: the wives of unemployed men were very well aware that feeling rules in the gendered terrain of marriage at this critical time of their husband's unemployment require that their husbands' feelings and well-being remain paramount, even if it means sacrificing their own mental well being. This is a rule that Rayan is struggling to grasp.

Rayan's own interview reveals deep tensions between trying to be supportive to his wife and trying to understand how, and indeed whether, he can have his emotional needs met by his wife during this time. His wife, Monica, in turn describes the support she feels she received from Rayan in unequivocally glowing terms: "My husband was really supportive. He was like phenomenal and really kind about it." As in the case of the wives of unemployed men, oftentimes the unemployed spouse remains unaware of the

[14] Arlie Hochschild (2003) defines "feeling rules" as the implicit social rules for given social interactions where each individual "ought to appear to others" (Hochschild, 2003: x) in socially specified ways; for example appearing sad at funeral; or happy at a wedding.

extent to which their partner is emotionally affected not just by their unemployment, but by trying to be supportive to them.

This case illuminates how men, even when being supportive, tend to calibrate and consider the issue of reciprocity when providing emotional support to their wives in a way that wives of unemployed men did not. For the latter, it was evident that being a wife involved suppressing their own emotions, including their own emotional well-being, in favor of their husbands' emotional needs during this time.

Husbands who berate

For unemployed women here, the most common experience of receiving emotional support from their husbands as they contend with unemployment and job-searching was receiving the time to deal with their emotions as well as assurances that the family could manage without wives' income from employment – at least for a while. Still, three women also recounted instances of immense pressure from their husbands to regain unemployment – pressure which they experienced as husbands' berating them.

Mary Louise Muller is a nurse anesthesiologist who lost her job a few months ago. Her shaggy ash blonde hair is tied loosely in a pony-tail at the nape of her head, with strands falling into her face which she keeps brushing away. At 5'1" she is wiry, and has a frantic, brisk manner. She narrates her life experiences with the joy of a natural story-teller, littering her speech with profanities and bold gestures, drawing the listener in by frequently leaning in conspiratorially. Mary Louise and her husband have a strained relationship which has worsened because of her unemployment. Her husband has an MBA and has held executive-level administrative positions at universities and colleges.

They have two sons, an 11-year old and a 16-year old. She is in her mid 50s and her husband is a few years older. Her husband, who is keen to retire soon, is especially miffed at Mary Louise, as she explains, because "He had planned to retire, and basically one time he said to me, 'I want to retire and you're interfering with that.'" She additionally explains that her husband was "basically implying that I was very stupid" for having lost her job. She links this to his background growing up, "In his family, fault is big." Wagging her finger, she arched her eyebrow, mimicking her husband's family members, and as though admonishing someone she added, "You know: 'It's your fault, it's your fault. You failed.' That's a big theme in his family."

Like other unemployed individuals, Mary Louise also tried to network to find her next job. Her husband castigated these efforts as well. Mimicking his skeptical and unpleasant expression, Mary Louise pressed her lips tightly together in a straight line, tilted her head and raised one eyebrow as she described her husband's quiet but pointed admonitions: "You know, one day he said to me, 'It's not your job to go out to lunch with people.' Because I would usually meet somebody for lunch." Sighing, Mary Louise's otherwise confident, even abrasive, demeanor drooped. She explained:

> And like I bend over backwards for him, believe me. He is a tough guy to live with but if he doesn't get 110 percent of your attention, you're not doing your job. He is much more demanding and energy-consuming than either one of the boys have ever been, even when they were infants. Just the nature of the beast.

Interestingly, although men's re-employment was clearly paramount for wives and husbands in the cases of unemployed men, even in the most negative cases the extent of spousal berating was not as extreme as in the cases of these women.

Unemployed women focus on husbands' careers

Unemployed women are often anxious about their unemployment and what it means for their families. In contrast to unemployed men, who focus on their own job-searching activities, some unemployed women turn to focusing on their husbands' careers. Eileen Boyle has a college education and had a job that provided about $100,000 per year for her family of four. Her husband, in contrast, has a high school degree and has primarily held manual jobs. Currently, he works as a custodian, earning about a third of Eileen's former income. Regardless, Eileen matter-of-factly describes how she does not tolerate any criticism from her husband about her job-search, instead implicitly reminding him that up until now she was the main support for the family. Eileen tells her husband, "Just like don't go there. Just pretty much let it go... I said, 'Now it's time for you to pick up the pieces and time for you to man up and do what you need to do.'" Like Eileen, other women too could access culturally mandated scripts which absolve them of the responsibility of economic provision – as we saw in an earlier chapter. This appears to hold even when women were the breadwinners. By emphasizing the importance of their husbands' career for their finances, and placing the burden of economic provision for the family onto husbands, unemployed women recreate traditionally gendered ideals of the family.

For the Bachs, where while both Darlene and Larry were college-educated, Darlene had been the primary breadwinner through the course of their marriage, a similar situation occurred. Nine months into Darlene's unemployment, Larry too lost the administrative job that provided benefits, including a pension, besides the $50,000 per year salary, and which he had held for over 20 years. While Larry described giving Darlene space and time to deal with her emotions and Darlene accepted this, his own unemployment was different. Larry explains:

> Darlene, on the other hand is very distressed…She can come home some days and she can just be vibrating with worry or anger or rage at me and a couple weeks ago she was just totally enraged at me for not having a job and it was relentless and that was very stressful.

Larry himself is not distressed at his job loss, in part because for him the working environment at his previous workplace had become toxic. In addition, unlike Darlene, Larry is far less concerned about their finances. Darlene's anger at Larry stemmed not just from financial concerns; instead, as he explains, "It's much more than just the practical issues. It's an affront against morality itself." Larry describes Darlene as someone who likes presenting an idealized picture of their family to outsiders, but having an unemployed man in the house in particular is contrary to that picture.

Indeed, as Gabrielle Luna, an unemployed lawyer, explains, unemployed women's anxieties about their own husbands' careers can mean an intensive involvement by wives. As I described earlier, Gabrielle's husband is distanced from her job-search. In contrast, Gabrielle describes her own involvement in making sure that her husband, who is a self-employed contractor, grows his business, especially since she is no longer

bringing in an income. Gabrielle says, "I think also my insecurity around feeling like I'm not doing enough to find a job, so I start to focus on his work and what he's doing." Cupping her hands together at chest level she peered over them, indicating how she would watch over what her husband was doing on the computer. She punched the air rapidly with her right index finger as she explained that she would say to her husband

> 'Did you hear back?' He said, 'No.' I said, 'Are you going to call him?' He said, 'No, I'm not going to call him.' I said, 'Well, what if he didn't get your e-mail?' He said, 'He got my email.' So he just stops there. I'm like, 'Well, maybe he didn't. Why wouldn't he e-mail you back or maybe he's busy. I've had people reach out to me and I'm busy, so I miss it, and I'm glad they followed up. He said 'No, I'm not going to do that.' I start putting I think the pressure that I would put on myself I start putting it on him to say, 'I just don't understand why you wouldn't do that.' And he gets very defensive.

Gabrielle mimicked her husband's response to her she relaxed her palms from their cupped position so that they were straightened out, signaling a stance of surrender. She continued explaining how her watchfulness irked her husband. Laughing, she said that she often did not know the extent of what he had done to follow up with contacts for his business and she needed to mind that instead of straight away telling him that he needed to do more.

In this way, even during women's unemployment, and even when their income is integral to the household, men's careers become the focus of emotional discussions, often to these men's dismay.

Conclusion

Both unemployed men and women narrate experiencing negative emotions related to their unemployment: feeling themselves to be worthless, lacking confidence, taking a hit to their conception of self, and experiencing tremendous self-doubt about their professional abilities. Unemployed women, however, explain that despite feeling these negative emotions they try to hide the extent of their emotions to spare their partners extra worry. Unemployed men did not express similar experiences.

The form of emotional support that unemployed men and women receive from spouses differs. In the case of unemployed men, couple-level interactions around emotions focus on helping unemployed men continue job-searching. Their wives' emotional support is geared toward ensuring that unemployed men remain motivated to continue job-searching. Wives try to instill the confidence that husbands often lack during this time, reminding them of their professional capabilities and encouraging them to remain positive even in the face of a slew of rejections.

Husbands of unemployed women have a decidedly different take on how to provide emotional support. Emotional support provision for unemployed women varies more than for unemployed men. Still, a key theme here is that husbands tend to be less involved in encouraging wives in their job-searching endeavors; instead husbands who provide emotional support tend to do so by reassuring wives that they can take as much time as necessary to deal with their feelings and make decisions about their future career paths and goals. In a minority of the cases, husbands do encourage their wives to continue job-searching, using tactics similar to those of wives of unemployed men. In

contrast to the case of unemployed men and their wives, both unemployed women and their husbands also explain that at times husbands don't know *how* to provide emotional support to their wives, even when they want to be supportive. Surprisingly, the stronger instances of an unemployed person not only receiving no emotional support from their spouse, but instead being berated for their status as an unemployed person also emerged in the instances of unemployed women. Lastly, while in the cases of unemployed men their employment is paramount, some unemployed women paradoxically focus on their husbands' careers.

These distinctions between the forms of emotional support that unemployed men and women receive illuminate how the couple relationship is seminal in shaping how these men and women perform gender, and how this performance veers toward the traditional and unequal instead of toward gender egalitarianism. Paid employment, even in these dual-earner families where women have careers, is seen as necessary for men. This does not hold as strongly for unemployed women. The different forms of emotional support that unemployed men and women receive from their spouses reinforce gendered expectations about who has an obligation to provide for the family, and who can opt out. These emotionally-laden interactions reveal an important dimension of how the couple-level interactions are significant in shaping men's unemployment experiences as central to the marriage and family, and women's as peripheral.

CONCLUSION

Insights from gendered experiences of unemployment on "doing gender" and the gender stall

Almost a year after 49-year old Robert Jansson had lost his job he started working full-time as a public relations director at a company with similar pay to the job he had lost earlier, and with similar levels of authority, responsibility, and autonomy. Robert and his wife Laura are both relieved with this outcome. Laura had explained that she felt like their life was at a standstill when Robert was unemployed. They were not able to have the kinds of experiences that she thought two people with their qualifications should be having. Now that Robert is back at work, Laura looks visibly relieved, although tired, as she explains, "We can start living our lives and…we're not waiting for the next thing. We're not waiting to see if Robert gets a job…We're not waiting for anything." Laura is tired because as soon as Robert signed his new employment contract the two of them started house-hunting so that they could move into a bigger house. They bought a spacious five-bedroom house, and are currently in the process of moving into it. Laura says:

> I'm so excited about it! All of my guiding principles were could we have Thanksgiving here for my family? Could we have a Super-bowl party? Which means that there has to be big enough space to entertain… And that's kind of exciting: that I'll be able to like experiment and do things with the kids and cook with the kids - have the space to do that. And I just think it'll afford us a life that's more fun…And I do feel like, you know,

> we've been working really hard towards this…Like I feel now we'll finally be able to be grownups.

Robert concurs with Laura's idea that his unemployment meant a standstill for their lives. In his own follow-up interview he explains what working again means for their life:

> I think I felt a little bit like our life was on hold. Definitely on hold in terms of vacation and things like that. It's not even a money issue; it's a planning issue at some point. Because you're not going to plan a vacation when you need to keep yourself available for interviews.

While both Laura and Robert are excited and happy that they are able to move on with their lives, Robert's employment also poses a few challenges – particularly in terms of time management. Laura says:

> Readjusting our schedules…it's just been…Like it's not devastating. Robert has an eight o'clock meeting on most Mondays. That means he has to leave the house before seven…The bigger challenge might be…where we've both had to work late or something like that. And we have our Plan B and C and that's coming together fine.

Still, for the Janssons, Robert's unemployment duration as long as it lasted, and as difficult as it was, has ended in a relatively good outcome for both Robert and their family. This is not always the case.

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Darlene Bach, a high-powered business executive, and the primary breadwinner in her family, had also lost her job. In the earlier weeks of her unemployment we saw Darlene trying to make the most of her time at home, centering her days on her teenage son,

Parker. At times she appeared to be enjoying the respite from a frenzied work-life that this involuntary break gave her. By the time of the follow-up interview though, things had shifted dramatically for the Bachs.

Ten months after losing her job, Darlene is still unemployed; she is getting antsy because she had given herself an outer limit of nine months to find a job and start working. The tension in the Bach home is palpable, with exchanges between Darlene and her husband Larry being curt, staccato. There are several reasons for this; a main one preying on Darlene's mind is that Larry, who had an administrative position at the same organization for over 20 years, was recently forced into early retirement. Darlene's previous job garnered her more than three times what Larry's job used to pay, yet Darlene is much more concerned about her husband's unemployment than her own. Even though Larry has been out of work for fewer months than Darlene and still collects a severance pay equivalent to his monthly salary for another few months, his unemployment is currently a much bigger issue than Darlene's. Darlene explains why this is: "I think [Larry's] in denial about the whole process…I would say to him, 'You know, the last time [you were looking for a job], the thing that you did that was really effective is that you had lunch with all these different people, and you were really networking, and that's what you need to do.'" Sighing, Darlene adds,

> He was not doing that. And I'm trying to push him to do something. Even aside from the money issue, I'm trying to point out to him, 'Hey, if you're only 60 now, and you live 'til you're 80 or 85, that's 20 years. You cannot spend 20 years in this house reading the *New York Times* every day and

> just puttering around. Like, you need to get out. You need to be interacting with people and doing things.

Clearly, exasperated, Darlene continues,

> Oh! He always has some excuse why. Now the current excuse is, 'Well, I have to be around,' he says, 'to shuttle Parker back and forth for his sports things.' Like, 'You don't really have to! You know, we'll work it out.'

The reasons that Larry presents to Darlene are strikingly similar to how some unemployed women described their experience of unemployment. Husbands of unemployed women treated their wives' explanations as legitimate; but here, Darlene sees Larry's similar explanation as illegitimate.

Darlene thinks Larry is in denial about having lost his job because it happened in a treacherous way. "Over the past couple of years, [his boss] had always said to him, you know, 'Don't worry, Larry…You're the one that would be basically the last man standing.' And it didn't turn out that way." Darlene thinks Larry is reeling from this experience. "I think that he is sad." She nods as she thinks over what it's been like for Larry to have lost a job he had for over two decades, and adds, "Yes."

For his part, Larry too has noticed that Darlene is pushing him when it comes to his being unemployed:

> A couple of weeks ago, she just finally had an explosion and essentially demanded that my time off was over and I needed to find a job. Right now. So last week I signed myself up at a temporary staffing firm and she basically said, 'Okay, good first start. Keep looking.' She wants me to get a job immediately.

Larry elaborates on this,

> I've been subjected to some anger about several things…: not being worried about the future, not being morally uneasy about my place in the universe because I'm not working…I've been sitting around now for almost six months, read a few books, been puttering around the house. Haven't really finished anything. Now there's a lot of driving Parker around, there's a lot of yard work, there's a lot of laundry, all these little things…

For the Bachs, things have become complicated over time as Darlene remains unemployed, and now, so is Larry. Even in their family though, where Darlene earned significantly more, the focus is now on Larry's unemployment, which has, so far, lasted for a shorter period than Darlene's.

The participants in this study had myriad outcomes at the time of the follow-up interview (captured in Table 6). Yet, these experiences fell along one major fault-line: while men's unemployment experiences were central to their marriages and families, women's were peripheral. Indeed, the follow-up interviews also suggest that the centrality of men's unemployment to marriage and family, and the peripheral nature of women's unemployment to their marriage and family continued over time. As Table 6 shows, at the time of the follow-up interview, more of the men in my sample than the women were engaging in some form of paid employment. Frequently this was a temporary form – such as short-term consulting for a company. A characteristic of the density of men's unemployment experience is the pressure to be in paid employment. Ideally, for this sample, this most often meant full-time paid employment similar to the

kind of job the unemployed man had lost. Yet, it appears that the need to engage in some form of paid employment trumped the search for the most suitable form of paid employment. In contrast, at the time of the follow-up, more women remained unemployed. Because women's unemployment experience is peripheral, and engaging in paid employment only one amongst several feasible choices, this makes sense. Indeed, the central versus peripheral experience may also help explain economist Henry Farber's (2015) findings that women take several weeks longer to find jobs than do men. Gaining re-employment is seen by wives and their husbands as less important for women than men, and so, perhaps, women, at least these professional women who are not suffering from material deprivation, are able to be more choosy.

Unemployed men, unemployed women, and their spouses framed the meaning of unemployment differently for men than for women. For men, both they and their wives, saw unemployment as a problem to be rectified; an event with moral implications for how the man in question measures up to culturally normative ideals of performing masculinity. Thus, amongst couples with an unemployed man, couple-level interactions focused materially and emotionally on trying to work together to resolve this issue. For unemployed women, their unemployment was not perceived to be as much of a problem. As such, couple-level interactions here usually did not engage directly with the issue of women's unemployment nor did they seek to rectify it. These divergent experiences have significance for broader research in the area of gender, family, and work.

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"Doing gender" during unemployment: a stall in the gender revolution

This dissertation has explained how men's unemployment experiences are central and women's are peripheral. These different experiences are shaped, as previous research has suggested, by internalized gendered norms about the importance of paid employment (Edin and Nelson, 2013; Damaske, 2011; Townsend, 2002; Cooper, 2000; Garey, 1999; Newman, 1988; Hays, 1996; Gerson, 1985; Komarovsky, 1940). But, as I show, they are reproduced – at a time of uncertainty when the potential for renegotiating gendered norms is tremendous – at the level of the couple, as unemployed men and women and their respective spouses interact to reproduce relatively gendered expectations vis-a-vis employment. As such, for this middle and upper-middle class sample, the turn to neo-traditionalism during times of crisis, as documented in some previous research (Cooper, 2014), although contradicted in other (Lane, 2011), seems to be prevalent. The issue of how inequalities persist, particularly gender inequalities, (Ridgeway, 2011) is of significant interest to scholars, especially those studying gender. This dissertation has sought to illuminate this persistence in one key area of life, marriage and family.

To do so, I have focused on three aspects of the unemployment experience. First, I have shown that the immediate process of job loss is fairly similar for men and women. This ostensible gender egalitarianism suggests that on the surface individuals, spouses, and others treat men and women's paid employment as having similar value. So losing this paid employment is treated as a similarly distressing event for both men and women. Yet, norms around actually being unemployed are not the same. Instead, staying at home results in vastly divergent experiences for men and women. Men's central unemployment experience unequivocally emphasizes the need for men to be employed; the idea that being unemployed is a moral failing lurks just beneath the surface for these unemployed

men. Consequently, unemployed men feel morally sanctioned at several levels. Men feel like trespassers at home; that they do not belong there and belong in the workplace instead. This is reinforced at the couple-level, by wives in particular, to the extent that unemployed men and their spouses often decide to create a separate office space, and at times even an office, to enable men to focus on finding re-employment. Job-searching is posed as a priority because the sanctions, the stigma, of unemployment for men still prevails. That being employed is vital for men is further reinforced at the couple-level where wives work closely with men to overcome unemployment. This often means a shared understanding amongst the couple that men's unemployment does not necessarily mean a dramatic shift in the division of housework such that men, as the unemployed partner, take over a greater share of the chores. Instead, job-searching activities safeguards men's time from housework. Wives also aim to emotionally encourage husbands to job-search as husbands go through the emotionally arduous process of job-searching in the white-collar marketplace (Sharone, 2014; Ehrenreich, 2005; Smith, 2001). In so doing wives acknowledge and iterate the importance of regaining appropriate employment for husbands. Men and their wives recognize the cultural norm of participating in paid employment as key to expectations of men, and that not doing so is a deviation. They reproduce this expectation through their interactions.

For women, unemployment is a *peripheral* experience. This means that women's unemployment is not associated with failing, nor is it linked to a set of cultural norms which make employment central to how women function in society. In contrast to unemployed men, unemployed women do not feel like trespassers at home and in the domestic space. Instead, they feel as though they belong, and are made to feel so by

others, particularly husbands. Instead of centering days around job-searching, women often start off by centering their days around typically feminine concerns such as their children's schedules and other housework. Women also use their time when unemployed to do more traditionally feminine things, such as carework for elderly family members. The variety of activities that unemployed women can do while at home, apart from job-searching, highlight for them and for those closest to them why regaining employment need not be a frantic priority. Indeed, this is reinforced by the marital dynamic between husbands and their unemployed wives during this time when husbands often provide emotional support to wives by assuring wives that they need not find a job quickly, and can be more relaxed about it. While this may take the pressure off, it also illuminates that being unemployed is not sanctioned or stigmatized for women in the way it is for men. The experience of unemployment is central for men and their marriages and peripheral for women and their marriages because while for unemployed men only one clear path, re-employment, is charted out, for unemployed women there is a greater variety of options, including full-time re-employment, part-time employment, or leaving the labor force for a while altogether.

Gender differences in staying-at-home while unemployed

Staying at home is an anomalous experience for these men: not only do men feel odd, as though they don't belong, when they stay at home during weekdays, but they are also made to feel so by others, especially wives. Men themselves explain that being at home is an odd, even isolating, experience as they don't often have neighbors, friends, or colleagues to meet during the work day, nor do they necessarily have an abundance of

spaces they can go to outside of the home during the day time where they feel at ease. Overwhelmingly, men feel uneasy staying at home in particular and in the domestic space during what would otherwise have been a work-week. Indeed, at times this uneasiness transforms into feelings of loneliness and isolation. Previous quantitative research has shown that unemployment results in greater costs to mental health for men than for women (Thoits, 1986). Some of these mental health issues may reside in this sense of isolation that men experience from being at home, which unemployed women do not.

The discomfort that unemployed men feel is reinforced by others around them, including their families and most often their wives. Wives of unemployed men highlighted their annoyance at their husbands' constant presence at home. Some of the wives worked fully or partly from their home. These wives in particular explained that having their husbands at home during the day disrupted the rhythm of doing their work, chores, and the daily household routine that they had established over the years. Other wives, who worked outside the home, often found themselves feeling overwhelmed at their husbands' constant presence when they got home from work – with some yearning for time all to themselves. Additionally, wives frequently explained that while husbands did not necessarily try to contribute more to household chores, they did often try to micro-manage minuscule details of the family's routine, which wives and children found irksome. Wives often attributed this interference to their husbands' need to exert authority in one realm as they were unable to do so in the realm of work. When studies have shown the shame or stigma that unemployed individuals feel it is often linked to a somewhat static conception of shame and unease arising from a general, amorphous cultural disdain for unemployment and what that implies about a person's moral worth

(Newman, 1988). In contrast, here, using family observations and separate, longitudinal interviews with unemployed individuals and spouses, this dissertation has shown how for men this unease is reproduced, frequently through interactions.

For women, staying at home when unemployed is a much different experience. Women feel comfortable staying at home and in the domestic sphere. Many of the women in my sample saw their unemployment as a time to be the involved mothers that they feared they weren't able to be when employed. As such, women frequently centered their days on their children. Chores such as picking children up from school or extra-curricular activities, which would have earlier been done in a rush or been outsourced to babysitters, became the focus of unemployed women's days. When dropping or picking up children from school, unemployed women lingered, often for extended periods of time, talking to teachers or other parents. As women explained, focusing on their children was sometimes a way to stave off feelings of shame and guilt as they job-searched, often unsuccessfully.

Unemployed women's comfort and sense of ease at home was reinforced by others around them, including family members. Unlike their male counterparts, women frequently found that they were welcome at a variety of non-home spaces during the day, for examples their children's school-related activities such as Booster's Clubs. Unlike men who stuck out and felt themselves to be anomalous in many non-home spaces they could access during the work-week, women in contrast felt welcomed. Additionally, most husbands did not work from home, but in those cases where unemployed women and their husbands spent time at home together because of the woman's unemployment, the issue of women as spoiling the daily rhythm of family life due to their unfamiliarity with

the family's routine did not come up. Even when employed, women are more at ease at home and tend to bear more responsibility for the various aspects of running a household. This aspect of their lives can function as somewhat of a buffer to the stigma of unemployment. This also illuminates how spaces are gendered, and conducive to gendered performances especially in terms of motherhood and fatherhood (Garner, 2015). These findings revise recent studies of the experience of unemployment (Sharone, 2014; Smith, 2001) by illuminating how unemployment is an intrinsically gendered experience.

Combined, a focus on the couple-level interactions during times of unemployment reveals how gender norms, often internalized in individuals, and embedded in institutions, are also reproduced by these members of married couples as men and women push each other toward traditional gender norms. Scholars have pointed out that unemployment in particular may be a time when traditional gender norms which ascribe women with housekeeping and men with providing for the family, may be undone, given the new household arrangement, especially in men's unemployment. Indeed, scholars have shown that gender is in fact undone when it comes to working class families (Shows and Gerstel, 2009; Presser, 2003; Deutsch and Saxon, 1998). Yet, for the middle- and upper-middle-class families here we see a fall back to traditional gendered ideals. Some have suggested that an obstacle to translating gender-egalitarian beliefs into practices is the lack of institutional support in the United States for working families – for example paid and more extensive parental leave, or subsidized child-care (Gerson, 2010; Williams, 2010). Another study argued that the anticipation of raising children in the American policy-context where childcare is expensive means that young women plan to curtail their career-orientation after the birth of child (Conroy-Bass, 2015). Yet, these

families actually do have the resources to meet these needs. As I show they selectively do so in the cases of unemployed men, but rarely in those of unemployed women. This suggests that while institutional support is certainly needed for working families, the issue extends beyond that.

Job-searching as a priority?

How men and women experience their time spent at home while unemployed maps quite well onto how much they prioritize job-searching, and how much others, too, do so for them. Staying at home is an uncomfortable experience for men and, on average, the job-search itself was a much more of a priority for men than it was for women. As I showed, job-searching was prioritized in the cases of men, and minimized for many of the women in a number of ways.

For the families in my sample it was a given that men would focus on job-searching. "Opting out" (Stone, 2007) for these men was not seen by them or their wives as a feasible decision, as it was seen by many of the unemployed women and their husbands. Central to Pamela Stone's argument in *Opting out?* is the assertion that professionally successful escape women don't make a choice to leave the workplace. Instead, a combination of factors – being pushed out by rigid and inflexible workplaces that do not make accommodations for the household and childcare responsibilities that fall on women; as well as the pull toward the home – mean that women "opt out." Unemployment can also be seen as a negative workplace experience; albeit one which pushes women out more than men. Indeed, in the case of unemployed men, we saw that homes were dominated with discussions around job-searching, resume-building or skills

enhancement. It was clear that men's unemployment and subsequent job-searching were perceived to be a defining feature for the family, beyond simply financial concerns. Indeed, as we also saw, wives actually expend a tremendous amount of emotional effort in order to make sure that husbands are emotionally and practically well-prepared to job search, which both unemployed husbands and wives agree is a priority. Often, this emotion work that wives do came at the cost of their own emotional well-being. These findings corroborate other research on emotion work in marriages which has shown how the flow of emotional support is usually from wives to husbands (Erickson, 2005), including during a spouse's physical ill-health (Thomeer et al., 2015); spouse's depression (Thomeer et al., 2013) and even a partner's sexual and gender transition (Pfeffer, 2010).

For the families of unemployed women in my sample, it was, in contrast, not at all evident that job-searching needed to be a priority. Women's job-searching activities were rarely a conversation of topic at home, let alone a dominant one. Indeed, when husbands do provide emotional support to wives it is often to assure them that wives can take as long as they need to find a job – there is no rush. The idea that wives may, for the time being at least, drop out of the labor force altogether, is frequently on the table in spousal discussions and remains a plausible option.

Combined, the intense pressure to find a job in the case of men, and the far more relaxed experience for women, in my sample, sheds some light on the question of gender norms, opting out, and masculinity. In my sample in only one case did the option of opting out for an unemployed man even come up and that was brought up by his wife in her interview, and not by the man. Even though the percentage of stay-at-home dads has

indeed increased over the last decade, we would be remiss in seeing this as a sign of an overthrow of cultural ideals about masculinity and fatherhood. Indeed, as the numbers show, many of the stay-at-home dads are involuntarily so, for example due to unemployment (Pew, 2014).

A national vignette-based survey (Jacobs and Gerson, 2016) found that respondents took into account whether a mother or father had been happy at work or unhappy, and a variety of other such variables, before saying whether a person should stay at home or not. The authors find that there is much more support for women's employment, even when they have small children, when the income is necessary or women enjoy work. For men, their findings go against previous research which suggests that employment and earning are hegemonic demands made of American men; instead they find that for men too respondents' ideas about working or not working were contingent on the context of individuals. This study suggests support for a convergence of gender norms and ideals. My findings go against this. Indeed, vignettes capture hypothetical instances and so can be useful for gauging attitudes; yet the discrepancy between attitudes and behavior can be significant. Ample evidence shows that while Americans' attitudes are clearly in the direction of gender equality, especially in terms of sharing income-earning and housework responsibilities within marriages, their behaviors still tend to be significantly gender-differentiated.

The findings presented here, from a sample of relatively privileged American couples, who have the material resources to truly behave in gender egalitarian[15] ways, provide support for the idea of a gender stall, as these couples nevertheless reproduce

strikingly gender traditional patterns when it comes to job-searching while unemployed. Previous research has highlighted how institutions and the policy context need to propel the change toward gender equality (Williams, 2010). These findings additionally highlight the critical, powerful, role that cultural norms about gender continue to have.

Unemployment and the division of housework

Lastly, this dissertation explains how the couple-level interactions during unemployment contribute to unequal time allocated to housework. The question of who spends more time on unpaid work and who on paid work has been seen as a key way of gauging gender equality; since much of gender inequality is understood to stem from the differently gendered roles men and women occupy at home and in work. Indeed, women's social, feminized role as nurturers and carers – which relegates primary care-giving and household responsibilities to them - has long been understood in feminist scholarship as a major factor for perpetuating gender inequalities at home, in the labor-force, and consequently in society at large (Ridgeway, 2011; Schilt, 2010; West and Zimmerman, 1987). Recent trends suggest a convergence in the amount of time men and women spend in paid and unpaid work (Pew, 2013; Bianchi et al. 2006), but questions about why gaps in some areas of sharing unpaid responsibilities continue to maintain traction have been important to scholars.

As such, previous quantitative research has found that during unemployment men's contribution to housework increases, but only by about half the amount of unemployed women (Gough and Killewald, 2011). Other research too suggests that women's economic contribution does not always buy them out of housework, nor does

men's economic dependence necessarily mean that men take over more housework (Tichenor 2005; Bitman et al., 2003). This goes contrary to the idea that the division of housework can be explained by relative economic contribution to the household. Some have suggested that because unemployment is seen as a transitional time, it doesn't make sense for couples to overhaul the distribution of chores.

While this important quantitative research has shown that these gaps exist, it has, for the most part, offered speculations as to the couple-level negotiations producing these unequal outcomes. Through the findings presented here, I have sought to explain this persistent gap in household chores during times of unemployment. In the case of unemployed men, I have shown how prioritizing the job-search gives men an out from housework. This can create tensions amongst couples: although wives do believe that job-searching should be men's priority, they also think that men could do more around the house than they do, and that men frequently use job-searching as an excuse. In contrast, since women choose to center their days on children, this choice often means spending more time on housework, for example, creating more elaborate meals. For many women this is a welcome distraction from constantly thinking about their unemployment and job-searching. For yet others, it is a way to show care and affection to their children and spouses. Unlike the unemployed men in my sample, many women in my sample felt as though doing chores while unemployed was important in terms of reciprocity. Still, many of these women also expressed the feeling that they already bore a more significant share of housework and so they tried to resist taking on more chores while unemployed.

These findings thus help explain the persistent unequal division of housework during men's and women's unemployment. This is shaped by couples' daily, micro-level interactions during unemployment. This is important because the rationale and ease of women's taking over the housework reflects, but also perpetuates, gendered labor-force inequalities. One study, for example, found that women take, on average, several weeks longer than men to regain employment (Farber, 2015), which makes sense given what my dissertation has illuminated about how unemployed women spend their time whilst unemployed in contrast to unemployed men. This has implications for lifetime earnings. The women in my sample have not lived out their work-lives yet, and so I cannot ascertain the impact of their current employment decisions on their lifetime earnings. But studies have shown that gaps in women's working lives are related to decreases in annual incomes and lifetime income; for example one study showed that a gap of two to three years can result in a 30% decrease in annual earnings (Stone, 2007). In contrast, while men remain protected from the compulsion to do housework, the flip-side is the gendered pressure to earn and gain employment. This imperative can hardly be conducive to their emotional and mental well-being.

Unemployment and gender inequality in the United States

Unemployment is an especially appropriate moment in these couples' lives to examine issues of gender in marriages. Unemployment can be a moment of crisis and these types of moments have been conceptualized in sociology as revealing underlying beliefs and behaviors. Unemployment i is a time when the home and work come into a critical collision, and when attitudes and realities about how working – or not working – intersect

with men and women's roles in the family. Unemployment thus has the potential to reveal both gendered beliefs and behaviors which continue to have a foothold in American marriages.

This focus on the couple-level interactions has illuminated how gendered norms are reproduced within these marriages during this time of unemployment. It is also a missing piece that links the micro-, individual level internalization of norms, to the macro-level of gender inequality in institutions such as the institution of the workplace.

If we had reached gender equality we would see unemployed men and women having striking similar experiences of unemployment. Not only would the experience of job loss itself be similar, as it currently is, but so would the entire unemployment experience following it. Gender equality would mean that unemployment experiences for men and women would not be divergent, central for men and peripheral for women, as we see through the data presented here. In contrast to contentions of gender equality in the home, the striking differences between men and women's unemployment experiences strongly suggests gender inequality.

Difference need not always equal inequality, but in the case of unemployment the differences of men and women's experiences are indeed conducive to producing and perpetuating gender inequalities at home and at the workplace. This is because working and not working are not valued in the same way – paid employment always wins out in terms of the status it confers within the home. In the United States, men's higher status, including in marriages is linked to their traditional status as breadwinners. Even though this empirical reality is eroding, the conceptual benefits of it still accrue to men: women's paid employment does not necessarily buy them out of housework (Bitman et al., 2003;

Gough and Killewald, 2011), and there is evidence that because wives out-earning husbands continues to be seen as gender-deviant, wives actually do more housework when they earn significantly more than husbands (Bitman et al., 2003).[16] Nor does earning more than their husbands necessarily have the same return in terms of decision making that it does for men (Tichenor, 2005). The focus within these families on making sure that unemployed husbands find a job, and find one quickly, is a reflection of this subtext of how a man maintains his status within the family. It is a way of upholding ideals about men and women's roles in the family.

Unemployed women arguably have an easier experience of unemployment since they are not under the same pressure to find a job. On the other hand, the lack of pressure pushes women toward focusing on the home. While women often enjoy this and it can be rewarding, it also means a decrease in lifetime earnings (Stone, 2007). Not earning at all will likely exacerbate gender inequalities at home. In this sample we already saw how many of the unemployed women – who did much of the housework when employed – felt compelled to take on even more when unemployed.

Falling into relatively traditional way of doing gender, as these unemployed men and women and their spouses do, is not just a sign of difference, but moreover a sign of gender inequality. Yet, this gender inequality takes somewhat different forms in the marriages of unemployed men and women. An important part of gender inequality is the unequal distribution of resources amongst men and women. Unemployment is central for men, and for the couple it's a problem in need of immediate rectification. In the case of

[16]Others disagree with this, finding a more optimistic picture of the potential of how stay-at-home fathers and breadwinning mothers can lead to a shift toward couple and institutional level equality. See Chesley, 2011 for more.

unemployed men, we thus see a flow of emotional and material resources to men, to help them in job-searching. For example, families of unemployed men spent money on creating an office space, at times even building or renovating a new home office, to help men with their job-searching. While men and their wives did say that men spent more time on household chores and childcare, men's time was also often safeguarded by families continuing to spend money on childcare providers and house-cleaners. While these families did not spend *more* money on these items than they had prior to employment, they often also did not save the amount they could have by, for example, having men take over these outsourced chores. Emotional resources too flowed to the husband from his wife as women often, especially in the early months, prioritized husband's feelings, frequently by suppressing their own.

In contrast, in the case of unemployed women there is no such stark emotional or material flow toward women. This is likely because women's unemployment is *peripheral,* it is seen as far less of a problem in need of immediate rectification. The couple's focus is thus not on job-searching, although many times the individual unemployed woman's may be. This means that typically in families of unemployed women, couples do not create or renovate home offices to facilitate women's job-searching. Since women often center their day on housework and childcare, these couples also more often cut back on any housekeepers, and childcare expenses. A few reported pulling children out of summer camps, decreasing the number of days young children spent in day daycare, and pulling children out of before-school or after-school care thus saving money. Additionally, women, who already do more unpaid carework (Conlon et al., 2014; Gerstel, 2000), sometimes took on even more unpaid carework for elderly

family members such as parents or in-laws. Lastly, unlike for unemployed men, there frequently was not as much or as intense a flow of emotional support from husbands to unemployed wives. While husbands sometimes tried to be encouraging to wives, they did not do so at the expense of concealing their own worries as wives of unemployed men did. This was because regaining employment was most often seen as one amongst many options available to unemployed women. Not being as much of a crisis as for men, the emotional support deemed necessary by wives for unemployed husband's successful outcomes in terms of regaining employment did not hold here.

This dissertation has highlighted some bleak realities about unemployment itself, but also what unemployment tells us about the progress toward gender equality. Most of all, it has sought to show the enduring power of gender in a context where gender could easily, if more progress were being made, be relegated to the background. This dissertation adds to the body of research by scholars showing how gender inequality continues to persist (Ridgeway, 2011). Yet there is far more to be done in this arena as gender scholars in particular pay attention to the question of *why* these inequalities persist, and to parse out how institutions, policies and cultural norms can be recalibrated for more egalitarian outcomes.

TABLES

TABLE 1. Interview and observational data collected

	Interviews	Follow-up Interviews	Observations
Unemployed Men	25	11	2 families
Wives of Unemployed Men	13	7	
Unemployed Women	23	13	2 families
Husbands of Unemployed Women	11	4	
TOTAL	**72**	**35**	**4**

TABLE 2. Central and peripheral unemployment experiences

Characteristics of gendered unemployment experiences		
Level	**Men's *central* unemployment**	**Women's *peripheral* unemployment**
Self	Paid employment as central to identity as husbands and fathers. Norm of provider holds strong	Paid employment important to sense of self, but peripheral from identity as wife, and to a lesser extent as mother
Couple	Paid employment seen as imperative for husband. Couple's emotional, financial, and temporal resources allocated toward helping husband find employment	Paid employment seen as one aspect of the wife's identity. Emotional and temporal resources allocated to finding re-employment come primarily from the unemployed woman rather than also from the spouse.
Others	Stigmatize men's unemployment	Do not stigmatize women's unemployment

TABLE 3. Descriptive data on unemployed men and families

N = 25

Educational attainment of unemployed men
Graduate degree (12)
Bachelor's degree (11)
Some college (2)

Age of unemployed men
Median = 49
Range = 37-58

Annual household income before unemployment
Median = $150,000
Range = $80,000 – 500,000

Race/ethnicity of unemployed men
Native-born white (20)
Native-born black (2)
Non-native born citizens (3)

Duration of unemployment at time of first interview
Median = 6 months
Range = 2 months-13 months

Years married
Median = 17
Range = 5 - 27

Spouse's employment status
Works full-time - earns the same as husband prior to his unemployment (7)
Works full-time - earns more than husband prior to his unemployment (3)
Works full-time - earns less than husband prior to his unemployment (10)
Works part-time - earns less than husband prior to his unemployment (5)

TABLE 4. Descriptive data on unemployed women and families

N = 23*

Highest level of educational attainment of unemployed women
Graduate degree (19)
Bachelor's degree (4)

Age of unemployed women
Median = 47
Range = 31 years – 61 years

Annual household income before unemployment
Median = $165, 000
Range = $70, 000 - $350, 000

Race/ethnicity of unemployed women
Native-born white (19)
Native-born black (1)
Non-native born citizens (2)
Other (1)

Duration of unemployment at time of first interview
Median = 8 months
Range = 3 weeks – 2 years

Years married
Median = 16 years
Range = 18 months – 40 years

Husband's employment status
Works full-time - earns the same as wife prior to her unemployment (6)
Works full-time - earns more than wife prior to her unemployment (4)
Works full-time - earns less than wife prior to her unemployment (9)
Unemployed (3)

*One participant declined to provide specific information on household finances, such that some of the figures will add up to 22 rather than 23 responses.

TABLE 5. Men and women's savings, assets and expenses

Savings, assets and expenses			
Men		**Women**	
*Savings average**	*Savings range*	*Savings average*	*Savings range*
550,000	0 - 2.5 million	139,000	0 - 1 million
Home Value average!	*Home value range*	*Home value average*	*Home value range*
510,000	260,000-1million	454,000	190,000-850,000
Monthly mortgage average#	*Monthly mortgage range*	*Monthly mortgage average*	*Monthly mortgage range*
1800	1000-3000	1600	900 – 2400
Monthly household expenses average&	*Monthly household expenses range*	*Monthly household expenses*	*Monthly household expenses range*
6300	2000-10,000	4900	1800-8000

* includes only 13 of the women and 17 of the men who shared info. Out of these several shared only info about liquid assets not pension funds, IRAs etc. These estimates are on the conservative side.

! 6 women and 8 men shared this information; for others there's mortgage payment information, which aligns with similarly valued houses
#based on12 women and 7 men who shared
& based on 7 women and 6 men who shared

TABLE 6. Employment status at first and follow up interviews

Where are they now?					
Unemployed Men			**Unemployed Women**		
Name	**Employment Status at First Interview**	**Employment Status at Second Interview**	**Name**	**Employment Status at First Interview**	**Employment Status at Second Interview**
Kevin Goldberg	Unemployed for 10 months; started consulting	NA	*Cheryl Stanley*	unemployed for 17 months	Employed full-time
James Peterson	Unemployed for 7 weeks	Started consulting	*Lisa Brozek*	Unemployed for 5 months	Employed full-time
William Smith	Unemployed for 10 months	Working as a substitute teacher	*Darlene Bach*	Unemployed for 3 weeks	Unemployed
John Huber	Unemployed for about 5 months	Employed full time	*Donna Mayr*	Unemployed for a year	Employed full-time
Pierre Miot	Unemployed for a little over a month	Moved to a different state to start up a health-care clinic with his brothers who are doctors	*Julia Crouch*	Unemployed for 3 months	Unemployed, now looking for part-time work only
Peter Scotts	Unemployed for 5	NA	*Doris Richards*	Unemployed for 8 months	NA

	months				
Scott Mandel	Unemployed for 6 months	Working as a consultant	*Kiara Eklund*	Unemployed for 4 months	Employed full-time
Gary Archer	Unemployed for 5 months	Working full-time in a similar capacity	*Rebecca Mason*	Unemployed for 5 months	Unemployed and thinking about higher education to work in a different industry
Terry Clarke	Unemployed for 5 months	Working for an hourly wage and no benefits in a different industry	*Monica Levy*	Unemployed and underemployed for last 2 years (periods of not working, with periods of working for very little pay)	Employed full-time
Brian Bader	Unemployed for 4 months	NA	*Grace Blum*	Unemployed for a little over a year	Unemployed
Doug Easton	Unemployed for 2 years	Unemployed	*Christina D'Angelo*	Unemployed for a little less than 2 years	Working part-time
Jim Radzik	Unemployed for a year	Self-employed; working on opening his own franchise	*Eileen Boyle*	Unemployed for 3 months	Employed full-time
Mitchell Lazovert	Unemployed for 4 months	Employed full-time, in a similar capacity	*Mary Louise Muller*	Unemployed for 8 months, but working full-time since the month before the interview	NA
Umut Karahan	Unemployed for 6 months	NA	*Caroline Anderson*	Unemployed for 11 months	Unemployed

Dave Dunn	Unemployed for 10 months, recently started contract work	NA	*Anne Davis*	Unemployed	Self-employed
Nate Gura	Unemployed for 2 years	NA	*Candace Wilson*	Unemployed for 21 months	NA
Rakesh Bhushan	Unemployed for 8 months	NA	*Gina Forrester*	Unemployed for 2 years	Unemployed
Todd Baron	Unemployed for 5 months	Working part-time and on commission as a salesman	*Claire Frankel*	Unemployed for 5 months	NA
Frank Amara	Unemployed for 4 months	Working part-time for an hourly wage and no benefits	*Padma Swaminathan*	Unemployed for 19 months	Employed full-time
Jack Marinucci	Unemployed for 2 months	NA	*Shira Koffman*	Unemployed for 2 years	NA
Shaun Schulte	Unemployed for 6 months	NA	*Gabrielle Luna*	Unemployed for 7 months	NA
Thomas Curtis	unemployed for 2.5 years	NA	*Nicole Lenoir*	Unemployed for 5 months	NA
Marcus Neals	Unemployed for a year	NA	*Kelly Varano*	Unemployed 2 years; doing freelance writing and editing work intermittently	NA
Robert Jansson	Unemployed for 7 months	Working full-time			
Paul Potter	Unemployed for 10 months	NA			

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