COPING WITH JOB LOSS BETWEEN 50 AND 65: APPLYING A POSITIVE AGEING FRAMEWORK

by

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ABSTRACT

The aim of the research was to explore predictors of positive ageing in a sample of 50 to 65 year old New Zealand displaced workers. The main focus of the research was to ascertain the mechanisms used by individuals to age positively when faced with situations characterized by limited control. Of the 174 respondents, 103 were male, 71 female. Of this sample, 81 individuals (47 males, 34 females) also took part in an interview evaluating cognitive aspects of wisdom. The survey contained a mixture of standardized measures (ABS and CES-D and a Life Satisfaction Scale as measures of wellbeing; OPS-JL and the Coping Humour Scale for measurement of coping) in addition to a number of closed and open-ended questions. Areas evaluated in the research were divided into three parts: opportunities (non-work and work based activities, roles, social resources, humour, wisdom and generativity), coping (using the newly developed 'Optimization in Primary and Secondary Control Job Loss Scale' (OPS-JL)) and constraints (job-related strain and other life transitions), and it was predicted that bi-directional links would be found between these three areas. Evidence for lack of control over re-employment in this age group and gender differences in coping with job loss (as a function of differences in central identity, coping, work history and socialization) were also predicted. Results found evidence for systematic differences between the sexes, in particular - males appeared to have more complex coping hierarchies. Substantial evidence was found for lack of situational control over re-employment and bi-directional links between opportunities, coping and constraints were demonstrated, indicating a holistic approach to evaluating positive ageing is warranted. Among outcomes unique to the thesis were a correlation between wisdom and the impact of life transitions, the moderating role of wisdom between coping and wellbeing, and the necessity to distinguish flexible goal adjustment into two forms: horizontal goal adjustments (HGA) (i.e. different jobs but similar rewards) and downward goal adjustments (DGA) (i.e. different jobs with lower rewards). DGA's were generally associated with lower levels of wellbeing for males, with outcomes contingent on factors such as whether HGA's were used first, levels of job related strain and current work status. It was concluded that older workers use many resources to aid positive ageing, but society must work to remove age-related blocks if this is to be achieved at an optimal level.

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PROLOGUE

This thesis explores the predictors of *positive ageing* associated with individuals going through the unexpected, and to an extent, uncontrollable, experience of job loss between the ages of 50 and 65. The first chapter in the thesis begins with a background to the area of positive ageing: what has caused interest in this field, how is positive ageing measured, who are the major players in the field? It then goes on to consider potential predictors of positive ageing. Each of the predictors is outlined in terms of its theoretical foundation, with unique theoretical development given in places. The predictors covered are also considered in terms of how they may be linked with each other. At the end of this process, the predictors are combined into a research framework. This framework provides the background for the research conducted in this thesis.

The second chapter focuses in on the area of job loss, beginning with consideration of the reason why this particular population was focused on and the past and current social and historical influences that define or colour the situation they are faced with. Themes of lack of situational control due to age discrimination and differences between males and females as a function of identity, work history and socialization are highlighted. The chapter then goes on to outline the format in which the remainder of the thesis will follow, outlining relevant literature and predictions that apply to the following seven chapters. A concise summary of the hypotheses made in the study is given at the conclusion of this chapter.

The third chapter outlines the method used in the thesis, outlining how participants were obtained, the measures used, justification and validation for them, and the procedure followed to collect the data. From this point on each chapter has its own discussion section. The fourth chapter provides in-depth coverage of participant demographics, and in particular, highlights if there are any systematic differences between the experiences of men and women, testing a number of hypothesized differences.

The fifth to ninth chapters then consider the relationship of predictor variables to the outcome variable of subjective wellbeing. These chapters will generally build on one another. The fifth chapter assesses the independent predictive strength on subjective wellbeing of all independent variables incorporated in the research. It aims to narrow down the number of non-coping strategy related variables to be used in later regression

analysis. The sixth chapter performs a similar function, but focuses primarily on coping strategies, testing a number of predictors related to them.

The seventh chapter then takes the variables screened from the fifth and sixth chapters for use in a final overall regression analysis, as well as testing hypothesized mediators and moderators of subjective wellbeing. The eighth chapter then covers qualitative comments generated from the research, using this information to back up predictions made and arguments formed around the quantitative analysis. The ninth chapter focuses specifically on the relationship between the age related gains of wisdom and generativity and the other variables assessed in the research. The final chapter (10) attempts to bring discussion from all of the results chapters together in order to form an overall picture of the predictors of positive ageing in the context of unexpected job loss.

1

CURRENT RESEARCH AND THEORY IN POSITIVE AGEING: TOWARD AN INTEGRATIVE FRAMEWORK

This chapter seeks to outline theory and research relevant to the field of positive/successful ageing. It begins with consideration of why positive ageing has become an increasingly popular topic over the last decade. Following this, the chapter considers the criteria by which positive ageing is evaluated. How do we know if a person is ageing positively? The chapter then considers predictors of positive ageing, with a particular emphasis on how individuals attempt to increase their perceptions of control (i.e. in the face of life events), and on later life gains (i.e. wisdom). Following this, an attempt is made to integrate the predictors covered into an overall framework.

The Ageing Population

Ageing, and its related effects, is something that concerns every human being on earth. Due to better nutrition and other factors, such as advances in medicine and technology, the average life expectancy of human beings in the western world has increased from 47 years in 1900 to 76 years in 1990. Indeed, of all those who have ever lived to be 65 and over, half of them are alive today (Rowe & Kahn, 1998). In the United States, the median age is projected to increase "from 33 years in 1990 to 42 years in 2050". This is due to the largest cohort in North American history (the baby boomers) moving through mid-life (Willis & Reid, 1999, p. xv). Likewise, in New Zealand, between 1996 and 2051 the number of New Zealanders aged 65 and over is projected to increase from 12 to 25% (Statistics New Zealand, 1998a) (see Khawaja (2000) for a more in-depth assessment of New Zealand's historical context and future prospects due to population ageing).

While work in the past has focused on the negative aspects of ageing, the focus today is increasingly on what constitutes positive or successful ageing. Presently, a number of initiatives are underway in New Zealand to address the issues of population ageing and of ageing positively. This is demonstrated in both scholastic appraisal (Ng, 1998) and in the public domain (refer to the work of the Government's National Strategy on Positive Ageing (Dalziel, 2001), EEO publications on older workers (White, 1999), and the recently formed New Zealand Institute of Research on Ageing (NZIRA – see web-site http://www3.vuw.ac.nz/ageing-institute/)). The aim of these initiatives is to give all New Zealanders an equal chance to age positively.

Evaluating Ageing Positively

How does one age positively/successfully? Before exploring possible predictors, it is important to consider the criteria by which positive ageing is evaluated. While objective measures such as physical health can be used, they say little about the individual's internal perceptions of how positive their life is. For example, a person in a wheelchair could be happier than an individual in perfect health. Indeed, Okun and George (1984) found a very weak association between physical health and measures of psychological wellbeing. Therefore, perhaps the most informative measure of contentment in life comes from an individual's own perceptions.

Subjective Wellbeing as One Criterion for Positive Ageing

"The subjective definition of quality of life is democratic in that it grants to each individual the right to decide whether his or her life is worthwhile. It is this approach to defining the good life that has come to be called "subjective wellbeing" (SWB)" (Diener, 2000, p. 34). SWB includes both cognitive and affective evaluations by the individual of their life and is said to be of growing importance to individuals in both western and non-westernised countries (Diener, 2000). The evaluation of SWB would therefore seem to constitute a key criterion in determining whether an individual is ageing positively.

There are three components that are generally included in the measurement of SWB. These include a) presence of positive emotions, b) absence of negative emotions, and c) a sense of satisfaction with life (Argyle, 1996). The first two components tap into levels of affect/emotion, while life satisfaction taps into cognition about one's life (Diener, 2000). All of these components have been found to correlate to about .50, indicating that sufficient independence is present between the components to warrant separate evaluation (Diener). Diener argues that for SWB to be measured accurately, each of these areas must be assessed.

It is important to note that responses on SWB measures tend to remain relatively stable over time (Diener, 2000). This is particularly the case if 'trait' rather than 'state' measures are used. Specifically, trait measures ask how the individual has felt over a number of weeks, whereas state measures ask them how they are feeling at one particular moment in time (Diener). Therefore, trait measures are more desirable for use in cross-sectional survey methodologies, whereas state measures may be useful for experimental manipulation. It is also important to measure both positive and negative affect. These measures were originally conceptualized as polar opposites, but are often found to be correlated "with different variables", indicating the presence of two separate factors (Diener, p. 35).

Diener (2000) also notes that there are three main processes that underlie SWB. These include goals, adaptation and temperament. Research reviewed by Diener indicates that as individuals reach their goals they may enjoy a peak period of happiness. However, this peak does not last; they return to their normal levels of happiness and are then motivated to set new goals. These baseline levels of happiness are said to be determined by temperament, in that some people are naturally happier by disposition than others. Individuals may also return to their baseline levels of happiness through the process of adaptation. Although major changes in one's life can have a negative impact, people generally adapt to changes fairly quickly. However, Diener notes that not all life events/circumstances are adapted to quickly.

It is also likely that adaptation occurs more or less quickly as a result of the suitability of adaptation tools applied by the individual to the situation. What are these tools and do some of them maximize successful adaptation, while others unwittingly

minimize it? To what degree do the constraints of the situation determine which tools have the most beneficial effect? The answer to these questions may be found in the exploration of potential predictors of positive ageing.

There are a number of possible predictors that could be discussed in this section. For instance, there is substantive evidence for the importance of adequate income and of education for positive ageing (Moen & Wethington, 1999; Dalziel, 2001). Access to supportive others is also well documented as an aid for psychological wellbeing (Acitelli & Antonucci, 1994; Mallinckrodt & Fretz, 1994). Likewise, temperament and personality factors have a substantial shaping influence on individual experiences throughout the life span (Diener, 2000). However, this review is more selective in that it is focusing primarily on research and theory in two main areas: a) cognition and control, and b) potential age-related gains.

Major Players in the Field of Positive Ageing

While work in the area of positive aging continues to develop grow and develop in New Zealand and Australia, it is to the United States and Germany that we turn to review the most extensive work done in this field to date. Two organizations are prominent in the field of positive ageing. The first is the McArthur Foundation in the United States, and the second is the Max Planck Institute for Human Development and Education in Berlin, Germany. Both have generated a plethora of research and theory in the field and are currently collaborating with each other.

Research funded over a 10-year period by the McArthur Foundation has generated over 100 published papers. The Foundation's goal was to clarify the biomedical, social, genetic, and behavioural factors responsible for retaining – and to an extent enhancing – individuals' ability to function adequately in later life. Rowe and Kahn (1998) reviewed these efforts in a book entitled "Successful Ageing"

The foundation redressed some of the erroneous assumptions found in prior ageing literature. They highlighted the point that ageing successfully is not just about imitating youth, and that ageing was previously too narrowly defined – focusing on the work of either one researcher or another and ignoring an integrated developmental

approach. They further highlighted the fact that success was treated *only* as the absence of failure in the past, and that the possibility of *age related gains* were neglected (Rowe & Kahn, 1998).

According to Rowe and Kahn (1998), positive ageing requires three broad criteria: avoiding diseases, maintaining engagement in life, and maintaining physical and cognitive functioning. There is also some mention of personal characteristics, such as high self-efficacy levels. Rowe and Kahn acknowledge that the three criteria are important across the entire life span. They also recognize that methods of attainment of the criteria are likely to differ by age. For example, for maintaining physical fitness, the 50-year-old may require lower-impact workouts than the 20-year-old, or injury could result.

This reference to possible injury is illustrative of an additional point made by Rowe and Kahn (1998) - more is not always better. Achieving balance within and across the criteria (with the exception of avoiding diseases) is required for adaptive functioning. Rowe and Kahn also recognize that there are substantial individual differences within any age group, and each person must find the balance that is right for them.

While Rowe and Kahn (1998) have added much of value to the positive ageing literature, their book does little to explicate the cognitive process by which individuals continue to have positive experiences in the face of age-associated (or even general) losses. For example, they note that older individuals often see themselves as healthy even if they are suffering from real physical problems. They question the reason for this dissonance, suggesting it is a reflection of the individual's ability to adapt to changes.

Researchers at the Max Planck Institute would agree with Rowe and Kahn's (1998) suggestion. Their focus has been largely on the cognitive processes behind positive ageing. Prof. Paul Baltes spearheads the research at the Max Planck Institute, and his foundational work underlies more than one of the predictors of particular interest in this review.

Cognition and Control: Roads to Positive Ageing

As stated by Rowe and Kahn (1998), maintaining physical and cognitive functioning is important for positive ageing. However, it is clear that as people age they

generally experience decline in these areas (Avolio & Sosik, 1999; Heckhausen & Schulz, 1995; Rowe & Kahn). They also tend to face increasing socio-cultural constraints (Heckhausen, Schulz & Wrosch, 1998). If such declines are part of the normative ageing process, then how is it possible that anyone can experience positive ageing?

Selective Optimization with Compensation

Baltes, Smith and Staudinger (1992) noted that even in the face of losses, older individuals did not seem to show a reduction in their perceptions of personal control. Baltes et al. argued that the reason for this could be due to older people engaging in a number of adaptive cognitive and action based activities.

Baltes et al (1992) proposed that selective optimization with compensation (SOC) provided an effective heuristic strategy for positive ageing. Selection refers to being selective in focus/effort, optimization refers to practicing chosen goals and evolving new domains of knowledge/technology, and compensation is invoked so as to minimize the impact of loss or failure. Baltes et al illustrated these components with the following example, based on a runner who wished to continue running into old age:

> "*If runners want to stay at a similar level of performance (distance, speed), they will need to invest more and more time and energy in running. As a correlate, therefore, other domains of life will need to take a backseat or be given up completely (selection). At the same time, aging runners will have to increase their knowledge of training methods to maximize their potential, such as learning about and paying attention to the influence of daily rhythms or diet (optimization). In addition, older runners will experience a need to compensate as some physical functions drop below a certain level of efficacy or injuries become more prevalent*" (p. 154).

Because it is the degree of functional impairment (inability to effect action on the environment) experienced by individuals that is strongly predictive of depression (Zeiss, Lewinsohn, Rohde & Seeley, 1996), the adaptive strategies of the SOC process have the potential to protect perceptions of functional ability, thereby protecting psychological

wellbeing. Therefore, individuals who use SOC effectively should experience ageing more positively. Recent work in this area by Freund and Baltes (1998) supports this conclusion. They found that individuals reporting the use of 'SOC-related life-management behaviours' scored more highly than those who did not report such behaviours on the successful ageing outcome measures of positive emotions, subjective well-being and absence of feelings of loneliness (p.531).

Baltes et al. (1992) claim SOC to be simply a heuristic or set of organizing principles. It is when this heuristic is applied to specific themes that it has the potential to guide exploration and understanding into the cognitive/behavioural processes through which individuals can continue to age positively. A theory that has incorporated the principles of SOC with the topics of coping and control is Heckhausen and Schulz's (1995) '*Life-Span Theory of Control*'.

Life-Span Theory of Control

The theory proposed by Heckhausen and Schulz (1995) incorporates the SOC principles with the concepts of primary and secondary control, resulting in a theoretical framework through which adaptation to loss can be evaluated.

Primary and secondary control. These two types of control represent a central tenet within Heckhausen and Schulz's (1995) theory. Primary control is mainly action based. It refers to the actions taken by individuals in order to fashion their environments to their needs (assimilation). Primary control is strongly related to the idea of being 'functional' (i.e. my actions are effective). Functional impairment is said to increase the likelihood of depression (Zeiss et al., 1996). Accordingly, losses in/blocks against using primary control can also stimulate a depressive episode due to the feelings of dis-empowerment associated with it (Heckhausen & Schulz).

Secondary control is primarily cognition based, and usually refers to internally-directed attempts to mould the self to the environment (accommodative). Secondary control can be used to achieve a variety of ends, such as resetting goals and re-evaluating outcomes (Heckhausen & Schulz, 1995).

Heckhausen and Schulz (1995) claim that "...primary and secondary control are often intertwined, shifting from one to the other depending on the challenges and

obstacles encountered" (p. 285). As shown in figure 1.1, secondary control can be conceptualized as the 'oil on the cogs' in the effective execution of primary control. In accordance with this, Heckhausen (1997) stated that "secondary control serves to protect the motivational resources of primary control" (p. 176). This is achieved via secondary control enhancing commitment to primary control goals and compensating in the event of failure by lessening negativity (Heckhausen, Schulz & Wrosch, 1998). This process could also work in a feedback loop until an acceptable result is obtained. This tendency for secondary control to revolve around primary control is due to belief that there is an underlying preference for primary control (Heckhausen & Schulz).

Primary Control		**Secondary Control**		**Primary Control**
Primary control attempts non-functional	➡	Appraise, accept and accommodate To situational constraints	➡	Refine deployment of primary control (i.e. in new way or new area)

Figure 1.1. The Regulating Role of Secondary Control in the Execution of Primary Control

Culture and control. It is important to note that there is likely to be cross-cultural variance in the emphasis placed on either primary or secondary control. Figure 1, as a process, may present itself more clearly in a western environment. This is because western societies tend to place more emphasis on autonomy and individualism than eastern societies, and as such the pursuit of primary control may be more salient than secondary control. The Protestant work ethic of the western world is orientated toward achievement and status recognized through independent action (primary control) (Clark-Plaskie & Lachman, 1999).

Where collectivism is emphasized (eastern), accommodative or secondary control strategies are used more frequently compared to western cultures (Peng, 1994, cited in Clark-Plaskie & Lachman, 1999). This appears to be because they are more likely to renounce primary control for their group (Flammer, Ito, Luethi & Plaschy, 1995). It is argued that the reason for this is that eastern values endorse harmony and inter-

dependence, and as such accommodating oneself to the environment (secondary control) is compatible with these values (Clark-Plaskie & Lachman).

Control and loss/failure. As previously indicated, of particular interest is how people react when they find themselves in a position where their ability to manipulate the environment is reduced. It is in these circumstances that the types of action and cognition employed are of importance in determining the ensuing wellbeing of the individual. The main point being that after a primary control loss/failure, it is reasonable to expect some sort of secondary or primary control process will be activated, but that not all of these processes will lead to a positive outcome for the individual (Heckhausen & Schulz, 1995).

Heckhausen and Schulz (1995) detailed a list of secondary control strategies mentioned by older individuals. These included self-protective causal attributions, minimization, adjustment of goals and aspirations, social comparisons, positive reappraisal, viewing the past more positively than it was, and identification with powerful others. Negative secondary actions may include things such as self-blame and giving up prematurely (sour grapes). However, what proves to be adaptive or maladaptive will depend, in part, on the extent to which action is limited. This will be covered in more depth later in the chapter.

Combining SOC with primary and secondary control. The theory was fully operationalized when primary and secondary controls were combined with the SOC principals, which resulted in five core categories of coping (Heckhausen et al., 1998). As seen in Table 1.1, these include optimization (general strategies used throughout life to assist goal selection and to maintain diversity of options, balance, etc), selection (preparation, investment of energy and retaining focus on selected goals – in both primary and secondary forms) and compensation (dealing with loss/failure so as to minimize or counteract its effects – in both primary and secondary forms). Optimization is not combined with primary and secondary control as it is deemed a 'higher order' coping strategy. For optimal effect, these coping strategies should be executed with awareness and consideration of age-graded constraints or opportunities and are measurable with the use of the Optimization in Primary and Secondary Control Scales (OPS-Scales) (Heckhausen et al.).

Table 1.1.

OPS-Model: Optimization in Primary and Secondary Control. Taken from Heckhausen, et al., (1998).

Optimization	
- adaptive goal selection: long-term and age-appropriate goals	
- management of positive and negative trade-offs for other life domains and future life course	
- maintain diversity, avoid dead-ends	
Selective Primary Control	**Selective Secondary Control**
- invest effort, ability	- enhance goal value
- invest time	- devalue competing goals
- learn new skills	- enhance perception of control
- fight difficulties	- anticipate positive consequences of goal attainment
Compensatory Primary Control	**Compensatory Secondary Control**
- recruit others' help	- goal disengagement (sour grapes)
- get other's advice	- self-protective attributions
- use of technical aids	- self-protective social comparison
- employ unusual means	- self-protective intra-individual comparison

In confirmation of the idea that optimization acts as a higher order coping strategy, optimization was found to have its effects on measures of psychological wellbeing mediated by each of the control subtypes (Heckhausen et al., 1998). This makes sense, as optimization determines the range of goals (limited or expansive depending on the degree individuals optimize) that the individual can chose amongst and

then pursue through focused selective action. Further, for compensation, the more involved in life an individual is (optimization) the more sources of compensation there are available to them (i.e. the more people you know, the more scope for downward social comparisons).

However, there is one potential difficulty with using OPS as a measurement tool. Respondents could easily construe primary compensation strategies as primary selective strategies. For example, when considering the items listed in Table 1.1, employing unusual means, aids, seeking advice, etc (compensation), could be construed as part of the process of pursuing a goal, as these actions would require investment of time and energy (selection) in order to 'realize' an end state. This then raises the question 'when does the use of alternate methods to reach a goal (compensation) become simply a part of the selection process (or goal pursuit) again?' To this end, an exploratory factor analysis of the OPS structure should be conducted to see whether these types of coping strategies have a tendency to factor together.

Contextual Determinants of Usage/Adaptability of Coping Strategies

Having established a set of coping strategies, what determines which coping strategies are adaptive and are likely to be employed in a given situation? Holahan, Moos and Schaefer (1996) reported the contextual approach to coping argues that coping is dynamic and "...changes over time in response to changing demands and changing appraisals of the situation" (p.26).

It has already been noted that the OPS strategies should be executed with awareness of the opportunities and constraints surrounding the individual (i.e. the context). By considering constraints it is possible to make more accurate predictions about which coping strategies will be most adaptive or hold the most predictive value in a given situation. As discussed below, the situational context can influence the coping process by minimizing the adaptive value of certain strategies and maximizing the value of others. It may also necessitate the individual to adjust their goals. Further, sex differences in coping styles may influence the usage levels and predictive value of certain coping strategies in certain situations.

For the purposes of this thesis, situational context has been defined by the Author as 'the opportunities or constraints encountered in the individuals environment (at both micro and macro levels) that influences cognitive and affective reactions and facilitates or limits personal agency. The micro level refers to the individual's immediate environment (i.e. family life, local community, work), while the macro level refers to the larger society, its rules, norms (both formal and informal) and past and prevailing socio-historical trends (i.e. population ageing due to the baby boom after WWII).

Controllable/uncontrollable events. Coping strategies that are usually found to be adaptive can be ineffective and/or maladaptive given certain contextual/situational constraints. For example, research from more than one source has found that primary control (or problem-focused) coping strategies are generally more adaptive than secondary control (or emotion-focused) strategies in controllable situations, but secondary strategies are more adaptive in uncontrollable situations (Hamilton, Hoffman, Clifford & Rauma, 1993; Holahan, et al., 1996; Wanberg, 1997). Here controllability is defined as 'the ability to rectify or sufficiently compensate for a loss'. Of course, controllability is not likely to fall into a simple dichotomy, and individuals are likely to vary in the degree of constraint they experience.

Heckhausen and Schulz (1992) refer to two types of 'pathological coping' when faced with uncontrollable losses that manifest as a result of age-graded constraints. These include prematurely giving up primary control striving (i.e. disengage from a goal without exploring other options to regain control) and continuing to pursue unachievable goals. It is argued that both of these courses of action can lead to higher levels of negative affect. They also note that '...the specific type of secondary control (e.g., goal adjustment, favorable social comparison, reinterpretation of causes) used is functionally adaptive to the particular loss in primary control encountered' (p. 1).

In a similar vein, research utilizing the OPS scales has looked into goal controllability through the exploration of developmental deadlines. These deadlines come about as a result of age-graded sequences for developmental tasks that have upper boundaries (i.e. deadlines). Socio-structural, biological and age-normative factors, as well as historical context, determine these deadlines (Wrosch & Heckhausen, 1999).

Heckhausen, Wrosch and Fleeson (1998) examined the impact on coping of a *biological* developmental deadline - childbearing. They argued that selective strategies focused on goal attainment were most adaptive prior to a developmental deadline being reached, and compensatory strategies were most adaptive once a deadline had passed. In line with these predictions, women aged 27 to 33 (prior to the deadline) endorsed use of selective strategies (i.e. planning a family); whereas women aged 40-45 endorsed more compensatory strategies (i.e. put more value on career).

In summary, these studies illustrate how situational constraints contribute to determining what types of coping strategies will be most commonly endorsed and which will be most adaptive, in terms of both primary/secondary control and selection/compensation. Combining these outcomes, it can be predicted that compensatory secondary control strategies should be most adaptive in uncontrollable situations. We are also informed that goal disengagement (listed under the compensatory secondary control strategies in Table 1.1), if it is premature, may actually be associated with lower levels of wellbeing.

Expected versus unexpected events. An additional factor that may impact on the event is whether it is expected or not. For anticipated events, selective planning can be used prior to the event. There may be a number of ways to approach the situation that can be chosen amongst. If the individual is successful then the negative consequences of loss may be avoided entirely and levels of wellbeing can be maintained. For example, a person who has been given adequate notice for upcoming job loss may obtain another job prior to the loss, thereby making a smooth transition to a new situation, avoiding disruption to financial resources.

However, for unexpected events some degree of loss is unavoidable. The individual's sense of control is disrupted, the impact of the loss is sudden and drops in wellbeing are more likely (Heckhausen & Schulz, 1995). In a climate of emotional vulnerability, the individual must use the OPS strategies to attempt to regain previous levels of wellbeing. In short, whether the event is expected or not should initially impact on how emotionally taxing the event is. However, the emotional impact of both expected and unexpected events may eventually converge if they are uncontrollable/irreversible losses.

Combining expected/unexpected events with event controllability. While unexpected events are likely to be more unsettling than expected events, this does not mean that they cannot be recovered from quickly. Consider Figure 1.2, where there are four illustrative possibilities. The basic scenario is a mature worker who has experienced redundancy in either an expected or unexpected manner. Here the term 'expected' represents a situation where the individual is given a substantial amount of forewarning about the impending loss. The socio-cultural developmental deadline being used here is employer attitudes to the older worker. The degree to which these are encountered influence how controllable or uncontrollable the situation is (in terms of reemployment likelihood).

The first scenario in Figure 1.2 appears to be the most desirable as it gives the individual the chance to circumvent the negative side effects of job loss through the early deployment of selection strategies. The second scenario, while not as desirable due to the sudden shock of the event coupled with the loss of income it brings, enables damage control and quick recovery from an unpleasant experience. Given that the environment is receptive to change, for both scenarios 1 and 2, initial primary control attempts are likely to yield positive outcomes.

1. Expected & Controllable Given forewarning of job loss, job search successful and makes a smooth transition from one job to another.	**2. Unexpected & Controllable** Sudden redundancy, job-search successful - new income found quickly and the impact of loss is minimized.
3. Expected & Uncontrollable Given forewarning or job loss, applies for jobs but unsuccessful due to ageist stereotypes held by employers.	**4. Unexpected & Uncontrollable** Sudden redundancy, job- search proves unsuccessful due to ageist stereotypes held by employers.

Figure 1.2. Four Possible Circumstances that a Loss Can Occur Under.

For the least desirable scenarios (3 and 4) compensatory secondary control strategies would eventually be most adaptive as continued striving toward unattainable goals is likely to heighten vulnerability to lower levels of wellbeing (Heckhausen &

Schulz, 1992). Therefore, it would be more adaptive to disengage from the goal and digest the loss positively. However, simply giving up is not necessarily an adaptive end to the process, especially since primary control is desirable. This is where goal adjustment comes into play.

Goal adjustment. Tackling the phenomenon of why older individuals do not remain depressed in the face of irreversible and uncontrollable losses, Brandtstaedter and Renner (1992) conceptualized a dual-process model of 'goal tenacity' (sticking with goals even in the face of high risk of failure) and 'flexible goal adjustment'. They found that flexibility in goal adjustment tended to increase with age, as a result of the increasing constraints that ageing engendered. A propensity toward flexibility was also associated with lower levels of negative affect. This reiterates the importance of adaptability for positive ageing.

A study by Salmela-Aro, Nurmi, Saisto and Halmesmaeki (2001) illustrates how the situational context necessitates a shift in goals in order to maintain wellbeing levels. Employing a longitudinal design, with expectant mothers forming the sample, they found that increases in family orientated goals were associated with lowered levels of depression during pregnancy and after childbirth. However, increases in goals that concerned the self were associated with increases in depression. In short, those who worked against the transition that they were going through were more likely to experience negative affect.

The evidence suggests that the ability to adapt ones goals to the context is important for wellbeing. Therefore, it should also constitute an important component of the OPS process. However, when looking at the current content of the coping strategies covered in the OPS scales, there appears to be no 'pinpointed' measurement of the transition from an old goal to a new one. This absence is conspicuous because if we are motivated to seek primary control, then if it cannot be obtained through one type of goal, we should surely seek it in another. Goal adjustment is the very process through which this could be realized.

Coverage of the literature so far indicates that it is maladaptive to continue pursuit of an unachievable goal, but that it is also maladaptive to prematurely give up altogether (Heckhausen & Schulz, 1992). If primary control is what we strive for, then we should

continue to adjust our goals until we are pursuing one that is obtainable. This process would include both cognitive reorientation to the new goal (secondary control) and subsequent action to pursue it (primary control).

Consider the situation of the individual in scenarios 3 and 4 of Figure 1.2. They eventually realize that getting the same type of job is unfeasible. They should employ compensatory secondary control in order to accept this loss. Aside from giving up entirely, the next likely action is to make what shall be coined as a 'horizontal goal adjustment'. The use of the term horizontal indicates that while it is a new goal (i.e. a different type of job) it still has the same levels of reward (i.e. same pay/prestige levels).

After reorientating to a new goal (compensatory secondary goal adjustment), if the individual then finds that this new goal is unattainable (after pursuing compensatory primary goal adjustment), the necessity to accept the loss is once again activated. The decision must then be made as to whether the individual will give up or make a further adjustment of goals. At this point, those not giving up are faced with little choice but to make a 'downward goal adjustment' (i.e. apply for jobs with less pay/prestige).

This situation is not likely to be as fulfilling as attaining original or horizontal goals. However, the individual may keep going through this process until an obtainable goal is realized. For example, if remunerative options prove unattainable, an individual may eventually forfeit income by doing volunteer work, but would still retain a sense of work ethic and involvement in the community.

In sum, downward goal adjustments may offer some measure of compensation, but are likely to be comparatively undesirable to horizontal goal adjustments because the downward movement indicates that some aspect of primary control is being relinquished. However, this impact may also be contingent upon how impactful the loss was to the individuals functional ability (i.e. loss of income would be more negative for those with less accrued financial resources and/or those who heavily invest their sense of worth in how much they earn).

Sex differences in coping. To the extent that men and women are socialized differently, how they appraise or approach a given situation may differ. This could occur both in terms of a) how they are socialized to react to stressors, and b) differences in role

histories or identity investment that nuance the situational context when faced with (on surface appraisal) the same type of loss.

In relation to the first point, Pearlin and Schooler (1978, cited in Malen & Stroh, 1998) reported that women use more passive or emotion focused coping strategies that add to stress, whereas men use a wider variety of resources/strategies that aid the coping process. Based on these findings it was argued that socialization left women ill-equipped to deal with stress. Parallels with the work of Nolen-Hoeksema (1990) can be found, which asserts that higher levels of depression are seen for women because they tend to ruminate over problems more than men, who are more likely to respond to problems with action based activities.

Bringing the second point into the discussion, sex differences in coping with job loss provides an example of how role histories may impact on reactions to a life stressor. Traditionally, work was seen as the male domain, with women more likely to have had disrupted work histories, less identity investment in their work, be more willing to accept jobs with less pay (Malen & Stroh, 1998) and to exhibit a greater willingness to accept government income support (Hanisch, 1999).

Phelps and Mason (1991) found that women tend to focus more on the grief process of coping with job loss by using strategies akin to compensatory secondary control, whereas men tended to focus on both cognitive and action-based strategies aimed at finding another job. Leana and Feldman (1992) also found men were more likely to use action based coping strategies, but women were more likely to seek help or advice from others. In a similar vein, Malen and Stroh (1998) found that men have a larger coping repertoire and are more proactive in their job search. Conversely, women had less confidence in their job seeking abilities.

These patterns indicate that women may have more confidence with using secondary control strategies, in particular compensatory ones, and may report higher endorsement of strategies such as seeking help and advice. They also indicate that, in the job loss domain at least, men are likely to use a wider repertoire of coping strategies. Potentially, these differences may lead to coping predictors of varying strength between the sexes. Further, the differences may reflect general trends in coping preferences, or may be more pronounced in the field of unemployment due to different role histories and

identity investment that have coloured the situational context. Regardless, research into coping with loss events should first establish whether gender differences are present in coping responses before combining the two sexes in analysis.

OPS and Positive Ageing

When taking the OPS model into consideration, some explanation is apparent for the dissonance noted by Rowe and Kahn (1998) with regard to older people who had experienced physical problems but still saw themselves as healthy. Indeed, the effective execution of SOC coping strategies could serve to preserve the older person's perceptions of primary control even after loss has occurred. As stated by Heckhausen et al. (1998) "In our view, successful development and successful aging means to realize a maximum of control across the life course." (p. 3). Heckhausen (1999) reviewed a number of studies that corroborate this statement.

In sum, Heckhausen and Schulz's (1995) theory has the potential to be used to explicate the process by which positive/successful ageing may be maintained by evaluating the coping styles of those who report higher overall wellbeing compared to those who do not. To aid this process, an understanding of the situational context should help to pinpoint why particular strategies are adaptive in one context but not in another. Added to this, preferred/adaptive coping strategies may differ by gender, warranting separate exploration of the coping process for males and females.

Modeling the OPS-Process: A Primary Control Model

Having reviewed a number of factors surrounding the coping process, Figure 1.3 was created in order to represent a causal pathway for primary control striving (note that steps are only used to make the diagram easier to convey in limited space and do not necessarily convey linear steps as some are options). Optimization, in line with its higher order role in the process, is shown to link into all of the coping subtypes present in the figure. Entering the process at selection, the figure states that the individual should be motivated to maintain what they have (i.e. original goal). Therefore, if they (for example) lose their job, they would pursue (step 1) a comparable job in their field. At this point, the situational context comes into play. Is this an achievable goal? If it is,

then for expected events another job is obtained before they lose their original job and subjective wellbeing levels (SWB) are maintained. For unexpected events, securing a job means the regaining of former SWB levels.

However, if the goal is not achievable the individual must make a decision. They can continue to tenaciously pursue a goal that is unobtainable (step 2), and will therefore suffer lower levels of SWB, or they can choose to detach from that goal. Detachment and acceptance of failure comes from the process of secondary compensation (step 3). From here, the individual can follow two pathways. They can prematurely give up altogether 'sour grapes' (step 4), again risking lowered SWB levels, or they can choose to adjust their goals. It is likely that the first attempt at goal adjustment will be horizontal (step 5), with the individual pursuing a new goal with comparable benefits to that of the original goal. Having set a new goal, goal pursuit (step 1) should once again be activated in order to obtain it, however pursuit is now likely to also involve compensatory primary elements (i.e. employ usual or alternative means to get what I want).

At this stage the individual's actions will either meet with a controllable or uncontrollable environment. Those in uncontrollable environments (unachievable goal) can either fall into the trap of tenacious goal pursuit (step 2) or feed back into the secondary compensation process again, detaching from the new goal and pursuing a new one (step 3) (or giving up – step 4). After failure to achieve both original goals and horizontal goals, the adjusted goal is likely to be downward (step 6) in nature.

It is likely that some individuals may keep making downward goal adjustments until they attain some form of primary control. The degree to which the individual has successfully accepted the failure of old goals and valued the goal that is obtained should perhaps have the greatest impact on their resulting levels of SWB; however it is expected that achievement of downward goals will be associated with lower levels of wellbeing than the achievement of horizontal goals.

This causal process would need to be substantiated with a longitudinal design, tracking individuals to test the validity of the process and comparing the SWB levels of

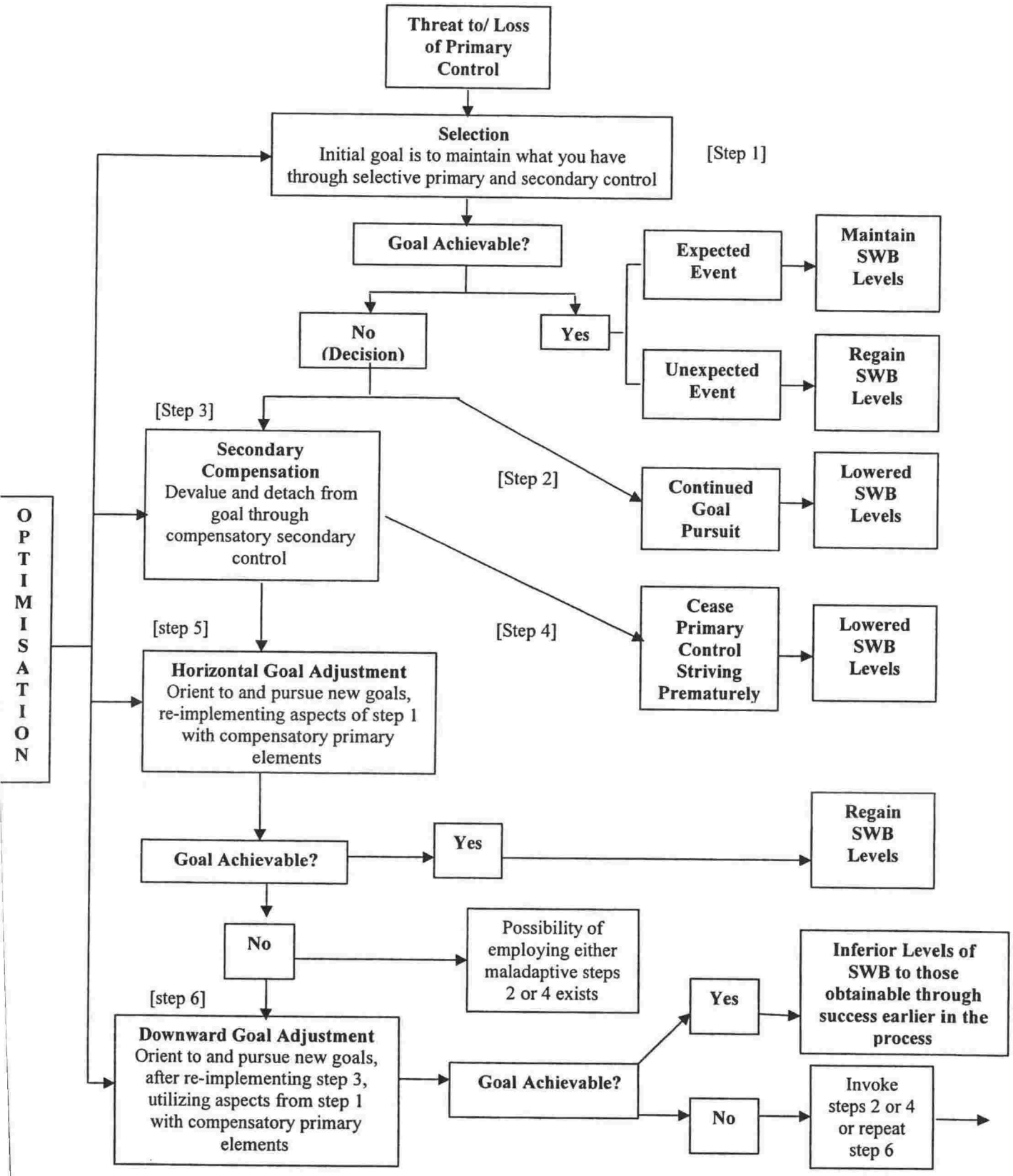


Figure 1.3. Predicted Pathways of Primary Control Striving in the OPS Process and the Impact on Subjective Wellbeing.

groups that end the process at one point or another. Alternatively, cross-sectional research could compare the relative predictive value of specific coping sub-types in light of situational constraints. For instance, if a sample of individuals were faced with an event characterized by limited controllability, would compensation strategies, in particular secondary strategies, have the greatest predictive value for SWB levels? How prominent would horizontal and downward goal adjustment be? By looking at individuals aged between 50 and 65 who have experience unexpected job loss, and by using the framework outlined in chapter 1, this is one of the many questions that the remainder of this thesis attempts to answer.

Secondary control and wellbeing. It should be noted that Figure 1.3 represents a primary control striving model of wellbeing. As already alluded to in Figure 1.1, secondary control enhances commitment to primary control goals and compensates in the event of failure by lessening negativity. Therefore, use of secondary control in itself may be enough to engender higher levels of wellbeing. Figure 1.3 is a primary control based model because compensatory secondary control does not independently link to a predicted level of wellbeing, although it would be expected that the more successfully it is implemented, the higher the level of wellbeing reported.

Gender and identity issues. Feeding into the point just raised about secondary control is previous research, as alluded to above, that found females tend to focus on the use secondary control more than males. This was notable in job-loss research (Phelps & Mason, 1991). Given that work is typically more central to the male identity (Reitzes, Mutran & Fernandez, 1994) it could be argued that primary control striving will be more pronounced as a predictor of wellbeing for males than for females if this were the area under assessment. For example, from an identity perspective males may perceive they have more to lose if they fail to obtain goals so will persist in the pursuit of goals more than females. Further, from a socialization perspective, males may feel it is expected of them to 'solve the problem' of their unemployment through agentic methods. If relationships was the field assessed we might see that females would have a higher need for primary control striving, as regulating relationships is often seen as the responsibility of females (Wickrama, Conger, Lorenz & Matthews, 1995).

Based on the comments made in regard to Figure 1.3, secondary control, and gender, a number of theoretical predictions can be raised that should come through in cross-sectional analysis. These are outlined in Table 1.2. These are preliminary predictions and some may be adapted or broken down into more detail in chapter 2, where the predictions for all areas of the thesis are outlined.

Table 1.2.

Hypotheses that Test the Theoretical Structure of Figure 1.3

- Optimization's effect on wellbeing will be mediated through subordinate coping strategies
- Downward goal adjustment will be associated with lower levels of wellbeing than that seen for horizontal goal adjustment
- Higher endorsement of goal disengagement will correlate with lower levels of wellbeing
- Females may demonstrate greater reliance on secondary control than males.

Age Related Gains

As mentioned earlier, one of the issues Rowe and Kahn (1998) raised was that the potential for age-related gains seemed to have been ignored in the literature. The meaning of the term 'gain' requires some qualification. It appears to refer to the acquisition of a tool or characteristic that was previously absent from a person's life. However, the definition could be expanded to include tools that were already in the individual's life, but have evolved with the passing of time and the contextual changes that time can bring. Old tools may be used in novel ways, or more frequently, in order to deal with the age-graded constraints that we encounter throughout the life span (Wrosch & Heckhausen, 1999).

Furthermore, these tools are only 'potentials', because they need to have the right contextual situations in which to develop to an optimal level (Baltes & Staudinger, 2000). With the proviso on the term 'gain' made clear, the review targets three areas of

functioning where age-graded opportunities/gains have the potential to arise. These areas are wisdom, generativity and humour.

Wisdom

What is wisdom? A somewhat intangible term, it is defined in the Concise Oxford Dictionary as "(possession of) experience and knowledge together with the power of applying them critically or practically" (Sykes, 1982, p. 1236). Implicit or common-sense theories of wisdom tend to characterize it as a distinct concept that is widely understood and shared. It involves functioning at exceptional levels, characterized by balance across the major domains of life, and high level interpersonal skills coupled with good intentions (Baltes & Staudinger, 2000).

Rowe and Kahn (1998) refer to wisdom as an age-related gain. They argue that as people age they accumulate experience, about themselves, the world, and other people. They learn what is ultimately important in life and what changes and remains stable in human affairs. They can use this information to reach sounder judgements, reasoning, problem solving, and are better able to deal with unexpected events than younger people are. They can better deal with questions that require factual knowledge, the ability to access information strategically, an appreciation of long-term outcomes, appropriate sensitivity to issues such as culture, and are aware that every course of action has both costs and benefits. However, these statements seem highly idealistic. Is it reasonable to assume that all individuals will attain wisdom and portray these ideals simply because they have been alive for a long time?

Psychoanalytic perspective. The psychoanalytic perspective disagrees with this assumption. Erikson, Erikson and Kivnick (1986) see wisdom as a developmental task that arises in the context of late mid-life to old age. They do not assume that wisdom automatically comes with age, but rather with successful stage reconciliation. According to this life-span theory, individuals go through 8 distinct psychosocial stages of development. These range from initial stages such as trust versus mistrust in infancy, to integrity versus despair in old age. As can be seen in Table 1.3, each of the stages has a different focus (i.e. hope, wisdom, love, care, etc), and constitutes a developmental challenge for the individual to resolve.

Wisdom has been highlighted in Table 1.3 to emphasize that it is a later-life developmental task. The first column of the table refers to the stages in more cognitive or abstract form. The second column is the desired behavioural expression for that stage, and advocates balance. This is akin to Rowe and Kahn's (1998) warning that too much of anything can be bad for you. It is also consistent with control theory, in that through the process of accommodating and assimilating to our environment (coping), we are trying to retain a sense of balance (Heckhausen & Schulz, 1995), our ability to do so being indicative of adaptive control processes in our lives. The third column explicates the kind of environmental variables we can expect to surround us as we age.

Table 1.3.

Erikson et al's (1986) Eight Stages of Psycho-social Development, Given Targeted Focus for Older Adults.

Stage Focus *(Cognition)*	**Need to Balance** *(Behavioural Expression)*	**Experiences specific to the aged** *(Environmental Variables)*
Trust vs. Mistrust: *Hope*	A sense of spirituality with a healthy wariness of the world.	Proximity of death may make spiritual matters more important.
Autonomy vs. Shame/Doubt: *Will*	A need for independence, whilst allowing the Self access to available coping resources.	A failing body can lead to loss of autonomy (i.e. eyesight loss = car license loss). May require care.
Initiative vs. Guilt: *Purpose*	Accepting necessary inactivity caused by ageing, while promoting purposeful activity in other areas.	Tires more easily. May be limited in continuing activities that are too strenuous/cognitively demanding.
Industry vs. Inferiority: *Competence*	Accept losses in areas previously a source of industry, and divert to more attainable areas.	Skills become out-dated. Retirement can lead to industry reduction.
Identity vs. Identity Confusion: *Fidelity*	Accept changes to identity and find/accept new sources of identity.	No forward looking identities. Bodily/Social/Activity losses restrict identity expressions.
Intimacy vs. Isolation: *Love*	Feeling close to others and being alone.	May need to act as a caregiver. Age-related transitions can upset existing power balances.
Generativity vs. Stagnation: *Care*	Looking after your own interests while letting others have theirs too.	Age specific roles are the ageing parent, grandparent, old friend, consultant, advisor and mentor.
Integrity vs. Despair: ***Wisdom***	Accept good and bad points about Self, integrating a sense of cynicism/ hopelessness with optimism.	The potential, through life-long experience, to take multiple points of view, being more patient/tolerant.

While the 8 stages are usually thought of as occurring sequentially over the life-span, Erikson et al. (1986) claim that when individuals reach old age, they review and attempt to reconcile each of the earlier stages. Successful reconciliation with the previous stages in the context of old age (and each stage in Table 1.3 is contextually specific to older age) should result in the elder experiencing a sense of wisdom, obtained through balancing feelings of integrity and despair. Their focus is primarily on development of the individuals personal characteristics. The limitation of both implicit and psychoanalytic approaches to wisdom is that they are difficult to operationalize and substantiate.

A cognitive view of wisdom. Baltes and Staudinger's (2000) explicit theory of wisdom argues that in addition to conducive personal characteristics, there are other conditions necessary for the development of wisdom. These include learning, practice, mentor-ship, and the motivation to strive toward excellence. In their view, wisdom is a multi-faceted phenomenon of substantial complexity, which requires the collusion of a number of micro and macro factors in order to reach 'peak' potential.

Baltes et al. (1992) define wisdom as "expert knowledge involving good judgement and advice about important but uncertain matters of life" (p. 135). Their research paradigm on wisdom involves individuals who are given problems to solve such as "a fourteen-year-old girl is pregnant. What should she, what should one, consider and do?" (Baltes & Smith, 1990, p. 103). Responses are then assessed by 10 judges on the extent to which individuals have demonstrated the use of: factual knowledge (i.e. specific and general knowledge), procedural knowledge (i.e. how to get information, timing, costs and benefits, monitoring emotions), life span contextualism (i.e. probable age sequences, historical and social influences), relativism (i.e. other people's value systems) and awareness of uncertainty in life (Baltes & Staudinger, 2000).

Staudinger, Lopez and Baltes (1997) regressed 33 psychometric measures against wisdom performance and found 10 of them to be significant predictors, accounting for 40% of performance. Interfacing intelligence and personality factors, particularly creativity and judicial (i.e. the weighing up of issues) and progressive (i.e. fluidity in rule boundaries and tolerance of ambiguity) thinking styles, were strong predictors of performance. These predictors appear to have an underlying theme of 'adaptability'. Life

experience (general and specific professional experience) also accounted for a sizeable amount of the variance. However, the fact that 60% of the variance remained unaccounted for indicated that wisdom had a fair degree of 'uniqueness' in its own right.

Age, mastery experiences and wisdom. Results from research using this methodology indicate that few people excel on these criteria, and that high performance on these tasks is not the sole reserve of older individuals (Baltes & Staudinger, 2000). Indeed, Labouvie-Vief (1990) found that wisdom is not unique to old age, and typically peaks in middle adulthood, with individuals over sixty scoring somewhat lower than middle aged individuals. Baltes and Staudinger found an age gradient of zero for wisdom between the ages of 25 and 75. They argued that the drop after 75 could be due to loss in cognitive ability.

However, interpretation of these results must be tempered with the cautionary note that a number of wisdom theories have only been developed over the last two decades. This means the effects of cohort on this construct are unknown. It is possible that the tools used to measure wisdom could be cohort-biased. For example, Moen and Wethington (1999) report that "Midlife in the early twenty-first century is in a state of flux, with economic, demographic, technological, social, and cultural changes producing unprecedented variability for those in this life stage" (p. 17). Such an environment opens up a wider variety of experiences for those currently in midlife, compared to the midlife experiences of those who are currently in old age. This may contribute to explaining the 'peak' performance of those in midlife found by Labouvie-Vief (1990).

Additionally, a number of transitions tend to happen in mid-life (i.e. becoming a parent, empty nest, death of parent/siblings, career changes, retirement) (Bahr & Peterson, 1989). Perhaps the factors associated with evaluating wisdom in Baltes and Staudinger's (2000) methodology, such as knowledge that life is uncertain, are fresher in the minds of those going through periods where a number of transitions are occurring or have recently occurred. After the age of sixty, the number of these transitions should decrease, and the individual's interactions with their environment should become more stable as a result of narrowing the social field. Arguably, this would limit the stimulation required to keep wisdom tools active and honed.

Therefore, it could be that, in some cases, it is not that individuals scoring low on wisdom in old age have never been all that wise, but rather that they have become 'rusty' with wisdom tools due to less opportunities to use them. This expands the idea that an individual requires mastery experiences/opportunities to be able to reach optimal performance in a given area (Baltes & Staudinger, 2000), to also incorporate the maintenance of optimal performance through continued opportunities to use wisdom-related skills.

In sum, it is possible that the dip in wisdom after the age of 60 is due to a drop in the availability of mastery experiences. After 75, decline in cognitive ability is likely to be a major factor. However, there is likely to be much inter-individual variability when it comes to the occurrence, sequence and temporal spacing of transitional events. Therefore, it may be that an individual's wisdom score is connected in some way to their transitional history, in terms of number, impact and types of transitions experienced and how they were spaced out over the life course.

Based on the evidence reviewed here, wisdom cannot be confidently termed an age-related gain. However, this does not preclude it from being a predictor of positive ageing. Lyster (2001) looked at individuals aged 55+ who had been nominated as wise, and found that higher wisdom scores correlated positively with higher levels of life satisfaction. This appears to be the first evidence of a link between subjective wellbeing and 'Baltes' method of assessing wisdom to date.

Generativity

Another stage of psychosocial development worthy of mention is generativity. As seen in Table 1.3, this is the stage immediately prior to wisdom. McAdams, Diamond, Aubin and Mansfield (1997) define it as an 'adult's concern for and commitment to the well-being of the next generation, as manifest in parenting, teaching, mentoring, and other behaviors and involvements that aim to contribute a positive legacy that will outlive the self' (p. 678). In line with Erikson et al's (1986) predictions, generativity tends to peak in mid-life (McAdams et al., 1997).

McAdams et al. (1997) consider volunteer workers to be individuals high in generativity and have used this as an indicator of the generative individual in their

research. They reported that generativity has previously been found to have positive associations with pro-social personalities and motivation for power, achievement, intimacy and affiliation. Further, in their study, that compared high vs. low generative individuals, McAdams et al. found that those high in generativity were more likely to set goals that benefit society, have a stable and positive personal ideology, reorient bad outcomes into good ones, and are empathetic and positive about family.

Given that successful resolution of a psychosocial stage is based on the successful resolution of prior stages (Erikson et al., 1986), it is likely that those displaying higher levels of generative behaviours will also display higher levels of wisdom. Further, when looking at the positive association's generativity has demonstrated with positive self ideologies and high motivation for power and achievement, it is likely that generative individuals also have healthy self-efficacy beliefs, and therefore higher levels of wellbeing. These beliefs may not be global, but specific to interpersonal relationships.

Humour

Humour is defined in the New Shorter Oxford Dictionary as 'A quality of action, speech, etc., which causes amusement; facetiousness, comicality; (more fully sense of humour) the faculty of perceiving and enjoying what is ludicrous or amusing; a sense of the ludicrous or amusing' (Brown, 1993, p. 1278). Labouvie-Vief (1990) argued that as we age we 'gain' increases in tolerance and humour. Humour and the positive behavioural responses (i.e. laughter) it elicits have been found to have beneficial physical and mental affects on the body (Fox Tennant, 1986). This makes it a powerful antidote to the effects of stress, enhancing flexibility in our perceptions, re-energizing us spiritually and allowing greater detachment from our problems (Wooten, 2000). Laughter and humour have been shown to correlate with higher levels of positive affect (Lefcourt & Martin, 1986), to moderate the relationship between negative life changes and psychological adjustment (Martin & Lefcourt, 1983) and to lift other competing and negative emotions (Fry Jr, 1986). Further, Solomon (1996) reports that "humour is posited to indirectly influence aging well through creating or maintaining a person's perceptions of control" (p.256).

This is illustrated in the following research. Palmore (1986) reported that a lot of older age jokes are aimed at positive attitudes towards ageing. In addition to playing down fears, these jokes served to challenge negative old-age stereotypes, in the minds of both older persons and the people they interacted with. In accordance with this, Ryan, Kennaley, Pratt and Shumovich (2000) found that older people in nursing homes used humour to avoid being victims of elder speak, while saving the face of nurses who attempted its use. In this way older people maintained control, instead of allowing themselves to be cast into a 'fragile' role that could ultimately undermine their sense of ability.

Humour and wisdom. Humour is also seen as an attribute of the wise. Clayton (1982) performed a study asking both younger and older individuals to generate a list of adjectives that they identified with the term 'wisdom'. A sense of humour was an attribute identified by both groups, but more strongly by older individuals. This indicates that exploration of the association between the construct of wisdom and the use of humour is warranted.

An Integrative Framework for Positive Ageing

A summary of the chapter so far suggests that Rowe and Kahn's (1998) positive ageing criteria (avoiding diseases, maintaining engagement in life and maintaining physical and cognitive functioning) provide a broad framework for adaptive functioning in later life. Looking to greater specificity, the concepts of selection, optimization and compensation proposed by Baltes et al. (1992) give some indication of the process through which individuals negotiate gains and losses throughout the life span. The work of Heckhausen and Schulz (1995), using SOC theory as an organizing principal, was then used to articulate this process into a model based on control and coping. The issues of event expectedness, controllability, goal adjustment and gender were also introduced in order to refine the predictive potential of the model. Baltes and Staudinger (2000), McAdams et al. (1997), and Solomon (1996), among others, then provided the means to consider the potential for later-life developmental gains in the areas of wisdom,

generativity, and humour. Potential linkages between these 'gains' and the OPS-coping strategies will now be considered.

Linking Age-Related Gains to Control

Having identified potential areas of age-related gain, that may provide useful tools to assist in the realization of positive ageing, an attempt is now made to integrate these areas with the coping and control processes proposed by Heckhausen et al (1998). These links will be narrated around the conceptual framework represented in Figure 1.4. The top two boxes in Figure 1.4 concern age-graded opportunities and constraints. The boxes have had their content divided into the 3 criteria for positive ageing suggested by Rowe and Kahn (1998) ('opportunities' only has two criteria). The age-related gains covered in this chapter are represented under age-graded opportunities. There is a bi-directional link between the two boxes, which serves to highlight the possibility that a) constraints can lead to decreases in some areas of opportunity (i.e. job loss leads to drops in activities that cost money – Gowan, Riordan & Gatewood, 1999) and that, b) opportunities can aid in compensating for constraints.

With regards to the latter, it has been found that humour (opportunity) generally acts as a moderator between stress (constraints) and wellbeing (Martin & Lefcourt, 1983), while opportunities may more generally reduce the negative impact of stressors (Ensminger & Celentano, 1988). At a fundamental level, constraints can also be conceptualized as facilitating the emergence of certain opportunities (i.e. retirement creates more time for hobbies).

In line with Heckhausen et al's (1998) contention, that implementation of the OPS strategies is optimal when age-graded opportunities and constraints are taken into consideration, these two areas feed into the OPS process. However, the link between OPS and the other two components is also represented as bi-directional, as successful implementation of the OPS process should arguably a) lessen or negate the impact of constraints, and b) contribute to the creation of opportunities (i.e. those who optimize more end up more engaged in life), while c) severity of constraint may impact on the utility of coping strategies, and at a basic level d) can be understood as triggers for

employing coping in the first place. Finally, e), opportunities may moderate the impact of coping strategies on wellbeing.

It is important to note that this is only a conceptual framework, not strictly a causal model. The constraints and opportunities should be considered in tandem with the OPS process as they conspire to create the background environment in which the coping process takes place, while the coping process, in turn, works to reconstruct their content. Researchers can use the framework to select variables in order to explore their relationship with the OPS process and subjective wellbeing. Regardless, a number of predicted inter-links between age-related gains (opportunities) and control (the two primary foci in the chapter) are discussed below.

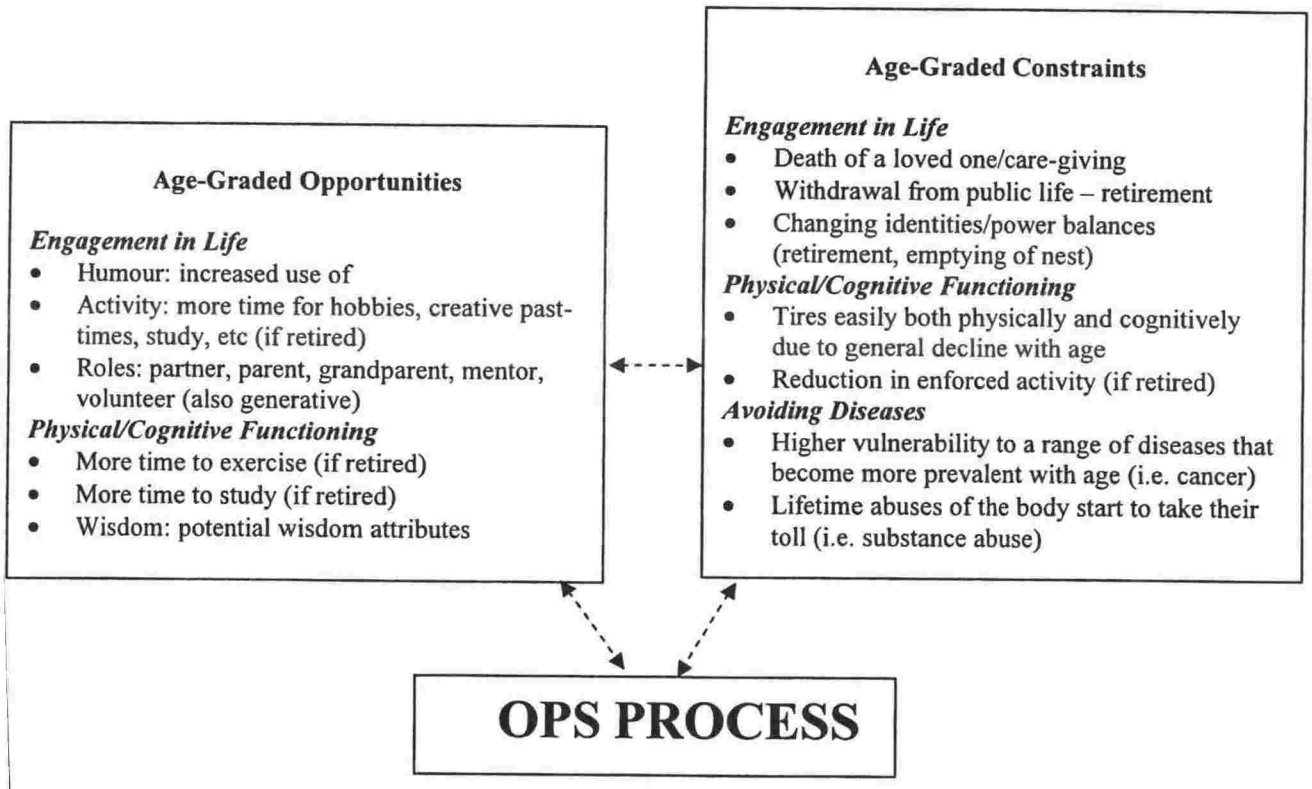


Figure 1.4. Bi-directional Influence between Age-graded Constraints, Opportunities and the OPS Process.

Humour and Control

Humour could be seen as a variant of compensatory secondary control strategy when it is invoked to accept uncontrollable situations. Like secondary control, it can serve to protect feelings of self-efficacy (Soloman, 1996). Further, Rim (1988, cited in Lefcourt, Davidson, Prkachin & Mills, 1997), noted that humour is related to minimization strategies. Minimization is characteristic of compensatory secondary control (Heckhausen et al, 1998). There is also an indication that humour may mediate the impact of compensatory secondary control strategies. Lefcourt, Davidson, Shepherd and Phillips (1995) note that "perspective taking humor is more an emotion-focused coping technique that facilitates recovery from stressful circumstances than a means of dealing with stress itself" (p. 373). Insofar as it operates as a facilitator, humour may be seen to facilitate the successful implementation of compensatory secondary control.

Wisdom and Control

One would assume that an individual utilizing wisdom is able to make well informed decisions which take into account all relevant factors surrounding a situation. A person who knows their limitations and opportunities should attempt goals that they know are attainable, making the most of their strengths, thereby increasing the likelihood of a positive outcome and protecting their sense of wellbeing. In short, it could be argued that to be wise is to have the tools/knowledge to apply SOC life-management behaviours optimally. This reasoning is consistent with how Baltes et al. (1992) conceptualized SOC and wisdom interacting. Given these conceptual linkages, it would be reasonable to assume that wisdom would demonstrate a moderating impact on the relationship between the OPS coping strategies and wellbeing.

Generativity and Control

As highlighted by McAdams et al (1997), generative individuals tend to be more involved in their community. Those more highly involved in their community are likely to have more areas in which to 'optimize' in their life. As such, it could be expected that generative individuals report higher levels of optimization.

Summarizing Inter-Links between Coping, Opportunities and Constraints

A number of simple predictions and inter-connections between age-related gains, constraints and coping were highlighted above. Table 1.4 summarizes predictions based on the reasoning that the bi-directionality between opportunities, constraints and coping is in actual existence. Chapter 2 constitutes the chapter that consolidates predictions for the entire thesis, however, drawing attention to these types of predictions in chapter 1 aids in the establishment of a pivotal conceptual framework. As indicated earlier, chapter 2 brings the focus of the thesis to bear on coping with unexpected job loss between the ages of 50 and 65. The predictions outlined here, and also in relation to Figure 1.3, will be contextualized, where appropriate, to fit in with the area of job loss.

Table 1.4.

Summary of Predictions of Inter-Links between Constraints, Opportunities and Coping

Opportunities and constraints link

- Humour will moderate the impact of stress on wellbeing (opportunities effect constraints)
- Entering opportunity variables into regression analysis will lead to drops in the predictive power of constraint variables (opportunities effect constraints)
- Constraints may lead to decreases in some areas of opportunity (constraints effect opportunity)

Opportunities and coping link

- Humour will mediate the effect of compensatory secondary control on SWB (coping effects opportunities)
- Wisdom will moderate the impact of coping strategies on SWB (opportunities effect coping)
- Volunteers will report higher levels of optimization than non-volunteers (opportunities correlate with coping)

Coping and constraints link

- Level of job-related strain will moderate the impact of coping strategies on SWB (constraints effect coping)
- Entering coping variables into regression analysis will lead to drops in the predictive power of constraint variables (coping effects constraints)

2

APPLYING THE POSITIVE AGEING FRAMEWORK: COPING WITH JOB LOSS WHEN AGED BETWEEN 50 AND 65

Having established a workable research framework, the next step was to decide on a suitable sample to apply it to. This chapter initially discusses why the age-group 50 to 65 was targeted, why job-loss was the focal life event looked at and why it is important to assess job-loss and coping separately by gender. The chapter then goes on to outline the thesis structure (i.e. the focus of each 'results' chapter), followed by the variables assessed within each chapter and the predictions made with regard to them. The chapter concludes with a table that summarizes the hypotheses for each chapter, as well as a table that highlights the overarching 'themes' that predictions relate to. It is hoped that this approach will aid the ease with which the reader can cognitively integrate the thesis content.

Why Look at Those Aged 50 to 65?

At what stage should research into positive ageing start? Much of the existing research is based on individuals already over the age of 65. As Willis and Reid (1999) note, mid-life has been the most over-looked period of the life-span in terms of a scholarly approach. Of the approximately 60 books published in the area over the last decade, fewer than 10 were of a scholarly approach, with the majority based on 'pop psychology'. Given that the progression of the baby boom generation through mid-life has provided the major impetus for the focus on positive ageing (Dalziel, 2001; Davey, 2002), research on this cohort has been lacking and is in need of more focused attention.

Of additional note is that baby boomers tend to be more educated than earlier cohorts and grew up in a period where idealistic hope for the future was extolled, and where they were told they had the power to shape their lives. Their childhood years

occurred under the influence of a positive economic outlook in the 1950's (Clark-Plaskie & Lachman, 1999). Added to this are anecdotal comments arising from the author's conversations with those in this age group. Their entry into parenthood (typically in the 1970's) was characterized by a time where the husband learnt a trade while the wife cared for husband, household and children. The husband experienced security in his employment, providing economic stability for his family. If he became disgruntled with his employment, he could 'walk down the road into another job'. These background influences would have contributed to a generation that reasonably expected that they would have security, choice and control in their lives.

Why Look at Job Loss?

Before considering why looking at job loss in 50 to 65 year olds is of interest, an understanding of the current historical climate in which this loss takes place is of relevance. Recent labour market trends in New Zealand have led to a large number of redundancies (Davey, 2002; White, 1999). This is mirrored elsewhere in the western world. Avolio and Sosik (1999) refer to patterns over the last decade in America that are characterized by downsizing, de-leveling management positions and diversification of the workforce (i.e. more women, minorities, etc). Attention to equal opportunity employment has grown and technology continues to develop rapidly. Job knowledge requires rapid turnover, with an emphasis on the need for continuing education and training throughout one's working career and greater flexibility in the nature of work (i.e. increases in part-time, contract work, self-employment and multiple job holding (Davey).

Further, in America, is it is noted more educated and older men are particularly vulnerable to involuntary job loss (Hanisch, 1999). In New Zealand, Davey (2002) notes that participation in employment in mid-life is dropping, in particular for men, with individuals over 50 years of age finding themselves 'retired' whether planned for or not. It is within this climate that the challenges faced by the older worker must be considered.

Of primary concern is that ageist employer stereotypes exist that serve to block the older worker from reemployment, and if internalized, may lead to the older worker 'self-selecting' themselves out of employment (Avolio & Sosik, 1999). Of particular

relevance to the current work climate are the stereotypes held by a number of New Zealand employers that older workers are unwilling or unable to retrain, lack flexibility, are techno-phobic, less value for money and are more set in their ways (Sparrow, 1999; White, 1999; McGregor & Gray, 2002).

Do such views influence the reemployment likelihood of mature displaced workers in New Zealand? Recent statistics suggest this may be the case. Sparrow (1999) reported individuals aged 45 and over are much more likely than younger age groups to be out of work for more than six months. Further, research into age discrimination by the Equal Employment Opportunities Commission was prompted by the number of older workers complaining of age discrimination, numerous rejections to job applications despite having the relevant experience, and reports from Employment Agencies that employers only wanted younger workers referred to them. This discrimination is implied through increases in those reporting being unemployed between 1986 and 1996. The overall increase reported was 26%, but for those over 45 it was 79% (Sparrow).

While older workers are faced with attempting to overcome these barriers, pressure is further compounded by recent NZ Government legislation that increased the age of entitlement for national superannuation from 60 to 65 years of age (White, 1999). If discrimination based on age becomes more prominent from age 45 onwards, this could mean that some individuals will face up to 20 years of disrupted work activity or unemployment before being eligible for a Government pension. This raises important political, fiscal and societal issues (Dalziel, 2000; Davey, 2002), and is likely to negatively impact on the positive ageing capacities and resources of affected individuals and the capacity of the Government to provide for them.

The importance of researching this age group is stated by Hanisch (1999), whose comments suggest that America faces similar issues to those raised for the New Zealand context:

> *"Because of age discrimination, older workers often do not find or it takes longer to find work. Research is needed on older workers and how they cope with extended unemployment as well as the transition from unemployment to retirement when that becomes their most viable and sometimes to them their only option"* (p. 214).

This leads into a second reason why job loss is of interest - if 'societal barriers' block the older worker from re-employment, then the opportunity to explore the impact of a 'societal developmental deadline' exists. Research using the OPS-Scales has already looked at the biological developmental deadline of child-bearing (Heckhausen et al., 1998), so this research allows for assessment of a different type of deadline.

Specifically, what is claimed here is that a deadline for working is placed on older workers by a society that has deemed the individual to be close enough to retirement age to leave work, and that younger workers are a more desirable proposition. In short, it is argued that society decides the older worker should step aside. Overall, this places the older worker in a climate of reduced controllability. This is illustrated in a study by Wanberg, Watt and Ramsey (1996), who found that frequency of job-seeking behaviour was associated with likelihood of obtaining a job for younger job-seekers but not for older job-seekers.

Fineman (1987) summarizes the more 'personal' situational context and cognitions of the older worker. Approaching the end of a career is a time when maintenance and consolidation are focal points. The individual is marking off time until retirement. When job loss occurs, the older worker can feel cheated by employers, that their experience and qualifications count for nothing in the face of age, and that re-training is pointless. Perhaps, most importantly, many may feel that their retirement plans are irreversibly damaged. This context is of theoretical interest because the impact of *uncontrollability* on coping can be assessed, and the necessity of employing goal adjustment is more probable.

A third reason for choosing job loss as a focus is that the OPS-Scales have not been previously applied to this domain. The Scales currently exist in, among others, general, work-specific and relationship specific forms (Wrosch & Heckhausen, 1999). Therefore, the development of a job-loss specific scale would add a new measurement tool to the field of stress and coping. The scale used in this research is unique from previous versions in that it is the first to incorporate measurement of goal adjustment within the OPS items, and is the first to target existing OPS strategies specifically to job loss. As previously noted, the situational constraints surrounding the sample should provide a ripe field for exploring the value of this addition to the OPS-Scales.

A fourth reason for looking at job loss is that work is a cornerstone of life and as such losing one's job can be extremely challenging. Brown, Bifulco and Harris (1987) identified unemployment as one of the most severe life events. Further, depression rates for the unemployed were found to run as high as 48% in a sample of male blue-collar workers (Mallinckrodt & Bennett, 1992). A primary reason for the traumatic impact of job-loss is that it can diminish a number of positive areas in the individual's life. Jahoda (1982) argues that, in addition to providing an income, employment offers structure of time, social interaction outside of the family, links to outside goals, status, identity, and enforced activity. When considering these repercussions, the reason why job-loss is often, if not always, traumatic becomes clear.

Job loss can also trigger other negative events, such as marriage break-down and relocation (Leana & Feldman, 1992; Yeung & Hofferth, 1998), to name just two. In addition, other unrelated life events may also be occurring in the individual's life - some may be positive, while others are negative. These additional events could magnify the stress individuals are under or, if positive, could help to alleviate it (Krause, 1988). Therefore, although job loss is the focal life event of interest, and is the one experience common to all of the sample participants, measurement of other life transitions will also be considered.

The Issue of Gender

As highlighted in chapter 1, research has previously found differences in the way that men and women cope (Nolen-Hoeksema, 1990; Malen & Stroh, 1998). Further, gender differences in coping, when assessed, have been routinely found in the job loss literature (Leana & Feldman, 1992; Phelps & Mason, 1991; Malen & Stroh). These differences have been attributed to the greater centrality (importance a person ascribes a role – as defined by Symbolic Interaction Theory) of the work role for the male identity than for the female identity (Malen & Stroh; Reitzes, et al., 1994; Wickrama, et al., 1995) (although recent research indicates that this effect is likely to diminish with time in light of increasing numbers of women participating in the workforce (Davey, 2002; Willis & Reid, 1999)). This is in large part shaped by the realities of parenting, where "family

roles disrupt women from their career and anchor men to it" (Moen, 2001, p. 179). Studies incorporating attention to gender differences have gone in some way to rectify the predominant focus on the male 'reality' in job loss literature that has been previously criticized (Hayes & Nutman, 1983).

Despite these developments, we are still embryonic in our understanding of how females cope with job loss, and given the increasing number of women in the workforce (Avolio & Sosik, 1999; Davey, 2002) it is argued that future research in this field should routinely consider the possibility of male/female differences in coping, socialization and identity, rather than lump the sexes together for reasons of convenience (such 'convenience' practices would be particularly misleading if the sample primarily consisted of males). Based on this reasoning, the reporting of results in this thesis will be conducted separately for males and females unless the data suggests similar patterns for both sexes.

To help organize the approach to gender taken in this thesis Table 2.1 outlines four keys areas that are predicted to influence systematic differences between the sexes. These areas are in line with research already covered and those to be highlighted throughout this chapter. Of particular note for Table 2.1 is that coping and socialization can be conceptualized as inter-linking (i.e. if males are socialized toward independence then this may manifest through more agentic or action focused coping), while central identity and work history can also be conceptualized as inter-linking (i.e. women have more interrupted work histories due to taking on primary care-giving roles such as parenting, demonstrating the centrality of relationships for women).

Table 2.1.

Predicted Areas of Difference between Males and Females in Work-Related Coping

Key Area	Males	Females
Coping	Agency/Action	Passivity/Thought
Socialization	Independence	Dependence
Work History	Continuous	Interrupted
Central Identity	Work	Relationships

Outline of Thesis Structure: Chapters, Literature and Predictions

The seven chapters referred to in this section will each assess hypothesized predictions. With the exception of the third chapter (which contains the method section) each 'results' chapter will contain its own discussion section. Because this chapter covers so much information, reference to previous literature will be concise, but discussed in more depth in a chapter's discussion if considered to be of particular relevance. Further, some literature relevant to the outcomes will have already been discussed in some depth in chapter 1. This will be alluded to where relevant. This chapter will mainly deal with hypothesized predictions and outline intended exploratory analysis, but the thesis will also contain a certain amount of post-hoc analysis that will be discussed as it arises (i.e. in each chapter). These additional findings will be integrated into the final chapter (10 - general discussion).

It should be noted that this research employs both a survey and interview methodology. The survey data represents the majority of data collected for the research, gathering both quantitative and qualitative information. The results from the survey will be analyzed in each of the seven results chapters, however, the results from the interview are only assessed in chapter nine.

The focus of each results chapter will be done in such a way as to build on the previous chapter, aiming for a linear progression of analysis. The third chapter establishes the methodology used and data gathered in the research. At this point new and/or dependent measures will be validated where possible (in some cases validation may continue throughout the chapters). The fourth chapter aims to describe the sample, highlighting simple variance in frequencies or means for males and females on all of the measures used in the study, as well as testing a number of predictions.

Following this, the fifth chapter aims to assess the baseline (independent) predictive value of the variables assessed in the study against the dependent variables and aims to narrow down the non-coping related variables to be used for later regression analysis. The sixth chapter focuses more specifically on the coping strategies assessed in the research, again focusing on narrowing down the variables to be used in later regression analysis. The integrated regression analysis takes place in chapter 7. The

eighth chapter covers the qualitative content from the research, both through content and discursive analysis. The qualitative analysis seeks to corroborate potential causative pathways inferred in the quantitative analysis, aiming to overcome, to varying extents, the limits of a cross-sectional methodology. The ninth chapter focuses on wisdom and generativity. This is given separate analysis due to not all sample participants taking part in the wisdom data collection. Literature and predictions for each of the chapters is covered forthwith.

Chapter 3 – Method

There are two areas of mention with regard to the method section. The first concerns the measurement of subjective wellbeing (SWB) and the second concerns development of the Optimization in Primary and Secondary Control Job Loss Scale (OPS-JL). With regards to the first area, as previously raised in chapter 1, Diener (2000) argued that all three components of SWB (life satisfaction, positive affect and negative affect) should be independently assessed in order to accurately measure SWB. The current research uses three standardized scales for assessing SWB, one that measures life satisfaction and two that measure positive and negative affect. In order to test Diener's (2000) contentions and also to ensure an accurate assessment of SWB, two hypotheses will be tested using structural equation modeling. The first prediction is that the three scales used as outcome measures will feed into the higher order construct of SWB (as indicated by adequate model fit). The second hypothesis is that separating items from the three scales into the areas of life satisfaction, positive affect and negative affect will show a superior model fit in explaining the higher order construct of SWB than is seen for the model which treats each scale as a separate entity.

With regards to the second area, given that the OPS-JL is a new scale, with six new coping strategies that assess horizontal and downward goal adjustment, the factor structure requires assessment. The theoretical structure outlined by Heckhausen et al (1998) will be used as a guide in this assessment, however this structure will not be imposed on the OPS-JL in a wholesale manner if it is at the expense of achieving a factor structure that is reflective of how respondents viewed the items (potentially as a result of

situational confines). It is expected that the coping strategies adapted from the original OPS scales will approximate Heckhausen's theoretical structure to a large degree; however, variation may occur in some areas. In particular, as raised in chapter 1, items measuring selective and compensatory primary control may tend to factor together as they both refer to the pursuit of a goal. Further, goal disengagement may discriminate itself as a separate factor from other the compensatory secondary goal adjustment items given that it has previously been acknowledged as a detrimental coping strategy (Heckhausen & Schulz, 1992).

As co-founder of the OPS-JL (in conjunction with Heckhausen) and as the first individual to implement the OPS-JL on a sample of individuals, the author claims the right to name identified factors in a manner that is deemed descriptive of the items within that factor. These names will then be used throughout the remainder of the thesis.

Chapter 4 – Descriptive Summary of Participants

Apart from describing the sample, this chapter aims to test predictions based on previously observed differences in male/female identity, socialization and life/work histories. It will also look for evidence of situational uncontrollability (i.e. societal developmental deadlines) and evaluate the validity of some commonly held employer stereotypes.

Addressing the first aim, gender differences will be explored systematically, however there are a number of areas within which differences can be predicted. Focusing on possible differences between males and females due to *life/work history and socialization*, DeViney (1995), in an analysis of demographics associated with retirement aged males and females; found that males in his sample had an average of 25.79 years experience in their jobs compared to 18.10 years for females. He argued this was due to women being more likely to have had interrupted work histories because of their prominent role in child-rearing. It was this higher propensity toward interrupted work histories which was used to explain his additional finding that females were less likely to be financially prepared for retirement, a trend compounded by the tendency for females to be employed in lower level positions with inadequate or no pension provisions, and to

be paid less than males. Based on these findings it is predicted that females will report less time in work related roles (in terms of both length of time in the job lost and in the industry associated with the job lost) than males, and further that females will report being less financially prepared for job loss than males.

Given that females are likely to have spent less time in work related roles, it is reasonable to expect that this will be further highlighted by a greater involvement in non-work related areas for females. One indication of this, which has been found numerous times in previous research, is the tendency for females to report a greater number of life transitions than males. This has been attributed to females being more likely to have extra-work demands and/or due to taking up primary care-giving roles (Dohrenwend, 1973). Likewise, Reitzes et al (1994) found that females are more likely to engage in informal and leisure time activities than males. Based on these findings it is predicted that females will report a higher number of life transitions than males and that females will report higher levels non-work related activities than males.

It is further predicted that the propensity for males to concentrate mainly on the work role (Bozett, 1985; Reitzes et al., 1994), while females diversify into other areas of life, will be manifest in a tendency for females to endorse the optimization coping strategy more highly than males. Recall from chapter 1 that optimization is characterized in part by the maintenance of diversity (Heckhausen et al., 1998). If females are socialized in such a way that leads to involvement in a greater number of areas in life, then it is reasonable to expect that this would lead to a greater tendency to optimize.

The importance of the work role for the male identity may also be manifest through certain variables. If a male's sense of wellbeing is heavily contingent upon their ability to be viewed as a breadwinner (Bozett, 1985) then this could arguably impact on the tenacity with which they pursue reemployment and the pressure they perceive there is for them to regain employment. Added to this argument is previous research findings that suggest females are more likely to accept financial aid (Malen & Stroh, 1998) and that unemployment is seen as more socially acceptable for women (Glyptis, 1989) (i.e. socialized toward dependency). Based on this reasoning, it is predicted that males will report higher levels of pressure to find work than females, and also that unemployed males will be more likely to still be seeking work than unemployed females.

However, there is reason to believe that age may influence the reported pressure to find work for males. Hayes and Nutman (1983), Jackson and Warr (1984) and Gallie and Vogler (1994) all refer to a decline in work commitment and legitimization of the retiree role the nearer to retirement age that males are. This appears to be because males (and also wider society) see the retiree role as both legitimate and deserved once males reach a certain age. As such, it is predicted that reported pressure to find work will lessen as males get older.

As previously mentioned in chapter 1, Malen and Stroh's (1998) research on redundant male and female white collar managers found that females were more limited in their coping repertoire, being less likely to use proactive job search strategies than males, and instead focusing primarily on more emotion or symptom-focused coping (Malen & Stroh, 1998; Phelps & Mason, 1991). This could be a further reflection of the centrality of the work role for men. If this is the case, then it is predicted that males will endorse coping strategies related to action-based goal pursuit more highly than females. Further, given that males tend to hold higher level positions in terms of either prestige or pay (DeViney, 1995), it is predicted that males may endorse downward goal adjustment more highly than females, given that a greater scope for downward adjustments should exist for males.

An alternative argument for why females are more inclined to use emotion or symptom-focused coping strategies and less action based strategies is that they are socialized towards passivity and have less confidence in their job seeking ability than males (Malen & Stroh, 1998). If this is the case, then it is predicted that females will endorse confidence for secondary control (passive) more than they endorse primary control (proactive). However, males should also show a tendency toward more confidence for secondary control if the reality of limited situational control is in evidence. Individuals who find that their attempts at primary control are blocked by *situational constraints* should eventually end up reporting more confidence for secondary control. Therefore, it is predicted that the overall sample (males and females combined) will endorse confidence for secondary control more than they endorse confidence for primary control. What is expected, however, is that confidence for secondary control will be more prominent in females than it is for males.

Confidence for a coping strategy may be quite different from preference for a coping strategy. As mentioned in chapter 1, Heckhausen and Schulz (1995) argued that primary control should be preferred over secondary control. As such, it is predicted that endorsement of preference for primary control will be higher than endorsement for secondary control in both sexes. This finding would also provide further support for the contention that individuals are faced with a situation characterized by limited control, as it is arguable that if the situation is amenable to change there should be little divergence between reported confidence and preference for either primary or secondary control. Further, it is predicted that lack of situational control should be further evidenced through higher endorsement of goal adjustment strategies (relative to other strategies), given that individuals who have limited control over the realization of preferred goals should be forced by necessity to make goal adjustments.

With regard to the assessment of *employer stereotypes*, consideration will be given to whether the demographics associated with the sample are reflective of employer attitudes that claim older individuals are less likely to train, take less pay, or engage in flexible work arrangements. Indeed, older workers appear to be portrayed as less flexible in general (White, 1999). If these stereotypes are reflective of reality, then the data should show that very few respondents are engaged in study or part-time work, should endorse both goal adjustment strategies to a low extent, and also be low in optimization because they are 'stuck in their ways'.

Chapter 5 – Baseline Predictors of Subjective Wellbeing

The purpose of this chapter is to assess the predictive value of the variables described in chapter four on the measures of SWB. It also aims to combine variables, where possible, in order to limit the number of variables to be used in later regression analysis and gives special consideration to the optimum method with which life transitions may be assessed. Each of the following predictor categories are considered in turn: age; social resources; activity levels; roles; job-loss related strain; other life transitions; and coping.

Age. Beginning with age, recall that research has previously found that older males have lower work commitment and can accept the role of retiree more readily than younger males (Jackson & Warr, 1984; Hayes & Nutman, 1983). Hayes and Nutman claim that this is because the humiliation associated with job loss is minimized. It is arguable that those suffering higher levels of humiliation would report lower levels of wellbeing. Based on this reasoning, it is predicted that SWB will be positively correlated with age for males, in that older males will report higher levels of wellbeing than younger males.

Social resources. A number of variables that tap into the availability of social resources, and the magnitude of social responsibilities, will be assessed. Of initial note is that there is extensive literature that indicates social support can have a direct positive impact on wellbeing (Holahan et al., 1996) and may also buffer the impact of stress or negative life events on wellbeing (Antonucci, 1991; Holahan et al.). Hence, social resources can be a source through which individuals can age positively. There are a myriad of ways in which social support may be assessed, some of which are very thorough, mapping out the 'convoys' of social support available to the individual and the types of support that each individual in a person's convoy provides (Antonucci & Akiyama, 1995), while others assess the availability of specific types of support to the individual (Mallinckrodt & Bennett, 1992).

The current study does not have social support as a primary focus; hence none of these more in-depth measures will be used. Rather, variables connected to social support will include basic demographics such as relationship status, number of children and partner's work status. Although assessment of social support is limited and, as noted by Acitelli and Antonucci (1994), one must consider the quality of relationships available to the individual, some predictions can be made in relation to these demographic variables based on the assumption that the presence of potential sources of support is better than having no access to supportive others at all.

Addressing the demographic variables, it has previously been found in both general (Reitzes et al, 1994) and job loss specific literature (Leana & Feldman, 1992) that individuals with partners report higher levels of wellbeing than single individuals, this being an equally strong predictor for both males and females (Wickrama et al, 1995).

With regard to children, relationships with children tend to strengthen after retirement (Williamson, Rinehart & Blank, 1992). Further, Bozett (1985) and Huyck (1999) both argue that males achieve vicariously through their children. Arguably, the more children a male has, the more sources of vicarious achievement that are open to him. This may be especially important to the male as it provides an alternative sense of identity (father) to focus on once the dominant role of worker is no longer available to him. Females may also benefit from parenthood; however, as noted by Wickrama et al (1995), females may be more susceptible to role strain in parenting, particularly if they over-parent. This is because their role demands as a parent tend to be greater than those placed on males (i.e. males may primarily provide financial support but females may also provide emotional support to their offspring).

Another source of support may come in the form of having working partners. It has previously been found that a working partner may help to alleviate financial stress, whereas those with unemployed partners may find financial strain is compounded (Gove & Zeiss, 1987). However, tempering these findings is recent research, based on a national survey of 5000 families in America, that found there was no evidence that an increase in a partner's work hours compensated for loss of income when the 'head of the household' (typically the male) had lost their job (Yeung & Hofferth, 1998). This suggests that males may benefit less from having a working spouse than females do.

Based on the literature reviewed, a number of predictions can be made. It is predicted that partnered individuals will report higher levels of SWB than single individuals. Additionally, those with more children should report higher levels of SWB than those with fewer or no children, with this relationship being stronger for males than it is for females. Finally, it is predicted that those with working partners will report higher levels of wellbeing than those with under- or un-employed partners. Finally, based on Yeung and Hofferth's (1998) findings, it is predicted that partners work status will be a stronger predictor for females than it is for males.

Activity levels. As noted at the beginning of this chapter, Jahoda (1982) identified lack of time structure, social interaction, activity, identity and status as losses that co-occur with job loss. Gowan, et al (1999), in their analysis of 202 individuals (average age 42) who had experienced job loss, predicted that 'non-work activities provide outcomes,

such as structure and rewards that should reduce the distress associated with job loss' (p. 78). Activities measured included volunteer work and leisure based activities. Their prediction was supported, with a significant negative correlation (-.23) between time spent in non-work activities and reported levels of distress (as measured by anxiety, depression and irritation). Activities in this vein represent a type of symptom-focused coping (i.e. I have nothing to do and this gets me down (symptom), so I fill my time with activities (coping) to help alleviate my distress).

This is the latest evidence for an association between activity levels and wellbeing that has been routinely demonstrated in job-loss literature (Glyptis, 1989; Hanisch, 1999; Wanberg, Griffiths & Gavin, 1997). This also reiterates the findings of McAdams et al (1997), who found involvement in volunteer work (as an indicator of generativity) was associated with a more positive outlook on life. Overall, higher involvement in activities represents higher engagement in life, and given that Rowe and Kahn (1998) identify engagement in life as a key determinant of ageing positively, assessment of activities is an important area for assessment.

However, Wanberg et al (1997) noted that some individuals may experience a decrease in time structure above and beyond that created by job loss. Having so much available time may mean that they constantly put off tasks because they perceive they have plenty of time to attend to them. Additionally, lack of financial resources may lead to a decrease in some non-work activities (costly ones) following job loss (Gowan et al, 1999).

In sum, it appears that individuals have the potential to either increase or decrease the activities they are involved in following job loss (others may simply retain the status quo). While Gowan et al (1999) assessed the amount of time spent in non-work activities; it is arguable that the impact of non-work related activities would be more accurately assessed if decreased activities are subtracted from increased activities, yielding a score that reflects a net increase in activity. This method of assessing leisure-related activities will be used in this research. Based on previous findings, it can be predicted that those with a higher net increase in activities will report higher levels of wellbeing than those who tend toward a net decrease in activities. Further, it is also

expected that individuals engaged in the non-work activities of volunteer work and study will report higher levels of SWB than those who are not engaged in these areas.

Level of involvement in paid work is another variable to be considered. It appears that regaining employment can alleviate the negative effects of unemployment. Ensminger and Celentano (1988) found that the continuously employed and those who had regained employment did not differ in their reported depression scores. These results were reiterated by Leana and Feldman (1992). Quality of reemployment is also another consideration. Kinicki, Prussia and McKee-Ryan (2000) found that both unemployment and under-employment have a similar impact on SWB. In general terms, one could consider being unemployed or employed part-time as less preferable to being employed full-time. These three categories will make up assessment of current work status in the sample, and it is predicted that higher levels of paid work status will positively correlate with higher levels of SWB. In a similar vein, it is predicted that those who report they are still seeking work (as an indicator that they are either unemployed or dissatisfied with current employment levels) will report lower levels of wellbeing than those who are not seeking work.

Roles. An additional means through which an individual can gain access to activity, social interaction and feelings of personal importance may be through the number of roles that they hold (Reitzes & Mutran, 1994). Clark-Plaskie and Lachman (1999) argued that identifying with multiple roles when individuals are older (above and beyond the roles of worker or parent – which can both tend to diminish with retirement and the emptying of the nest) provides a flexibility that may promote access to gains in meaning and competence Consider that males spend most of their working life focused mainly on the role of 'worker'. It is arguable that when they lose this identity, they should feel the impact of the loss less severely if they have alternative roles that they can redirect their investment of identity towards - the more roles available, the more potential sources of positive investment. Accordingly, both Gove and Zeiss (1987) and Ogilvie (1987, cited in Clark-Plaskie & Lachman) have found that individuals reported higher levels of wellbeing the more roles that they held.

Based on this reasoning, it is predicted that individuals holding a greater number of roles will report higher levels of wellbeing than those holding fewer roles, this

relationship being stronger for males given the prior centrality of the work role for them (i.e. males have the potential to make a greater shift in terms of identity investment). Assessing roles in such a manner is also a good way of consolidating a number of potential predictors into a single variable. The areas of work status, study, volunteer work, parent and partner will be used to create a variable assessing the number of roles and each of these areas are independently predicted to contribute to higher levels of wellbeing.

Job-Loss related strain. It is necessary to include measures that tap into the stress or strain (constraint) experienced due to job loss. This enables assessment of how coping and age related gains may affect the relationship between stress and wellbeing. Three variables will assess job-loss related strain: financial preparation at the time of job loss, perceived pressure to find work, and number of prior instances of unemployment.

With regard to financial preparation, research on unemployment has routinely found that financial strain has a negative impact on wellbeing (Grossi, 1999; Vinokur & Schul, 2002). It has also been found that financial strain tends to have a stronger impact on SWB for males (Mendes de Leon, Rapp & Kasl, 1994). Stillson, O'Neil and Owen (1991) suggest that the reason why this occurs may be because males invest in money more heavily as a status symbol, and as such it is not just lacks of funds that impacts on the male, but also lack of worth. Additionally, Hanisch (1999) reported that females are more likely to support the receipt of unemployment benefits. Based on this research it is predicted that those reporting higher levels of financial preparation at the time of job loss will report higher levels of SWB than those reporting lower levels of financial preparation. Additionally, lack of financial preparation will impact more heavily on SWB for males than it does for females.

In addition to financial preparation, an individual's perceptions of how much pressure there is on them to find work should not only be correlated with financial preparation but also capture subjectively perceived pressures. For example, Jackson and Warr (1984), in their British sample of 954 unemployed men, found those with higher work commitment felt the impact of job loss more strongly. In sum, it is predicted that those who report higher levels of pressure to find work will report lower levels of SWB, and further that while pressure and finance will inter-correlate, both will capture a unique

amount of the variance in explaining levels of SWB. These two variables may also represent variables that can be collapsed together in order to assess job-loss related strain more economically.

The final indicator associated with job-loss related strain is the number of times an individual has previously experienced unemployment. Ensminger and Celentano (1988) note that those who have experienced a greater history of unemployment in the past could be considered to have had job loss not just as a current burden in their lives, but as chronic burden that has effected their life over a substantial period of time. Such burdens are associated with lower levels of wellbeing, as these experiences are likely to have had a cumulative and ongoing negative impact on the individuals life, therefore it is predicted that those reporting higher number of instances of past unemployment will report lower levels of SWB than those reporting lower or no instances of past unemployment.

Other life transitions. There is little doubt that stressful life events are associated with lower levels of SWB; this has been demonstrated in the literature on numerous occasions (Brown, et al, 1987). Further, it appears that negative life events have a comparable impact on rates of depression for both males and females (Kendler, Thornton & Prescott, 2001). However, there has been contention about the best method in which to assess life events.

Generally, extensive multiple checklists, detailing a range of established life transitions, are given to respondents, with ticked transitions then rated on further criteria such as impact of the event and whether it was viewed as positive or negative (individualized weighting). At times, this additional criteria rating is not used, and the impact of transitions for an individual is calculated using a set of generalized weights (determined by independent judges) (Zuckerman, Oliver, Hollingsworth & Harvey, 1986). Zuckerman et al's review of life transition literature indicated that individualized weights are generally superior predictors of SWB than generalized weights, although they can be tautological in that the respondent is assessing them after the event, within the knowledge of its consequences. However, as noted by Diener (2000), some events are easier to overcome than others, and perhaps it is how the respondent currently views an event that is of most relevance to their lives and is therefore arguably what the researcher

should be focusing on if they wish to assess the impact of life events on SWB at a given point in time.

This point also highlights a potential difficulty with using multiple checklists. While such checklists enable a thorough examination of the events that have occurred in the individual's life within a certain timeframe, rating all identified events in terms of their impact and positive or negative valence may mean that a certain amount of 'noise' is present in the final score given to an individual for their life transitions. Events that hold little consequence, or have been overcome, may erroneously inflate scores, especially if events are rated for their retrospective impact rather than ongoing impact. Rather, it would appear that a more 'space' efficient method of assessing life transitions would be to ask the individual to generate a capped amount of life events that they deem to be most relevant to them (i.e. ask them to report up to three events that have occurred and then rate them in terms of impact and valence).

Once data on life transitions has been collected, it can be evaluated in a number of ways. Some researchers may simply count the number of transitions, while others may consider their impact, while others may devise an 'total weights' score, which subtracts the impact of positive events from negative events (Zuckerman et al., 1986). It has been observed that the impact of events is a superior predictor than simply counting the number of events, and that subtracting the impact of positive events from negative events is yet again superior to considering impact alone. Generally, negative events appear to predict SWB levels more strongly than positive events (Zuckerman et al). However, the influence of positive events may depend on the type of positive event assessed.

Krause (1988), in his study of the impact of positive life events on depression in adults aged 65+, noted that previous research into life events found that while negative life events predicted higher levels of distress, positive life events appeared to have little or no impact on wellbeing. He argued that family related positive events may be especially beneficial for older individuals as they lose other roles (i.e. work). He found that it was only the presence of family related positive events that predicted higher levels of wellbeing, while negative events, whether family related or not, were predictive of lower levels of wellbeing.

Weighing up this literature, it was decided that non-work related life transitions would be assessed on a number of levels in this thesis. In line with the arguments put forward, it was decided that respondents should generate up to three life events and then weight them in terms of impact and positive, negative or mixed valence. The data will then be organized in a variety of ways so as to test previous findings regarding the optimum measurement of events and by doing so arrive at an optimum and concise method of measuring events.

The predictions regarding life events can be summed up as follows: the total weights score (positive impact subtracted from negative impact) will be a superior predictor of SWB than either the total number of events or total impact of events; positive family events will predict levels of SWB but positive non-family events will not; negative events, whether family or non-family related, will predict levels of SWB. The final hypothesis is that those who have a balance towards more positive events (as determined by the total weights score) will report higher levels of SWB than those who have a balance towards more negative events.

Coping. Based on arguments put forward in chapter 1 and represented in Figure 1.3, and also arguments put forward in this chapter, that individuals are facing a situation characterized by lack of control, it is expected that compensatory secondary strategies, humour based strategies and goal adjustment strategies should present themselves as prominent predictors of SWB (relative to the other coping strategies, but not including optimization) as these should arguably be 'last points' of recourse when faced with an environment which does not respond to more direct or preferred attempts at control. Optimization should also be a prominent predictor, as the ability to be flexible and adaptable should be crucial when control is lacking and alternatives must be sought. It is further predicted that higher levels of goal disengagement will be associated with lower levels of SWB and that horizontal goal adjustment will be associated with higher levels of SWB than is seen for downward goal adjustment.

There is also reason to believe that there will be variation in the coping strategies that are predictors of SWB for males and females. Pearlin and Schooler (1978, cited in Malen and Stroh (1998) found females not only used less active coping strategies than males, but were further limited in the effectiveness of their coping responses compared to

males. Further, Phelps and Mason (1991) noted that women are more likely to focus on the grief process of job loss. Based on these findings, it is predicted that males will have a higher number of coping strategies that are significant predictors of wellbeing than the number seen for females. Further, given that females are more likely to tend toward passive coping strategies, it is predicted that the significant predictors of wellbeing for females will tend to be more secondary rather than primary in nature.

As a proviso on humour, it should also be noted that previous research assessing the use of humour to cope has found that relationships between humour and wellbeing have often varied by gender, with the type of stressful stimulus assessed appearing to affect the outcomes produced. For example, in a study using martial conflict as a stimulus, females used humour as a social lubricant or as a means to be more self-effacing, while males used it more aggressively or destructively. Humour related to the outcome measures for females only (Lefcourt & Martin, 1987). However, in another study, where the stimulus used was simple stressful tasks, males tended to use humour more competitively, and humour related to the outcome measures for males only (Lefcourt et al, 1997). This raises the question – what role does humour play in the area of job loss, where the stressor is more central to the male's identity? This is an area for exploration.

Chapter 6 – In-Depth Analysis of the Coping Strategies

This chapter seeks to test predicted relationships between the coping strategies and also narrow down the number of coping strategies to be taken through to the final regression analysis in chapter 7.

An initial aim will be to assess the inter-relationships between coping strategies and whether or not optimization is found to be mediated by the lower order coping strategies. The latter will be done in order to test Heckhausen et al's (1998) contention that optimization is a higher order coping strategy. The inter-correlations observed will also be compared with those found by Heckhausen et al in their general OPS scale.

Due to the fact that the OPS-JL is a subjective and, arguably, retrospective measurement tool, its construct validity will also be explored by assessing the

relationship of some of the coping strategies with more objective but related indicators. Specifically, it is predicted that: those who optimize more will report a higher number of roles and activities than those who optimize less; those who report a change in goals following job loss will endorse goal adjustment strategies more highly than those who do not report a change in goals; and those who report they are no longer seeking work will endorse goal disengagement more highly than those who are still seeking work.

Given that it is predicted that there will be gender differences in terms of which coping strategies will predict levels of SWB, this chapter will also ascertain whether there are any differences between males and females in terms of the inter-correlation patterns of coping strategies. This may serve to illuminate why males and females produce different coping predictors of SWB (if differences are found in chapter 5).

With regard to humour, it is noted that Rim (1988, cited in Lefcourt et al, 1997) found using humour to cope was associated with minimization strategies (akin to compensatory secondary strategies). As argued in chapter 1, it is predicted that humour will mediate the impact of minimization strategies (compensatory secondary strategies) on wellbeing, following the direction of Lefcourt et al, who state that "perspective taking humour is more an emotion-focused coping technique that facilitates recovery from stressful circumstances than a means of dealing with stress itself" (p.373) (*coping effects opportunities*).

Finally, hierarchical regression analysis will be conducted in order to ascertain which of the coping strategies should be carried forward for regression analysis in chapter 7 for both males and females.

Chapter 7 – Moderators, Mediators and Regression Predictors of Subjective Wellbeing

This chapter brings together the strongest predictors established in chapters 5 and 6 for males and females into final regression analysis to see which variables still capture a unique amount of the variance in SWB once all are entered into regression analysis together. However, before running this analysis the chapter ascertains whether moderation or mediation exists between any of the predictor variables. The predictions tested using moderation and mediation are based on predictions raised in chapter 1

regarding proposed inter-links between coping, constraints and opportunities, as highlighted in Table 1.4.

With regard to moderation, there are three moderators that will be assessed in this chapter: social resources, humour and strain. Focusing on social resources, Mallinckrodt and Bennett (1992), in their analysis of dislocated male blue collar workers, found that while financial concerns had a strong direct impact on wellbeing they were also partially moderated by social support. The buffering effect of social support is robust in the literature; however, as noted by Holahan et al (1996), this buffering effect only seems to be in evidence when the stressor in question is controllable. When events are uncontrollable social support only shows a direct impact on wellbeing.

Given that one of the central arguments in this thesis is that individuals are in an uncontrollable situation when it comes to reemployment, it is predicted that a) presence of a spouse will buffer the impact of other life events on SWB (*opportunities effect constraints*), but that b) presence of a spouse will not buffer the impact of job-related strain on SWB. These predictions are made because other life events may well have higher levels of controllability than job-related stress, so if these two outcomes are found, it is further evidence that older unemployed workers are faced with a lack of situational control in the work domain.

With regard to humour, this variable has been found to moderate the impact of stress on wellbeing in a number of studies (Lefcourt, et al, 1997; Martin & Lefcourt, 1983). Based on these findings, it is predicted that using humour to cope will moderate the impact of both life events and job related stress on SWB (*opportunities effect constraints*). Finally, as argued in chapter 1, evidence may be found that strain levels influence the impact of coping strategies on SWB (*constraints effect coping*).

With regard to the overall regression analysis, if predictors of positive ageing are indeed positive predictors, it is hypothesized that entering opportunity and coping variables into regression analysis will lead to drops in the predictive power of constraint variables (*opportunities and coping effect constraints*). However, as previously mentioned, Gowan et al (1999) found that job loss can have a depleting impact on activity levels, so it is further predicted that lower levels of financial preparation will

negatively impact on non-work related activities, in turn making individuals more susceptible to lower levels of wellbeing *(constraints effect opportunities)*.

A means to theoretically conceptualize the kind of outcomes expected in this chapter with regard to the possible moderating or mediating effects between coping/ opportunities and constraints is provided by Ensminger and Celentano (1988). They outlined three models through which job loss could be understood: vulnerability hypothesis; additive burden hypothesis; and chronic burden hypothesis. The vulnerability hypothesis states that the impact on SWB of the stress associated with negative life events or job loss is moderated by factors such as social support and coping style (i.e. those with low social support and poor coping responses will be more vulnerable to the effects of stress on wellbeing) (opportunities and coping effect constraints). The additive burden hypothesis (a mediation model) predicts that unemployment depletes social resources and coping capabilities, as well as directly influencing wellbeing levels. This implies that there is no interaction between stressors and coping or resources, as stress is the depleting agent (constraints effect opportunities and coping). The chronic burden hypothesis that postulates that chronic burdens, such as a history of long term unemployment, should be the primary influence on wellbeing levels, with current stressors adding little above and beyond this overall characterization of a life under burden.

It is the author's view that it is unlikely that any of the above models could fully capture the experience of job loss (indeed, the bi-directional relationships between coping, opportunities and constraints seen in Figure 1.4 suggest greater complexity that the uni-directional models outlined by Ensminger and Celentano (1988)), but rather that varying support for each may be seen in the data. It is also difficult to predict which hypothesis will fit the data best, given that these have not been previously tested on individuals at the end of their working life. It is likely that more instances of previous unemployment is a form of chronic burden, and it is also likely that stress may damage or deplete one's social relationships or make coping more difficult, however it is also possible that social support and coping buffer the impact of stress on wellbeing. Further-

Chapter 8 – Qualitative Feedback

This chapter will cover the content of comments made by respondents whenever they had an opportunity to respond to open-ended questions in the survey. Areas where comment was invited were related to financial preparation, increased/decreased areas of activity, areas of growth, types of transitions, perceptions regarding confidence/preference for primary or secondary control, emotional changes since job loss, what they tried doing when they first lost their jobs and any subsequent changes in goals, and plans for the future. Generally, content analysis will be utilized to assess comments, but in some cases low inference descriptors will be used (see chapter 8 for more information on the methodology used).

In general, this chapter seeks to back up predictions or arguments developed as a result of the quantitative components of the analysis. It is expected that themes regarding age discrimination and lack of control over the environment will be common, and that differences in male/female socialization, history and identity will also be reflected within the comments. The analysis will also enable greater understanding of the types of activities that are increased or decreased, the types of events rated as positive, negative or mixed, and the stages that individuals progress through as they adjust their goals.

Assessment of growth as a result of job loss should be a particularly interesting area of analysis. As noted by Hanisch (1999), research often overlooks the positive outcomes that may result from unemployment. It may provide an opportunity to redirect goals, priorities and careers to more satisfying areas, while developing new skills. This may be especially stimulating if the job that was lost was unchallenging or dissatisfying in some way. Further, only assessing the negative aspects of job loss could set up a response bias where respondents feel unemployment has been entirely framed as negative and therefore that is the only, and therefore correct, way in which it must be viewed. Such an approach would limit our understanding of the diversity through which positive ageing may be realized. The proverb every cloud has its silver lining exists for a reason.

Respondents will also be asked about their plans for the future. This should be an important question as the themes that come out of such questioning inform us about what respondents see as a prescription for ageing positively. It is expected that the majority of

the themes mentioned will compliment the observed predictors of positive ageing evidenced in the quantitative analysis.

Chapter 9 – A Focus on Wisdom and Generativity

This chapter focuses on the interview data collected from a subset of the sample, and also explores co-correlates of volunteer work (as a measure of generativity).

Wisdom

Wisdom is assessed using Staudinger et al's (1994) methodology. High wisdom scorers have previously been found to report higher levels of life satisfaction (Lyster, 2001). Theoretically, it has also been argued that factors necessary for the development of wisdom include dispositions towards generativity and access to appropriate mastery experiences (which include a mixture of success and failure). Additionally, 'educational, professional status, and leadership experience are listed as additional factors likely to facilitate the acquisition of wisdom' (p. 105), and as previously stated in chapter 1, wise individuals are perceived to have a good sense of humour (Clayton, 1982). Further, as argued in chapter 1, life events could be viewed as mastery experiences.

Based on these findings or speculations, a number of predictions were formed in regard to wisdom. Specifically, it is predicted that: as socio-economic status increases, so too will wisdom scores; those with higher levels of life events will report higher wisdom scores; as wisdom scores increase so will the reported usage of humour to cope; those with higher wisdom scores will be more likely to be engaged in volunteer work than those with lower levels of wisdom scores; those with higher levels of wisdom will report higher levels of wellbeing.

Research has not previously assessed the relationship between this wisdom methodology and coping, however, it was speculated in chapter 1 that given Baltes et al's (1992) repeated linkage of the SOC principals and wisdom, that the quality of background thought (wisdom) that exists when a coping strategy is implemented may moderate the impact of coping on wellbeing. Therefore, it is further predicted that wisdom will be found to moderate the impact of coping strategies on SWB.

Given the limited research that has been done with this methodology, the wisdom scores will also be correlated against other predictor variables, in an exploratory analysis of correlates of wisdom. Further, if wisdom is found to correlate with wellbeing, it would be desirable to see whether wisdom can capture a unique amount of the variance in wellbeing when other key predictors of wellbeing are entered into regression analysis.

Generativity

Attention with also be given to the co-correlates of volunteer work, insofar as this variable is considered an indicator of the generative individual (McAdams et al., 1997). Given that volunteer work indicates greater involvement in the community, it is predicted that those who engage in volunteer work will be more likely to optimize than those who do not engage in volunteer work. Previous research also indicates that those with higher levels of education (Rumsey, 1997) and occupational status (Warburton, Le Brocque & Rosenman, 1998) are more likely to volunteer. Therefore it is predicted that those engaged in volunteer work will have higher levels of socio-economic status than those not engaged in volunteer work. As with the wisdom variable, volunteering will be correlated against other predictor variables, in an exploratory analysis of correlates of generativity.

Summary of the Hypotheses

The hypotheses for each of the chapters are summarized in Table 2.2. These represent a total of 61 predictions. Generally, predictions have been categorized into one of the major themes identified in chapters 1 and 2. The 'theme' column identifies both higher order and lower order themes. The following codes relate to higher order themes: (C) = coping process predictions, (CON) = Constraints, (CV) = construct validity, (G) = gender differences, (INT) = Figure 1.4 interlinks, (O) = Opportunities. Lower order themes (i.e. identity, socialization under the higher order theme of gender) are also given in the 'theme' column. Appreciably, this is still a considerable amount of information to process; therefore Table 2.3 summarizes the predictions for each higher order theme and its lower order themes across the chapters.

Table 2.2
Summary of Hypotheses in Chapter 2

#	Chapter 3 – Method	Theme
3a	The three scales used as outcome measures will feed into the higher order construct of SWB (as indicated by adequate model fit)	(CV)
3b	Separating items from the three scales into the areas of life satisfaction, positive affect, and negative affect will show a superior model fit in terms of explaining the higher order construct of SWB	(CV)
#	**Chapter 4 - Descriptive Summary of Participants**	**Theme**
4a	Females will report less time in work related roles than males	Work History (G)
4b	Females will be less financially prepared for job loss than males	Work History (G)
4c	Females will report a higher number of life transitions than males	Work History (G)
4d	Females will report higher levels of non-work related activities than males	Work History (G)
4e	Females will report higher levels of optimization than males	Work History (G)
4f	Males will report higher levels of pressure to find work than females	Identity (G)
4g	Unemployed males will be more likely to still be seeking work than unemployed females	Identity/ Socialization (G)
4h	Reported pressure to find work will lessen as males get older	Identity (G)
4i	Males will endorse primary control based coping strategies more highly than females	Coping (G)
4j	Males will endorse downward goal adjustment more highly than females	Coping (G)
4k	The overall sample will endorse confidence for secondary control more than they endorse confidence for primary control	Situational Un-controllability (CON)
4l	Females will endorse confidence for secondary control at higher rates than males endorse confidence for secondary control	Socialization (G)
4m	Preference for primary control will be higher than preference for secondary control	Situational Un-controllability (CON)
4n	Goal adjustment will be a highly endorsed coping strategy in the sample	Situational Un-controllability (CON)
#	**Chapter 5 – Baseline Predictors of Subjective Wellbeing**	**Theme**
5a	Older males will report higher levels of wellbeing than younger males	Identity (G)
5b	Partnered individuals will report higher levels of SWB than single individuals	Social Resources (O)
5c	Those with more children will report higher levels of wellbeing than those with fewer or no children	Social Resources (O)
5d	The relationship between number of children and SWB will be stronger for males than is seen for females	Identity (G)
5e	Those with working partners will report higher levels of wellbeing than those with under- or un-employed working partners.	Social Resources (O)
5f	Partners work status will be a stronger predictor for females	Socialization (G)
5g	Those with a higher net increase in non-work activities will report higher levels of SWB than those who tend toward a net decrease in activities	Activity (O)
5h	Volunteer workers (generative individuals) will report higher levels of wellbeing than non-volunteers	Generativity (O)

5i	Those engaged in study will report higher levels of wellbeing than those not engaged in study	Activity (O)
5j	As the current level of employment increases (i.e. from unemployed, to part-time to full-time) so will the levels of wellbeing reported	Activity (O)
5k	Those still seeking work will report lower levels of wellbeing than those who are no longer seeking work	Strain (CON)
5l	The more roles an individual holds, the higher the reported level of wellbeing	Activity (O)
5m	The number of roles held will be a stronger predictor for males than for females	Identity (G)
5n	Those who were less prepared financially at the time of job loss will report lower levels of wellbeing	Strain (CON)
5o	Lack of financial preparation will impact more heavily on SWB for males than it does for females	Socialization (G)
5p	Those with higher levels of pressure to find work will report lower levels of wellbeing	Strain (CON)
5q	Both financial preparation and pressure to find work will capture a unique amount of the variance in SWB	Strain (CON)
5r	Those who have experienced unemployment more times in the past will report lower levels of wellbeing and financial preparedness	Strain (CON)
5s	The total weights score (positive impact subtracted from negative impact) will be a superior predictor of SWB than either total number or impact of events	Transitions (CON)
5t	Family related positive events will predict levels of SWB (and not non-family related positive events)	Transitions (CON)
5u	Negative events will significantly predict wellbeing regardless of whether they are family related or not	Transitions (CON)
5v	Those who have a balance towards more positive events (as determined by total weights score) will report higher levels of SWB than those who have a balance towards more negative events	Transitions (CON)
5w	Compensatory secondary control coping strategies, humour based strategies and goal adjustment strategies should be prominent predictors of SWB (relative to other coping strategies, excluding optimization)	Situational Un-controllability (CON)
5x	Those who optimize more will report higher levels of wellbeing than those who optimize less	Coping Process (C)
5y	Higher endorsement of goal disengagement will correlate with lower levels of wellbeing	Coping Process (C)
5z	Downward goal adjustment will be associated with lower levels of wellbeing than that seen for horizontal goal adjustment	Coping Process (C)
5aa	Males will have a higher number of coping strategies that are significant predictors of wellbeing than females	Coping (G)
5ab	Significant coping predictors of wellbeing for females will be more secondary rather than primary in nature	Coping (G)
#	**Chapter Six – In-Depth Analysis of Coping Strategies**	**Theme**
6a	Optimization's effect on wellbeing will be mediated through subordinate coping strategies	Coping process (C)

6b	Those who optimize more will report a higher number of roles and activities than those who optimize less	(CV)
6c	Those who report a change in goals will endorse goal adjustment strategies more highly than those who do not	(CV)
6d	Those no longer seeking work will endorse goal disengagement more highly than those still seeking work	(CV)
6e	Humour will mediate the effect of compensatory secondary control on SWB	Opportunity & Coping Link (INT)
#	**Chapter Seven – Moderators, Mediators and Regression Predictors of Subjective Wellbeing**	**Theme**
7a	Relationship status will buffer the impact of life events on SWB	Opportunity & Constraint Link (INT)
7b	Relationship status will not buffer the impact of job-related strain on SWB	Situational Un-controllability (CON)
7c	Humour will moderate the impact of other life events and job-related strain on wellbeing	Opportunity & Constraint Link (INT)
7d	Level of job-related strain will moderate the impact of coping strategies on SWB	Coping & Constraint Link (INT)
7e	Entering opportunity and coping variables into regression analysis will lead to drops in the predictive power of constraint variables	Opportunity/Coping & Constraint Link (INT)
7f	Lower levels of financial preparation will negatively impact on non-work related activities, in turn making individuals more susceptible to lower levels of wellbeing.	Opportunity and Constraint Link (INT)
#	**Chapter Eight – Qualitative Feedback**	**Theme**
8a	Themes regarding age discrimination and lack of control over the environment will be common in the sample	Situational Un-controllability (CON)
#	**Chapter 9 – A Focus on Wisdom and Generativity**	**Theme**
9a	As socio-economic status increases, so too will wisdom scores	Age-related Gain (O)
9b	Those with higher levels of life events will report higher wisdom scores	Age-related Gain (O)
9c	As wisdom scores increase so will the reported usage of humour to cope	Age-related Gain (O)
9d	Those with higher wisdom scores will be more likely to be engaged in volunteer work	Age-related Gain (O)
9e	Those with higher levels of wisdom will report higher levels of wellbeing	Age-related Gain (O)
9f	Wisdom will moderate the impact of coping strategies on SWB	Opportunity & Coping Link (INT)
9g	Volunteer workers will report higher levels of optimization than non-volunteers	Opportunity & Coping Link (INT)
9h	Volunteer workers will have higher levels of socio-economic status than non-volunteers	Age-related Gain (O)

Note. Key to higher order themes: (C) = coping process predictions, (CON) = Constraints, (CV) = construct validity, (G) = gender differences, (INT) = Figure 1.4 interlinks, (O) = Opportunities.

Table 2.3.

Quick Reference of Predictions related to Key Themes in the Thesis

Key Themes	Hypotheses Related to Theme	Total
Constraints (CON)		*15*
Stress related variables	5k, 5n, 5p, 5q, 5r, 5s, 5t, 5u, 5v	9
Situational uncontrollability	4k, 4m, 4n, 5w, 7b, 8a	6
Opportunities (O)		*14*
Social resources	5b, 5c, 5e	3
Activities	5g, 5i, 5j, 5l	4
Age-related gains	5h, 9a, 9b, 9c, 9d, 9e, 9h	7
Coping process predictions (C)	5x, 5y, 5z, 6a	4
Gender differences (G)		*19*
Work history	4a, 4b, 4c, 4d, 4e	5
Central identity	4f, 4g, 4h, 5a, 5d, 5m	6
Socialization	4g, 4l, 5f, 5o	4
Coping	4i, 4j, 5aa, 5ab	4
Figure 1.4 Interlinks (INT)		*9*
Opportunities & Constraints	7a, 7c, 7e, 7f	4
Opportunities & Coping	6e, 9f, 9g	3
Coping & Constraints	7d, 7e	2

3

METHOD

Participants

The self-selecting participants were initially solicited for participation in the survey component of the research through a general mail-out from a mailing list database established by the Wellington Work and Age Trust. Three hundred questionnaires were sent out, with a 10% response rate (*N*=30). Later, a press release soliciting participants was issued (Appendix 1) and picked up by 10 or more urban and rural newspapers. This release yielded the majority of respondents (*N*=156). Of the 186 respondents, 12 were excluded due to either incomplete questionnaires or not correctly meeting the inclusion criteria (must be aged between 50 and 65 and have experienced job loss at some point over 50). The remaining 174 individuals comprised 71 females and 103 men. From this sample, a further 81 took part in a later face to face interview (47 males, 34 females).

The number of individuals captured in the current sample was compared with the overall population of individuals aged 50 to 65 who identified themselves as unemployed in the New Zealand 2001 census information. It was found that a total of 16,002 (males = 9,369, females = 6,330) aged 50 to 64 identified themselves as unemployed in 2001 (Statistics New Zealand, 2003). The sample of males and females used in this study each represent 1.1% of these populations respectively.

The sample was predominantly of European descent (166), with 4 Maori and 2 Asian participants. All were drawn from the North Island of New Zealand (greater Wellington Region, Wairarapa, Waikato, Auckland, Whangarei and Hawkes Bay). Regardless of self-selection, a broad range of people responded. Due to the large range of demographic information collected, the sample is described in more depth in the following chapter.

A simple analysis of power, using Cohen (1992) as a quick reference, revealed that the sample size of both male and female participants for both the main study and the wisdom interviews was sufficient to detect medium to large effect sizes (using power of .80 as the benchmark) for the tests carried out in the research, for alpha set at .05. The absence of an overly large sample size minimizes the chances of making a type II error, but there is the possibility of type I errors for medium effect sizes. Therefore alphas between .05 to .10 were considered if any test, in particular, was deemed to have the possibility of a type I error occurring.

Materials, Measures, Coding, and Scale Psychometric Properties

This section not only gives details about the measures used but also describes how they were transformed for use in analysis, through both description of coding practices, and - for scales - details of factor structure and reliability analysis. The measures used in the two stages of data collection (stage 1 – survey, stage 2 – interview) are outlined in turn.

Stage 1: The Survey

The survey mail package consisted of an information sheet inviting participants to take part, highlighting its voluntary nature, and providing some insight into the reason for, and nature of, the study (appendix 2). It also contained an optional response form (appendix 3) which asked the individual to indicate if they a) wished to take part in a prize draw, b) wished to receive a summary sheet of the study's findings, and c) wished to take part in a later face to face interview. A space was provided for contact details if respondents were interested in any of the above. The survey (appendix 4) was accompanied by a reply paid envelope.

The first page of the survey instructed respondents how to answer the questions and advised that it takes approximately 45 minutes to complete. The survey was broken down into four main sections: general information (demographics); job loss and current status; wellbeing and life events; coping. The measures are discussed section by section

(survey questions not covered herein were not analyzed due to lack of variation, sample size, and/or absence of predictive/descriptive value).

Section 1: General Demographics

Sex and age. Sex was coded as males = 1, females = 2. Age was recorded as given.

Relationship status. The values were as follows: married/defacto = 1, single = 2, separated = 3, divorced = 4, widowed = 5. These categories were further collapsed into two categories: involved = 1 (category 1), uninvolved = 2 (categories 2, 3, 4 & 5 combined). Number of years involved and work status of partner was also recorded, the latter coded as: partner working fulltime = 1, working part-time = 2, unemployed = 3.

Parental status. Childless respondents were coded 0, and those with children coded 1. The number of children was also recorded.

Educational status. Responses to this open ended question were coded through content analysis into the categories of 1= no qualifications, 2 = secondary qualifications, 3 = trade qualifications, 4 = polytechnic/diploma qualifications, 5 = bachelors degree, 6 = post-graduate degree.

Ethnicity. New Zealand European was coded as 1, Maori as 2, and Asian as 3. This information was used for demographic interest only due to the majority of respondents being New Zealand European.

Section 2: Job Loss and Current Status

Length of time since job lost. Responses to this open ended question were transformed into months. To aid comparison, time was further categorized into three time spans: 1 = 0 to 6 months, 2 = 6 months to 1 ½ years, and 3 = 1 ½ years and up.

Job status. Respondents were asked to state the title of the job lost. Open-ended responses were coded using the New Zealand Index of Socio-Economic Status (NZSEI, 1999), with 1 = doctors and higher professionals, 2 = teachers, nurses and managerial levels, 3 = specialized jobs and lower management, 4 = clerical level jobs, 5 = machinery operator levels, and 6 = cleaner and labourer levels.

Overall socio-economic status. The two measures of socio-economic status (job status and education level) showed a moderate negative correlation of $r(172) = -.40$, $p < .001$. Given that both job status and education level measures used 6 grades of status/level an overall index of socio-economic status was derived by reverse coding standardized NZSEI scores, and combining them with standardized education scores. Higher scores denoted higher levels of socio-economic status in the resulting measure. This was done to conserve the number of variables used in regression analysis.

Length of time in job lost and length of time in industry. These variables were recorded in months and years and assessed in order to describe the stability of the respondent's work history.

Amount of notice and reason for job loss. Both collected for descriptive purposes, the former was recorded in number of days and further categorized for ease of descriptive reporting (see chapter 4). The latter employed an open-ended question from which categories were created.

Financial preparation at time of job loss. A single 5 point likert-type scale was created which ranged from 1 = not at all unprepared, to 5 = very unprepared. Although multiple item measures of financial status are generally used in job loss research (Ensminger & Celentano, 1988), concerns about survey length restricted measurement. Lack of financial preparation at the time of job loss should contribute to higher levels of ongoing strain. Compensating for a one item measure, finance was combined with pressure to find work to create an overall indicator of strain (details given below). Qualitative comments about finance were also invited and subjected to content analysis.

Number of times unemployed. Respondents indicating no previous unemployment experiences were coded 0, otherwise the number of times unemployed was the recorded value.

Paid work status. Respondents were asked if they worked full-time or part-time. For each variable, respondents were coded as either 0 = not working, or 1 = working. By combining these variables, a work status variable was created as follows: no paid work = 0, part-time = 1, full-time = 3.

Unpaid work status. Respondents were also asked to report whether they were engaged in volunteer work or study. These were coded in the same format given above

for part-time and full-time work (i.e. 0 = no, 1 = yes). In this study, volunteering was seen as an indicator of being a generative individual, as per previous research on generativity by McAdams et al (1997).

Total number of roles. In order to gauge whether involvement in a greater number of roles was beneficial to individuals, an overall composite number of roles were calculated. Roles were identified as: partner, parent, full-time worker, part-time worker, volunteer worker, and student. This enabled a range of 0 to 5 roles.

Seeking work. Respondents were asked if they were actively seeking work. No was coded as 0, yes coded as 1. Apart from providing descriptive information, this information potentially impacts on the predictive value of different coping strategies.

Pressure to find work. Respondents were asked how much pressure there was on them to find work. Responses were coded as 0 = none, 1 = a little, 3 = a lot. It was thought that this variable would encapsulate both objective pressures (i.e. finances, responsibilities) and subjective pressures (work ethic/identity issues).

Strain. This variable combined pressure to find work and level of financial preparation in order to create a composite measure of strain for use in regression analysis. The two variables correlated moderately to $r(167) = .30$, $p < .001$. Both were standardized and then added together.

Increases/decreases in non-work activity and personal growth. Respondents were asked to make open-ended comments about increases and decreases in activity since job loss, and to report on the types of activity affected. They were also asked to report any areas of growth in terms of skills or personal development. This information was subjected to qualitative analysis.

Non-work activity balance. Having already established a measure of work activity, this variable sought to further capture the activity levels of individuals by looking at non-work related activities. The number of activities increased since job loss was recorded, as was the number of decreased activities. Using 0 as a baseline, the number of decreased activities was subtracted from the number of increased activities where applicable, resulting in either a positive or negative value (negative if decreases outweighed increases). Individuals reporting no increases or decreases were given a

value of zero. Further, if, for example, an individual reported 2 decreased activities, but no increased activities, the value recorded was -2.

Section 3: Wellbeing and Life Events

This section contains a) three standardized scales that measure various aspects of subjective wellbeing and b) measures used to assess any other significant life events/transitions the individual may have experienced.

Measures of subjective wellbeing. Each of the scales are outlined below in terms of history, performance (past and present), and suitability for the selected sample. Details are then given on the process followed that resulted in the composite subjective wellbeing outcome measures used in the study.

Center for Epidemiological Studies Depression Scale (CES-D). Created by Radloff (1977), the CES-D is a self-report 20-item scale that assesses the frequency (number of days present) of depressive symptoms in an individual's life within the preceding week. It uses a four-point scale, with items scored between 0 and 3 and totaled scores ranging from 0 and 60. A score of 0 is given to an item when the respondent has felt that way for less than 1 day in the preceding week, 1 = 1-2 days, 2 = 3 to 4 days, and 3 = 5-7 days of the week.

In its uni-dimensional form the 20 items are summed, and the general cut-off for depression is a score of 16 or higher. The creator of the scale reported high internal consistency for the uni-dimensional scale (α = .85 in general populations and α = .90 in clinical samples) and adequate test-retest reliability (r = .45 and .70 respectively) (Radloff, 1977). More recently, Knight, Williams, McGee and Olaman (1997) reported α = .88 on a sample of mid-life women. The overall internal consistency for the current study was α = .92.

The scale has previously been used with the OPS scales (Wrosch & Heckhausen, 1999) and on older populations (Gupta & Yick, 2001; Knight, et al., 1997). There have been mixed findings on the factor structure of the CES-D. Radloff (1977), using a western sample, initially proposed that there were four factors: depressive mood, positive affect, somatic symptoms and interpersonal problems. Latterly, Gupta and Yick (2001),

using a sample of 76 Chinese Immigrants aged over 50 and employing a methodology of confirmatory factor analysis (CFA), found a 3-factor solution: somatic/depressed affect (α .= 74), positive affect (α = .64), and interpersonal/depressed affect (α = .77).

The scale used on this sample was subjected to a number of CFA's, using LISREL 8.5 (Joreskog & Sorbom, 1996), based on the factor structures found by others. For the purpose of interpretation, the goodness-of-fit index (GFI; Joreskog & Sorbom, 1996), the root mean square of approximation (RMSEA; Steiger, 1989) and the comparative fit index (CFI; Bentler, 1990) all measure model fit of the data. GFI's and CFI's above .90 and RMSEA's below .10 demonstrate good model fit.

Gupta and Yick's (2001) 3-factor structure showed the best model fit (RMSEA = .052, GFI = .88, CFI = .94), superior to the uni-dimensional scale (RMSEA = .094, GFI = .80, CFI = .83), therefore, three *subscales* were created: *positive affect* included the scale items 4, 8, 12 and 16 (α .80), *somatic/depressed affect* was measured by items 1, 2, 3, 5, 6, 7, 11, 17, and 20 (α .86), and *interpersonal/depressed affect* was measured by items 9, 10, 13, 14, 15, 18 and 19 (α .81).

As can be seen, the current sample returned higher levels of internal consistency in both uni-dimensional and tri-dimensional forms than has been found in the other referenced papers. The *somatic* and *interpersonal* subscales correlated to r = .75, compared with the correlation of *positive affect* to the two sub-scales of r = .55 and .52 respectively, indicating greater independence for the *positive affect* sub-scale.

Affect Balance Scale (ABS). Developed in the USA by Bradburn (1969), this 10-item scale asks respondents to focus on their feelings over the past few weeks. A dichotomous choice of yes or no is given for each item. Half of the items measure positive affect (items 1, 3, 4, 6, and 9) and half negative affect (items 2, 5, 7, 8, and 10). The positive affect items are each assigned a 1 for yes and a 0 for no, then the total is summed (resulting in a possible range of 0 to 5). The same process is followed for negative affect. A uni-dimensional score is achieved by subtracting the negative affect score from the positive affect score, then adding a constant of 5 to avoid values below zero. The resulting score ranges between 0 (low affect balance) and 10 (high affect balance) (NORC, 1999).

Internal consistency for the uni-dimensional scale has been reported at a less than optimal $\alpha = .64$ in samples of adults from Western European countries (Van Schuur & Kruijtbosch, 1995). Assessment of the two factor model, on a sample of 452 Canadian adults aged 54 to 70, found slightly less than optimal alpha's for positive affect ($\alpha = .62$) and negative affect ($\alpha = .62$), and moderately stable scores over three years ($r = .44$ and $r = .45$ respectively) (Maitland, Dixon, Hultsch & Hertzog, 2001).

The ABS has been widely used on older populations (MacIntosh, 1998). Despite its popularity, there has been substantial debate as to how the scale should be used. Bradburn (1969) originally saw the scale as uni-dimensional, and data from 10 European countries have supported this contention (Van Schuur & Kruijtbosch, 1995). However, others argue that positive affect and negative affect are separate factors that should be treated as such. The superiority of the two-factor model has been demonstrated in British (Warr, Barter & Brownbridge, 1983) and Asian (Devins, Besier, Dion, Pelletier & Edwards, 1997) samples.

In the light of these debates, the ABS was examined in both one and two factor forms to ascertain the best fit. The one factor model (RMSEA = .09, GFI = .91, CFI = .83, $\alpha = .75$) was found to be inferior to the two factor model (RMSEA = .07, GFI = .93, CFI = .89, $\alpha = .68$ for positive affect, $\alpha = .64$ for negative affect). In all cases, internal consistencies for the current sample were superior to those cited in overseas samples. Although the two factor model showed lower levels of internal consistency than the one factor model, this is in part due to fewer items in the two sub-factors. The sub-factors correlated to $r = -.45$, indicating considerable independence.

Life Satisfaction Scale (LSS). The LSS is a 15-item life satisfaction scale used by Leana and Feldman (1992) in a number of studies on the unemployed. Using a 5-point scale, where 1 is very dissatisfied and 5 is very satisfied, individuals are asked to indicate their satisfaction with regard to aspects such as social relationships, family, financial standing, activities and accomplishments. They can also indicate if an item is not applicable. The items are then summed. The uni-dimensional scale has generated an alpha of .83 (Leana & Feldman).

The scale had not previously been subjected to CFA, so was assessed in standard 1, 2 and 3 factor forms. The 2 factor form showed a poor fit. The one factor form

showed the best fit (RMSEA = .09, GFI = .86, CFI = .88) and a superior level of internal consistency (α = .89) to that found by Leana and Feldman (1992). However, the three factor model showed a marginally weaker fit (RMSEA = .11, GFI = .85, CFI = .85), indicating that the scale could be used in both one and three factor forms depending on the level of specificity required.

The three sub-factors identified were *family satisfaction* (items 2, 3 and 7, α = .72), *community/social satisfaction* (items 1, 4, 5, and 8, α = .72) and *career satisfaction* (items 6, 9, 11, 13, 14, and 15, α = .90). Two items were dropped from the subscales, items 10 (the house or apartment you live in) and 12 (your present state of health) both loaded onto the family subscale but reduced levels of internal consistency and were not theoretically homogenous with the other items. Family satisfaction correlated to r = .31 and .34 respectively with community and career satisfaction, which correlated to r = .51 with each other, indicating considerable independence between the sub-scales.

It should be noted that due to the fact that not all of the life satisfaction questions were relevant to all individuals (i.e. satisfaction with children is redundant to those without children), this resulted in only 80 out of 174 fully completed scales. However, it was deemed important that satisfaction with the features present in a person's life should be captured. For this reason, averages were obtained based on the number of items present in each of the sub-factors of life-satisfaction.

Subjective wellbeing (SWB). Having established the optimal factor structure of the three scales, they were then processed through structural equation modeling (using LISREL 8.5, Joreskog & Sorbom, 1996) to assess the degree to which they captured the higher order construct of subjective wellbeing. Two models were tested. These are depicted in Figure 3.1. As can be seen, the first model treats the three measures as separate contributors to SWB, whereas the second model divides the components of the CES-D, ABS and LSS up into positive affect, negative affect and life-satisfaction; in line with Diener's (2000) recommendations for assessing SWB.

The fit of the first model was inferior (RMSEA = .14, GFI = .89, CFI = .88) to the fit of the second model (RMSEA = .11, GFI = .92, CFI = .93), in support of the hypothesis and Diener's (2000) contentions and hypothesis 4b. Further, as predicted in hypothesis 4a, these measures showed adequate model fit in their representation of the

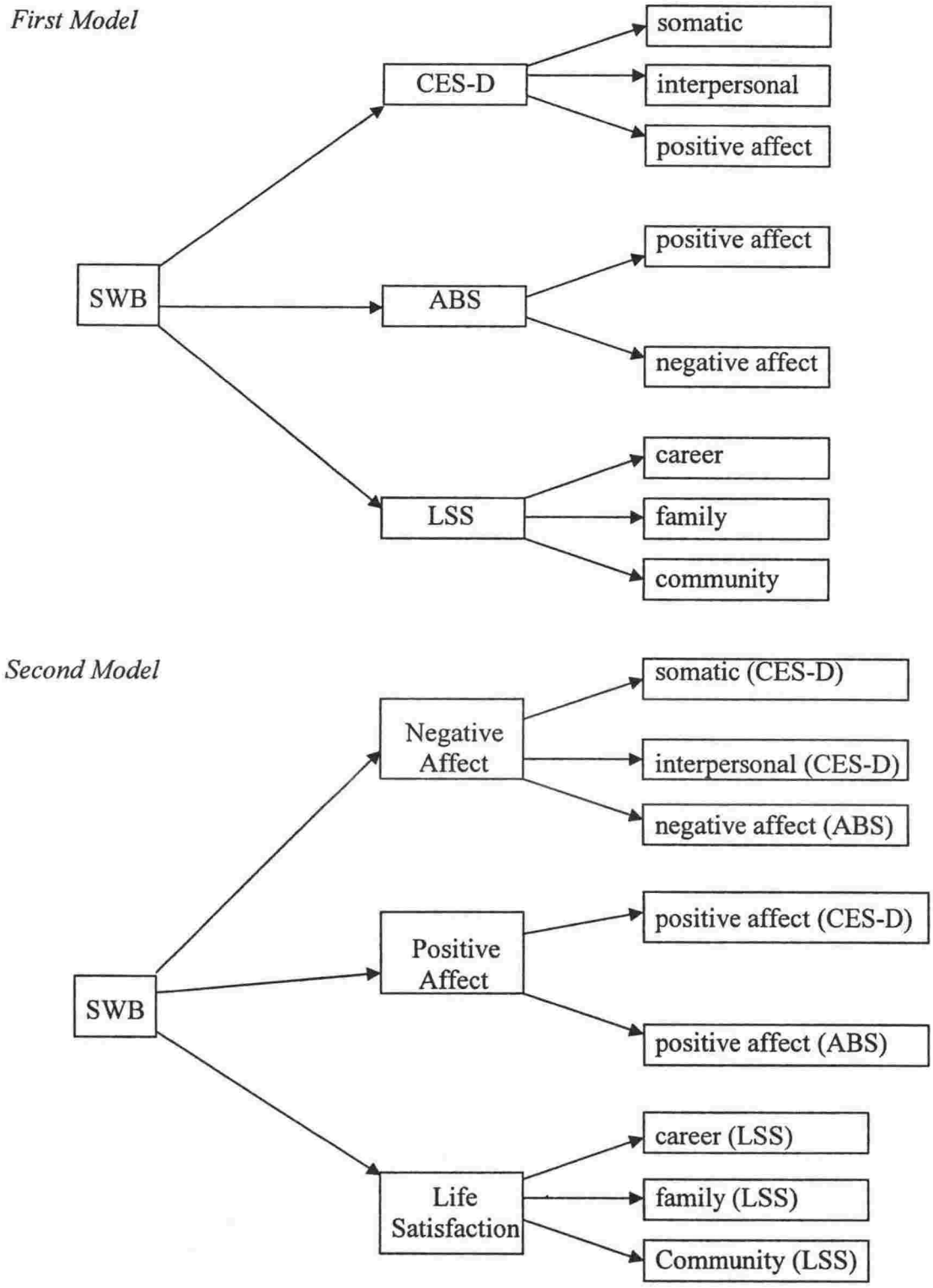


Figure 3.1. Two Alternate Models of Assessing the Higher Order Construct of SWB.

higher order construct of SWB. Diener also proposed that the three factors should correlate to approximately .50. Although the correlations tended to be larger, ranging from $r = .57$ to .68, there still appears to be adequate independence.

Based on this information, four main outcome measures were created for the study. To create *negative affect* the subscales from the first component outlined in the second model were standardized to equalize their contribution and added together. The same method was employed to create the measures of *positive affect* from the second component, and *life satisfaction* from the third. Finally, an overall measure of *SWB* was created by reverse coding *negative affect* and adding it to *positive affect* and *life satisfaction*. To check that all three components made equal contributions to SWB the correlations were assessed, and revealed approximately consistent input from all three components (range of $r = .84$ to .89). For more in-depth information on the process of obtaining the outcome measures used in this study, refer to Brown, Jose, Ng and Guo (2002), which is based on the data in this study.

Other life events/transitions. Respondents were asked to report on up to three *major* additional events/transitions (open-ended) that had occurred in the previous two years, and asked to weight them in terms of impact (none = 0, small = .5, moderate = 1, large = 1.5) and whether the impact was positive (1), mixed (2) or negative (3). To current knowledge, the variable 'mixed' is new to the measurement of life events.

An arbitrary decision was made that three events would be sufficient to capture major events in the past two years. The information gathered was transformed into a number of variables. The *overall number of life events* (range 0 to 3) was recorded, as was the *overall impact of events* (range 0 to 4.5). *Number* and *impact of positive, mixed* and *negative events* was also recorded. In order to ascertain the overall degree to which individuals experienced additional events as positive or negative, the variable *event -/+ balance* was created by assigning individuals a constant of 5 (baseline) and adding the impact of positive events and subtracting impact of negative events (range .50 to 9.50). Zero events or mixed events did not alter movement away from baseline. It was considered that mixed events contain both positive and negative valence that cancel out the impact of the event for the purposes of this variable.

The events recorded by respondents were subjected to content analysis. The range of categories identified was used in the qualitative component of the analysis. In order to test the prediction that positive family events have greater predictive power than positive non-family events, events were categorized into family events and non-family events. With the exception of overall number and impact of events, the same variables described in the previous paragraph were calculated for family and non-family events separately. Specifically, separate *event -/+ balance* scores were created for family and non-family events.

Section 4: Coping

This section measures coping using two scales (the OPS Job-Loss Scale and the Coping Humour Scale). It also asks a number of questions, in primarily open-ended format, that cover coping preferences, emotional changes, goals and how they have changed, and plans for the future. The two scales are outlined first.

Job-Loss Specific OPS Scale (OPS-JL). This 26-item coping strategy scale measures different facets of coping and asks respondents to indicate the extent to which they believe a 'coping statement' is applicable to them if faced with a particular situation (situations are stated in the items). It utilizes a 5 point likert-type scale, ranging from 1 = almost never true to 5 = almost always true (where don't know is assigned as a missing value). Scoring is derived from a mean value across the items for each of the coping sub-scales (Heckhausen, et al., 1998).

It is an adaptation of the 'Optimization in Primary and Secondary Control Scales (OPS-Scales)', developed in Germany by Heckhausen, et al. (1998). The components of the scale have been shown to translate well to English, using an American sample (Heckhausen, 1999). The scale was made job loss specific in line with literature that indicates domain-specific scales yield more accurate ratings of control than general scales (Wrosch & Heckhausen, 1999).

Twenty of the items in the scale were adapted from Heckhausen et al (1998) and 6 were created in conjunction with Heckhausen, for inclusion in the scale. Coping strategies were clustered into theoretical subtypes. From the six new items, two theoretical categories were created - *compensatory primary goal adjustment (CPGA)*

(items 7, 12 and 22) and *compensatory secondary goal adjustment (CSGA)* (items 5, 10 and 17). These deal with attitudes and action toward taking different types of jobs and jobs with less pay or prestige.

The remaining 20-items on the scale relate to variants of optimization, selection and compensation. *Optimization* is measured by items 15, 18, 19 and 26. These respectively evaluate the ability to prioritize problem focus (15) and maintain diversity (18, 19, and 26). These are the only items not explicitly linked to job loss, in line with the higher order nature of optimization (Heckhausen et al., 1998).

Selective primary control is measured by items 6, 9, 13 and 25. These respectively evaluate the ability to focus on goals by sharpening skills, working hard, investing time in job search, and trying harder in the face of difficulty. *Selective secondary control* is measured by items 1, 2, 8 and 21. These items respectively evaluate tenacity and focus on selected goals, using future achievement satisfaction as a motivator, confidence for goal achievement, and keeping goal benefits in mind as a motivator.

Compensatory primary control is measured by items 3, 16, 23 and 24. These respectively measure if the individual will ask others for advice, use unusual means to achieve goals, ask others for help, and find alternative means to attain what is wanted. *Compensatory secondary control* is measured by items 4, 11, 14 and 20. These respectively measure the making of downward social comparisons, the ability to disengage from unobtainable goals, absolving self from blame, and thinking of other areas of success.

Although the theoretical groupings of items are outlined above, coping has an idiosyncratic nature that requires a balance of theory and exploration. Therefore, in order to accurately capture the nature of coping in this sample, the strategies were subjected to factor analysis using varimax rotation, where loadings of .40 or higher on a factor were deemed suitable for inclusion. Due to optimization being a higher order strategy that was not job-loss specific and would associate with the majority of lower order coping sub-types, it was not included in the overall factor analysis. Rather, the four optimization items were separately assessed.

Factor analysis on the higher order sub-scale optimization. Factor analysis returned a single factor. All items loaded to above .40, however items 18, 19, and 26

(maintain diversity) showed loadings ranging between .73 and .78, while item 15 (prioritize problem focus) loaded to only .50. The latter item showed weak inter-correlation compared to the other items and removal of this item raised internal consistency from $\alpha = .65$ to a more acceptable $\alpha = .69$. Therefore, it was decided to drop item 15 from optimization, but it was included in the factor analysis of the lower order coping strategies.

Factor analysis of the lower order coping strategies. The analysis of the remaining factors was conducted in two rounds because, theoretically, the coping strategies are not just defined in terms of optimization, selection and compensation, but also in terms of primary and secondary control. This means the strategies may present their structure in two layers. Details of the first round are given in Table 3.1.

First round. The twenty three coping strategies were entered into factor analysis. An initial run found 7 factors with eigenvalues over 1. This took 23 iterations and the structures were weak and confusing. Therefore, it was decided to restrict the number of factors to be found. Restricting the number to 3 factors showed the best fit, converging in 6 iterations. Table 3.1 gives details of the items that loaded over .40 on each of the 3 factors. Where an item failed to load above .40 on any factor its highest loading value is given in brackets.

As can been seen in Table 3.1, all of the goal adjustment items (whether primary or secondary) loaded on the second factor. Therefore, this factor was named *Goal Adjustment*. All of the primary control items (whether compensation or selection) loaded on the first factor and the factor was therefore named *Primary Control*. Likewise, the secondary control items (whether compensation or selection) loaded on the third factor, named *Secondary Control*. One of the secondary control items (8) clearly loaded with primary control. The treatment required for problem items 1, 4, 11 and 15 (i.e. loading on two factors, weak loadings and the optimization item) was clarified in the second round of factor analysis.

Table 3.1.

First Round of Factor Analysis on OPS-Scale Lower Order Coping Strategies

Item	Coping Type	First Factor	Second Factor	Third Factor
1	SS	.48		.42
2	SS			.50
3	CP	.72		
4	CS			(.38)
5	GA(S)		.68	
6	SP	.42		
7	GA(P)		.76	
8	SS	.69		
9	SP	.65		
10	GA(S)		.63	
11	CS			(.34)
12	GA(P)		.67	
13	SP	.70		
14	CS			.57
15	OP			.65
16	CP	.54		
17	GA(S)		.54	
20	CS			.51
21	SS			.52
22	GA(P)		.68	
23	CP	.67		
24	CP	.68		
25	SP	.75		

Note. SS = selective secondary; SP = selective primary; CS = compensatory secondary; CP = compensatory primary; GA(S) = goal adjustment secondary; GA(P) = goal adjustment primary; OP = optimization.

Second round. In the second round the number of factors required was not specified. Factors with eigenvalues over 1 are reported. Details of the factor loadings are given in Table 3.2 (more specific details of the content of the items in each sub-scale and internal consistency ratings for both the first and second rounds are given in Figure 3.2). The first round factor *goal adjustment* produced 2 factors and converged in 3 iterations. Two of the items in the first factor refer to trying out different types of jobs. Item 10 referred to prestige and was removed from the first factor as doing so increased internal consistency from $\alpha = .71$ to .80. It was decided to call this factor *horizontal goal adjustment*, as it consists of items that capture a shift in goals which are not necessarily downward in nature. The second factor consisted of items that were clearly downward in nature and was called *downward goal adjustment.*

For the first round factor *secondary control* it was decided that the weak items - 4 and 11 - should be included in the second round analysis of secondary control because they loaded highest on this factor. Further, the optimization item (15) had loaded here, so was also included. The second round produced 3 factors and converged in six iterations. The first factor comprised of selective secondary control items. Although item 1 was found to load on two of the first round factors, it loaded more heavily with the selective secondary control items in the second round and complimented internal consistency, so was included here. The items appeared to largely refer to thoughts aimed at increasing motivation, and it was decided to call this factor *goal motivation.*

The second factor comprised of compensatory secondary control items and one optimization item. It was decided to leave the optimization item in as it raised internal consistency from .36 to .49. It was also in keeping with the theme of the other items. While it was conceptualized to measure the avoidance of dead ends (Heckhausen et al., 1998), it was thought that respondents may have focused on the item more in terms of whether or not they tended to ruminate over problems in general. Due to the nature of the items this factor was called *accepting loss*. While item 4 loaded weakly in the first round, it showed a stronger fit with this accepting loss in the second round. Item 4 also showed a very poor level of internal consistency when compared with item 11 ($\alpha = .16$). Rather, item 11 appears to be an entity in its own right, as it is a measure of *goal*

disengagement, and given its poor loading in the first round it was decided to not group it under the heading of *secondary control*.

Table 3.2.

Second Round of Factor Analysis on OPS-Scale Lower Order Coping Strategies

Items	Coping Type	First Factor	Second Factor	Third Factor
Goal Adjustment				
5	GA(S)	.83		
7	GA(P)	.89		
10	GA(S)	.61		
12	GA(P)		.75	
17	GA(S)		.75	
22	GA(P)		.71	
Secondary Control				
1	SS	.77		
2	SS	.82		
4	CS		.52	.54
11	CS			.72
14	CS		.52	
15	OP		.73	
20	CS		.75	
21	SS	.59		
Primary Control				
1	SS	.61		
3	CP		.85	
6	SP	.56		
8	SS	.67		
9	SP	.63		
13	SP	.69		
16	CP	.72		
23	CP		.91	
24	CP	.54	.55	
25	SP	.68		

Note. SS = selective secondary; SP = selective primary; CS = compensatory secondary; CP = compensatory primary; GA(S) = goal adjustment secondary; GA(P) = goal adjustment primary; OP = optimization.

The first round factor *primary control* produced two factors and converged in 3 iterations. The second factor was clearly interpersonal in nature and was termed *seeking*

support. Although item 24 loaded on both factors, it was not support focused so was included in factor 1. The first factor included items measuring selective secondary, selective primary and compensatory primary control.

It was thought that the selective secondary item (8) loaded here because of its decisive nature (i.e. I know I will achieve the goal), making it more strongly associated with action based strategies. Selective secondary and primary control strategies have been found to have close associations in previous OPS research (Heckhausen, 1999). Further, in keeping with the predictions made in Chapter 1 about the relationship between compensatory primary and selective primary control, it appears that certain compensatory items do not discriminate from what is, regardless of the method used, the pursuit of a goal. Therefore, this factor was called *Goal Pursuit*.

In summary, the factor structure of the OPS-JL indicated that, in general, the theoretical structure of the coping strategies was supported, with the boundaries between primary and secondary control and goal adjustment almost exclusively delineated in the first round. In the second round, the idiosyncratic nature of coping made itself known, though the strategies had a tendency to form into the coping sub-types of compensatory secondary, compensatory primary, selective secondary and selective primary control. The goal adjustment items chose to align not with primary or secondary sub-types but instead with adjustments that were either clearly downward or those that may simply represent a horizontal shift in goal seeking.

Figure 3.2 provides a brief descriptor of the item numbers and item content in each sub-scale (see appendix 4 for specific wording of each item). The sub-scales *goal pursuit*, *seeking support* and *horizontal goal adjustment* all have adequate levels of consistency (above .70). Borderline consistency (close to .70) is seen for *optimization* and *downward goal adjustment*. The weakest areas of consistency are the two secondary control factors, in particular the factor *accept loss*.

Coping Humour Scale (CHS). Developed by Martin and Lefcourt (1983) this 7 item measure assesses the degree to which individuals use humour to cope with stressful situations. Utilizing a 4-point scale, ranging from strongly agree (1) to strongly disagree (4), possible scores range from 7 to 28. Five items indicate the use of humour, while two (items 1 & 4) indicate a lack of humour and are reverse scored. Typically, scoring is

achieved by summing the 7 items. High scores indicate a higher use of humour in stressful situations. Humour has previously been found to exert a moderating effect between stress and psychological wellbeing (Lefcourt & Martin, 1986). The scale has yielded Cronbach Alpha's of .60 to .70 (Martin & Lefcourt).

In the current sample, the observed alpha for the total scale was $\alpha = .75$. However, factor analysis using varimax rotation yielded two distinct factors. Items 1 and 4 clearly distinguished themselves from the other items, therefore it was decided to treat these as a separate variable, titled *lack of humour* ($\alpha = .66$). The remaining items loaded highly together and this factor was titled *use of humour* ($\alpha = .83$).

Primary/secondary control confidence/preference. Two questions were created in order to ascertain whether there were any systematic differences between having "more confidence for using" or "a preference to use" either primary or secondary control coping strategies. Respondents were asked, in each case, to indicate whether they endorsed primary or secondary control. Respondents indicating primary control were coded 1, secondary control = 2. Qualitative comment was also invited.

Emotional changes. Respondents were asked to indicate if they had experienced any changes in the ability to cope emotionally over time. If they indicated yes, they were invited to make comment on these changes. Comments were subjected to content analysis.

Goals and goal changes. In order to get qualitative content on issues such as goal adjustment, individuals were asked to comment on what they did when they first lost their job. They were then asked if they were still doing the same things. Those indicating no were coded 1 and were asked to comment on what changes had occurred, those indicating yes were coded 2. Qualitative comments were subjected to content analysis.

Future plans. In order to capture future plans and outlook, respondents were asked to comment on their plans for the future. Respondents were subjected to content analysis.

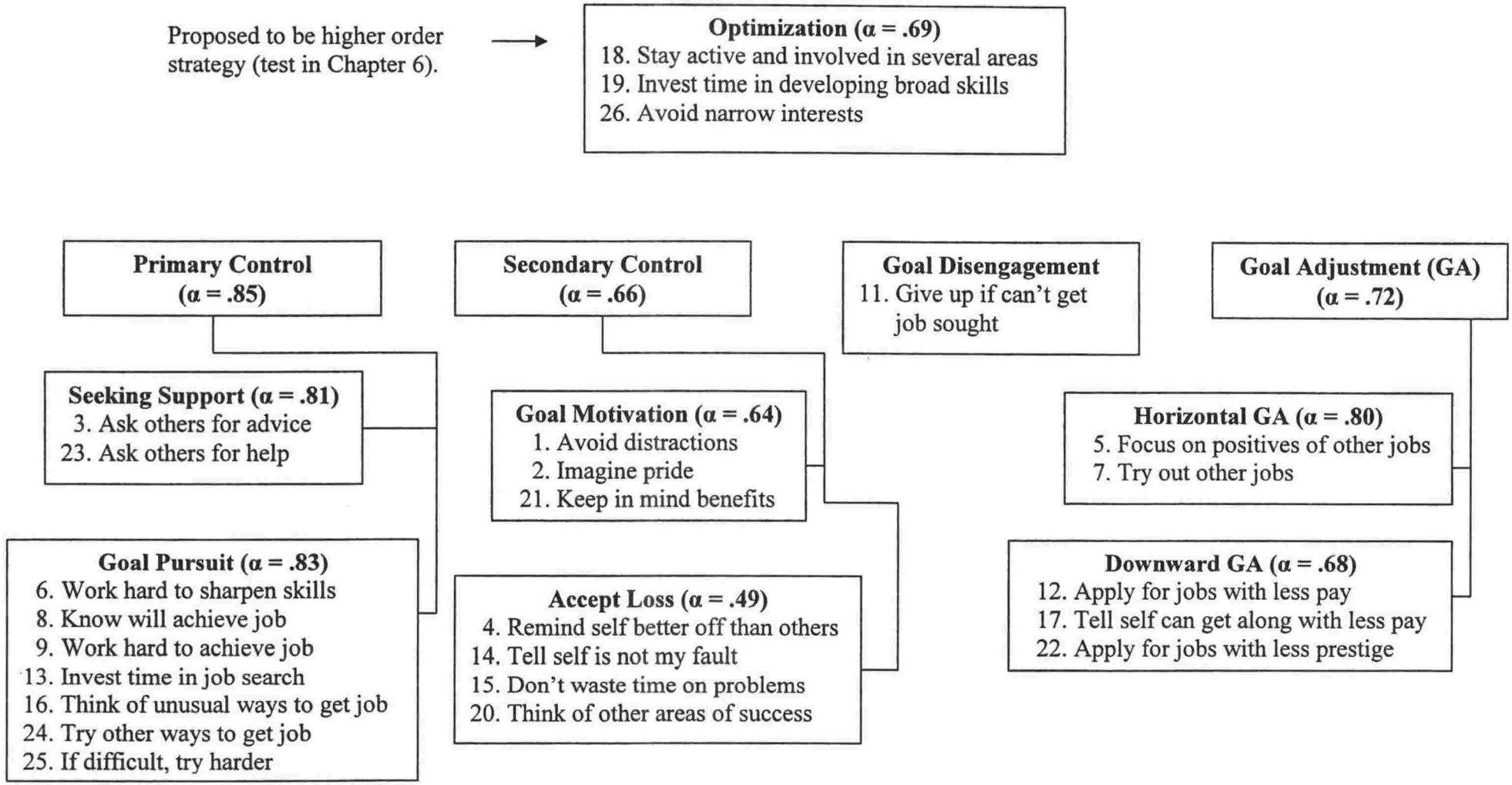


Figure 3.2. Factor Structure and Internal Consistency of the OPS-JL

Stage 2: The Life-Planning Interview (Wisdom)

This measure obtains individualized responses to another person's hypothetical problem. Individuals are given standardized conditions and asked to think aloud while responses are recorded for later transcription (see interview instructions in appendix 5). Transcribed information is evaluated by a panel of 10 judges, with typically two judges rating only one of the five wisdom-related criteria (rich factual knowledge; rich procedural knowledge; life span contextualism; relativism; and uncertainty) using a 7-point scale. Judges' ratings are calibrated during training sessions, based on the use of a standardized manual (Staudinger, Smith & Baltes, 1994).

This method of rating reported test-retest reliability over 12 months of between .65 and .94. Inter-correlation between the five criteria ranges from .50 to .77 (Baltes & Staudinger, 2000). The wisdom manual provided a choice of four hypothetical scenarios and respondents are typically given more than one scenario, with both life planning and life review skills evaluated.

Given that a single thesis student does not have access to the breadth of resources available to the research institute in which the measure was created, the assessment of wisdom in the current study was limited - only life planning was assessed, with three judges (instead of 10) used to score the data. The three judges consisted of the author, one 50-65 year old male, and one 50-65 year old female. These three judges rated all five of the criteria. The scenario selected was chosen because the main character was age congruent with the sample, and the situation faced was unexpected.

A scoring template was created to aid marking of the transcripts, where each facet of each criterion was given a score out of 7 from which averages were derived for each of the criteria (appendix 6). The inter-rater reliability was assessed across the three judges for each of the criteria. This was based on 60 cases only, as the first 21 cases had been worked on as a group. As seen in Table 3.3, rich factual knowledge and rich procedural knowledge reached acceptable levels of reliability, but the three remaining criteria were less than acceptable.

In order to increase confidence in the ratings, it was decided to evaluate the judges' ratings on each criterion for each respondent. If values were reasonably similar across all three judges then the average of the three scores was used for that criterion.

However, if for example, two judges had scores of 6.5 and 6.25 but one had a score of 2.5 for a criterion, then the average of the two similar scores was used and the divergent score discounted. Hence, the majority consensus was deemed most valid. This practice was adopted after initial group discussions consistently found that the diverging judge had missed criteria that the other two judges had picked up on.

Table 3.3.

Inter-rater Reliability for the Five Wisdom Criteria

Criteria	Alpha
Rich factual knowledge	.73
Rich procedural knowledge	.70
Life-span contextualism	.64
Value relativism	.68
Uncertainty	.46

Inter-correlation between the five subsets was .82 to .92, notably higher than those found by Baltes and Staudinger (2000). This is probably due to the fact that judges rated each of the criteria for each individual, instead of focusing on just one criteria instead. The five criteria were added together then divided by 5, resulting in a variable titled *wisdom* that had a possible score range between 1 (low wisdom) and 7 (high wisdom).

Procedure

Pilot Study

An initial pilot study was conducted on 5 individuals, (males = 3, females = 2). Age spanned from 52 to 63, with an average age of 59 years. Educational attainment was to tertiary level for 3 of the participants, and previous jobs held of middle to upper class range for all but one unskilled worker. Average length of time unemployed was 3.5 years. A flyer requesting participants (Appendix 7) was posted at the Work and Age

Trust in Wellington and the Mature Students Association at Victoria University. The flyer generated three participants; the other two participants were obtained via word of mouth.

The pilot interview differed from the structure for the main data collection. Both the survey questionnaire and life-planning interview were conducted together in a face to face interview. This allowed for direct feedback on all measures used. After each pilot, the measures were adjusted in terms of any rewording (in order to clarify or be more sensitive) and/or addition/subtraction of measures. The most notable change was the replacement of the term 'wisdom' with the term 'life-planning' as respondents tended to feel uncomfortable if they thought their wisdom was being assessed.

The interviews took approximately two hours to complete. Due to fatigue concerns, it was decided that the main data collection would be divided into the survey questionnaire and the life-planning interview. Due to the rating procedure for the life-planning interview being so thorough, and the greater reliability of data gathered in face to face interviews (Kviz, Clark, Crittenden, Warnecke & Freels, 1995), the segregation of data collection allowed for smaller numbers required for the life-planning task, increasing efficiency in terms of time and costs.

Main Study

In addition to the previously outlined selection procedure for participants, the majority of individuals who indicated interest in participating in the second stage of the study were contacted by telephone and an interview time was arranged. Not all interested respondents were contacted due to time and funding limitations. Respondents were interviewed in their homes throughout the North Island of New Zealand. Responses were recorded on a dictaphone. In some cases, other family members were present, but were asked not to comment on the interview process. At the beginning of each recording the individual's subject number was recorded so results could be linked back to the questionnaire data. Interview times ranged from 30 minutes to 1 hour, depending on how much the respondent had to say. Results from the interview were then transcribed and paper-based copies were provided to each of the three judges for scoring.

Those who indicated, on their optional response form, that they were interested in entering a prize draw were entered in one of 13 prize draws for a $50 petrol voucher. This was also applicable to pilot survey participants. Each draw was made up of 20 individuals. Respondents were entered into more than one prize draw if they had taken part in both stages of the data collection. Prize draws consisted of 20 individuals, each assigned a number between 1 and 20. The winning number was drawn from an envelope. Winners were sent their vouchers along with feedback on the results of the study.

Variables to Enter into Figures 1.3 and 1.4

Given that a number of variable names have been created in this chapter, Figures 1.3 and 1.4 from chapter 1 have been replicated here (as Figures 3.3 and 3.4 respectively) with the new variable names inserted. This should focus the reader on the variables assessed in this study and allow him/her to tie variables clearly back to the research framework. A proviso on Figure 3.4 is that event balance has been placed under age-graded constraints. Given that the event balance measure contains both positive and negative events, it is potentially a source of constraint (i.e. negative events); however, positive events may generate opportunities, so the event balance measure should be conceptualized as lying between constraints and opportunities.

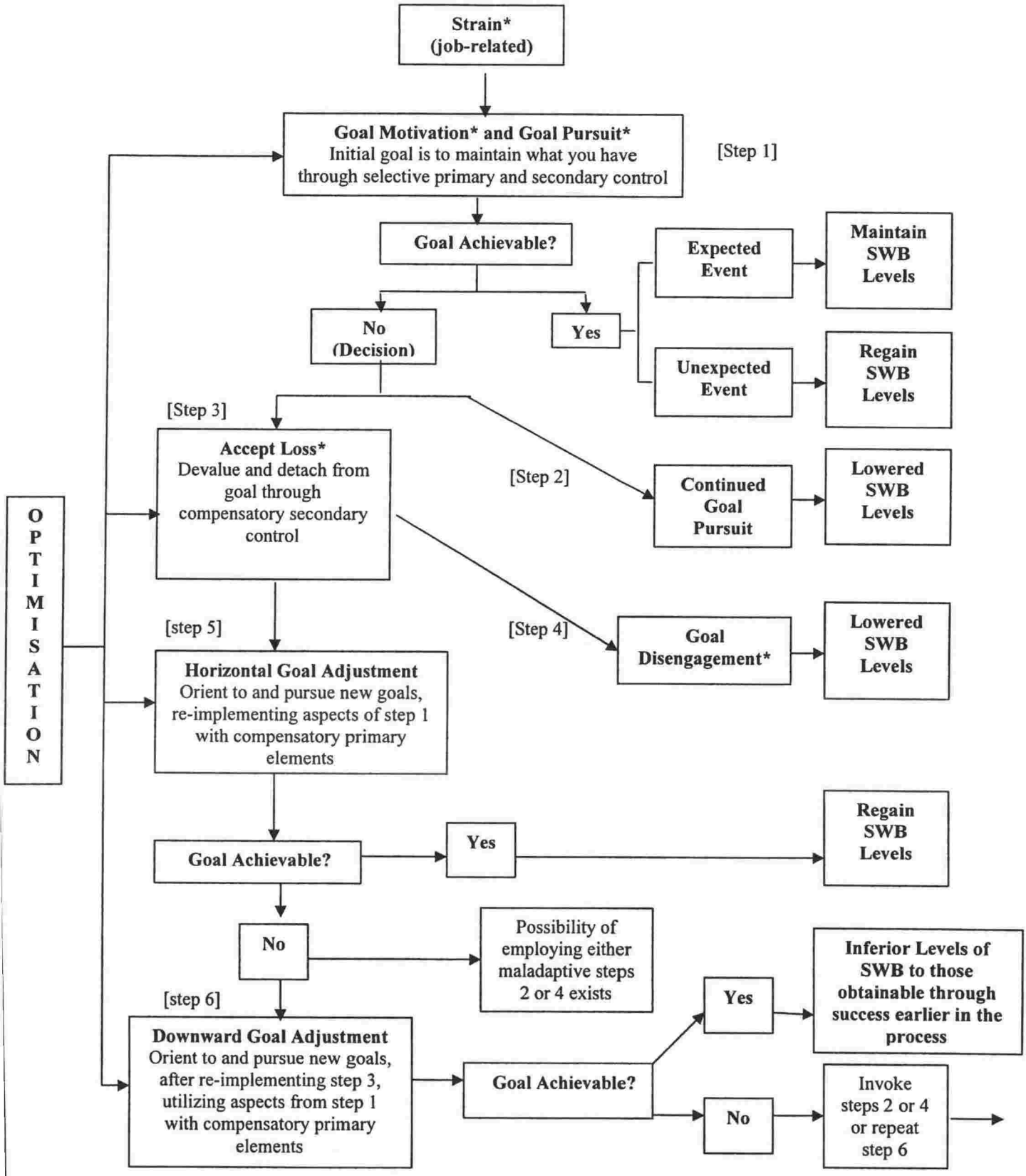


Figure 3.3. Figure 1.3 Adapted to Include New Variable Names from Chapter Three (*Note*. *newly inserted variable names).

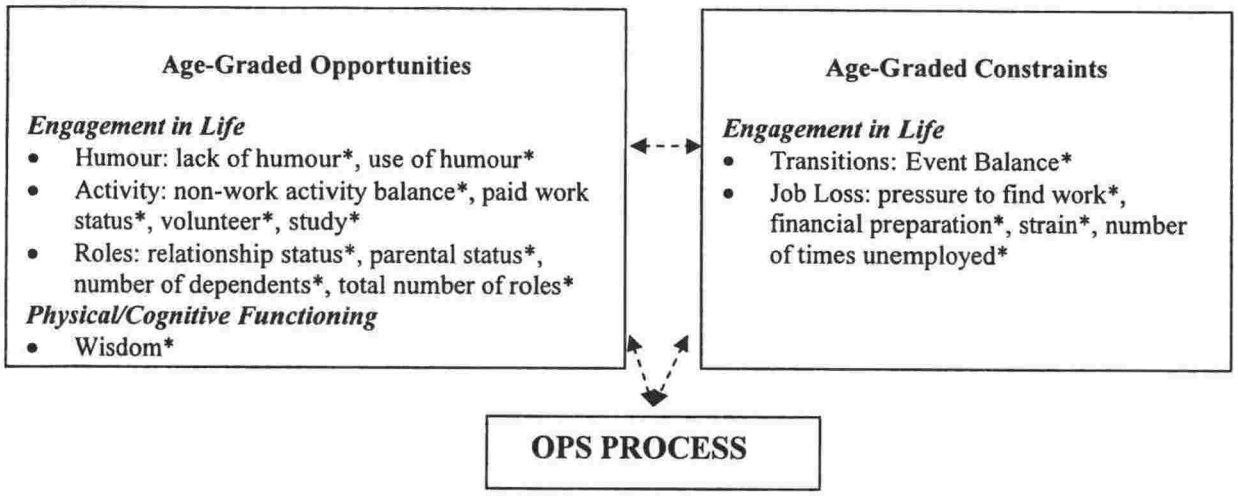


Figure 3.4. Figure 1.4 Adapted to Include New Variable Names from Chapter Three (*Note.* *newly inserted variable names - areas not tested have been removed from this figure).

4

DESCRIPTIVE SUMMARY OF PARTICIPANTS

The purpose of this chapter was four-fold. Firstly, it sought to give an accurate description of the sample. Secondly, it aimed to explore and test predictions of systematic differences between males and females that were argued to result from differences in identity, work/life histories, socialization and coping, in order to justify treating the sexes separately in later analysis. Thirdly, it sought to establish whether predicted patterns were present that supported the key argument that individuals in this sample were faced with confines to situational control. Fourthly, it aimed to assess whether the sample characteristics challenged or upheld stereotypes held by employers about the older worker. An alpha level of 5% or below was deemed significant for all statistical tests used in this study.

Results

General Demographics

Variables covered herein were age, relationship status, partner's work status, and parental status. Each area was addressed in turn below.

Age. The males in the sample had a mean age of 57.3 years (SD = 3.99), similar to that observed for females (M = 56.8, SD = 3.86). Creation of three age bands, each approximately five years in length (see Table 4.1), indicated that males were evenly dispersed across age bands, whereas females were most common in the middle age bracket, and tended to be under-represented in the highest age bracket. Despite these trends, males and females did not differ significantly in age distribution.

Relationship status. As seen in Figure 4.1, a sizeable proportion of the sample were involved in a relationship. Males were more likely to be partnered than females, who in turn were more likely to be represented in three of the four categories of single

status. When the data was dichotomized into involved and un-involved status, a 2x2 chi-square confirmed that women (52.1%) were significantly more likely to be single than men (17.5%), $X2(1,170) = 59.42$, $p < .001$. On average, partnered males reported being in their relationships for 27.22 years, compared to 30.62 for females. These averages did not differ significantly.

Table 4.1

Distribution of Males and Females across Age Categories

Age Category	Males N=103	Females N=71	Overall N=174
50 to 54	31 (30%)	20 (28.2%)	51 (29.3%)
55 to 59	36 (35%)	33 (46.5%)	69 (39.7%)
60 to 65	36 (35%)	15 (21.1%)	51 (29.3%)
Undisclosed	0	3 (4.2%)	3 (1.7%)

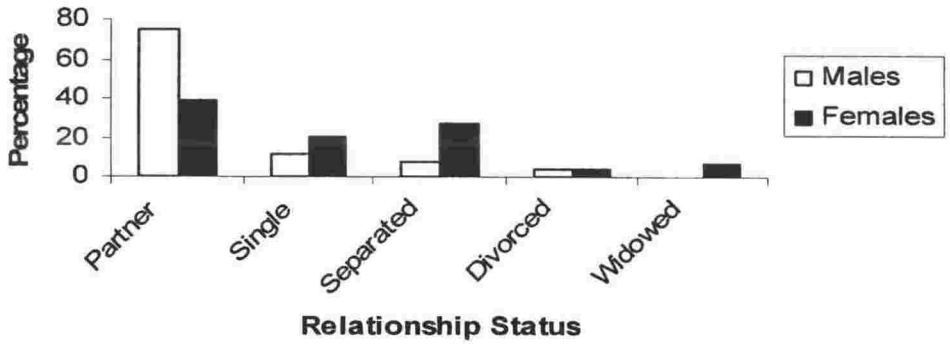


Figure 4.1. Relationship Status for Men and Women

Partner's work status. Table 4.2 detailed the work status of the partners of participants in relationships. As can be seen, partners of males were relatively evenly distributed across the three levels of work status, whereas for females partners were more likely to be either working full time or unemployed. Females were moderately more likely to have a partner in full time work, whereas males were notably more likely to have

a partner working part-time. Overall, the distributions produced a significant difference, $X2(2,104) = 8.77, p = .012$.

Table 4.2

Observed Frequency of Partners Work Status for Partnered Males and Females

Partner's Status	Males	Females	Overall
Work full-time	26 (29.6)	14 (10.4)	40
Work part-time	29 (23)	2 (8)	31
Unemployed	22 (24.4)	11 (8.6)	33
Overall	77	27	104

Note. One case missing. Expected frequencies in brackets.

Relationship between partner's work status and age. A one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was conducted to ascertain whether age varied with partner's work status. Due to the limited number of involved females, and preliminary analysis that revealed similar trends for both sexes, the overall sample was used in the analysis. The test produced a significant result, $F(2,100) = 9.95$, $p < .001$. A Tukey post-hoc test indicated that those with partners working full-time ($M = 55.4$, $SD = 3.54$) were significantly younger than those with partners working part-time ($M = 57.68$, $SD = 3.80$) or who were unemployed ($M = 59.24$, $SD = 3.62$). Part-time and unemployed status did not differ from one another.

Parental status. The majority had children (men 74.8%, women 64.8%), with only 16.1% reporting dependent children. The number of children ranged from 0 to 9, with the majority having either 2 (33.9%) or 3 (17.2%) offspring. Males and females did not differ on any of the variables related to parental status.

Work-related Demographics

Work-related variables were broken down into four main areas: work history, circumstances surrounding job loss, current work and non-work activity levels, and unemployment strain variables. Each area is assessed in turn.

Work History

The variables covered herein provide a general background of the participants' work history. Variables of relevance include level of educational attainment, status of job lost, overall socio-economic status (SES), length of time in the job lost, how long worked in related industries, and the number of times individuals' previously experienced unemployment.

Educational status. As seen in Figure 4.2, there was reasonable representation across all levels of educational attainment, with the exception of a tendency toward under-representation for no qualifications. Secondary qualifications were the most common level of attainment for both sexes. Approximately 50% of the sample had a trade qualification or lower.

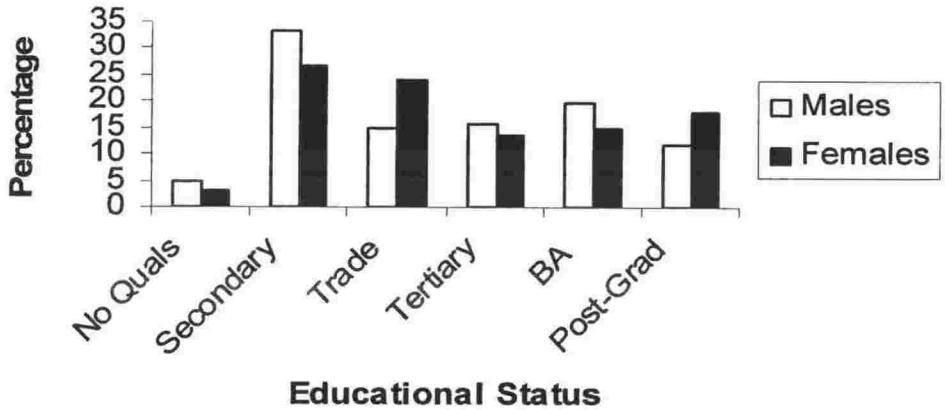


Figure 4.2. Educational Status for Males and Females

Job status. Table 4.3 shows the distribution of the participants across the New Zealand Socio-Economic Index (NZSEI, 1999), as rated by the status afforded to the job title respondents provided for the job they had lost. As can be seen, most of the occupations were of average to high status, with higher representation in clerical level jobs for females. Overall, there was no significant difference between the rankings of males and females. There was a moderate correlation between the NZSEI and education

level, $r(165) = -.40$, $p < .001$, indicating that higher levels of educational attainment coincide with higher levels of job status. The combination of education and job status (overall socio-economic status) did not show a significant difference between males and females.

Table 4.3

Status of Job Lost for Males and Females

Rank	Males N=102	Females N=70	Overall N=172
1	8 (7.9%)	9 (12.9%)	17 (9.9%)
2	42 (41.2%)	18 (25.7%)	60 (34.8%)
3	37 (36.3%)	27 (38.6%)	64 (37.2%)
4	7 (6.9%)	14 (20%)	21 (12.2%)
5	6 (5.8%)	2 (2.8%)	8 (4.7%)
6	2 (1.9)	-	2 (1.2%)

Note. Two missing cases. Percentages in brackets. Rank: 1 = higher professionals, 2 = lower professionals, 3 = specialized/lower management, 4 = clerical level, 5 = machinery operator level, 6 = labourer level.

Time in job. As can be seen in Figure 4.3, a sizeable number of both males and females were in the position lost for less than 5 years. The skewed data revealed a median of 9 years for males and 6 years for females. The overall trend showed a decrease in frequencies as the number of years increased for females. The pattern was less consistent for males. A 1-tailed independent samples t-test, using standardised scores, indicated that males (M=.19, SD=1.1) reported being in their jobs for longer than females (M=-.28, SD=.74), $t(170) = 3.09$, $p < .001$, supporting hypothesis 4a.

Length of time in industry. While the length of time spent in the job lost gives an indication of how long individuals held a certain position, this may only refer to one position of many held within the same firm or industry. Therefore, data on the length of time in the industry was also collected.

As can be seen in Figure 4.4, the distribution across the number of years has changed from those seen in Figure 4.3. Overall, representation in the 0 to 5-year category drops from 43.3% for length of time in job to 13.2% for length of time in industry. The

central tendency of the skewed data indicated that males (*Median* = 24) spent a greater number of years in their industries than females (*Median* = 15). Utilising standardised scores, this difference between males (M=13, SD=1.01) and females (M=-.19, SD=.95) was significant, $t(167) = 2.08, p = .04$, in further support of hypothesis 4a.

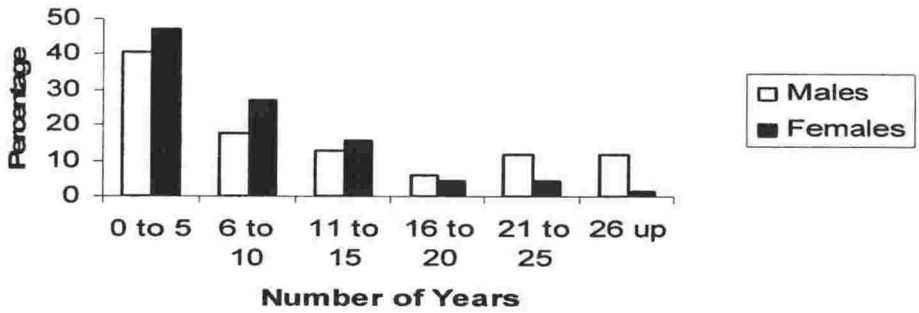


Figure 4.3. Length of Time in Job Lost for Males and Females

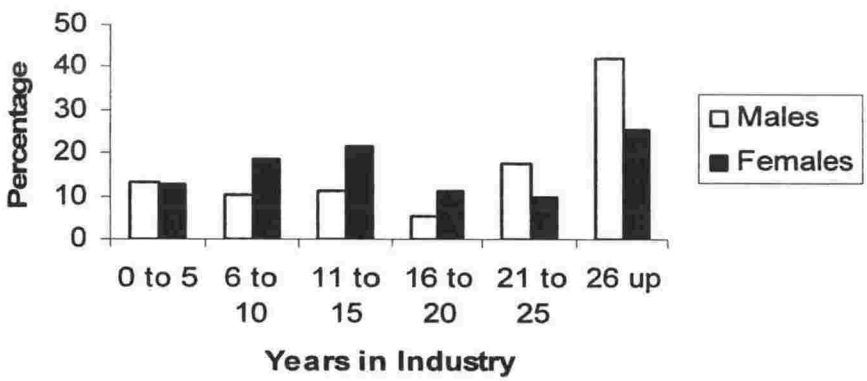


Figure 4.4. Length of Time in Industry for Males and Females

Number of times unemployed. The most concrete way to ascertain job stability is to establish how many times the individual has previously been unemployed. Consideration of this, in tandem with length of time in the job and the industry, also allows some general conclusions to be made about whether certain categories of

individuals may have entered the workforce at a later stage in life, due to child-rearing responsibilities, etc. As can be seen in Figure 4.5, approximately half of the sample had never experienced unemployment before. Collapsing the first two categories (zero and one) indicated that approximately 75% of the sample had little previous experience with unemployment. In sum, a healthy percentage of individuals experienced a high level of job stability during their working careers, irrespective of sex.

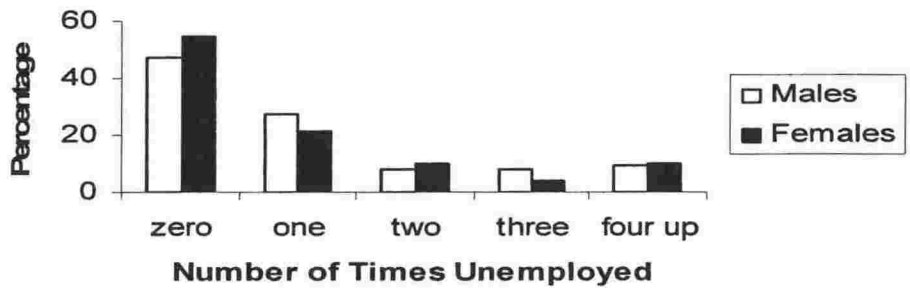


Figure 4.5. Number of Times Previously Unemployed for Males and Females

Circumstances Surrounding Job Loss

How consistent are participants in the circumstances surrounding their job loss? Three main variables were used in order to obtain a broad picture of the factors that may colour the experience of job loss. These variables include: length of time since job loss, amount of notice given and reason for job loss. Each area is considered in turn below.

Length of time since job loss. Table 4.4 gives the distribution of length of time since job loss across three major categories, indicating that for the majority more than 1 ½ years had passed since job loss. Times reported ranged from 0 to 12 ½ years. Both males and females had a median of two years and did not differ significantly on this variable. Length of time since job loss co-varied with age for both sexes. Reporting for the overall sample, as age increased, so too did the length of time reported since job loss, $r(167) = .40, p \leq .001$.

Table 4.4

Length of Time Since Job Loss for Males and Females

Time Period	Males N=101	Females N=71	Overall N=172
0 – 6 months	21 (20.8%)	13 (18.3%)	34 (19.8%)
6 months to 1 ½ years	19 (18.8%)	11 (15.5%)	30 (17.4%)
1 ½ years up	61 (60.4%)	47 (66.2%)	108 (62.8%)

Note. Two missing cases. Percentage in brackets.

Notice given. Figure 4.6 shows the amount of notice given before job loss. As suggested by the graph, the median for both men and women was 1 month. The majority (74%) received up to 2 months notice. A third of respondents received two weeks notice or less, with no significant differences between the sexes.

Figure 4.6. Amount of Notice Given before Job Loss for Males and Females

Reason for job loss. A content analysis was carried out on the reasons given for job loss. Overwhelmingly, the most common reason for job loss was redundancy (83.3%). For 11.5% of the sample, job loss resulted from disputes with employers, for 2.9% it was due to injury/illness, 1.7% left of their own will, and 1 individual cited migration as the reason for job loss.

Current Work and Non-Work Activity Levels

Given that the criteria for participation was broadly limited to participants aged between 50 and 65 who had experienced job loss at some point over 50, individuals vary

considerably in their current status. The variables covered herein seek to establish current work status, total number of roles the individual reports, overall non-work activity levels, seeking work status and whether goals had changed since they first lost their jobs. Each area is considered in turn below.

Current work status. The examination of work status was not solely confined to paid work. In addition to full- and part-time work, volunteer work and study were also considered to be active activities under the broad heading of work. A total of 33 (19%) participants were not engaged in any of these activities. Table 4.5 shows the number of males and females engaged in each area and for the sample overall. Categories are not mutually exclusive and percentages were calculated from the sample sizes indicated in the table headings.

As can be seen in Table 4.5, only a small percentage of the sample had full-time work, with part-time work being approximately 3 times more common. Approximately half of the sample was involved in one or more volunteer activity. These three categories did not differ significantly by sex. However, a goodness of fit test indicated that women were significantly more likely to be studying than men, $X2(1,174) = 4.56, p = .03$.

Table 4.5

Number of Males and Females Engaged in each of the Four Main Work-Related Activities.

Work Activity	Males N=103	Females N=71	Overall N=174
Full -time	15 (14.6%)	9 (12.7%)	24 (13.8%)
Part-time	39 (37.9%)	29 (40.8%)	68 (39.1%)
Volunteer	46 (44.7%)	37 (52.1%)	83 (47.7%)
Study	25 (24.3%)	28 (39.4%)	53 (30.4%)

Note. Percentages in brackets.

Looking specifically at paid work status, men and women did not differ in their distribution across the exclusive categories of working full-time, part-time or unemployed. Further, socio-economic status (SES) was not significantly correlated with

the levels of paid work status, $r(165) = .07, p = .377$, suggesting that SES is not related to the likelihood of sample participants regaining paid employment. This absence of relationship holds for both sexes.

Overall number of roles. The overall number of roles was compared for both sexes. These include roles as parent, partner and work related activities. As seen in Figure 4.7 most individuals had multiple roles, generally 2 or 3. Overall, males and females did not differ in the number of roles held.

Figure 4.7. Total Number of Roles for Males and Females

Non-work activity balance. A 1-tailed independent samples t-test supported hypothesis 4d, that females (M = 2.08, SD = 2.12) would report a higher increased activity level than males (M = 1.50, SD = 1.91), $t(172) = 1.91, p = .03$.

Seeking work. Overall, 54.5% of the sample reported that they were still seeking work, with significantly more males (61.2%) still seeking than females (45.1%), $X2(1,173) = 4.02, p = .05$. In order to test whether work status influenced the differences seen between males and females, gender and seeking work status was examined separately for the three levels of paid work status. There was no significant variation found between males and females in terms of seeking work for those employed part or full-time. However, there was for unemployed individuals, $X2(1, 84) = 6.94, p = .008$. The observed and expected frequencies are given in Table 4.6, and indicate that more than the expected number of unemployed men were still seeking work, while less than the expected number of females were still seeking work. This supports hypothesis 4g, that unemployed males will be more likely to still be seeking work than unemployed females.

Table 4.6

Cross Tabulation of Observed Frequencies for Job Search Status and Gender for Unemployed Individuals

Job Search Status	Males	Females	Overall
Not seeking work	15(20.8)	19(13.2)	34
Seeking work	37(31.2)	14(19.8)	51
Overall	52	33	85

Note. Expected frequencies in brackets

Goal change. When asked if they had changed from the things they did when they first lost their job a comparable amount of males (47%) and females (46%) reported a shift in focus.

Job-Related Strain Variables

The variables covered herein are level of financial preparation at the time of job loss, perceived pressure to find work and a combination of these two variables, titled 'strain'. Each area is considered in turn.

Financial preparation. As can be seen in Figure 4.8, being somewhat prepared was a common response for both sexes. Both males (37.2%) and females (48.6%) were more likely to report being fairly/very unprepared, than they reported being fairly/very prepared (30.4% and 20% respectively). A 2-tailed independent samples t-test supported hypothesis 4b, that females ($M = 3.57$, $SD = 1.26$) would be less financially prepared than males ($M = 3.13$, $SD = 1.25$), $t(170) = 2.29$, $p = .02$. Of note is that financial preparation did not correlate significantly with length of time in the job lost or industry for females.

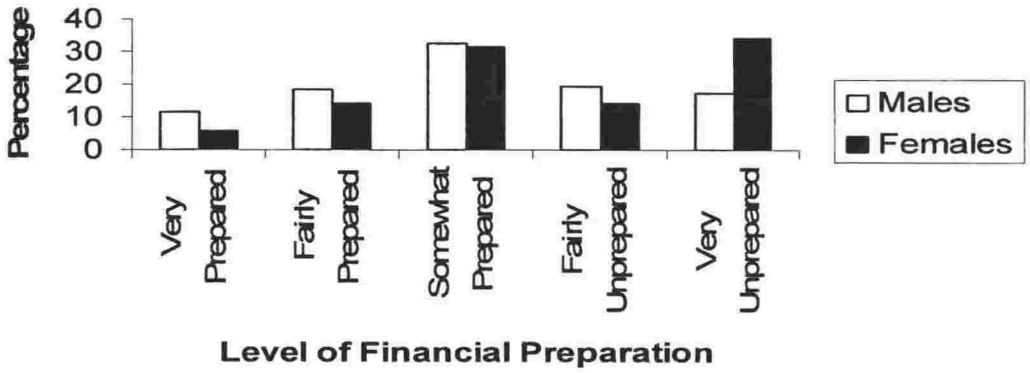


Figure 4.8. Degree of Financial Preparation at Time of Job Loss for Males and Females

Pressure to find work. As seen in Table 4.7, females were slightly less likely to report higher levels of pressure than males. Although the trend is in line with hypothesis 4h, that males would report higher levels of pressure to find work, the distribution did not differ significantly. Overall, 70% or more of the sample indicated some level of pressure to find work.

Table 4.7
Perceived Pressure to Find Work for Males and Females

Pressure Level	Males	Females	Overall
None	25 (28.6)	23 (19.4)	48
A little	39 (38.2)	25 (25.8)	64
A lot	38 (35.2)	21 (23.8)	59
Overall	102	69	171

Note. Three missing cases. Expected frequencies in brackets.

Strain. This variable combined pressure to find work and financial preparation. A t-test comparison revealed that males and females did not differ on this variable.

Age and pressure to find work. A significant moderate and negative correlation was found between age and pressure to find work for males, $r(100) = -.39, p < .001$, indicating that as age increased reported pressure levels decreased. This supports hypothesis 4h, that pressure to find work will lessen as males get older. A lack of

correlation between financial preparation and age discounted the interpretation that this is the result of less financial preparation in younger males. There was no relationship found between age and pressure to find work for females.

Other Life Transitions

Over 70% of the sample experienced at least one non-job related life transition within the last two years, with 33% reporting the maximum of three transitions. A 1-tailed independent samples t-test showed support for hypothesis 4c, that females (M = 1.96, SD = 1.07) would report a higher number of life transitions than males (M = 1.40, SD = 1.18), $t(172) = 3.18, p = .001$.

SWB Measures

The standardized means and standard deviations are given in Table 4.8 for each of the outcome measures. It was not possible to report raw scores because each of the variables had been calculated in such a way that required standardization. T-test analysis revealed that not one of the outcome measures differed by gender. To give some representation of the overall levels of adjustment of the sample, the CES-D cut-off for depression was used, which indicated that 41% of females and 43% of males met the cut-off of 16 or higher for depression.

Coping Strategies

The means and standard deviations of the coping strategies used in the study are given in Table 4.8. Two-tailed independent samples t-tests found support for the hypotheses that a) females would endorse optimization more highly than males, $t(172) = 2.59, p = .01$ (hypothesis 4e) and b) that males would endorse downward goal adjustment more highly than females, $t(163) = 2.05, p = .04$ (hypothesis 4j). These represented the only two coping strategies on which the sexes differed; accordingly, support was not found for hypothesis 4i, that males would endorse primary control strategies more highly than females.

Table 4.8

Means and Standard Deviations of SWB Measures, OPS-JL and CHS Coping Strategies.

Coping Strategy	Males *M*	Males *SD*	Females *M*	Females *SD*	Overall *M*	Overall *SD*
SWB Measures						
Negative affect	-.004	2.63	.000	2.68	-.002	2.64
Positive affect	.000	.90	-.001	.93	-.000	.91
Life satisfaction	-.005	.99	.008	1.01	-.000	1.00
SWB overall	-.004	.84	.001	.86	-.001	.85
OPS-JL						
Optimization	3.75	.86	4.08	.76	3.98	.84
Seek support	3.14	1.23	3.44	1.03	3.26	1.16
Goal pursuit	3.47	.83	3.57	.78	3.51	.81
Goal motivation	3.55	.97	3.51	.95	3.53	.96
Accept loss	3.51	.71	3.54	.73	3.53	.72
Goal disengage	2.36	1.33	2.43	1.27	2.38	1.30
Horizontal GA	4.07	.91	3.76	1.20	3.94	1.04
Downward GA	4.20	.71	3.94	.87	4.10	.78
CHS						
Lack of humour	2.66	.70	2.56	.79	2.62	.74
Use of humour	2.97	.56	3.02	.57	2.99	.56

Note. GA = goal adjustment. CHS = Coping Humour Scale.

Optimization and downward goal adjustment appear to be the two most highly endorsed coping strategies, followed by horizontal goal adjustment. A series of paired sample t-tests comparing these three to the other coping strategies confirmed that in all cases this endorsement was significantly higher. There was no difference in the level of endorsement between optimization and both types of goal adjustment, although downward goal adjustment was endorsed more highly than horizontal goal adjustment.

The higher endorsement of goal adjustment strategies relative to other strategies supports hypothesis 4n.

Goal disengagement was the least endorsed coping strategy of all of the strategies, significantly so in all comparisons. Use of humour was also endorsed more highly than lack of humour overall, $t(172) = 5.74, p < .001$.

Tables 4.9 and 4.10 illustrates the frequency of endorsement for, respectively, confidence and preference for primary or secondary control. Pearson's 2 x 2 chi-square analysis revealed a significant difference in the distribution of confidence endorsement $X2(1,168) = 5.34, p = .01$, but no significant difference in the distribution for preference. Consideration of the frequencies in Table 4.9 indicates that, while both males and females tended to report more confidence for secondary control, female confidence for secondary control was more pronounced. This supports hypothesis 4l, that females will endorse secondary control more highly than primary control.

Table 4.09

Observed Frequency of Male/Female Confidence for Primary or Secondary Control.

Control Type	Males	Females	Overall
Primary	44 (36.9)	18 (25.1)	62
Secondary	56 (63.1)	50 (42.9)	106
Overall	100	68	168

Note. Six missing cases. Expected frequencies in brackets.

Table 4.10

Observed Frequency of Male/Female Preference for Primary or Secondary Control.

Control Type	Males	Females	Overall
Primary	59 (58)	37 (38)	96
Secondary	40 (41)	28 (27)	68
Overall	99	67	164

Note. Ten missing cases. Expected frequencies in brackets.

Contrasting confidence and preference, goodness of fit chi-square tests based on the overall sample indicated that while secondary control was more highly endorsed for confidence, $X2(1,168) = 11.82$, $p < .001$, there was a tendency for primary control to be preferred, $X2(1,164) = 4.78$, $p < .05$. These results are in support on hypotheses 4k and 4m respectively.

Discussion

The descriptive statistics reveal a number of differences between males and females, and also help to distinguish the primary characteristics associated with the sample. Evaluation of the results and interpretations based on previous research are considered for each of the broad areas below:

General Demographics

Males and females were roughly consistent in terms of age distribution. Females were more likely to be single than males. This supports the findings of Reitzes et al (1994) and also DeViney's (1995) contention that women are more likely to have broken marriages (and have not remarried), to be single, or to have a partner who has died. This was evidenced by greater representation of females in all levels of single status. Such trends are also typically found in New Zealand (Davey, 2002).

While the majority of participants had children, relatively few still had dependent children. The emptying of the nest is a common transition faced by people in this age group (Bozett, 1985) and may help to relieve some day to day living expenses. Further, even if children are absent from the home, they can still remain a source of support for parents, and while few of the women are married, a sizeable number do have children.

Work-Related Demographics

The data shows an even distribution of educational status for men and women. Likewise, the distribution in terms of the status of the job lost does not differ between males and females. For both socio-economic indices, the most clearly under-represented

category is jobs or education of the lowest status. Neither of the SES indices were associated with the likelihood of currently being in employment.

A comparison of the outcomes for education levels in the current sample was made with the New Zealand 2001 Census information on age, sex and education in order to ascertain how representative the current sample was of the general population. The census information revealed that 75% of individuals in the 50 to 65 year old age group had a trade qualification or lower, with approximately 37% of individuals having no qualifications at all (Statistics New Zealand, 2003). This compares with 50% of individuals having a trade qualification or lower, and less than 5% having no qualifications at all in the current sample. This simple comparison indicates that the sample is over-educated in comparison with the general population, reducing the generalisability of results. It is speculated that more educated individuals are more likely to respond to media based requests to participate in surveys.

What is interesting to note is that although there was a sizeable correlation between educational status and job status, this correlation is still quite low considering that they are both indices of socio-economic status. This indicates that there is probably a considerable amount of 'on the job' training, leading to promotion, which is not captured by educational attainment alone. In a similar manner, the converse could also apply. Promotion could be curtailed due to lack of application by the individual or by issues such as marginalisation.

Gender, Work History and Identity

With regard to work stability, it was hypothesised (4a) that women would be less likely to have spent as long in the job lost, or in that particular industry. The results supported this prediction. These patterns are likely the result of the different 'role demands' men and women have experienced in their normative life-span development. As noted by DeViney (1995), women are more likely to have had interrupted work histories due to their prominent role in child-rearing. In further argument for this, women and men did not differ in the amount of times they had previously been unemployed. Women would not consider their time child-rearing as 'unemployment', nor would they

consider leaving their jobs to have children as losing their jobs. Therefore, the gaps in their work histories are reflected in fewer years reported in the job lost/industry, but not more instances of previous unemployment.

As hypothesized (4b), females reported less financial preparation than males, once again in line with DeViney's (1995) predictions. However, this does not appear to be simply due to interrupted work histories. It may be that pay inequalities are a stronger predictor of lack of preparation. Pay inequalities are still prevalent, with men earning $7,800 more a year on average than women in New Zealand (Statistics New Zealand, 1998b), and as more women fill an occupation, the wage for that occupation drops (DeViney, 1995). In retrospect, it would have been worthwhile to collect details of salary levels in the job lost and compare them between men and women to assess whether pay inequities contributed to less financial preparation for women even when SES levels that measure education or job status appear comparable for the two sexes.

As predicted (4g), and even though women were less financially prepared than males, unemployed males were more likely to still be seeking work than unemployed females. This could be due to women being more willing to accept alternative forms of monetary compensation, possibly a reflection of societal gender stereotypes/roles that support the dependence of women. Recall that Glyptis (1989) argued that unemployment may be seen as more socially acceptable for women, while Malen and Stroh (1998) found women are more likely to use support focused coping strategies such as financial aid. However, since attitudes toward and usage of financial aid were not assessed in this study, such a conclusion is based on speculation only.

Men, on the other hand, have been brought up with the societal expectation that they will be the breadwinner, and as a result much more of their identity may have been put into their work-life than women, who may have invested more in their family life (Reitzes et al, 1994; Wickrama et al, 1995). Therefore, work has provided men with a major source of identity (Bozett, 1985), and this may prompt them to continue the search so that they can feel like 'whole men' again.

The hypothesis (4f) that males would report higher levels of pressure to find work than females was not supported. However, once age was considered, a significant difference emerged, with pressure correlating with age for males only (as predicted in

hypothesis 4h). Further, age was not correlated with financial preparation for men, indicating that the outcomes observed may be due to younger men having more difficulty disengaging from the work role. Such an interpretation is in line with the observations of Hayes and Nutman (1983), Jackson and Warr (1984) and Gallie and Vogler (1994), who all refer to a decline in work commitment and legitimization of the retiree role as men age.

As hypothesized (4d), women reported a higher increase in non-work activities, higher levels of optimization (4e) and also a higher number of other life transitions (4c) compared to men. These are all taken as evidence of their greater diversification outside of the work role (Dohrenwend, 1973; Reitzes et al, 1994). Optimization was the only coping strategy that was not job-loss specific. It is likely that the centrality of the work identity for males (Reitzes et al., 1994) has limited an approach to life that is characterized by optimization/diversity, whereas less emphasis on the work role has enabled females to explore and develop more diverse areas of interest over their lifetimes. This diversity is perhaps reflected in being exposed to more life transitions, a propensity to study and more non-work activities for women. That more unemployed men than women are still seeking work may suggest that women may more readily access a sense of purpose or fulfilment in life from sources outside of the work role and therefore pursue work less rigorously than men.

It should also be noted that the higher proportion of women studying is in line other research conducted in New Zealand. Davey (2002) assessed 959 mature students studying at Victoria University of Wellington in New Zealand and found that 70% of the students were female. She also noted that this was reflective of trends seen overseas.

SWB Measures

The results indicated that there were no significant differences between the sexes on any of the outcome measures. This is counter to previous findings that suggest females report twice the rate of depression of males (Nolen-Hoeksema, 1990). However, Mallincrokdt and Bennett (1992) found a depression rate of 48% in a sample of male blue-collar workers. While the observed rates for both sexes are below 48%, they are in a

similar range, indicating a level of similarity in the impact of job loss that is irrespective of gender. It is arguable that it is the magnitude of threat of this type of loss to the male identity that serves to equalize the depression rates in this sample.

Coping Strategies/Situational Uncontrollability

Apart from the previously discussed higher endorsement of optimization for females, support was also found for the hypothesis that males would endorse downward goal adjustment more highly than females (4j). Gallie and Vogler (1994) found that men are more likely to take less pay and/or move to find work. Further, women are more likely to take financial aid (Malen & Stroh, 1998). Added to this, men are more likely to have previously held jobs with higher pay (DeViney, 1995). This would allow a larger scope for downward movement for males. Given the centrality of the work role, males may pursue it more rigorously in order to reinstate it again. However, females may be more willing to utilize financial aid, involve themselves in alternative activities, and then feel more relaxed about waiting for a comparable job to come along rather than taking lesser pay, especially if their previous pay rate was not that generous to begin with.

Contrary to the findings of Malen and Stroh (1998), support was not found for the hypothesis (4i) that males would endorse primary control based coping strategies more highly than females. The most clearly proactive and action based job search category was goal pursuit, and this did not differ by gender. The only possible evidence for females being more limited is that, as predicted (4l), they reported higher levels of confidence for secondary control. Perhaps the measure of a coping strategy is how effective it is. While females may report similar levels of coping strategy usage, does their lack of confidence affect the utility of their coping strategies? This issue is addressed in chapter 5.

Overall, the sample endorsed a wide range of coping strategies, and the two that differed by gender were also the most highly endorsed strategies. Horizontal goal adjustment was also highly endorsed. This indicates a willingness to diversify, perhaps promoted by situational constraints that necessitate diversification because traditional avenues have been blocked. Based upon this reasoning, support for the hypothesis of situational uncontrollability (as determined by the high endorsement of goal adjustment –

4n) is inferred. This is also backed up by the findings that, as predicted, the overall sample would tend towards more confidence for secondary control (4k) but, conversely, more preference for primary control (4m) (the latter also supporting Heckhausen and Schulz's (1995) contention that primary control is preferred).

Goal disengagement was the least frequently endorsed coping strategy. This indicates that giving up prematurely is a dis-preferred strategy (Heckhausen & Schulz, 1992). Rather, the finding that goal adjustment is highly endorsed indicates that individuals are more willing to explore other options than to give up altogether. This is backed up by the finding that approximately half of the sample indicated some change in goals since first losing their job.

Use of humour was more highly endorsed than lack of humour. Presumably it would be more infrequent for individuals to indicate an absence of humour than it would be for them to rate their use of it. There were only two items assessing lack of humour, compared to five items for use of humour. If these two factors are in fact found to be distinct in future research, then it may be worthwhile to include additional items that assess a lack of humour in order to ascertain whether this trend remains given multiple items.

Employer Stereotypes Assessed

The overall characteristics of the sample participants are individuals who can hold a job down for a considerable period of time, and have had little previous experience with unemployment. So why would seemingly stable employees suddenly lose their jobs and then also have difficulty regaining work? To understand this, the current nature of the work place in New Zealand must be considered.

White (1999) reported that over the last 2 decades, labour market trends in New Zealand have seen increases in cost-cutting and downsizing in order for businesses to survive. This has resulted in a great number of displaced workers, accounting for the majority of the current sample, who lost their jobs due to redundancy. Also highlighted in the current sample is the speed with which these changes occurred (most were given minimal notice before job loss). In addition, due to ever-changing technology, jobs often

become obsolete within 5 to 10 years and the number of people working part-time or in more than 1 job has been steadily increasing (White, 1999). Older individuals, who have been used to working in relative stability, now have to adjust to a new work environment where the key word is 'flexibility'. Ironically, the stability that the sample shows is also a major factor that works against them in the current job market.

The results from the current study indicate that most respondents have been out of their jobs for more than one year, yet when considering their current status, only a small proportion of individuals have regained full-time work and the majority indicate they feel some level of pressure to find work. This perhaps reflects the claims of Sparrow (1995), that older workers find it more difficult to regain employment after job loss.

What are the factors that contribute to this? The surveying of employer attitudes in New Zealand highlighted that a record of 'stability' worked against the older worker. Employers see older workers who have only had 1 or 2 jobs over 30 to 40 years as being more narrow-minded and more likely to have unrealistic expectations in terms of the benefits they should get (most employers (62.6%) identified an older worker as someone over 50) (Sparrow, 1999). They are also seen as harder to train and resistant to change (White, 1999).

However, White (1999) claims that these beliefs are myths, with research showing that older workers are very willing to train and will take on the task for themselves, and that they are receptive to flexible working arrangements and prepared to take lesser jobs with less pay. The results of the current research also seem to belie employer stereotypes and support the observations of White. A sizeable number are involved in study (especially women), which indicates the initiative to train themselves. A number are also involved in alternate work forms (volunteer work, part-time work), indicating flexibility in work arrangements. Further, a sizeable number report multiple roles, which is indicative of multi-skill bases. While stability and the security that comes with it may be preferred, the results do not indicate that older workers are unwilling or unable to adapt to the changing work environment. Indeed, the three most highly endorsed coping strategies – horizontal and downward goal adjustment and optimization – are all characterized by, to some extent, a willingness to adapt (even if the former two may be

forced by situational constraints). Indeed, high endorsement of downward goal adjustment indicates a willingness, or perhaps resignation, to take less pay.

Chapter Summary

This chapter sought to accomplish four aims. The first was to describe the sample. The second was to establish points of difference between the sexes as a function of identity, work histories, socialization and coping. The third was to look for indicators of situational uncontrollability, and the fourth to assess the validity of employer stereotypes about the older worker. Each of these aims is summarized in turn.

Description of the sample. Description was achieved across a number of areas. Age was fairly evenly distributed across three age bands, the majority of respondents were parents, though few still had dependent children, and females were more likely to be single than males. Education level was under-represented compared to the general NZ population in this age group, limiting generalisability of the results. Neither of the SES indices was associated with likelihood of regaining work.

The sample had little previous experience with unemployment, had an average of 1 ½ years past since job loss, with the majority having up to 2 months or less notice before job loss, which was primarily due to restructuring/redundancy. Comparable levels of males and females were currently engaged in full-time, part-time and volunteer work, although the latter two types of work were clearly more common than full-time work. A number were also studying, with this being more common in females.

The majority of individuals held more than one role and approximately half of the sample indicated some change in focus since first losing their jobs. The majority reported some level of pressure to find work, with over half of the sample still seeking work. Most had experienced at least one additional life transition in the past two years. Assessment of coping strategies indicated optimization and the two goal adjustment strategies were most highly endorsed, with goal disengagement least endorsed. Further, use of humour was more highly endorsed than lack of humour.

Male/female differences due to work history, identity, socialization and coping. As expected, men also spent longer in the job lost and in the industry, indicating different work histories, corroborated by the fact that males and females did not differ in reported

past instances of unemployment. These trends provide some explanation for why women reported less financial preparation than men. Even so, unemployed women were less likely to still be seeking work than men, perhaps due to a larger propensity to accept financial aid (i.e. socialized to accept dependency).

The centrality of the work role for men was indicated through the finding that older males report less pressure to find work, with this outcome attributed to the role of 'retiree' becoming more valid to males as they near retirement age. Added to this, depression rates were equitable between the sexes. There is usually a 2:1 ratio of depression between the sexes, with females being twice as likely to report depression as males (Nolen-Hoeksema, 1990). It was argued that the impact of job-loss on the male identity (to which work should be central) is what has served to equalize depression rates in the sample.

Evidence for less centrality in the work role for women was taken the findings that they study more, report greater number of non-work activities, report higher levels of additional life transitions and endorse optimization more highly. Any of these could indicate more diversification outside work in women's lives. That men endorsed downward goal adjustment more highly is also suggestive that males continue to pursue the work role more rigorously than females, as well as being an indicator that they have greater scope for downward movement.

In terms of socialization, females also showed a stronger tendency towards confidence for secondary control than males did. Females did not endorse action based coping strategies less than males but this lack of confidence for primary control seems to indicate that females feel more confident when endorsing a coping style that is in keeping with the way they are socialized.

In sum, there is evidence to suggest that there are systematic differences between males and females that likely result from differences in identity investment, work histories and socialization. For this reason, it is important to consider the sexes separately when assessing job loss and their reactions to it.

Indicators of situational uncontrollability. In assessment of the third aim, most of the respondents reported an average of a year and a half since job loss, but only a small percentage had regained full-time work, with over half of the sample still seeking work.

Further, approximately half of the sample had indicated a change in focus since first losing their jobs. In light of this background information it is not surprising that goal adjustment coping strategies were highly endorsed. This is indicative of situational constraints that necessitate a shift in goals. That downward goal adjustment was endorsed more highly than horizontal goal adjustment suggests that individuals have been forced to shift from the same kind of job, to a comparable job, down to a lesser job, in order to obtain employment. Even so, the fact remains that the majority are still unemployed or under-employed. This suggests that situational constraints are robust, and difficult to overcome.

Further indication of situational uncontrollability is found with confidence and preference for primary or secondary control. With confidence, secondary control (or fitting the self to the environment) was more highly endorsed. However, for preference, primary control (or altering the environment to suit the self) was more highly endorsed. These findings suggest that individuals perceive that their ability to alter the environment is limited. Chapter 8 will look at the qualitative comments that were associated with the confidence/preference selections, and will seek to assess whether these trends are a result of perceived lack of control.

Assessment of employer stereotypes. In assessment of the fourth aim, the sample indicated a history of stability through lack of past experience with employment and long periods of time spent in a particular industry. However, the changing work environment necessitates flexibility and employers see the stability of older workers as an indicator that they are resistant to change, harder to train and less willing to take pay cuts than younger workers. Regardless of past stability, the sample characteristics appear to belie the beliefs held by employers.

The results indicate that the sample has demonstrated a willingness to study/train on their own initiative, flexibility in working arrangements through volunteer and part-time work, multiple roles indicative of multiple skills, high endorsement of coping strategies characterised by adaptability, and the most highly endorsed coping strategy indicated a willingness to pursue jobs with less pay. The low endorsement of goal disengagement also indicates a resistance to give up.

Although it is understandable that individuals with stable work histories may prefer to remain stable, not train nor take cuts in pay, and would like to coast to retirement without being exposed to drastic changes, the sample appears to have appraised their situation and recognised that change is required. Rather than being 'beyond hope', they appear to be 'stepping up' to the challenges imposed upon them by the current work climate. As such, employers should evaluate each individual based upon their merits and not automatically discount a person based solely on age and its associative stereotypes.

In summary, it is thought that this chapter has provided a baseline understanding of the sample across a number of areas of issue. This baseline should prove useful to refer back to as the thesis progresses and the embryonic themes outlined here are subjected to further and more in-depth scrutiny. Having assessed these baseline areas of interest, the thesis now turns to see which independent variables are independent predictors of SWB for males and females.

5

BASELINE PREDICTORS OF SUBJECTIVE WELLBEING

The primary aim of this chapter was to ascertain core predictors of SWB for later use in regression analysis. It also sought to establish which variables were independent and significant predictors of the four outcome measures – highlighting those variables which are or are not potential contributors to positive ageing (in terms of coping, opportunities, and constraints). This was done separately for males and females (unless otherwise stated) given the number of differences found in chapter 4. This allowed further exploration of differences between the sexes due to differences in work history, identity, socialization and coping. The chapter also continues to explore indicators of situational uncontrollability, and sought to combine similar variables into a single variable where possible. Finally, the measurement of life transitions was given special focus in this chapter.

Results

Dichotomous variables were compared with the use of t-tests with continuous variables correlated against the outcome measures. Any variables described in chapter 4 that are not included in this chapter were excluded because a) they held no predictive power for SWB, and b) they were not hypothesized upon.

T-tests on Dichotomous Variables

The variables assessed herein were: relationship status; seeking work status; volunteer work; study; confidence for primary or secondary control; and preference for primary or secondary control. One-tailed tests were used for hypothesized predictions, with 2 tailed tests used in all other cases.

Relationship status. For males, significant differences were found on the outcome variables negative affect, life satisfaction and SWB. Using SWB to illustrate the difference, uninvolved males (M = -.49, SD = .86) had lower SWB scores than males in

relationships (M = 4.92, SD = .82), $t(101)$ = 2.50, p = .007. For females, significant differences were found for all outcome variables. Again, demonstrating with SWB and consistent with males, uninvolved females (M = -.21, SD = .93) reported lower levels of SWB than females in relationships (M = .25, SD = .73), $t(67)$ = 2.28, p = .013. This supports hypothesis 5b, that those in relationships will report higher levels of adjustment than those who are single.

Seeking work status. There were no significant differences found for females. For men, significant differences were found for life satisfaction and SWB. Illustrated with SWB, those who were still seeking work (M = -.19, SD = .84) had lower adjustment levels than those who reported they were no longer seeking work (M = .18, SD = .80), $t(101)$ = 2.22, p = .014. This indicates partial support (males only) for hypothesis 5k, that those seeking work will report lower levels of wellbeing than those not seeking work.

Volunteer work. Whether individuals were engaged in volunteer work or not was not a significant predictor for females. For males, it was significant for positive affect only, with those not engaged in volunteer activities (M = -.15, SD = .87) reporting lower levels of positive affect than those who did engage in volunteer activities (M = .20, SD = .90), $t(100)$ = 2.00, p = .025. These results partially support hypothesis 5h, that generative individuals (those engaged in volunteer work) have higher levels of adjustment in that the hypothesized relationship only holds for males and positive affect.

Study. Whether individuals were engaged in study or not was not a significant predictor for males. For females, it was significant for life satisfaction, negative affect and subjective wellbeing. Illustrated with SWB, those who were studying (M = -.23, SD = .89) reported lower levels of wellbeing than those who were not studying (M = .18, SD = .82), $t(63)$ = 1.98, p = .025. This does not support hypothesis 5i, that those engaged in study will report higher levels of wellbeing than those not engaged in study.

Correlations on Continuous Variables

There were three main areas under assessment. These were a) non-coping or life event related variables, b) life transition variables, and c) coping strategies. Each area was reported on in turn.

Non-Coping or Life Event Related Variables as predictors of SWB

The correlations for this area are given in Table 5.1 for males and Table 5.2 for females. Predictors under this heading cover age, social resources, activity levels, roles, and job related strain variables.

Age. A moderate positive relationship was found between age and life satisfaction/SWB for males, with positive affect showing a borderline relationship in the same direction. Conversely, age was not a significant predictor for females. This provides support for hypothesis 5a, that older males will report higher levels of wellbeing than younger males. Due to the relationship found between seeking work and age in chapter 4, hierarchical regression analysis was performed on SWB to ascertain whether seeking work contributed a unique amount of the variance beyond age. This was done for males only, due to lack of predictive value of the two variables for females.

Seeking work was entered as step 1, and produced a significant equation, $F(1,101) = 4.94$, $p = .028$, $R^2 = .05$, and standardized beta weight, $\beta = -.22$, $p = .028$. Entering age as step 2 yielded a stronger model, $F(2,100) = 5.12$, $p = .008$, $R^2 = .09$. However, while age was a significant predictor, $\beta = .22$, $p = .026$, seeking work lost its significance, $\beta = -.16$, $p = .114$, indicating that there is no unique variance above and beyond age for this variable.

Partners work status. A converse pattern is seen between the sexes for partner's work status. It appears that the more a partner is working the lower the adjustment levels reported for males whereas for females the opposite trend is in evidence. Due to the significant correlation found between partner's work status and age in chapter 4, it was decided to conduct hierarchical regression analysis to see whether partners work status explained a unique amount of the variance in wellbeing. Life satisfaction was used as the outcome measure due to it showing the strongest associations with these two variables. This was done for males only, given that age is not a predictor of SWB for females.

Partners work status was entered as step 1, yielding a significant equation, $F(1,75) = 4.92$, $p = .029$, $R^2 = .06$ and standardized beta weight, $\beta = .25$, $p = .029$. Entering age at step 2 yielded a stronger model, $F(2,74) = 7.54$, $p = .001$, with a notable increase in the variance accounted for, $R^2 = .17$. The standardized beta weights indicated that only age ($\beta = .35$, $p = .003$) significantly predicted life satisfaction. The beta for partner's work status dropped to $\beta = .13$, $p = .26$. Based on this, it is reasonable to conclude that the relationship between partner's work status and life satisfaction for males is due to the

shared variance of partner's work status with age. Overall, partial support was found for hypothesis 5e, that those with working partners will report higher levels of wellbeing than those with under- or un-employed working partners (females only); however, full support was found for hypothesis 5f, that partners work status would be a stronger predictor for females.

Table 5.1

Correlations between Non-Coping or Life Event Related Variables and SWB for Males

Predictors	Negative Affect	Positive Affect	Life Sat.	SWB
Age/Social Resources				
Age	-.17*	.19*	.31***	.26**
Partners work status (N=77)	-.19+	.07	.25*	.20*
Number of children	-.21*	.08	.27**	.24**
Activity Levels				
Paid work status	-.02	.05	.12	.08
Overall number of roles	-.22*	.22*	.21*	.28**
Non-work activity balance	-.16+	.30***	.29**	.29**
Job-Loss Related Stress				
Number of times unemployed	.25**	-.11	-.25**	-.26**
Level of financial preparation	.27**	-.12	-.37***	-.30***
Pressure to find work	.32***	-.21*	-.39***	.36***
Strain	.38***	-.20*	-.47***	-.42***

Note. $p \leq +.10$, *.05, **.01, ***.001.

Number of children. This variable was associated with higher levels of adjustment on three of the outcome measures for males, but was not a significant predictor for females. The relationship between wellbeing and number of children for males remained when relationship status was controlled for through partial correlation. This partially supports hypothesis 5c (males only), that those with more children would report higher levels of SWB than those with fewer or no children; however, it fully supports hypothesis 5d, that this variable would be a stronger predictor for males than for females.

Table 5.2

Correlations between Non-Coping or Life Event Related Variables and SWB for Females

Predictors	Negative Affect	Positive Affect	Life Sat.	SWB
Age/Social Resources				
Age	-.05	-.08	-.14	-.07
Partner working (N=27)	.03	-.34+	-.42*	-.39*
Number of children	-.03	.16	.14	.10
Activity Levels				
Paid work status	-.35**	.19+	.24*	.31**
Overall number of roles	-.03	.08	-.04	.03
Non-work activity balance	-.10	.30**	.23*	.24*
Job-Loss Related Stress				
Number of times unemployed	-.01	.00	.00	-.01
Level of financial preparation	.26*	-.12	-.13	-.22*
Pressure to find work	.38***	-.36**	-.33**	-.41***
Strain	.40***	-.29*	-.27*	-.38***

Note. $p \leq +.10$, *.05, **.01, ***.001.

Paid work status. With regard to paid work status, partial support (females only) was found for hypothesis 5j, that as the current level of employment increases so will the levels of wellbeing.

Non-work activities. A general consistency of relationship was found for males and females for the non-work activity balance. In both cases this demonstrated degrees of significance for all outcomes bar negative affect (although data tended toward the predicted direction). This supported hypothesis 5g, that those with a higher net increase in non-work activities will report higher levels of SWB than those who tend toward a net decrease in activities.

Roles. The overall number of roles was not a predictor for females but was a consistent predictor for males. This provides partial support (males only) for hypothesis 5l,

that the more roles an individual holds, the higher the reported level of wellbeing. Full support is also found for hypothesis 5m, that this variable would be a stronger predictor for males. For males, total number of roles was found to correlate with its subcomponents (the four types of work activity and partner/parental status) to between .38 and .58, indicating that it may be a suitable composite representation of these subcomponents for males.

Job-Loss related stress. Number of times unemployed was a significant predictor for males only, with more reported past unemployment moderately related to lower levels of adjustment on three of the outcome measures. There was no such relationship found for females. Further, number of times unemployed correlated positively with lack of financial preparation for men, $r(100) = .25$, $p < .01$. This partially supports hypothesis 5r (males only), that those who have experienced unemployment more times in the past will report lower levels of wellbeing and financial preparedness.

Less financial preparation was moderately associated with higher levels of negative affect for both sexes, and moderately associated with SWB for males, and weakly associated with SWB for females. It was not a predictor of positive affect levels for either sex; further, it showed a moderate negative relationship with life satisfaction for males only. Overall, support was found for hypothesis 5n, that those less financially prepared at the time of job loss would report lower levels of wellbeing. The lack of relationship between this variable and life satisfaction for females also supports hypothesis 5o, that lack of financial preparation will impact more heavily on SWB for males than it does for females.

The patterns for the two sexes are more consistent for pressure to find work, with (in line with hypothesis 5 p) higher reported pressure significantly a ssociated with lower levels of adjustment for all four outcome measures. This pattern is also seen for the strain variable, which combines financial preparation and pressure to find work. Strain appears superior in predictive strength than the sub-components for males, but is somewhat weaker than pressure to find work on three of the measures for females. The weaker predictive value of financial preparation for females is the likely cause.

In order to test whether financial preparation and pressure to find work each contribute a unique amount of the variance in explaining SWB, a hierarchical regression analysis was performed. Table 5.3 shows support for hypothesis 5q. Entering financial preparation in step 1 produces a significant beta weight. Once pressure to find work is entered in step 2, a significant increase in R^2 is seen. Pressure to find work appears to

deplete over a third of the predictive power of financial preparation - however, both variables produce significant beta weights in this equation.

Table 5.3

Hierarchical Regression Analysis of the Impact of Financial Preparation and Pressure to Find Work on Levels of SWB for the Overall Sample

Step	β	*F*	*df*	R^2	ΔR^2
Step 1		11.78***	165	.07	--
Finance	-.26***				
Step 2					
Finance	-.16*	16.87***	164	.17	.10***
Pressure	-.34***				

Note. p = *.05, ***.001

Life Transition Variables as Predictors of SWB

As seen in Tables 5.4 (males) and 5.5 (females), the overall number of events and impact of events are not significant predictors of adjustment for either sex. When looking at whether events were positive, negative or mixed, it is clear that superior prediction occurs at these levels. When considering the opposite relationships with adjustment of positive (adjustment higher) and negative (adjustment lower) events, it becomes clear as to why simply considering overall numbers or impact levels is insufficient – positive and negative events would effectively cancel each other out. Further, mixed events (those containing both positive and negative aspects) appear to cancel themselves out, as seen in the lack of predictive value for males on these variables. For females, however, there appears to be a tendency to still weight mixed events towards the negative, as demonstrated in their significant associations with higher levels of negative affect and lower levels of life satisfaction and SWB (the latter being borderline).

Table 5.4

Correlations between Various methods of Assessing Life Events and Measures of Subjective Wellbeing for Males

Life Transition Variables	Negative Affect	Positive Affect	Life Sat.	SWB
Number of Events				
Positive	-.16	.16	.27**	.20*
Negative	.22*	-.14	-.42***	-.27**
Mixed	.08	.13	-.09	.02
Overall number	.07	.12	-.13	.01
Impact of Events				
Positive	-.15	.17+	.27**	.20*
Negative	.27**	-.15	-.45***	-.30**
Mixed	.07	.12	-.08	.01
Overall impact	.10	.11	-.15	-.04
Event Balance Variables				
Family only	-.32**	.19*	.27**	.27**
Non-family only	-.12	.12	.39***	.21*
Overall	-.26**	.21*	.45***	.31***

Note. $p \leq +.10$, *.05, **.01, ***.001.

It is clear that balancing the events by subtracting negative from positive events is the optimal way to measure events, as demonstrated by the overall event balance variable (total weights score), which showed weak to moderate associations with all outcome variables. This outcome supports hypothesis 5s, that the total weights score will be a superior predictor of SWB than either total number or impact of events, and also hypothesis 5v, that those who have a balance towards more positive events will report higher levels of SWB than those who have a balance towards more negative events. Despite the female tendency to weight mixed events negatively, the performance of overall event balance is comparable for both sexes.

Table 5.5

Correlations between Various methods of Assessing Life Events and Measures of Subjective Wellbeing for Females

Life Transition Variables	Negative Affect	Positive Affect	Life Sat.	SWB
Number of Events				
Positive	-.17	.15	.38**	.25*
Negative	.16	-.23+	-.29*	-.21+
Mixed	.27*	.01	-.22+	-.19
Overall number	.16	-.03	-.05	-.09
Impact of Events				
Positive	-.19	.17	.39***	.27*
Negative	.20	-.22+	-.27*	-.21+
Mixed	.31*	-.02	-.25*	-.23+
Overall impact	.10	.01	.00	-.02
Event Balance Variables				
Family only	-.17	.32**	.44***	.31*
Non-family only	-.16	.04	.15	.12
Overall	-.25*	.24*	.41***	.30*

Note. $p \leq +.10$, *.05, **.01, ***.001.

The family and non-family event balance variables were included in the assessment in order to ascertain whether family events had a larger association with adjustment than non-family events. This is clearly the case for females (with the exception of negative affect, which was not significant for either predictor). Males also demonstrated a tendency for family events to be superior in predictive value, showing significant relationships with all outcome variables. However, non-family events appear to have a stronger impact on life satisfaction for males.

Table 5.6 assesses the impact of family and non-family events at the level of positive and negative events, using the overall sample. In line with hypothesis 5t, only family related positive events yielded significant associations with SWB. Positive non-

family events were not significant predictors. Further, as predicted by hypothesis 5u, negative events, regardless of whether they were family or non-family, demonstrated significant associations. Finally, a correlation between the overall balance of life events and the strain associated with job loss demonstrated an insignificant relationship, $r(167) = -.08$, $p = .32$, indicating that these two variables were independent contributors to levels of adjustment.

Table 5.6

Comparison of Predictive Value of Family and Non-Family Positive and Negative Events for the Overall Sample

Life Transition Variables	Negative Affect	Positive Affect	Life Sat.	SWB
Positive Events				
Family	-.21+	.23*	.20+	.24*
Non-family	-.07	.04	.15	.08
Negative Events				
Family	.18	-.23*	-.23*	-.22+
Non-family	.22+	.20+	-.26*	-.25*

Note. $p \leq +.10$, *.05, **.01, ***.001.

Correlation between Coping Strategies and SWB

Examination of Tables 5.7 (males) and 5.8 (females) immediately highlighted that accept loss was the only coping strategy that produced a significant relationship with all four outcome measures for females. It is also of note that these relationships were all moderate to strong. In short, the more females endorsed accept loss, the higher their reported levels of adjustment. Goal pursuit and motivation showed moderate to weak associations with life satisfaction respectively, while any other correlations were only border-line in significance.

In contrast, there is a range of significant associations across the different coping strategies for males. These initial observations support the hypothesis 5aa, that males will have a higher number of coping strategies that are significant predictors of wellbeing than the number seen for females. They also support hypothesis 5ab, that significant coping

predictors of wellbeing for females will be more secondary rather than primary in nature (i.e. accept loss mainly contains items assessing secondary control, as does goal motivation).

Table 5.7

Correlations of the OPS-JL and CHS Coping Strategies on SWB for Males

Coping Strategies	Negative Affect	Positive Affect	Life Sat.	SWB
OPS-JL				
Optimization	-.45***	.44***	.38***	.49***
Seek support	-.09	.13+	.23*	.14+
Goal pursuit	-.31***	.30***	.22*	.31***
Goal motivation	.14+	-.01	-.04	-.10
Accept loss	-.19*	.33***	.07	.24**
Goal disengage	.36***	.01	-.30***	-.25**
Horizontal GA	-.24**	.28**	.08	.23*
Downward GA	.15+	.00	-.23*	-.08
CHS				
Lack of humour	-.40***	.18*	.20*	.28**
Use of humour	-.13	.39***	.20*	.32***

Note. $p \leq +.10$, *.05, **.01, ***.001. CHS = Coping Humour Scale, OPS-JL = Optimization in Primary and Secondary Control Job Loss Scale.

In terms of strength of predictive power on the overall SWB measure, optimization appears to be the strongest predictor of SWB for men, followed by use of humour, lack of humour, goal pursuit, goal disengagement, accept loss and horizontal goal adjustment. Higher endorsement of these strategies (except goal disengagement) is related to higher levels of wellbeing. Seeking support and downward goal adjustment are weakly associated with life satisfaction only, while goal motivation is not a significant predictor for any of the outcome measures. It was predicted that compensatory secondary strategies (accept loss and goal disengagement), humour based strategies and goal adjustment strategies should be prominent predictors of SWB relative to other coping strategies (excluding optimization) (hypothesis 5w). This appears to be partially supported for males, with the exceptions that

downward goal adjustment was not as prominent as expected, while goal pursuit was more prominent than expected. There also appears to be partial support found for females in that accept loss (a compensatory secondary strategy) was the strongest predictor.

In order to gain some indication into whether endorsement of coping strategies may be influenced by retrospective bias or current position, the selective secondary strategy of "I know I will achieve the job" (an item which loaded under the goal pursuit coping sub-type) was correlated with work status and a significant positive correlation was found for males only, $r(96) = .29$, $p = .004$. This indicated that those more likely to highly endorse knowing they will get a job they pursue are more likely to currently be employed in paid work.

Table 5.8

Correlations of the OPS-JL and CHS Coping Strategies on SWB for Females

Coping Strategies	Negative Affect	Positive Affect	Life Sat.	SWB
OPS-JL				
Optimization	-.10	.18+	.16	.18+
Seek support	-.01	.07	.16	.09
Goal pursuit	-.10	.17+	.26*	.19+
Goal motivation	.03	.18+	.24*	.15
Accept loss	-.39***	.46***	.46***	.50***
Goal disengage	.04	-.02	-.06	-.05
Horizontal GA	.13	-.02	-.10	-.11
Downward GA	.01	.00	.03	.01
CHS				
Lack of humour	-.10	.04	.20+	.12
Use of humour	.11	-.04	-.04	-.06

Note. $p \leq +.10$, *.05, **.01, ***.001. CHS = Coping Humour Scale, OPS-JL = Optimization in Primary and Secondary Control Job Loss Scale.

As predicted by hypothesis 5x, those who optimized more reported higher levels of wellbeing that those who optimized less. This association was strongly demonstrated for men, but weakly demonstrated for women, with only borderline significance levels. Of note for the humour strategies is that lack of humour appears more strongly associated with higher levels of negative affect. Conversely, use of humour is unrelated to negative affect

but is a moderate predictor of positive affect. This suggests that both factors are distinct from one another. The absence of predictive value of the humour variables for females is notable.

While higher endorsement of all of the above strategies is related to higher levels of adjustment, two strategies appear to have the opposite relationship for males. This is most strongly expressed through goal disengagement, higher levels of which coincide with higher negative affect and lower life satisfaction and SWB. To a lesser extent, downward goal adjustment is associated with lower life satisfaction and there is a non-significant trend toward higher levels of negative affect (this is borderline significant if 1-tailed). These two outcomes are in line with hypotheses 5y, that higher endorsement of goal disengagement will correlate with lower levels of wellbeing, and 5z, that downward goal adjustment will be associated with lower levels of wellbeing that that seen for horizontal goal adjustment. However, this is only partial support since the predicted effects were observed for males only.

Discussion

The discussion begins with addressing outcomes related to age. Following this, variables falling under the category of 'opportunities' are discussed (i.e. social resources, activity levels, & roles). Outcomes related to 'constraint' variables (job-related stress &, other life transitions) are then considered, followed by the outcomes related to 'coping' variables. The chapter ends with a summary of the non-coping related variables to take through to regression analysis in chapter 7.

Age

Age was of interest due to links with identity issues. Age was found to be a significant predictor for males only, providing support for hypothesis 5a, that older males will report higher levels of wellbeing than younger males. This is in line with the argument that the humiliation associated with job loss is lessened for older males because they can more readily shift to the role of retiree (Hayes & Nutman, 1983), and suggests that the assumption that less humiliation would serve to protect an individual's sense of wellbeing may have some validation.

Added to the argument that age and identity is a prominent theme for males is the finding that the variable 'seeking work' failed to produce a unique amount of the variance

in wellbeing once age was entered into the equation. Seeking work was formerly associated with lower levels of SWB, and this was initially taken as support for hypothesis 5k. That age was not a significant predictor for females indicates that they do not suffer from the same types of age-related identity dilemmas, adding further support for the general argument that males have differing levels of identity investment in the work role.

Opportunity Variables

Social Resources

Three variables tapped into the social resources available to respondents. These were relationship status, number of children and partners work status. Higher involvement in the first two areas is conceptualized as evidence for engagement in life, while partners work status is viewed as a possible side benefit of having a partner. Number of children also links in to the identity argument. All variables represent aspects of 'opportunity'.

Relationship status. It is clear that, for both sexes, being involved in a relationship was associated with higher levels of wellbeing. This supports hypothesis 5b, that partnered individuals would report higher levels of SWB than un-partnered individuals, and is in line with the findings of Reitzes et al (1994) and Leana and Feldman (1992).

Number of children. Hypothesis 5c predicted that those with more children would report higher levels of wellbeing than those with fewer or no children. This was supported for males only, which also supports hypothesis 5d, that the relationship between number of children and SWB would be stronger for males than for females. This was based on the assumption that females retain a continuity of investment in the role of mother, while men invest more heavily in the identity of father once the work role is no longer so consuming (Bozett, 1985), and also that males may experience vicarious achievement through their children (Huyck, 1999). Adding to the argument that the predictive power of number of children is due to a shift in identity investment for men is Huyck's finding that only males over 57 were more likely to experience negative symptoms if they were unhappy about their parenting, while this affect dissipated for females one they reached this age.

The lack of predictive power for females may be due to their tendency to experience higher levels of role strain in the parenting role. However, despite role strain, they may still report their relationship with their children to be satisfactory (Wickrama et al., 1995). The conflicting presence of strain (negative) and satisfaction (positive) may

serve to cancel out the impact of each aspect of parenting, thereby nullifying the predictive power of number of children for females.

Partners work status. With regard to partner's work status, the results observed for males were discounted due to partner's work status failing to produce a unique amount of the variance in wellbeing when age was controlled for. A more robust relationship was found for females, with (as predicted by hypothesis 5e) higher levels of employment in partners associated with higher life satisfaction and SWB (and borderline higher positive affect). This also supports hypothesis 5f, that this variable would be a stronger predictor for females. However, given the lack of correlation between financial preparation and partner's work status observed in chapter 4, it seems plausible to conclude this relationship is not due to less financial strain, but rather that females report higher wellbeing when their spouse is working because they don't have to deal with the double jeopardy of living with another individual who is also trying to come to terms with unemployment.

Activity Levels

The variables of interest under this heading are volunteer work, study, paid work status, and non-work activity balance. As with social resources, involvement in each of these areas is conceptualized as engagement in life, falling under the higher order umbrella of 'opportunities', with volunteer work also serving as an indicator of generativity.

Volunteer work. Hypothesis 5h predicted that volunteer work would be related to higher levels of SWB. Partial support was found for this prediction for males only, and only for positive affect. However, McAdams et al (1997) found that volunteer work was associated with a positive outlook, so this result seems fitting. While it would be tempting to infer this is support for the generativity argument, Reitzes et al (1994) claims that males engage in volunteer work for prestige value. However, if in chapter 9, it is found that volunteer work correlates with wisdom scores for males, this may bolster the generativity view. It is unclear as to why this relationship was absent for females. It was seen in chapter 4 that the sexes did not differ on levels of volunteer work involvement. It can only be assumed that females do not invest the same sense of worth in volunteer work.

Study. The outcomes in this area are somewhat perplexing, and do not support hypothesis 5i, that those engaged in study will report higher levels of wellbeing than those not engaged in study. This variable was not a predictor for males, but females who study (which, as seen in chapter 4, they are more likely to do) appear to report lower levels of life satisfaction. This may be due to a number of reasons.

Research on mature students indicates that they may experience problems with adjustment to the student lifestyle. Taylor (1998) found, using qualitative analysis on 23 mature students, that the experiences of mature students involve subtle judgement and discrimination from others and struggles to handle multiple responsibilities. Further, Makinen and Pychyl (2001) compared 109 younger students with 66 mature students and found economic hindrance and project challenges affected levels of life satisfaction for mature students only.

Research on mature students in NZ provides some insight into why females find studying more difficult. Marie (1998) reported that mature female students recounted stories about how they were socialized away from higher education when younger. Marie asserted that the students gained empowerment from the knowledge that their previous lack of education was not based on their inherent incompetence but rather by institutional structures that tended to educate females more toward domestic endeavours. Therefore

Roles

Hypothesis 5l predicted that the more roles an individuals holds, the higher the reported level of wellbeing, in line with Gove and Zeiss' (1987) argument that happiness would increase with the number of roles. This was supported for males only, which also supports hypothesis 5m, that number of roles would be a stronger predictor for males. These outcomes infer support for the idea that males are more likely to benefit from a greater range of identities due to the loss of a role that held a high level of centrality in the individual's life. Additionally, Reitzes and Mutran (1994) found and concluded that, in general, males were more strongly influenced by 'identity meanings' than females. This may explain why this variable was not a predictor for females.

Additionally, the variables that make up number of roles had divergent outcomes for females (i.e. study, number of children and volunteer work were negative or non-predictive variables, whereas being in a relationship had a positive impact on SWB), which makes the number of roles variable unsuitable as a composite measure for this sex. However, these variables all tended in the same direction for males, with most producing significant associations, and inter-correlating well with the number of roles measure, hence why this composite variable works well as a predictor for males only.

Constraints

Job-Loss Related Stress

The variables considered under this heading are number of times unemployed, financial preparation, pressure to find work and overall strain. All are measures of the stress associated with job loss.

Number of times unemployed. Hypothesis 5r predicted that those who had experienced unemployment more times in the past would report lower levels of wellbeing and financial preparation, in line with Ensminger and Celentano's (1988) argument that repeated experienced of unemployment would constitute a chronic stressor in the individual's life. This was supported for males only. The lack of predictive value for females may be a further indicator that the work role is more central to the male identity.

Financial preparation. Hypothesis 5n predicted that those who were less prepared financially at the time of job loss would report lower levels of wellbeing. This was supported for both sexes and is in line with previous research that indicated financial strain was associated with higher levels of distress for unemployed individuals (Jackson & Warr,

1984; Mallinckrodt & Bennett, 1992; Mallinckrodt & Fretz, 1988). Further, as predicted by hypothesis 5o, lack of financial preparation impacted more heavily on males than on females. This was seen through financial preparation being a predictor of life satisfaction for males only, despite the chapter 4 finding that females report lower levels of preparation overall. Of note is that it was not predictive of positive affect for either sex.

These outcomes are likely due to different value systems in males and females, where males may see money as a status symbol within their central identity and hence experience less life satisfaction when this symbol is lacking or conveys lower status (Stillson, et al., 1991). It is clear that less financial preparation coincides with higher levels of negative affect for both sexes, as less money no doubt makes life more difficult; however, to the extent that money contains less symbolism for females, or that symbolism in general is less important to females (i.e. quality of life is based on quality of relationships with others, not quantity of assets, etc), this may not impinge upon levels of life satisfaction.

Pressure to find work. In line with hypothesis 5p, those with higher levels of pressure to find work reported lower levels of wellbeing, this holding constant for both sexes. Further, support was found for hypothesis 5q, that both pressure to find work and financial preparation would capture a unique amount of the variance in SWB. This indicates that combining the two variables into the *strain* variable should yield a more complete and composite indicator of the stress associated with job loss. Strain was a superior predictor than its two sub-components for males, and was generally comparable for females, although somewhat weaker than pressure to find work. This is likely due to the weaker predictive power of financial preparation. Regardless, the strain variable is more economical for use in regression analysis and performs well enough.

Other Life Transitions

This area was considered not only in terms of the predictive power of other life transitions (a measure of stress that is not job-loss specific) for SWB, but also aimed to verify the optimal way to measure life events. Overall, it is clear that additional life events had an impact on subjective wellbeing that was independent of the impact generated from the strain associated with job loss. This was evidenced by a lack of correlation between the two areas. This is an important point to note for researchers who wish to focus on only one type of transition (i.e. job loss). A considerable amount of the variance in SWB may be missed if consideration is not given to other concurrent events. This is particularly so if the

sample consists of individuals in later mid-life, due to the number of transitions that tend to occur at this time (Bahr & Peterson, 1989).

Level of analysis. It is clear that the overall balance of events had a comparable impact on SWB levels for both sexes. This relationship between life events and SWB is robust in the literature (Kendler, et al, 2001) and supports hypothesis 5v, that those with a balance towards more positive events will report higher levels of wellbeing than those with a balance towards more negative events. Further, the overall balance of events (total weights score) was a superior predictor of wellbeing than either the total number or total impact of events, as predicted in hypothesis 5s.

Addressing methodological issues in assessing life events, the overall number and impact of events held no predictive power. Superior prediction began to emerge when events were separated into positive, negative and mixed valence. Positive events were associated with higher levels of wellbeing, while the opposite was true for negative events. Hence, if positive and negative events are combined into a single variable (i.e. number or impact of events) that does not account for their valence, then they could effectively cancel each other out, resulting in misleading outcomes. Overall, the valencing of events and deriving a total weights score as a superior method of assessing life transitions is in line with the findings of Zuckerman et al (1986).

As predicted by hypothesis 5t, and in line with the findings of Krause (1988), only positive events related to family (and not non-family positive events) were significant predictors of SWB. Further, as predicted (hypothesis 5u) negative events – whether family or not – still had a negative impact on wellbeing. A lack of distinction between family and non-family events had previously led researchers to conclude that positive events have no or little impact on SWB (Krause). This is clearly not the case.

Further, the event balance measure for family was clearly superior in predictive power than non-family events for females, perhaps highlighting the importance of family for females. This trend was also in strong evidence for males, although it appears that a balance towards more positive non-family events is associated with higher levels of life satisfaction. This could be because events in this area could enhance or detract from a male's sense of status or achievement in some way – an issue to be explored in chapter 8.

The division of event balance scales into family and non-family was performed in order to illustrate some of the issues just discussed. However, it is the combination of the two – the overall event balance measure – that appears to hold the most robust and

inclusive assessment of life events, and is the variable of choice to carry through to regression analysis.

Mixed events. There were some conflicting results for mixed events. For males, mixed events appeared to be just that, with the conflicting positive and negative valences within mixed events effectively cancelling out their predictive value. To the author's knowledge, mixed events have not been previously assessed in this way, and this approach may be useful to include in future assessments of life events. However, the relationship of mixed events to SWB was less clear cut for females, with these events demonstrating some negative valence. It may be that even if females can see a positive side to an event, the presence of any negative aspects remains the focal point, whereas males make a greater distinction.

This could also be caused by the types of events that females rate as mixed. For example, a female could gain freedom from a care-giving role when a loved one dies or a child leaves home, and this could be noted as positive. However, the female may feel the loss of a role, loss of a sense of being needed or be grieving the absence of that person, and may even feel guilty about the positive side of the event. Qualitative assessment of the types of transitions rated as mixed by females in chapter 8 may help to illuminate this area.

Consideration of the method used to assess events. The measure used to assess life events was created for this study. Previous assessment of life events have been conducted in different formats, often using multiple checklists, with identified transitions then rated on further levels (Zuckerman et al., 1988). For researchers not wishing to focus too strongly on life events, or for those who desire a short and efficient method of collecting such data, this measure, or modifications of it, may prove to be a useful tool.

The current study capped the number of transitions at three. Future research could cap the number at higher or lower levels. However, it is felt that there is likely to be a ceiling effect in terms of predictive value of life events. When individuals are asked to report only three, then they should be prompted to list only those that they perceive to be most relevant (i.e. have some sort of current on ongoing impact on the individuals life), bearing in mind the words of Diener (2000) that most people adapt to changes over time, but that some events are more easily resolved than others.

This 'capping' would serve to cut down the 'noise' created by other less important transitions that may be captured in a checklist format, thereby enhancing the predictive power of the measure. Indeed, Shrout, Link, Dohrenwend, Skodol, Stueve and Mirotznik (1989) note that events that are self-rated aid the separation of important from trivial events

and tend to lead to stronger relationships between events and wellbeing than normatively weighted methods of assessing life events. As seen in chapter 4, approximately 69% of the sample reported less than 3 transitions, so this would indicate that the cut-off is not unreasonable.

The separate assessment and discussion of the components of the event balance measure also help to provide confidence in the use of this tool, as they illustrate why this method is effective. However, mixed events are somewhat problematic for females, but despite this, the overall balance measure performed at comparable levels for both sexes. The most notable limitation is that a sample of 174 that is then broken down by sex and then types of transitions would diminish the rates of transitions in the sub-categories, and it is worthwhile to repeat this procedure with a larger sample to see whether the observed relationships remain in evidence.

Coping Variables

The assessment of coping strategies in this chapter sought to establish baseline predictors of SWB. Chapter 6 will assess the coping strategies in more complexity. Discussion in this area is separated into two parts: OPS-JL coping strategies and humour.

OPS-JL

Summarizing the predictions in this area, it was hypothesized that if individuals in the sample were indeed faced with a situation characterized by limited controllability then compensatory secondary control strategies (i.e. accept loss and goal disengagement), humour strategies, and goal adjustment coping strategies should feature as prominent predictors of SWB (hypothesis 5w). It was further hypothesized that those who optimize more (i.e. are more engaged in life) would report higher levels of wellbeing than those who optimize less (hypothesis 5x). Further, it was predicted that higher endorsement of goal disengagement would coincide with lower levels of wellbeing (hypothesis 5y), and that horizontal goal adjustment would be related to higher levels of SWB than downward goal adjustment (hypothesis 5z). Finally, it was predicted males would have a higher number of predictors of SWB than females (hypothesis 5aa), the latter whose predictors would primarily be secondary control based in nature (hypothesis 5ab). All of these predictions were supported either in full or in part.

Situational Uncontrollability. With regards to hypothesis 5w, it is clear that accept loss was the most prominent predictor for females. It also exerted a reasonable influence on affect levels for males, as did the goal disengagement and humour based strategies (types of secondary compensation). Further, horizontal goal adjustment was a prominent positive predictor for males, although downward goal adjustment was not as prominent as expected and goal pursuit featured more prominently than anticipated. However, as expected, seeking support and goal motivation were weak predictors (these were primary and selective strategies). Therefore reasonable support was found for hypothesis 5w.

Optimization. Support was found for hypothesis 5x, in that higher levels of optimization were clearly associated with higher levels of wellbeing for males, although the same direction of relationship was only borderline for females. The weak predictive value for females is surprising given that this strategy was more highly endorsed by females in chapter 4. However, it is this higher endorsement that may explain optimizations lack o f p redictive power. If females have a tendency to optimize due to more divergent roles and activities, then this may lead to a lack of variability for females. Conversely, for males, optimization may not be as common and so constitutes a level of openness to diversity that may be low in some males. On this basis, enough variability would exist to demonstrate optimizations predictive strength.

Goal disengagement. In line with hypothesis 5y, this coping strategy was a negative predictor of SWB for males, in line with Heckhausen and Schulz's (1992) contention that it is a dis-preferred strategy and also in line with the predicted outcome in Figure 1.3; however, this held for males only. That accept loss items had a positive impact on SWB, while goal disengagement had a negative impact provides validity for separating the latter item from the other compensatory secondary control strategies.

Goal adjustment. Downward goal adjustment was associated with lower levels of life satisfaction for men, with a trend towards being associated with higher levels of negative affect. As such, hypothesis 5z was supported for males, but was not supported for females, as neither of the adjustment strategies were significant predictors. It is not surprising that downward goal adjustment was associated with lower levels of wellbeing. To the extent that downward goal adjustment is an indicator that males are pursuing or have obtained a lesser job, we are reminded of work by Kinicki, et al (2000), who found that both unemployment and under-employment was associated with lower levels of wellbeing, whereas those who gain satisfactory reemployment (i.e. horizontal goal adjusters, etc) produce equivalent levels of wellbeing to those who have not experienced

unemployment at all. The downward shift should be more salient for men, who are prone to assess their worth in terms of status symbols such as pay and prestige (Stillson et al, 1991).

With regards to the other significant predictors for males, goal pursuit was also a prominent predictor. It should be noted that this coping strategy involved both selective primary, selective secondary and compensatory primary control strategies. From this viewpoint, it is difficult to assess whether males were referring to the pursuit of original goals or the pursuit of adjusted goals. Figure 1.3 allows goal pursuit to be activated in either case. Further, the positive correlation between the coping strategy "I know I will achieve the job I pursue' and current work status could potentially mean that the coping strategy was primarily more highly endorsed by those currently working because they viewed the strategy in light of their retrospective success. Only longitudinal analysis can clearly resolve these sorts of issues.

Gender and coping. It is clear from the results that accept loss is the only clear cut predictor of wellbeing for females. Overall, this result support hypothesis 5aa, that males will have a higher number of coping strategies that are predictors of wellbeing than females, and also hypothesis 5ab, that significant coping predictors of wellbeing will be more secondary than primary in nature for females.

Recall that in chapter 4, females tended to report more confidence for secondary control and that this confidence was related to endorsing higher levels of accept loss. However, chapter 4 also found that males and females did not appear to differ greatly in terms of the levels at which the coping strategies were endorsed. On this basis, it was concluded that females did not have a less diverse coping repertoire than males. However, when looking at the effectiveness of the coping strategies for SWB, support was found for Pearlin and Schooler's (1978, cited in Malen & Stroh, 1998) contention that females are more limited in the effectiveness of their coping strategies.

This could be because females have less identity investment in the work role and so therefore, although they may continue to seek work, removing themselves from it cognitively is sufficient for wellbeing levels, whereas males may gain some satisfaction from continuing the pursuit of work, as long as they can pursue jobs of comparable status. There may be some validity to this argument, and it could be that given another area of loss (i.e. relationships), females would show greater predictive power across the OPS strategies.

However, socialization issues could also play a significant, if not primary, role in these outcomes. It could be that despite the range of coping strategies endorsed, females

who go against the more passive female socialization of 'going with the flow' or 'changing the self to suit the needs of others or the environment' experience lower levels of SWB. This is reminiscent of the findings of Salema-Aro et al (2001), which was based on females only and showed that females who went against the prevailing dictates of the change they were going through experienced lower levels of wellbeing. It is possible that this is a prevailing female trend.

Additionally, perhaps the outcomes of this study are compounded by the double jeopardy of being an older worker and being female. Research indicates that both older workers and females are less likely to regain employment (Wanberg, 1997). Therefore, females who actively try to work against their marginalized status may be more aware of both age and sex discrimination and dwell negatively on their perceptions about this situation, experiencing lower levels of SWB as a result.

This leads into an interesting speculation about the accept loss coping strategy. The strategy involved items such as 'don't dwell on problems', 'remind self I am better off than others', 'focus on other areas of success', and 'tell self it is not my fault'. What do females think about when they answer these questions? Do males and females appraise them in the same way? Because the questions are all worded in one direction, we do not know if low endorsement indicates that the individual does not think about these things at all, or whether it indicates that they do dwell on problems, blame themselves, see themselves as worse off than others or focus on other areas of failure as well.

This is an important issue, as the literature indicates that females are more likely to ruminate (a tendency to dwell negatively on problems) than males (Nolen-Hoeksema, 1992). Does low endorsement of these items indicate that females are ruminating, while high endorsement means they are focusing on positives instead? The higher rates of rumination found in females may be the reason why the accept loss variable is prominent for them. Future versions of the OPS-JL may do well to address this issue by including items such as 'I dwell on problems', 'I think of all the other people that are better off than me', etc. This would allow a greater understanding of the underlying reasons for the predictive value of the accept loss coping strategies, and allow assessment of whether males and females approach these questions in the same way.

Humour

Validity for using two distinct humour factors was demonstrated by lack of humour's tendency to relate more to negative affect, and use of humour's tendency to

relate to positive affect for males. Of interest is the finding that while the two humour factors showed prominent predictive strength for males (in line with Wooten's (2000) assertion that humour is an effective stress reliever), it appeared to lack predictive strength for females. It is possible that this is because humour acts as a moderator for females. Humour has previously been found to demonstrate a moderating effect between life events and distress (Labott & Martin, 1987) and this possibility will be assessed in chapter 7.

Divergent outcomes on humour variables between the sexes are not unprecedented. Schill and O'Laughlin (1984) reported that sexually based humour aided men (as evidenced by lower depression scores), but not women in coping with stress. Likewise, Lefcourt et al (1997) found humour to be a stronger predictor for males. In contrast, Lefcourt and Martin (1987) found that humour was associated with happiness and marital satisfaction for females but not for males when assessing how couples deal with relational conflict.

If identify investment in relational roles in terms of 'keeping social relations running smoothly' is more central to females, then the work role may be more central to males, hence why humour shows a stronger relationship for males within this situational context. Such an interpretation evolves knowledge about sex differences in humour to acknowledge that domain specific usage of humour may account for anomalies found in research concerning sex and humour.

As an alternative explanation, Lefcourt and Martin (1987) also reported that women who perceived themselves as helpless used less humour. Could it be that females placed in an uncontrollable situation may also find that humour is not effective for them, and this, rather than identity issues, is the reason for the lack of predictive power demonstrated? Further research is required to resolve these questions.

Non-Coping Related Variables for Regression Analysis

One of the criteria for choosing which predictors should go through to regression analysis in chapter 7 is that variables should show a relationship across at least two of the sub-components of SWB, and correlate significantly with the composite measure of SWB. A second criterion is that variables which consolidate a number of other variables are also preferable. On this basis, it was decided that the predictors to be carried through for males should be age, number of roles, non-work activity balance, strain, number of times unemployed and overall event balance. For females, the chosen predictors were

relationship status, paid work status, non-work activity balance, strain and overall event balance.

Chapter Summary

A number of predictions, based on overarching themes or key predictor areas, were tested in this chapter. These themes mainly related to gender (in terms of identity, socialization & coping), opportunities, constraints, and situational uncontrollability. Outcomes for each key area are summarized in turn.

Gender: identity, socialization and coping. Support for differences in male and female identity investment and socialization/coping was implied through a number of outcomes. Male identity shifts from worker to retiree were implied by the finding that that older age was associated with higher levels of wellbeing for males only. Males benefited more notably from having the 'parent' identity and a larger number of identities to invest in than females. This backs up the notion that due to the centrality of the work role for males, they have a larger void to fill in terms of identity. Finally, males had a greater number of coping related predictors of wellbeing than females, indicating more complex coping due to the centrality of the work role for males. Males also tended to distinguish between maladaptive and adaptive strategies more accurately, indicating that their coping and goal hierarchies are more specific and more closely tied to wellbeing than females.

A differential attitude towards money was also evidenced by the greater impact of lack of financial preparation on wellbeing for males than was seen for females. This would indicate that males are socialized to view money as a symbol of status, while females may value other areas of life more highly and make do with less. The tendency for females to 'make do' is also potentially manifest in the finding that accepting loss was the only significant coping predictor for them. Females also appear to benefit more from having a working partner, although this appears to be due to not having to deal with an unemployed partner, rather than financial relief.

Opportunities: social resources, activity and roles. Both sexes benefited from having a spouse, while only females benefited from a working partner. Both males and females benefited from increasing rather than decreasing their leisure time pursuits, however volunteering was associated with higher positive affect for males only, while higher levels of employment benefited females only. Higher involvement in paid work was associated with higher wellbeing for females but not for males. The lack of

relationship between paid work status and SWB for males was attributed to the possibility that they have a higher tendency to perceive themselves as under-employed. Further, study appeared to have a negative impact on wellbeing for females, but no impact for males. This may be due, in part, to how females in this age group were socialized away from education when they were younger. The number of roles functioned as a predictor for males only, primarily due to the consistency of relationship with wellbeing seen for its sub-components compared to females. Despite variation due to gender, evidence for higher levels of wellbeing was found for all variables under this heading (whether for both sexes or one sex or the other), with the exception of study, highlighting the adaptive value of engagement in life.

Constraints: job related stressors and life transitions. Pressure to find work was a robust predictor of wellbeing for both sexes, with financial preparation a slightly stronger predictor for males than for females. These two variables were found to both contribute to explaining a unique amount of the variance in SWB. It was found that combining these two variables (into the strain variable) is more economical and serves to predict SWB at approximately comparable levels for both sexes. Additionally, the greater importance of the work role for males was further demonstrated by the finding that number of times previously unemployed was a significant predictor for males but not for females.

Finally, results indicated that the method used to assess other life transitions in this study works well in predicting levels of SWB for both sexes, as evidenced by the finding that using a total weights score is superior to simply assessing number or impact of events alone. Also, family events appear to have a stronger influence on wellbeing for both sexes, this notably being the case when only positive events are considered.

Situational uncontrollability. Only one hypothesis tested this area and although definitive support for the prediction was not clear cut, accept loss was the most prominent predictor for females and a reasonable predictor for males. Goal disengagement, humour strategies (types of secondary compensation) and horizontal goal adjustment were prominent for males, while downward goal adjustment was less prominent and goal pursuit more prominent than anticipated. Overall, however, the types of coping strategies coming through as predictors tended to be those one could associate with being prominent if situational control was limited.

Overall, this chapter adds further support to some of the arguments established in chapter 4. It also allowed for the collapsing of compatible variables and the discard of non-coping related variables that lacked in predictive strength, thus narrowing the number

of variables for use in the regression analysis to be conducted in chapter 7. While it allowed for consideration of the coping strategies at their baseline predictive level, the thesis now turns to chapter 6 to examine these coping strategies in more depth.

6

IN-DEPTH ANALYSIS OF THE COPING STRATEGIES

The purpose of this chapter is to investigate the coping strategies used in this research (OPS-JL and humour) in a more in-depth manner. It was seen in chapter 5 that there were differences between males and females in terms of which coping strategies were predictive of SWB. To explore these differences more deeply, this chapter initially looks at the inter-correlations between coping strategies and highlights inter-correlations between strategies that differ between the sexes. This allows for consideration on how males and females may construct their approach to coping differently.

The inter-correlations also serve to test relationships between coping strategies (in terms of either direct relationships or mediating relationships) and the construct validity of some of the coping strategies is assessed by comparison with more objective indicators. The hypothesized relationship between humour and compensatory secondary control is also tested. The results end with regression analysis aimed at determining which coping strategies should be carried through to the regression analysis in chapter 7 for each sex, as well as an exploratory focus on downward goal adjustment.

Results

Coping Strategy Inter-correlations and Sex-based Variations

Table 6.1 outlines the inter-correlations of coping strategies for the overall sample. Table 6.2 outlines sex-based variations in inter-correlation. These tables are broken down for analysis in three areas: inter-correlation of OPS-JL strategies; inter-correlation of OPS-JL strategies with humour; and sex based variations in inter-correlation. Each area is discussed in turn.

Table 6.1

Inter-correlation of Coping Strategies for the Overall Sample

Variable	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
1. Optimization	--									
2. Seek support	.29***	--								
3. Goal pursuit	.49***	.50***	--							
4. Goal motivation	.07	.31***	.39***	--						
5. Accept loss	.30***	.24***	.30***	.34***	--					
6. Goal disengage	-.19**	-.15*	-.10	-.12	.03	--				
7. Horizontal GA	.25***	.30***	.37***	.16*	.22**	-.07	--			
8. Downward GA	.09	.07	.14*	.07	.24***	.06	.42***	--		
9. Lack Humour	.06	-.01	.07	-.11+	.05	-.23***	.00	-.01	--	
10. Use Humour	.17*	.03	.12+	.01	.18**	.03	.17*	.11+	.16*	--

Note. GA = Goal Adjustment. Based on Pearson's correlation 1 tailed tests. $p \leq +.10$, *.05, **.01, ***.001.

Inter-correlation of OPS-JL Strategies

It was expected that optimization would be correlated with all of the OPS-JL coping strategies. As seen in Table 6.1, it was found to correlate with all strategies except goal motivation and downward goal adjustment. It was negatively related to goal disengagement. Seeking support showed the same kind of inter-correlations demonstrated for optimization. The accept loss, horizontal goal adjustment and goal pursuit strategies were positively related to all strategies except goal disengagement. Downward goal adjustment was correlated with accept loss and horizontal goal adjustment (as would be expected in Figure 1.3 in chapter 1), showing a somewhat weaker correlation with goal pursuit, and appeared to be a more distinct coping strategy than horizontal goal adjustment, which showed stronger relationships with the other OPS-JL strategies.

Inter-correlation of OPS-JL with Humour

Referring again to Table 6.1, lack of humour showed it strongest relationship with goal disengagement (i.e. give up if lack humour), while use of humour showed its strongest association with accept loss (i.e. use more humour, accept loss more). Use of humour also shows a significant positive relationship with optimization and horizontal goal adjustment. The two humour factors showed a weak positive correlation with each other.

Sex Based Variations in Inter-correlation

Focusing on Table 6.2, accept loss related to all strategies except goal disengagement for males (8 out of 9 strategies). For females it was only related to goal pursuit, goal motivation and optimization (3 out of 9). Of interest here is that accept loss appears to be a more distinct coping strategy for females than it is for males.

The correlations between downward goal adjustment and goal pursuit indicate that the weak correlation between these two variables in the overall sample was due to the significant relationship between these variables for females only. This indicated that males differentiate goal pursuit from downward adjustment more distinctly than females. Further, the stronger correlation between downward goal adjustment and

horizontal goal adjustment for females indicated that they do not differentiate between these two variables as much as males do.

Humour factors appear to be more distinct from one another for males, but there was a stronger correlation for females. It is of note that, for males, use of humour related specifically to only two of the strategies that make up accept loss, these were downward social comparisons (.27**) and thinking of other areas of success (.30**). These both constitute minimization strategies.

Table 6.2

Notable Differences between Males and Females in the Inter-correlation of Coping Strategies.

Correlation	*Males*	*Females*
Goal Pursuit + Downward GA	.04	.30**
Downward GA + Horizontal GA	.34***	.48***
Accept Loss + Horizontal GA	.37***	.07
Accept Loss + Downward GA	.30***	.19+
Accept Loss + Seek Support	.31***	.12
Accept Loss + Lack of Humour	.17*	-.11
Accept Loss + Use of Humour	.25**	.09
Use of Humour + Optimization	.23**	.06
Use of Humour + Horizontal GA	.24**	.10
Use of Humour + Lack of Humour	.10	.26*

Note. GA = Goal Adjustment. Based on Pearson's correlation 1 tailed tests. $p \leq +.10$, *.05, **.01, ***.001.

Construct Validity of OPS-JL Strategies

A common argument against using subjective self report scales is that the individual may be subject to response bias. In the case of the OPS-JL, respondents were asked to consider how highly they would endorse a coping strategy regardless of whether or not they were still seeking work or had found a job. In other words, they were asked to consider what they would do if they were in the situation posed in the question. Some of the OPS-JL strategies were tested to see whether their subjective

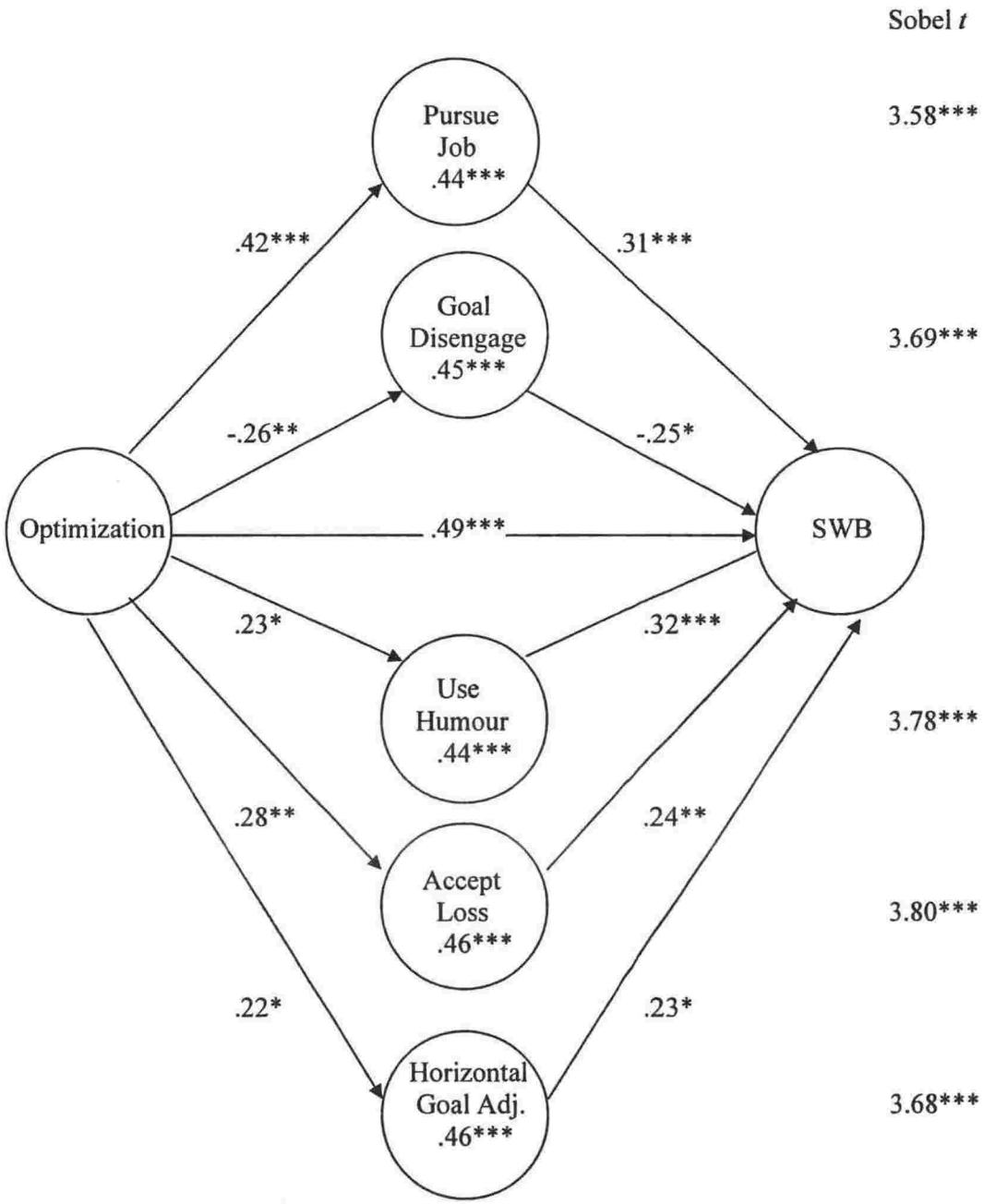
perceptions of what they would do related to some of the more objective indicators used in the study, thus providing evidence for construct validity.

As predicted by hypothesis 6b, construct validity was found for the optimization coping strategy through its positive correlation with the variables activity balance, $r(172) = .15$, $p = .023$ and total number of roles, $r(172) = .31$, $p < .001$, indicating that higher optimization was associated with a higher number of activities and involvement in a larger number of roles. Further, those who reported a change of goals endorsed downward goal adjustment more highly (N=70, $M = 4.26$, $SD = .71$) than those who report no change in goals (N=82, $M = 4.04$, $SD = .71$), $t(150) = 1.93$, $p = .028$. This partially supports hypothesis 6c, as the same relationship was not observed for horizontal goal adjustment. Finally, those who reported they were no longer seeking work endorsed goal disengagement more highly (N=76, $M = 2.61$, $SD = 1.33$) than those who were still seeking work (N=92, $M = 2.20$, $SD = 1.27$), $t(166) = 2.04$, $p = .022$, in support of hypothesis 6d. Of interest is the finding that optimization did not correlate with paid work status for either sex.

Mediation of OPS-JL Sub-types between Optimization and Wellbeing

Hypothesis 6a predicted that optimizations effect on wellbeing would be mediated through subordinate coping strategies. In order to test whether significant mediation occurred, the difference in the unstandardized betas and standard error for optimization before and after entering the subordinate coping strategies was recorded and used to calculate a Sobel test of differences. This test ascertains whether the drop in the beta of the first variable, as a result of the inclusion of the second variable, constitutes a significant mediation effect.

The first point of note was that there was no mediation found for females between optimization and the coping strategies, therefore only the results for males are reported on below. As seen in Figure 6.1, 5 of the coping strategies were found to partially mediate the impact of optimization on SWB. Included in these five strategies was representation from one of the new goal adjustment strategies (horizontal) and also the use of humour, which is not included in the OPS-JL questionnaire. These relationships indicate that higher optimizers use more humour and horizontal goal adjustments, which in turn relates to higher levels of wellbeing.



Note. The standardized betas reported within the circles of mediating strategies denote the level to which optimization dropped when they were entered. Betas next to lines denote the strength of the relationship between the connected two variables. The figures in the right hand margin are the corresponding Sobel test statistics and their levels of significance. $p \leq$ *.05, **.01, ***.001

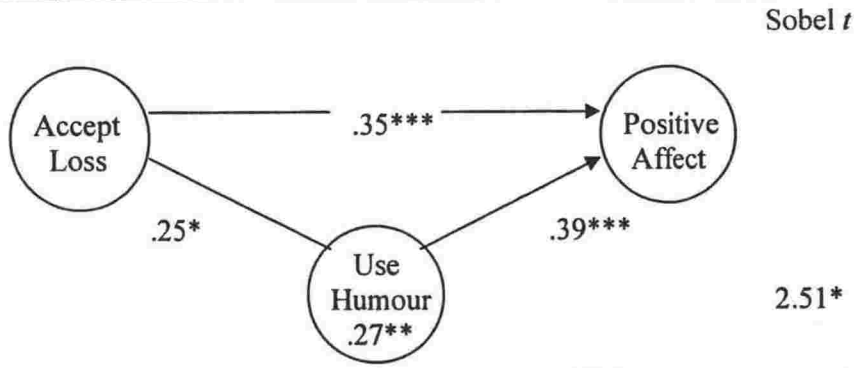
Figure 6.1. Coping Strategies found to Partially Mediate the effect of Optimization on Subjective Wellbeing for Males

Overall, three of five of the OPS-JL subordinate strategies mediated optimization. Higher optimizers were more likely to accept loss, pursue jobs and not give up, which in turn related to higher levels of subjective wellbeing. Of note is that in all cases, optimization still retained a positive and moderate direct relationship with SWB. In sum, partial support was found for hypothesis 6a (i.e. predicted outcomes held for males only, partial mediation only and for only some of sub-ordinate strategies).

Although not reported on in diagram format (in order to save space), each of the subcomponents of the SWB measure were tested for males. It is noteworthy that goal disengagement mediated for life satisfaction and negative affect only, while pursue job mediated all four of the outcome measures. Use of humour and horizontal goal adjustment mediated positive affect only.

Mediating Role of Humour on the Effect of Compensatory Secondary Control on Wellbeing

Hypothesis 6e predicted that humour would mediate the effect of compensatory secondary control on SWB. This was partially supported, in that only partial mediation was in evidence and the predicted relationship held for males only. Figure 6.2 illustrates how use of humour partially mediated the impact of accepting loss on positive affect for males, where acceptance of loss is facilitated by the use of humour.



Note. $p \leq$ *.05, **.01, ***.001

Figure 6.2. Mediating Role of Humour on the Effect of Compensatory Secondary Control on Wellbeing

This section aimed to narrow down the coping strategies to carry through to the regression analysis in chapter 7. Hierarchical regression analysis was carried out separately for males and females given observed gender differences in chapters 4, 5 and the current chapter. The regression analysis followed the same three steps for males and females, although the reasoning for the ordering of the steps was based on the outcomes seen so far in this chapter for males. Namely, subordinate OPS-JL strategies were entered in the first step, followed by humour strategies in the second step, and optimization in the final step. Humour and optimization were put last due to the instances of mediation found between these variables and the subordinate strategies for males. This allows consideration of the predictive value of the subordinate OPS-JL strategies before potential contaminants are entered into analysis.

Focusing on males and Table 6.3, the first step indicated that all subordinate OPS-JL strategies, with the exception of seeking help, were predictive of SWB levels. Entering humour in step 2 caused two of the subordinate strategies (accept loss and horizontal goal adjustment) to lose their predictive power. Recall that the accept loss variable was partially mediated by use of humour. Use of humour is seen to be a stronger predictor than lack of humour. Entering optimization in step 3 resulted in further subordinate strategies losing their predictive value, with only optimization, lack of humour and downward goal adjustment remaining as significant predictors. It is of note that downward goal adjustment was the strongest predictor in steps 1 and 2, and a comparable predictor to optimization in step 3. In all cases, higher endorsement of the downward goal adjustment strategy was associated with lower levels of wellbeing.

To determine which of the 3 steps should be selected for significant predictors to take through to chapter seven, only the significant predictors (at $p \leq .05$) within each of the steps in Table 6.3 (first regression) were entered into a second round of regression analysis. A comparison was made between the number of significant predictors and R^2 from the first regression (all predictors in a step entered) and the second regression (only significant predictors from each step entered). The results are given in Table 6.4. As can be seen, step 1 retains the most consistency in terms of number of predictors and R^2, while steps 2 and 3 lose a large degree of the variance

explained. This indicates that step 1 may yield the most information and contain the least contamination from other variables, while roughly accounting for a similar amount of the variance produced in step 3.

Table 6.3

Hierarchical Regression of OPS-JL and Humour Strategies on SWB for Males

Strategy	*Step 1* β	*Step 2* β	*Step 3* β	*F*	*df*	R^2
Step 1				5.01***	87	.29
Pursue Job	.26*	.27*	-.10			
Seek Help	-.05	-.03	-.16			
Goal Motivation	-.24*	-.21*	-.02			
Goal Disengagement	-.20*	-.16+	.15			
Accept Loss	.26*	.17	.14			
Horizontal GA	.21*	.16	.15			
Downward GA	-.31**	-.29**	-.29**			
Step 2				5.33***	85	.36
Use Humour	--	.21*	.15			
Lack Humour	--	.18+	.19*			
Step 3				6.05***	84	.42
Optimization	--	--	.29**			

Table 6.4.

Comparison of Variance Explained by Significant Predictors Identified in Hierarchical Steps in Table 6.3.

	1st Regression		2nd regression	
Step	# Predictors	R^2	# Predictors	R^2
1	6	.29	6	.29
2	4	.36	3	.23
3	3	.42	2	.31

Moving to focus on the results of regression analysis for females (given in Table 6.5) it was immediately clear that, as indicated in chapter 5, accept loss was the strongest predictor of wellbeing, demonstrating a sizeable beta weight. Pursue job achieved borderline significance only, while none of the remaining variables were significant predictors.

Table 6.5

Hierarchical Regression of OPS-JL and Humour Strategies on SWB for Females

Strategy	*Step 1* β	*Step 2* β	*Step 3* β	*F*	*df*	R^2
Step 1				4.49***	54	.37
Pursue Job	.24+	.17	.22			
Seek Help	.17	.19	.20			
Goal Motivation	-.09	-.06	-.09			
Goal Disengagement	-.05	.01	.00			
Accept Loss	.51***	.54***	.56***			
Horizontal GA	-.24	-.20	-.19			
Downward GA	-.17	-.17	-.17			
Step 2				3.85***	52	.40
Use Humour	--	-.10	-.10			
Lack Humour	--	.20	.19			
Step 3				3.43***	51	.40
Optimization	--	--	-.07			

Exploration of Downward Goal Adjustment

Given that downward goal adjustment (DGA) came through as a notable predictor for males in regression analysis but was not a strong independent predictor in chapter 5, further consideration was given to this variable through exploratory analysis. Two outcomes of interest were found for males only. As seen in Table 6.6, horizontal goal adjustment moderated the impact of DGA on life satisfaction. Figure 6.3 presents an interaction where life satisfaction remains relatively stable across horizontal goal adjustment levels if DGA is low, but if DGA is high, higher levels of

life satisfaction occurs if horizontal goal adjustment was also high, as compared to low.

Table 6.6

Horizontal Goal Adjustment as a Moderator between Downward Goal Adjustment and Life Satisfaction in Males.

Predictors	β	*F*	*df*	R^2	ΔR^2
Downward GA	-.24*	5.60**	89	.06	--
Horizontal GA	.21+	4.65*	88	.08	.036+
HGA*DGA	1.45*	4.83**	87	.11	.047*

Note. $p \leq$ +.10, *.05, **.01, ***.001. GA = goal adjustment.

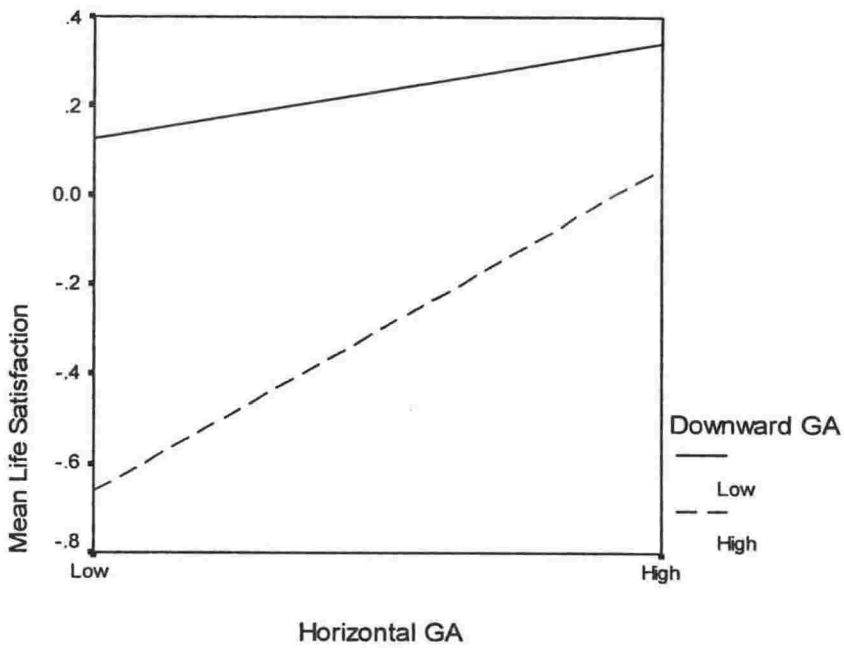


Figure 6.3. The Moderating Impact of Horizontal GA on Downward GA and Life Satisfaction in Males

Given that DGA relates to taking lesser jobs, it was decided to assess the correlation between DGA and wellbeing when current work status was taken into account. As seen in Table 6.7, DGA showed its strongest relationship with those who

were working part-time, with those working full-time showing the same trends, although considerably weaker and not significant. These trends indicated that higher endorsement of DGA was associated with lower levels of wellbeing. DGA showed trends of being associated with less life satisfaction across all work statuses, but was borderline significant in its association with higher positive affect in the unemployed. A partial correlation, controlling for financial preparation, was conducted for part-time workers between negative affect, life satisfaction and DGA. The results indicated that the correlation between negative affect and DGA was no longer significant, while the correlation between life satisfaction and DGA was significant to a borderline degree, $r(27) = -.35, p = .06$

Table 6.7

Relationship of Downward Goal Adjustment to Wellbeing as a Function of Current Work Status for Males

Job Status	Negative Affect	Positive Affect	Life Sat.	SWB
Unemployed (*N*=52)	-.02	.26+	-.10	.15
Part-time (*N*=36)	.39*	-.29	-.44**	-.38*
Full-time (*N*=15)	.19	-.09	-.04	-.08

Note. Based on Pearson's 2-tailed correlation. p = +.10, *.05, **.01.

Discussion

The discussion of the results in this chapter begins with a comparison of the performance of the OPS-JL with previous outcomes found with the general OPS scales. Following this, the observed relationship of the goal adjustment and humour items to the more established OPS strategies is discussed. Observed male/female differences are then focused on, with possible reasons for, and consequences of, the observed differences being considered. The discussion ends with evaluation of the regression analysis, at which point the predictors to be taken through to the seventh chapter are decided upon.

Performance of the OPS-JL with Previous OPS Outcomes

The factor structure used for the OPS-JL in this research differs somewhat from the categorization of variables used in the general OPS scales, specifically in terms of the fact that a number of selective and compensatory primary control strategies were combined, while selective and compensatory secondary strategies were slightly different from the original OPS composition. Comparing the inter-correlations seen in this sample (excluding goal adjustment and humour strategies) with those found between strategies by Heckhausen et al (1998) it can be noted that while correlations between optimization and coping sub-types ran between .43 and .65 for Heckhausen et al, they inter-correlated to a lower range of -.19 to .49 for the current sample. Additionally, Heckhausen et al found a strong correlation between selective primary and secondary control (.72), whereas the related strategies of goal pursuit and goal motivation only correlated to .39 in the current sample. This is presumably influenced by the current study's mixing of selective and compensatory primary control items (and a single selective secondary item) in the goal pursuit coping strategy.

Further, Heckhausen et al (1998) used the longest version of the OPS scales (92 items), incorporating more diverse facets of optimization and a higher number of items for each of the coping sub-types. Bearing these differences in mind, the OPS-JL's relationship between coping strategies appears to resemble the relationships observed for the general OPS scale to an acceptable extent.

The degree to which these differences in patterns are due to the scale being tested on a situation characterized by limited control or due to the different way in which items were clustered through factor analysis cannot be currently verified. However, the correlation between OPS strategies and conceptually related objective indicators (as per supported hypotheses 6b, 6c and 6d) provides some confidence in the construct validity of the coping strategies.

Additionally, while selective secondary items correlated with optimization to .52 in Heckhausen et al's (1998) research, the related strategy of goal motivation did not correlate with optimization in the current research. Given that goal motivation was concerned with enhancing perceptions of control over a chosen goal and also anticipating positive outcomes, the lack of relationship between optimization and goal

motivation may well be an indicator that situational uncontrollability is influencing the structure of the coping strategies.

Future researchers using the OPS-JL may wish to retain the theoretically driven clustering of items, and simply not use categories that show poor internal consistency. Conversely, they may wish to test the structures used in this research to perform comparative confirmatory factor analyses between the theoretical structuring of items and the structure used here. In cross-sectional analysis different age bands could be used to ascertain the impact of increasing limits to control with age. Further, longitudinal assessment could be used to tease out the effects or age vs. cohort in reaction to job loss (i.e. are the results a 'sign of the times' or likely to repeat for all future generations entering this age group?).

Mediation was not found between optimization and all of the OPS-JL strategies, however in Heckhausen's et al's (1998) research, mediation was found with all strategies, but not necessarily with the same kind of outcome variable. This was also seen for this sample, where some variables only partially mediated for certain sub-types of subjective wellbeing. Therefore, the outcome measure evaluated plays a part in whether mediation will be observed.

Of further note is that evidence of mediation was seen for males only, suggesting the domain the OPS is applied to may affect the relationship between variables that are observed for each gender (i.e. would male/female patterns be reversed or similar if familial relationships were being assessed?). Overall, however, it can be said that hypothesis 6a, that optimization would be mediated by subordinate OPS-JL strategies, was partially supported (males only, only for some of the coping strategies and only partial mediation).

The Relationship of Goal Adjustment to the OPS Strategies and Wellbeing

The newly added goal adjustment items displayed differing levels of inter-correlation with the OPS strategies based on whether they were horizontal (HGA) or downward (DGA) in nature. The horizontal goal adjustment items appeared more uniform in their inter-correlation with the pre-existing OPS categories than the downward goal adjustment items. Added to this, HGA acted in the manner hypothesized for a lower order OPS coping strategy in that it partially mediated the impact of optimization on wellbeing.

Conversely, while DGA inter-correlated to a moderate extent with HGA, its positive correlations were pinpointed with goal pursuit (weak association) and accept loss (somewhat stronger association), it did not mediate the impact of optimization, and nor did it correlate with this higher order strategy. These results suggest that, in line with the predicted pathways outlined in Figure 1.3 of chapter 1, HGA may be less differentiated from the rest of the coping process than DGA. The primary correlation with accept loss for DGA suggests that it is more likely to be employed following failed earlier attempts, whereas HGA may be employed earlier in the process.

The moderating impact of HGA on DGA for life satisfaction in males suggests that whether HGA is employed prior to using DGA will have an impact on how individuals feel about making DGA's. Specifically, the results indicate that individuals will feel more satisfied with their lives when making DGA's if they know they have first made a reasonable attempt to obtain jobs of a similar level to the job lost. Those who immediately make DGA's, without attempting HGA's, may be left wondering whether they have sold themselves short, whereas this uncertainty would be absent in those who did employ HGA. Further, it is possible that moving from a HGA to a DGA may ease the process of accepting loss, whereas a shift from original goals to DGA may be felt as more abrupt and therefore more difficult to come to terms with. Finally, like goal disengagement, an immediate shift to DGA from original goals may be a watered down form of disengaging from goals prematurely (i.e. giving up too easily).

Current job status is another variable that impacts on how the individual experiences DGA's. It was seen that part-time workers (and to a lesser extent – full-time workers) experienced lower levels of wellbeing if they endorsed DGA more highly. While it is difficult to infer the direction of causality between work status and DGA, the finding that there is a tendency for DGA to be associated with higher levels of positive affect in unemployed respondents suggests that the *reality* of making downward goal adjustments is associated with lower levels of wellbeing. In other words, DGA may seem a viable proposition when an individual is not employed at all, but the reality of being under-employed is an unsatisfactory position. This appears to be felt more strongly for those who are part-time employed, than those who are full-time employed, this being likely due to the degree to which underemployment is experienced, and as indicated through partial correlation, the degree to which

individuals were financially prepared for job loss. Qualitative comments about goal changes in chapter 8 should shed further light on this area.

The lack of correlation between DGA and optimization suggests that Figure 1.3 may require some adjustment. This lack of relationship indicates that, for the current sample at least, individuals who employ DGA are not more or less likely to optimize, rather it seems that this is simply a dis-preferred recourse that is forced by the constraints of the situation.

Overall, a number of interesting outcomes have been generated when focusing on goal adjustment. While interpretation of some of these outcomes is more straightforward than others, given that goal adjustment is a new inclusion to the OPS scales, deeper exploration into how it functions in the coping process is required. The results found here provide some indication of where further exploration may be focused.

Humour and OPS-JL Strategies

Of note for the use of humour strategy, holding for males only, is that it correlated only with compensatory and secondary strategies, aside from its relationship to the more general optimization strategy. The correlation with horizontal goal adjustment indicates that humour may also play a role in aiding individuals to view shifting focus to alternative jobs more positively. The relationship of use of humour to optimization suggests that those who optimize are also more likely to employ humour to cope, and the finding that it partially mediates the impact of optimization suggests that it may be a suitable addition to the OPS scales.

The moderate correlation between use of humour and accept loss indicates that use of humour is akin to the accept loss strategies but still unique from them. Humour appears to relate, in particular, to the comparisons males make between their own life and the world around them. The results suggest that the claims of Rim (1988, cited in Lefcourt et al, 1997), that humour is related to minimization strategies, are valid. However, Rim said this held only for females, whereas the current research demonstrated this for males only. This may be due to the fact that job loss is the area under assessment, as previously highlighted in chapter 5.

The connection between minimization and humour is further understood by the finding that, as per hypothesis 6e (supported for males only), accepting loss was

mediated through humour (i.e. accepting loss was aided by using humour to cope) (coping effects opportunities as per Figure 1.4). The mediating role of humour appears to be compatible with a statement made by Lefcourt et al (1995) that "perspective taking humor is more an emotion-focused coping technique that facilitates recovery from stressful circumstances than a means of dealing with stress itself" (p. 373).

Male/Female Differences in Coping

The tendency for 'accept loss' to be a more isolated variable for females (in terms of its correlation with other coping strategies) than for males provides an indicator as to why this was the only prominent coping predictor of wellbeing for women. Accept loss only correlated with the more selection based strategies of goal pursuit and goal motivation, and the overarching strategy of optimization for females. This could suggest that the selection strategies correlate with accept loss simply because they occur earlier in the process (as indicated in Figure 1.3), but that once females reach the stage of accepting the loss, the process, in some manner, stops there (at least in terms of predictive value for wellbeing).

Of additional note was that the two humour factors inter-correlated for females only. Previous research using the Coping Humour Scale has concluded that the measure works better for females (Lefcourt & Martin, 1987). This would follow if the scale tends to be more uni- than bi-dimensional for females, whereas for males, combining two separate factors, which can operate in opposite directions, may serve to nullify relationships between humour and the variables it is applied to.

The finding that males tend to distinguish downward goal adjustment from both horizontal goal adjustment and goal pursuit more than females do may well be an indicator of how males and females differ in their cognitive or identity based approach to work. Due to work having been a major role for males, they may tend to make finer distinctions in their goal hierarchies than females do. Further, since downward goal adjustment referred to drops in both prestige and pay, it may be that females do not base the value of their jobs on this criteria as heavily as males. Such an interpretation is commensurate with Stillson et al's (1991) argument that males are more likely to attach status or worth to the symbolic facets of work (i.e. salary range).

For males, it was decided to use the significant variables from step 1 in Table 6.3, as this yields more individual information, with variables retaining their predictive strength when non-significant predictors are removed, accounting also for a sizeable amount of the variance in SWB. This enables representation of all of the subordinate OPS-JL strategies, except seeking help, in the final assessment of predictors from the survey component of the research. It is regrettable that the humour factors and optimization cannot be included, however the instances of mediation associated with these variables and their independent predictive strength mean that their status as predictors of SWB can be readily inferred. Of course, accept loss clearly remains the only predictor to carry through for females. The results in this chapter also serve to further back hypotheses 5aa and 5ab, which respectively predicted that males would have more significant coping predictors than females and that female predictors would be more likely to be secondary control based.

Of specific note regarding the results for males is that higher endorsement of goal motivation was significantly associated with lower levels of wellbeing when entered into regression analysis. The result for this variable is not surprising because this coping sub-type is partly concerned with enhancing perceptions of control over a chosen goal and also anticipating positive outcomes from the pursuit of that goal (Heckhausen, et al, 1998). If individuals are in a situation that realistically limits their control, then adherence to these beliefs may in fact prove to be maladaptive, with the refusal to accept a more realistic appraisal indicating a level of denial that does not protect the individual's sense of wellbeing when failure occurs (Heckhausen & Schulz, 1995).

Further, Heckhausen and Schulz (1995) refer to 'defensive pessimism' as a means to adjust to anticipated failure. This can be defined as anticipating negative outcomes so as to not be so disappointed when failure occurs. It may be that low endorsement of the goal motivation strategy indicates that defensive pessimism has been employed and that this ends up being adaptive given the reality of situational confines. However, because the questions were only posed in one direction we cannot be sure whether defensive pessimism can be inferred by low endorsement of these items, hence raising the same issue discussed in relation to the accept loss strategy covered in the discussion of chapter 5. That this relationship is only seen for males

may once again highlight the importance of the work identity for males relative to females.

Chapter Summary

Despite changes to the theoretical OPS structure that have been made in the current research, evidence was still seen for optimization to be a higher order coping strategy, which also acted in this manner for one of the goal adjustment strategies and one of the humour strategies. However, optimizations higher order nature held for some of the subordinate OPS-JL strategies and for males only, and partial, not full, mediation was in evidence. Although inter-correlation between OPS-JL strategies were not as high as those found using general OPS scales in past research, many of the inter-relationships were still present, and it was supposed that lack of situational control may have affected inter-correlation, although evidence of construct validity of OPS strategies was found with at least 3 strategies showing inter-correlation with related objective indicators.

As might be expected, DGA was more remote from other OPS-JL strategies than HGA, as conceptualized in Figure 1.3, with it being at the bottom of the primary control striving goal hierarchy. Exploratory analysis further indicated that individuals feel better about making DGA's if they first make HGA's, although the idea of making a DGA is more appealing to the unemployed, while it is experienced more negatively by the currently but under-employed. These outcomes suggest that how DGA is experienced may be dependent on a number of other contextual factors. Both of the exploratory outcomes held for males only.

As expected, humour related primarily to minimization strategies and was found to aid the accept loss process. Once again, this held for males only. Comparison of inter-correlations between males and females indicated that males appear to have more intricate coping hierarchies in that coping strategies appear more compartmentalized from one another (especially in terms of goal adjustment, goal pursuit and humour), while females showed higher inter-correlation among distinct factors. On the other hand, accept loss, which was the strongest predictor for females, appeared more isolated in its relationships to other coping strategies, with its only inter-correlations linked to strategies that occur prior to the accept loss stage in Figure 1.3. This suggests that females do little to pass beyond the accept loss stage in

terms of utility of coping for wellbeing, suggesting a primary control model may not fit for females as well as it does for males.

As with chapter 5, outcomes from regression analysis showed males more likely to have a greater number of significant predictors of wellbeing, while significant predictors for females were predominantly secondary control based. Males also tended to suffer more if they did not engage in defensive pessimism or were over-confident when assessing the likelihood of achieving a goal. This was taken as a potential indicator of lack of situational control. Overall, higher complexity within coping structures and a higher number of significant predictors for males was taken as indirect evidence that work has been their central identity and is relatively more important and thus their coping more intricate than is seen for females.

7

MODERATORS, MEDIATORS AND REGRESSION PREDICTORS OF SUBJECTIVE WELLBEING

This chapter initially seeks to tests for links between opportunity, constraint and coping variables (as per predictions arising from Figure 1.4). The chapter also combines the strongest SWB predictors, ascertained from chapters 5 and 6, into a single regression analysis for each sex, in order to establish which variables capture significant portions of the variance in SWB, and to assess how the inclusion of certain clusters of variables into hierarchical regression effect other predictors of SWB.

Results

Predicted Relationships between Constraints, Opportunities and Coping - Moderation

It was predicted that relationship status (a proxy for social support) and humour act as buffers (moderators) between stress-related variables and SWB. Focusing on relationship status, as shown in Table 7.1, evidence for a significant buffering effect of relationship status is seen for males only, between the event balance measure and the SWB measure, partially supporting hypothesis 7a. Figure 7.1 depicts an interaction where more positive transitions are associated with higher SWB in partnered individuals but lower SWB in single individuals. As per hypothesis 7b, no buffering effect was found for the strain variable.

Table 7.1

Relationship Status as a Moderator between Event Balance and SWB in Males.

Predictors	β	*F*	*df*	R^2	ΔR^2
Event Balance	.31***	10.98***	101	.09	--
Relationship Status	.16	6.92**	100	.12	.023
Event*Relationship	.92**	7.60***	99	.19	.066**

Note. $p \leq$ *.05, **.01, ***.001.

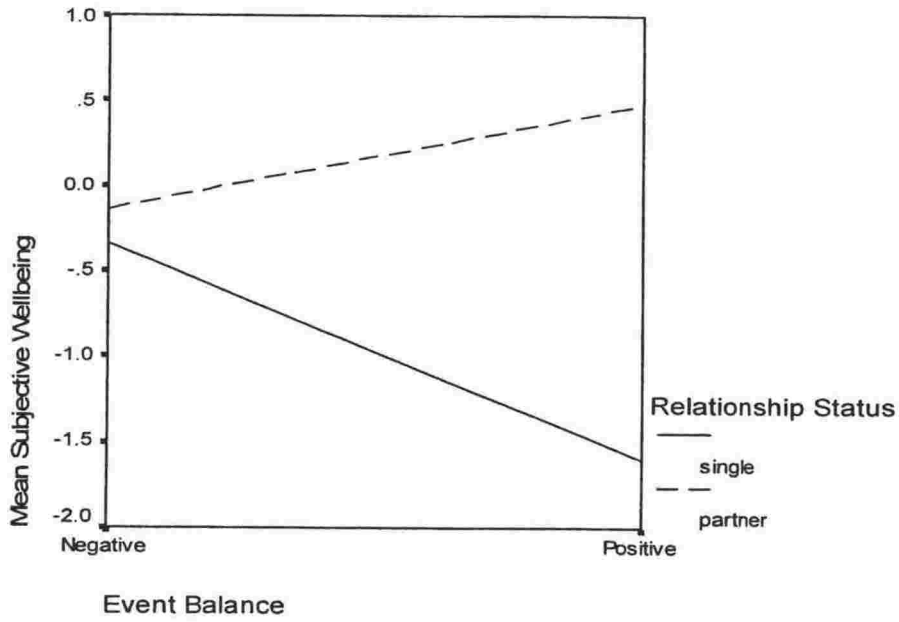


Figure 7.1. The Moderating Impact of Relationship Status between Overall Event Balance and Subjective Wellbeing in Males

With regards to humour, Table 7.2 shows that humour significantly moderated between strain and SWB for the overall sample. Figure 7.2 depicts an interaction where high use of humour is associated with higher SWB than seen for those with low use of humour in the face of higher levels of strain. It is of note that this interaction was only significant when both sexes were combined. When analyzed separately, the interaction beta weight for males was borderline significant (p = .069), but only reached p = .30 for females (although trends were in the same direction).

Table 7.2.

Use of Humour as a Moderator between Strain and SWB for the Overall Sample.

Predictors	β	*F*	*df*	R^2	ΔR^2
Strain	-.40***	18.73***	164	.16	--
Use of Humour	.16*	10.88***	163	.18	.025*
Strain*Humour	.83*	8.05***	162	.20	.02*

Note. $p \leq$ *.05, ***.001.

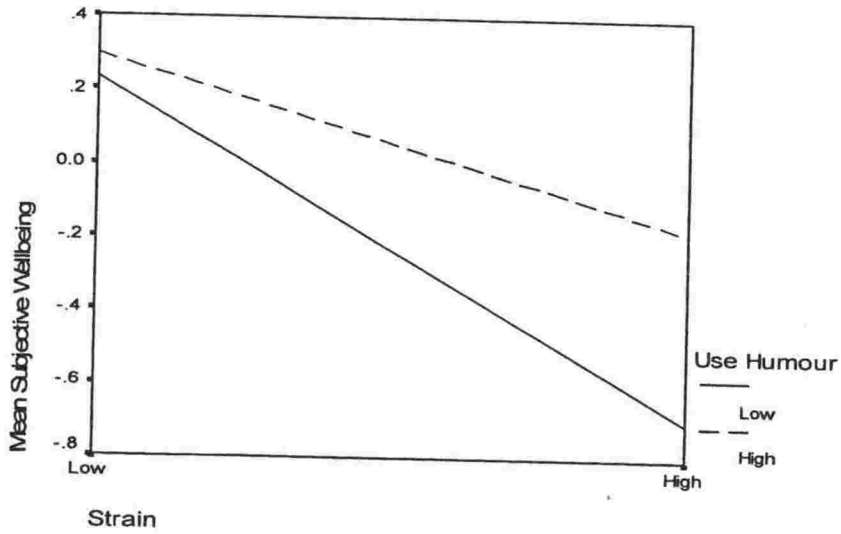


Figure 7.2. The Moderating Impact of Use of Humour between Strain and Subjective Wellbeing for the Overall Sample

A similar buffering effect of humour was seen between the event balance measure (other life transitions) and negative affect in males (see Table 7.3). Figure 7.3 depicts an interaction where those high in the use of humour reported lower levels of negative affect when events were more positive, but higher levels of negative affect when events were more negative. Those with low use of humour showed little variation across positive or negative events in terms of reported negative affect. Overall, partial support was found for hypothesis 7c, that humour would moderate the impact of other life events and job-related strain on wellbeing. Support is partial due to the buffering effect for strain holding for males only.

Table 7.3

Use of Humour as a Moderator between Event Balance and Negative Affect in Males.

Predictors	β	*F*	*df*	R^2	ΔR^2
Event Balance	-.25*	6.16*	91	.06	--
Use of Humour	-.10	3.52*	90	.07	.01
Event*Humour	-1.71*	4.52**	89	.13	.06*

Note. $p \leq$ *.05, **.01.

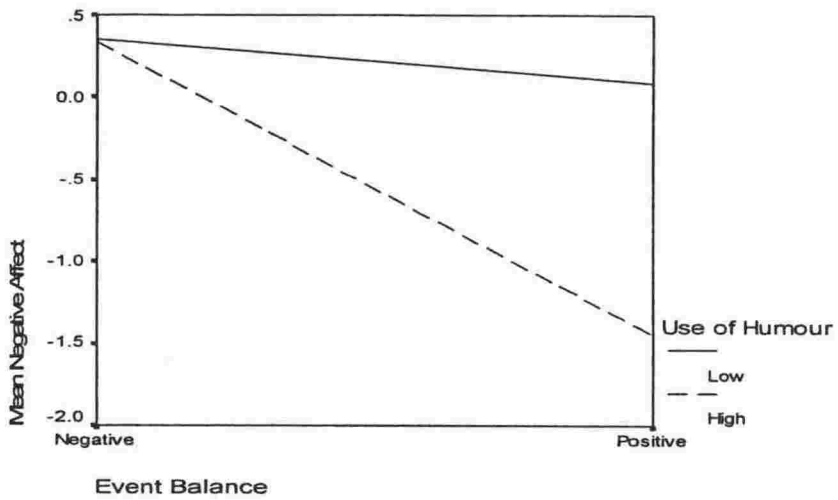


Figure 7.3. The Moderating Impact of Use of Humour between Overall Event Balance and Negative Affect in Males

It was further predicted that level of job-related strain would moderate the impact of coping strategies on wellbeing. In support of hypothesis 7d, two instances of moderation were found – one for females and one for unemployed males. With regard to the instance of moderation found for females, Table 7.4 reports a significant interaction between job-related strain and the 'seeking help' coping strategy. Figure 7.4 depicts an interaction where there was little difference in SWB scores for females across levels of strain when seeking help was high. However, when seeking help was low, those with high levels of strain had lower levels of wellbeing that those with low levels of strain.

Table 7.4.

Job-related Strain as a Moderator between the Seeking Help Coping Strategy and SWB for Females

Predictors	β	*F*	*df*	R^2	ΔR^2
Strain	-.38**	10.62**	64	.14	--
Seek Help	.10	5.62**	63	.15	.01
Strain*Seek Help	1.13**	6.45***	62	.24	.09**

Note. $p \leq$ *.05, **.01, ***.001.

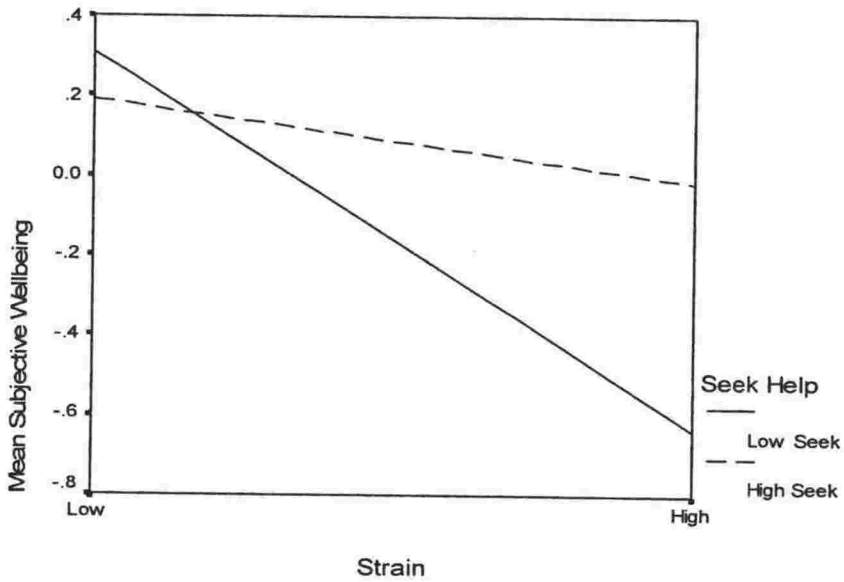


Figure 7.4. The Moderating Impact of Job-related Strain on Seeking Help and Subjective Wellbeing for Females

With regard to the instance of moderation found for unemployed males, job related strain was found to significantly moderate between DGA strain and SWB (see Table 7.5). Figure 7.5 depicts an interaction where those who employed higher levels of DGA reported slightly lower levels of wellbeing when strain was high. Low use of DGA was associated with higher SWB when strain was low, but lower SWB when strain was high. This was initially found using all males regardless of work status, however, given the differential relationships between DGA and SWB for those of different work status seen in chapter 6, each level of work status was assessed for moderation separately, with moderation remaining only for unemployed males.

Table 7.5.

Job-related Strain as a Moderator between DGA and SWB for Unemployed Males

Predictors	β	*F*	*df*	R^2	ΔR^2
Strain	-.43**	10.65**	47	.19	--
DGA	.08	5.40**	46	.19	.006
Strain*DGA	2.04**	6.86***	45	.31	.123**

Note. $p \leq$ *.05, **.01, ***.001. DGA = downward goal adjustment.

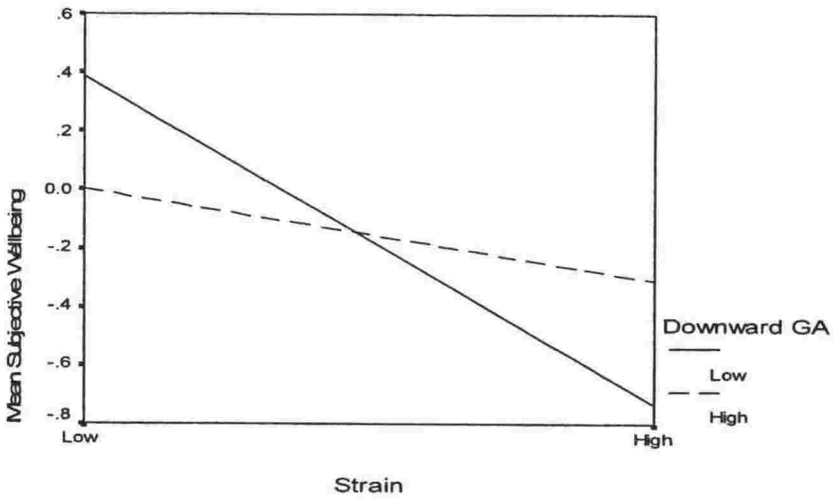
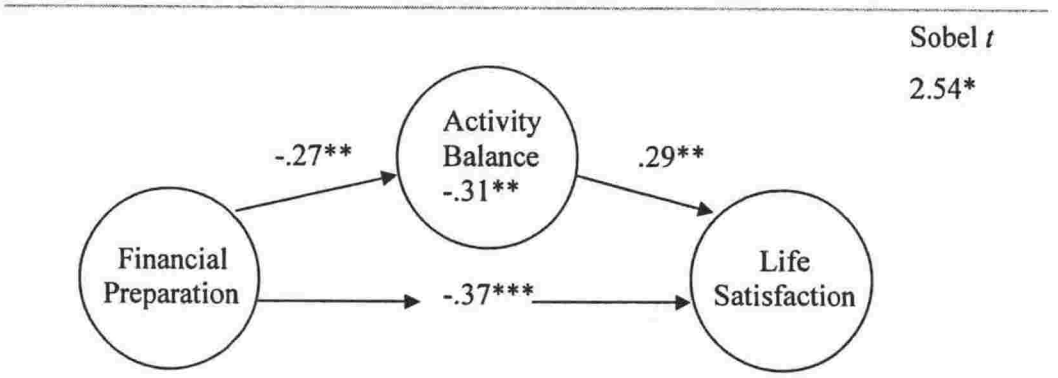


Figure 7.5. The Moderating Impact of Job-related Strain on DGA and Subjective Wellbeing for Unemployed Males

Mediation between Stress and Wellbeing

In partial support of hypothesis 7f, that lower levels of financial preparation will negatively impact on non-work related activities, in turn making individuals more susceptible to lower levels of wellbeing, Figure 7.6 demonstrates that strain had a depleting influence on activity levels for males, thus damaging a variable typically associated with higher levels of SWB. Of note is that exploratory analysis found no other instances of mediation were found in the data.



Note. Standardized beta weights reported within circles denote levels to which stress dropped when the mediator was entered. Betas next to lines denote strength of the relationship between the two connected variables. The figure in the right hand margin is the Sobel test statistic. $p \leq$ *.05, **.01, ***.001

Figure 7.6. Activity Balance as a Partial Mediator of the Effect of Financial Preparation on Life Satisfaction for Males

Tables 7.6 (males) and 7.7 (females) entered the significant predictors from chapters 5 and 6 into hierarchical regression analysis. Generally, variables that were viewed as background demographics and not job-loss related were entered in step 1 (age for males and relationships status for females). Following this, stressor variables were entered in step 2. Activity variables, as objective indicators of diversity or engagement in life, were entered in step 3. Finally, step 4 entered selected OPS-JL coping variables.

Focusing on males, Table 7.6 indicates that while age was a significant predictor on its own, it lost predictive power once stress variables were entered at step 2, at which point the amount of variance accounted for jumped the largest amount of the 3 final steps. Of the stress related variables, strain was the strongest predictor, followed by number of times unemployed. Although both progressively accounted for less variance (as evidenced by drops in the beta weights over steps 3 and 4), they both retained a direct significant relationship with SWB in the final step. The same cannot be said for the event balance variable, which dropped to borderline significance once step 3 was entered and dropped well below significance at step 4. However, the drops evidenced in the constraint related variables once opportunity and coping variables were entered supports hypothesis 7e.

At step 3, an additional .06 of the variance was accounted for, with the activity balance variable being significant, while the total number of roles variable was borderline significant. After the coping strategies were entered in step 4, activity balance showed a borderline significance, while number of roles dropped substantially and exerted no significant unique amount of the variance in explaining SWB. Despite the fact that the coping strategies entered in step 4 were all significant predictors in chapter 6, only two variables were significant here – goal disengagement and downward goal adjustment (goal pursuit is borderline). Higher levels of both were associated with lower levels of wellbeing. Although the other coping strategies were not significant, their betas were still reasonably sizeable, so these, in addition to the two significant strategies, no doubt contributed to the increase in R^2 of .14 seen at step 4.

Table 7.6

Hierarchical Regression of Predictors of SWB for Males

Variable	Step 1β	2β	3β	4β	*F*	*df*	R^2
Step 1					7.70**	95	.08
Age	.27**	.13	.11	.15			
Step 2					10.27***	88	.32
Strain	--	-.39***	-.32***	-.25**			
Event Balance	--	.19*	.16+	.11			
# times unemployed	--	-.25**	-.21*	-.20*			
Step 3					8.72***	86	.38
Activity Balance	--	--	.23**	.17+			
Total Roles	--	--	.15+	.09			
Step 4					7.06***	80	.52
Pursue Job	--	--	--	.18+			
Goal Motivation	--	--	--	-.15			
Goal Disengagement	--	--	--	-.19*			
Accept Loss	--	--	--	.16			
Horizontal GA	--	--	--	.15			
Downward GA	--	--	--	-.20*			

Note. $p \leq$ +.10, *.05, **.01, ***.001

Focusing on females and Table 7.7, relationship status at step 1 demonstrated similar predictive strength to that seen for males and age, and like males, this demographic variable lost predictive strength once the stress related variables were entered at step 2. Like males, the addition of stress variables produced the largest increase in R^2 of the three remaining steps. However, unlike males, the predictive power of both the strain and event balance variables dropped little, if at all, once steps

3 and 4 were entered, providing little support for hypothesis 7e for females. Both retained moderate predictive strength by the final step.

Step 3 showed an increase of .06 in the variance, identical to the increase seen for males; however, only work status produced a significant result (borderline) and both step 3 variables equally lost significance by step 4. Entering the accept loss variable at step 4 produced an increase in R^2 comparable to that seen for the strain variables, with this variable producing the strongest beta weight of all the variables entered for females. Comparing the R^2's produced by the final step for males and females shows that very similar levels of R^2 were captured, although this was achieved in fewer variables for females than for males (6 vs. 12).

Table 7.7

Hierarchical Regression of Predictors of SWB for Females

	Step						
Variable	1β	2β	3β	4β	*F*	*df*	R^2
Step 1					4.70*	64	.07
Relationship Status	.26*	.14	.14	.14			
Step 2					8.15***	62	.28
Strain	--	-.35**	-.31**	-.34***			
Event Balance	--	.32**	.24*	.26**			
Step 3					6.12***	60	.34
Activity Balance	--	--	.16	.08			
Work Status	--	--	.19+	.08			
Step 4					11.40***	59	.54
Accept Loss	--	--	--	.46***			

Note. $p \leq$ +.10, *.05, **.01, ***.001

Discussion

The discussion begins with assessment of predicted instances of moderation and mediation observed in the data and compares these outcomes against the theoretical structure outlined in Figure 1.4 and the three models of coping outlined in chapter 2 (vulnerability, additive burden and chronic burden hypotheses). The discussion ends with consideration of the outcomes observed in the final regression analysis.

Predicted Relationships

Relationship Status as a Moderator between Constraints and SWB

As predicted, and in line with previous research (Mallinckrodt & Bennett, 1992), relationship status (as a proxy for social support) was found to moderate between life events and SWB (opportunities effect constraints as per Figure 1.4). However, this was found for males only, providing partial support for hypothesis 7a. The interaction suggests that having access to a spousal relationship can heighten the enjoyment of positive events; however positive events appear to have a more negative impact on SWB than negative events if the individual is single. This may be because at such times the individual is reminded that they have no one to share their positive events with and this is particularly distressing.

That this occurs for males only could be interpreted with reference to research that suggests males are less likely to engage in social interaction outside the home than females (Gallie, Gershuny & Vogler, 1994), and are more likely to suffer from loneliness and isolation (Pratt & Norris, 1994), while females are more likely than males to compensate for the lack of a partner by satisfying their emotional/social needs through the making of new friends (Bonita, 1993). Therefore, females may be more likely to have non-spousal others that they can share their good news with. That relationship status was not found to moderate the impact of job related stress (supporting hypothesis 7b) is further support for the argument of situational uncontrollability, in that previous literature indicates that social support only acts as a buffer with events or situations that have some level of controllability (Holahan et al, 1996).

Humour as a Moderator between Constraints and SWB

Overall, support was found for hypothesis 7c, that humour acts as a moderator between stress and wellbeing (opportunities effect constraints as per Figure 1.4). Use of humour moderated between job-related strain and wellbeing for the overall sample, with those high in the use of humour reporting higher levels of wellbeing than those low in the use of humour when strain was high. However, the relationship between job-related strain and wellbeing was notably stronger for males than for females. Recall that Lefcourt et al (1997) found moderation for males only when simple tasks were used as a stimulus, whereas Lefcourt and Martin (1987) found moderation for females only when martial conflict was the stimulus. It may be that the current study, like Lefcourt et al (1997), used a background situation (type of stimulus) that tied more strongly to males than it did to females.

In partial support of the hypothesis, humour moderated the impact of events on negative affect for males only. However, the manner in which the interaction occurred was surprising. Martin and Lefcourt (1973, cited in Labott & Martin, 1987) found humour to buffer the impact of negative life events on distress; however the current findings showed that use of humour had no effect when events were more negative in impact. Rather, it was found that those high in the use of humour appear to benefit more from positive events than those low in the use of humour. This suggests that use of humour allows males to stop and 'smell the roses' when positive events occur. That this relationship was not found for females may undermine the argument made about the type of stimulus used, as it is difficult to argue that other life transitions are a male specific stimulus. Rather, it may be a case of what males and females use humour for. If females are more prone to use humour as a social lubricant (Lefcourt & Martin, 1986), then it is arguable that neither the strain or event balance variables are particularly affected by use of humour for social lubrication.

The three instances of moderation just covered provide some support for the vulnerability hypothesis put forward by Ensminger and Celentano (1988), that those who are ill-equipped in terms of social resources and coping will be more vulnerable to the effects of stress.

Job-related Strain as a Moderator between Coping and SWB

Support for hypothesis 7d, that level of job-related strain would moderate the impact of coping strategies on SWB (constraints effect coping as per Figure 1.4) was

found in the interaction between strain and the seeking help coping strategy for females, and the interaction between strain and downward goal adjustment for unemployed males. Focusing on females, an interaction was seen where there was little difference in SWB scores across levels of strain when seeking help was high but when seeking help was low, those with high levels of strain had lower levels of wellbeing that those with low levels of strain. This suggests that those without support are not protected from strain, becoming more at risk to it.

This outcome provides further evidence of a relationship between social support/resources and stress. That moderation of the seeking help variable occurred for females only may reflect, in line with arguments put forward above, the fact that females access their support from more diverse sources than the spousal relationship (Bonita, 1993; Gallie et al., 1994). This is especially given that a high number of females in the sample are single. That this relationship was not found for males may reflect a general confinement to the spousal relationship for support.

Focusing on unemployed males, an interaction was seen where those employing high levels of DGA reported slightly lower levels of wellbeing when strain was high as opposed to low. Low use of DGA was associated with higher SWB when strain was low, but lower SWB when strain was high. This suggests that those who refrain from making downward adjustments when strain is high experience lower levels of wellbeing. This outcome further serves to illuminate the influence of financial stress on DGA suggested for males in chapter 6 (i.e. the predictive value of DGA for wellbeing was decreased for males working part-time when financial stress was controlled for), by demonstrating an additional influence of strain on DGA for unemployed males.

It is clear that the process of downward goal adjustment and how individuals feel about it is not straightforward. Results over chapters 6 and 7 indicate that its impact on wellbeing is contingent on a number of additional factors (i.e. prior use of horizontal goal adjustment, current work status and levels of strain). Future research using a longitudinal methodology is required to map these variations.

Mediation of Activity Levels between Stress and Wellbeing

In line with hypothesis 7f, job-related strain was found to have a depleting impact on the leisure based activities one can be involved in, as seen by the partial mediation of activity balance between stress and wellbeing for males (constraints

effect opportunities as per Figure 1.4). This is also in line with Gowan et al's (1999) argument that those with more financial resources should be able to engage in more activities due to their ability to finance them. That this was found for males only is also in line with research that suggests males are more likely to be involved in leisure time activities that require money for participation (Gallie, et al, 1994).

The complete lack of mediation of OPS-JL strategies between stress and wellbeing does not support the additive burden hypothesis, in that strain did not demonstrate a depleting influence on the coping strategies. This is a positive outcome, as it indicates that coping can be used to promote positive ageing, rather than being a futile activity in the face of constraints.

Final Hierarchical Regression Analysis

Of initial note in the final regression analysis is that, for both genders, the coping strategies that came through as significant could arguably be demonstrating the effects of a lack of situational control. Accept loss showed a strong positive impact on wellbeing for females, while giving up or making downward goal adjustments was associated with lower levels of wellbeing for males. Both of the latter strategies could be termed 'forced' compensation, rather than preferred or even adaptive compensation strategies. This demonstrates that variables more closely associated with situational confines may have an over-riding impact on the individual when it comes to coping, overshadowing the adaptive value of other coping strategies.

That the goal disengagement and DGA variables are significant for males only may also indicate that males may 'push' more strongly against the confines of the situation so that the outcomes from employing these strategies manifest more strongly for them. However, although there may be something to this argument, the outcomes are also likely influenced to a large degree by how these strategies are viewed differently by males and females, as argued in chapter six.

In support of hypothesis 7e, the tendency for opportunity and coping variables to decrease the predictive power of constraint variables on wellbeing was demonstrated through the decreasing amount of variance that strain and event balance account for opportunity and coping variables were added to the regression analysis for males (opportunities and coping effect constraints as per Figure 1.4). Other life events appeared more amenable to this influence than job related stress, giving further

weight to the argument that the issue of job loss is characterized by a lack of control in this population. This does not appear to happen for females. This suggests that while accept loss is adaptive for females, it does not in itself reduce the negative impact from the stress variables, nor do the activity balance or work roles. In fact, activity balance is redundant as a predictor in the face of the other variables.

Some support was found for the chronic burden hypothesis for males, but only insofar as number of times unemployed can hold its own as a predictor once other strategies are entered. However, it was not a dominating predictor, indicating that this variable in itself is not superior or overrides the value of the other predictors, as the chronic burden hypothesis would suggest (Ensminger & Celentano, 1988).

What is clear is that accounting for the variance in wellbeing is much more simplistic for females than it is for males, with 6 predictors, 3 of which were significant, accounting for .54 of the variance in wellbeing for females, compared to 12 predictors, 6 of which were significant to some degree, accounting for .52 of the variance for males. While it cannot be argued that less of the variance is accounted for through the measures used in this study for females, there are still a number of questions that may be raised in light of the outcomes.

Firstly, given that the majority of past research into unemployment has been based on males (Hayes & Nutman, 1983), has the researcher inadvertently assessed coping with job loss in a male biased manner? Indeed, there appears to be more support for the process outlined in Figure 1.3 for males than is seen for females. Could there be aspects of coping with job loss that are relevant to females that have not been previously assessed? Open-ended interviews with women about how they cope with job loss may help to identify if this is the case. In contrast, as argued in chapters 1 and 2, it may be that females are simply more limited in utility of their coping repertoire than males, due in part to issues of socialization that promote passivity in females and agency in males (Malen & Stroh, 1998). Or, as previously argued, it may be that the coping process is more detailed for males due to the centrality of the work role for them (Reitzes et al., 1994).

Chapter Summary

This chapter found support for the predictions that humour and social resources act as buffers between stress and wellbeing, although the outcomes for

humour largely held for males only. The lack of predictive power of the humour variables for females was attributed to females primarily using humour as a social lubricant, which may not be relevant to the stressors assessed here. Differences between males and females with regard to which social support variables were associated with stress and wellbeing were attributed to a higher tendency for females to seek support outside of the spousal relationship, resulting in males being more likely to suffer negatively from not having a spouse.

Overall, there was more support found for the vulnerability hypothesis (than for the additive burden or chronic burden hypotheses), with numerous instances of moderation seen in the data. The role that downward goal adjustment plays in the wellbeing of males was further complicated through the finding that low use of the strategy was associated with lower levels of wellbeing when individuals were still unemployed and strain was high. In sum, we are informed through chapters 6 and 7 that DGA's impact on wellbeing is contingent upon stress levels, work status and whether attempts at horizontal goal adjustment preceded its implementation.

Where mediation was found, it was centered on males and confined to the non-coping related variable of activity balance. That higher levels of strain was negatively related to an increase in non-work activities for males only was attributed to the greater likelihood that male activities are more costly than female activities.

The final regression analysis indicated that, for both sexes, the coping strategies that showed the highest levels of significance could arguably be due to individuals facing lower levels of control over the situation. In this manner, accepting loss, goal disengagement and downward goal adjustment predominated. A further indicator of lack of control was the finding that relationship status did not buffer the impact of job related strain on SWB.

It was also noted that the variables assessed for females captured a comparable amount of the variance in wellbeing to males, with only half as many significant predictors. Speculation about the cause of this outcome ranged from the methods used in the study capturing the male reality more accurately, differences in male/female socialization or the greater centrality of the work role for males. However, it appeared that opportunity and coping variables more clearly reduced the predictive strength of constraint variables for males.

Reflecting on the overall outcomes for this chapter, findings generally supported the theoretical bi-directional inter-relationships between constraints,

opportunities and coping predicted in Figure 1.4 of chapter 1 (although this was more clearly demonstrated for males than for females). Evidence was found for opportunities and coping to effect constraints, and for constraints to effect opportunities and coping. This adds to the finding in chapter 6 that coping effected opportunities (mediation of accept loss and SWB by humour for males).

Over the course of the thesis a number of arguments/key themes have continued to develop. However, while the credence one can give to these arguments can come from comparison with previous literature, a cross-sectional and survey based methodology prevents confident statements of causation. Considering the qualitative comments made by survey participants can provide more concrete evidence for the validity of the arguments put forward to date, and the thesis now turns to chapter 8 in order to assess these comments.

8

QUALITATIVE FEEDBACK

The purpose of this chapter is to consolidate the responses to open-ended questions in the survey, and through appraisal of these responses gain greater insight into the mechanisms underlying the quantitative findings reported in the thesis to date. Using open ended short answer questions is a valuable way to gain greater insight into an area when the full range of possible answers cannot be known and also when very personal areas are being explored. It is also a good way to pinpoint contextual factors that underlie a given phenomena. Further, research that uses both quantitative and qualitative approaches (known as triangulation) is typically viewed as the strongest type of research, as open-ended questions allows more freedom in response, which can help to back up or refute assumptions made through the use of standardized measures (Field & Morse, 1985).

Generally, responses to open-ended questions are categorized into major themes (content analysis), and hence are transferred into quantifiable form that can be presented in a descriptive manner. However, these categories can be subjectively decided, so low inference descriptors (verbatim comments) may be used in tandem with content analysis to help validate the categories established (Field & Morse, 1985). This chapter uses both content analysis and, where considered particularly appropriate, low inference descriptors.

Respondents were invited to make comments in the following areas: financial preparation, increased/decreased areas of activity, areas of growth, types of transitions, perceptions regarding confidence/preference for primary or secondary control, emotional changes since job loss, what they tried doing when they first lost their jobs and any subsequent changes in goals, and plans for the future. Each of these areas will be analyzed in turn. Of specific interest in the analyses will be the recurrent themes of male and female differences due to work identity/socialization and ascertaining supporting evidence of situational uncontrollability.

Results

Comments Regarding Financial Preparation

Viewing Table 8.1, it appears that males had a tendency to be more prepared for job loss, in part due to good pension provisions and good redundancy payouts. Women were more likely to have had no savings or to have needed to work longer or to receive a pension at the age of 60.

Table 8.1.

Comments Regarding Financial Preparation for Males and Females

Activity	Overall	Males	Females
No Comment	46(26.4)	29(28.2)	17(23.9)
Prepared			
Received good payout	22(12.6)	17(16.5)	5(7)
Expected redundancy	14(8)	9(8.7)	5(7)
Had savings	10(5.7)	6(5.8)	4(5.6)
Good pension	10(5.7)	8(7.8)	2(2.8)
Can live on benefit	7(4)	3(2.9)	4(5.6)
Used redundancy to pay off bills	6(3.4)	6(5.8)	0(0)
Have working spouse	5(2.9)	2(1.9)	3(4.2)
Unprepared			
Caught unprepared	16(9.2)	10(9.7)	6(8.5)
Savings plans ruined	13(7.5)	10(9.7)	3(4.2)
No savings/expect pension at 60	12(6.9)	4(3.9)	8(11.3)
Second redundancy	10(5.7)	7(6.8)	3(4.2)
Could not get new job	8(4.6)	4(3.9)	4(5.6)
Hoped to work more years	6(3.4)	2(1.9)	4(5.6)
No money for extra's	5(2.9)	2(1.9)	3(4.2)

Note. Frequencies, followed by percentage (in brackets) of respondents citing the comment are given. Comments mentioned less than 5 times were: prepared: re-budgeted, living on savings and got a new job straight away; unprepared: need a supplement to the benefit, had just incurred large debts prior to job loss, hard to pay bills, had to sell home, hard to live on benefit, no money to help children/spouse and ill-advised by WINZ.

Increased/Decreased Activities

As can be seen in Table 8.2, reading, gardening and exercise were the most common types of increased activity. The sexes were roughly comparable in their reports of reading, housework, study, volunteer work, computer, shopping, travelling and no increases.

Table 8.2

Different Types of Increased Activities for Males and Females

Activity	Overall	Males	Females
Reading	71(40.8)	42(40.8)	29(40.8)
Gardening	62(35.6)	29(28)	33(46.5)
Exercise	53(30.5)	27(26)	26(36.6)
Housework	35(20)	21(20)	14(19.7)
Study	33(19)	17(16.5)	16(22.5)
Volunteer work	33(19)	20(19.4)	13(18.3)
House renovation	32(18.4)	26(25)	6(8.4)
Hobbies	28(16.1)	10(9.7)	18(25.3)
Computer	25(14.4)	16(15.5)	9(12.7)
None	21(12.1)	12(11.7)	9(12.7)
Sport	18(10.3)	15(14.6)	3(4.2)
Job Hunting	17(9.8)	12(11.7)	5(7)
TV/Radio	15(8.6)	13(12.6)	2(2.8)
Writing	15(8.6)	2(1.9)	13(18.3)
Family/friends	13(7.5)	3(2.9)	10(14)
Clubs/Associations	12(6.9)	4(3.9)	8(11.3)
Research/genealogy	8(4.6)	1(1)	7(9.9)
Shopping	6(3.4)	4(3.9)	2(2.8)
Care-giving	6(3.4)	2(1.9)	4(5.6)
Travelling	5(2.9)	3(2.9)	2(2.8)

Note. Frequencies, followed by percentage (in brackets) of respondents citing the comment are given. Mentioned less than 5 times: movies/theatre, religion and music.

Men predominated with increases in house renovation, sport, and TV/Radio. Women predominated with increases in gardening, exercise, hobbies, writing, family/friends, clubs/associations, and research, indicating a wider breadth of activities. Of note is that only five of the 20 main activities reported could confidently be considered activities that involve social interaction (sport, volunteer work, friends/family, clubs/associations and care-giving). As such there appears to be an overall tendency to increase solitary activities.

As seen in Table 8.3, comparable and sizeable proportions of both sexes reported no decrease in activities. Loss of contact with friends/colleagues, followed by less dining out, was mentioned frequently by both sexes. Decreases in travel/sport were notable for men, while decreases in movie/theatre going and hobbies were notable for women. Three main limitations were identified - financial limitations were implied through less dining out, travel, movies/theatre, hobbies and shopping; social limitations were implied through less time with friends/colleagues and meetings/clubs/seminars and; physical limitations were implied through less commuting and exercise. Less time in sports could also impact or be impacted by all of these limitations.

Table 8.3.

Different Types of Decreased Activities for Males and Females

Activity	Overall	Males	Females
None	70(40.2)	40(38.8)	30(42.2)
Time with friends/colleagues	40(23)	24(23.3)	16(22.5)
Dining out	22(12.6)	13(12.6)	9(12.7)
Travel	17(9.8)	13(12.6)	4(5.6)
Commuting	14(8)	8(7.8)	6(8.4)
Movies/theatre	15(8.6)	7(6.8)	8(11.3)
Meetings/clubs/seminars	15(8.6)	9(8.7)	6(8.4)
Sport	14(8)	12(11.7)	2(2.8)
Exercise	10(5.7)	7(6.8)	3(4.2)
Hobbies	7(4)	4(3.9)	6(8.4)
Shopping	7(4)	3(2.9)	4(5.6)

Note. Frequencies, followed by percentage (in brackets) of respondents citing the comment are given.

Table 8.4 indicates that males were more likely to report no increases in skills/growth. Increased computer skill was the predominant area of increase for both sexes, with qualifications, interpersonal skills and increases in assertiveness and self-esteem more common for females. Increases in trade skills and sympathy for others were more common for males. Overall 74.6 percent of respondents reported some kind of growth either personally or in terms of skills.

Table 8.4.

Different Types of New Skills and Personal Growth for Males and Females

Activity	Overall	Males	Females
None	46(26.4)	31(30)	15(21)
New Skills			
Computer	49(28.2)	26(25.2)	23(32.4)
Qualifications	28(16)	12(11.7)	16(22.5)
Trade	18(10.3)	15(14.6)	3(4.2)
Interpersonal	16(9.2)	8(7.8)	8(11.3)
Creative	14(8)	8(7.8)	6(8.4)
Selling	7(4)	5(4.9)	2(2.8)
Budgeting	7(4)	6(5.8)	1(1.4)
Personal Growth			
Peaceful/less stressed	16(9.2)	9(8.7)	7(9.9)
Independence/freedom	14(8)	7(6.8)	7(9.9)
Confidence/self-esteem	11(6.3)	1(1)	10(14)
Sympathy for others	9(5.2)	7(6.8)	2(2.8)
More assertive/stronger	8(4.6)	2(1.9)	6(8.5)
Higher community awareness	6(3.4)	2(1.9)	4(5.6)

Note. Frequencies, followed by percentage (in brackets) of respondents citing the comment are given. Mentioned less than 5 times: New Skills: re-connection with old skills, self-motivation, interview techniques, sporting, self-employment, insights into new organisations, reading/writing, more clubs/meetings, improved house-keeping, investigative skills; Personal Growth: aware of age discrimination, lifestyle change, better health, more attention to detail, adaptability, a better person, emotional regulation, can more easily spot insincerity, revalue important things in life.

Respondents were asked whether they had experienced any changes in emotion since they initially lost their jobs. As seen in Table 8.5, with the exception of hoping for the best (which tended to be reported more frequently by males), a sense of despondency was conveyed in that comments appear to be skewed toward the negative, involving negative evaluations of the situation and negative states of mind. Reference to age discrimination was the most common theme overall. Age discrimination, along with lack of control, resigned to fate, frustration, doubt re-employment, avoiding rejection and skills don't count all indicate situational uncontrollability. As with personal growth, females were more likely to refer to changes in self-esteem.

Table 8.5

Reported Changes in Emotion since Job Loss

Activity	Overall	Males	Females
None	70(40)	44(42.7)	26(37)
Age Discrimination	24(13.8)	16(15.5)	8(11.3)
Loss of self-esteem	16(9.2)	5(4.9)	11(15.5)
Resigned to fate	13(7.5)	6(5.8)	7(10)
Lack of purpose/control	10(5.7)	4(3.9)	6(8.5)
Hope for the best	9(5.2)	8(7.8)	1(1.4)
Depression	9(5.2)	5(4.9)	4(5.6)
Doubt re-employment	8(4.6)	6(5.8)	2(2.8)
Avoiding rejection	6(3.4)	2(1.9)	4(5.6)
Frustration	6(3.4)	4(3.9)	2(2.8)
Financial Anxiety	5(2.9)	3(2.9)	2(2.8)
Skills don't count	5(2.9)	4(3.9)	1(1.4)

Note. Frequencies, followed by percentage (in brackets) of respondents citing the comment are given. Mentioned less than 5 times: angry, bitter, hurt, less tolerant, isolated/lonely, unmotivated, in therapy, needed medication, suicidal.

Negative and Positive Events

Table 8.6 outlines the family and non-family life events that were rated as negative. Themes of illness, death and the breakdown of relationships predominated for both sexes, with financial difficulties the only divergence from this. Overall, events rated as negative almost uniformly denoted a loss of some shape or form. In contrast, Table 8.7 indicated that the events rated as positive were largely additive or a 'gain' in some respect, whether it be additions to the family, increases in freedom, new possessions or increases in health.

Table 8.6.

Types of Family and Non-Family Negative Events for Males and Females

Transition	Overall	Males	Females
Family Events			
Illness in Family	12	4	8
Death of Parent	8	4	4
Divorce/separation	6	4	2
Family dis-unification	6	2	4
Death of Partner	4	2	2
Non-Family Events			
Illness	18	7	11
Financial difficulties	6	4	2
Death of a friend	4	2	2

Note. Events mentioned less than 4 times were: *family:* partner's job issues, child's divorce and vocational choices, death of a child or sibling; *non-family*: a new home, changed-work environment, end of friendship, friend's illness, isolation, stopping a past-time, legal issues, loss of faith and burglary.

In chapter 5 it was stated that non-family events may hold a significant relationship to life satisfaction for males due to males reporting events that could enhance or detract from their sense of status or achievement. In a cursory exploration of this argument, it was noted that across Tables 8.7 and 8.8, the three potential status

threatening or enhancing non-family transitions of financial difficulties, community involvement and obtaining work were cumulatively mentioned 17 times by males and only 6 times by females. Further, travel (which requires sufficient funding) was mentioned more frequently by men than by women.

Table 8.7.

Types of Family and Non-Family Positive Events for Males and Females

Event	Overall	Males	Females
Family Events			
Child returns home	6	2	4
Birth of Grandchild	6	3	3
New relationship	5	3	2
Marriage of child	4	2	2
Child leaves home	3	2	1
Parent to nursing home	3	0	3
Non-Family Events			
Acquired a new home	15	4	11
Travel	9	7	2
Community involvement	9	6	3
Obtained work	8	7	1
Health improvement	5	3	2
Got religion	3	2	1

Note. Those mentioned less than 3 times were: family: death of parent, partner's job loss, end of child's marriage, family reunification, child's vocational choices, becoming a full-time parent and grandchild's achievements; non-family: sold home, finances improve, change in career focus, got a pet, new car, and stopped smoking.

Mixed Events

Examination of Table 8.8 indicated that events previously mentioned as either negative or positive may sometimes be accorded a mixed valence, although mixed events tended more towards those reported as negative. Of note for non-family events was the tendency for females to rate health issues as mixed. This category included discovery of illness and operations/treatment for said illness.

Table 8.8.

Types of Family and Non-Family Mixed Events for Males and Females

Event	Overall	Males	Females
Family Events			
Child leaves home	9	6	3
Death of a Parent	9	7	2
Family dis-unification	8	5	3
More time with Partner	3	2	1
Divorce/Separation	3	2	1
Parent to nursing home	3	1	2
Non-Family Events			
Illness/operations	17	3	14
Travel	3	1	2

Note. Events mentioned less than 3 times were: *family:* partner's job under threat, family reunification, problems with child and sibling dies; *non-family*: income improves, changed work environment, got work, age discrimination awareness, death of a friend, lost home, financial issues, change in career focus, isolation, stopping a past-time, buying a new car, community involvement, buying a business and loss of self-esteem.

Comments regarding Primary and Secondary Control Confidence/Preference

The comments made in accompaniment to the questions regarding confidence and preference for primary or secondary control (22 comments made by females and 23 by males) were heterogeneous and difficult to categorize through content analysis. Therefore, low inference descriptors (verbatim comments) were used for analyzing these comments.

Initially, it must be noted that a number of individuals alluded to finding these questions difficult or thought provoking, as indicated by the following responses:

> *This took some consideration and I am still not sure if I have answered it truthfully.*

> *It said this questionnaire would take around 45 minutes and I've probably spent 40 of those thinking about this question.*

Difficult to answer.

Very subtle question this.

These questions really got to me. Have found it may depend on my mood, but I have tried to be honest in my approach.

This is a pretty tricky question and I am not sure that I have got the answers right.

What a difficult question! I think long and hard before I act to change things, so I think my answer is ok.

A number of both males and females also expressed that whether one used primary or secondary control either depended on the situation or that the two were not mutually exclusive:

...if I was to think outside the square a combination of both would be preferable or more practicable.

Would probably opt for b initially but with familiarity and time would probably be inclined to move toward a.

I don't feel more confident or prefer certain method. I do which ever I see as most useful at the time and for that occasion.

I don't see these as exclusive. Some situations and environments can be changed and I should do this where desirable, but where I cannot change something I should change the way I think to accept that.

A mix of both is more relevant in my view.

The above depends on the environment in which I'm in as I see the above two questions as existing along a continuum.

It depends, there are always environmental/situational contexts that mitigate in favour and/or against using either of the above strategies for coping.

I won't give one or the other method as an answer because it would depend on the situation for which one would use it. I would use, or may take a combination of both methods. Each situation has to be assessed on the spot and a decision made on which method would work.

In addition to the above comments, three major themes emanated from these questions: male/female socialization, situational uncontrollability, and positive construction of secondary control. Each is discussed in turn.

Male/Female Socialization

Beginning with females, it is argued that socialization issues presented themselves within the following comments:

> *In our age group we have been conditioned to make the most of one's circumstances and lot in life.*
>
> *It is a matter of degree really, but having set up house and life in several countries I have learned to make the best of what's on offer.*
>
> *It would be nice to think we could change the environment to suit our needs but we live in the real world.*
>
> *I have very little confidence in going for what I would like and tend to defer to others or the status quo.*

These comments suggest that women are socialized to be more accepting or passive about their 'lot in life' and that this constitutes the 'real world'. Males were more likely to make comments that reflect their socialization toward being 'movers and shakers" and also the expectation that they should be independent.

> *My reason for answering as above [primary control] is that old "to thy own self be true" thing that if you know your approach is right then you do not prostitute your judgment to someone else's more erroneous philosophy or modus operandi.*
>
> *The world needs changing.*
>
> *I prefer to engineer a situation where things work as they should and my effort is minimized.*
>
> *I tend to change things so I can cope better ... I feel my circumstances are up to me to manage and I must manage the challenges.*

Situational Uncontrollability

Females also alluded to situational uncontrollability, by citing the situation or environment as one that was not necessarily amenable to change:

> *Would prefer to answer a [primary control] in both questions – but not financially viable at the moment so rather than feel frustrated by not being able to do what I want I must change my way of thinking for the moment and in accepting this situation as is I am able to cope for now.*
>
> *I would like to change my circumstances but feel unable to do so, and the longer I'm unemployed the harder it gets. There's hardly any suitable jobs advertised and I feel unwilling to put myself through rejection.*

...I can change my wallpaper, my garden, but not the economic situation or my age.

In today's work environment, adapting to circumstances is the only way to go.

This trend was also common in males:

The workforce is aging and that isn't going to change, but how employers and their agencies deal with this is an issue. Most HR people and agency people look blankly at issues such as aging, casualisation, knowledge loss. Their task is to fill the position as cheaply as possible and an older person is considered less adaptable and incapable of learning new skills of technology and probably more expensive. The reality is different.

The frustration comes when age is a factor and is a very common denominator when interviewing people in between jobs.

At my age and with the rate of change predominant today, to change the situation/environment is usually not possible.

I have reached the stage of not trying anymore to convince employers of the value of being mature/experienced.

Would ideally have liked to answer a [primary control] to each of these above but the goal posts keep changing and such would be a perilous course.

Beggars cannot be choosers.

A difficulty is that regardless of ones thinking events and situations and lack of income/work tend to control the situation.

Of note is the frequent mention of age.

Positive Construction of Secondary Control

Rather than lament the confines of the situation, some individuals instead chose to construct secondary control as a positive thing. Women commented that:

Trying to change the situation/environment smacks of "I'm right and they're wrong" and is a negative response. Learning to look at yourself and being willing to adapt and change should always be a growth and development process.

I never cease to be amazed at how little I know, and how often life changes everything.

I see myself as having the ability to cooperate with others in changing situations for betterment of many not just to suit me.

The first two examples suggested that continued growth and development are positive aspects, suggesting that life's curveballs and the need to adjust to them stimulate such growth. The last comment was framed in terms of having the positive ability of being able to help others. The same kind of pattern was seen in males, with the following comments:

> *[secondary control] allows to learn new skills and proceed into new activities and develop confidence.*
>
> *I am prepared to consider adjusting to meet other peoples needs not just my own.*

Focus at Time of Job Loss and Goal Change

After respondents were asked what they tried doing when they first lost their job, they were also asked whether or not they were still doing the same thing. If they said they were not, they were invited to explain what their 'goals' had changed to. Nearly all respondents indicated what they did when they first lost their job, and Tables 8.9 and 8.10 explore their responses, but are divided into those who either did not (Table 8.9) or did (Table 8.10) report subsequent changes in goals. Table 8.11 reports what changes were made by those who did change their goals.

Looking at Table 8.9, applying for alternative work was the most common response, as captured in the following comments:

> *Applied for all sorts of jobs.*
>
> *Applications for alternative employment.*
>
> *All types of manual work so I would not think of office work and get depressed.*
>
> *Applied for as many jobs as possible, whether or not they were directly related to my previous experience*
>
> *I became self employed and purchased a small hire car franchise, figuring the chances of full employment were very remote*
>
> *Looking for alternatives that I'd be suited for.*

From the total of 113 comments given for the overall sample (calculated only on those mentioned 4 times or more), 62% related to pursuing paid work, while the remainder focused on non-work activities.

Table 8.9.

Responses to the Question 'When you first left your job, what sort of things did you try doing?' for Males and Females who reported no subsequent changes.

Response Type	Overall	Male	Female
Apply for alternative jobs	33	22	11
Job search (unspecified)	13	8	5
Rested	10	3	7
Hobbies	9	7	2
Looked for similar work	8	3	5
Got a job	8	6	2
Volunteer work	7	1	6
More time with family/friends	6	1	5
Travel	6	4	2
House maintenance	5	5	0
Seek social support	4	1	3
Wrote C.V.	4	1	3

Note. Mentioned less than 4 times: enjoy freedom, new interests, found a financial advisor, and resigned to be a retiree.

Turning to Table 8.10, those who went on to report subsequent changes reported similar activities to those seen in Table 8.9, with some notable exceptions. While applying for alternative jobs remained the most commonly reported activity, study and self-employment emerged as two new activities. Further, there appeared to be less non-work activities reported. From the total of 106 comments made at least 4 times or more, only 19% could clearly be labelled non-work related, compared to the 38% evidenced in Table 8.9.

Table 8.10

Responses to the Question 'When you first left your job, what sort of things did you try doing?' for Males and Females who reported subsequent changes.

Response Type	Overall	Male	Female
Apply for alternative jobs	22	10	12
Study	17	4	13
Job search (unspecified)	17	13	4
Looked for similar work	11	8	3
Seek social support	11	5	6
Self-employment	8	3	5
Volunteer work	7	2	5
Rested	7	3	4
Travel	6	4	2

Note. Those mentioned less than 4 times were: sending CV's to agencies, reviewed finances, more time with family and on hobbies, and legal action against employer.

Table 8.11

Reported Goal Changes of Males and Females

Response Type	Overall	Male	Female
Apply for alternative jobs	27	18	9
Gave up/accepted futility	13	7	6
Self-employment	9	6	3
Study	6	3	3
Volunteer work	6	2	4
Got job	6	2	4
Focus on retirement	5	5	0
Tell self money not important	5	0	5
Slowed down job hunt	4	3	1

Note. Those mentioned less than 4 times were: no longer want full-time work, can't cope, less leisure activities, travel, disillusioned.

Focusing on Table 8.11, alternative jobs were once again the most common theme. Study and creating own business opportunities were also common. However, there also appeared to be a theme of giving up or refocusing away from paid employment (i.e. focus on retirement, money not important, unpaid work, etc). This was captured in 40% of the 81 comments (only counting those mentioned more than 4 times).

Of note from Table 8.11 was that only males mentioned focus on retirement:

> *Initially find another job. I have now retired and spend more time looking after grandchildren.*
>
> *Apply for jobs that were advertised but found that the age barrier was a major obstacle although never openly acknowledged. Learn to live within my retirement income. Not anxious anymore about having to get full time or even part-time work.*
>
> *I actively pursued twelve good jobs that I knew I could do well. When I received zero response I accepted retirement and pursued other interests, i.e. home maintenance, garden, walking.*

On the other hand, only females mentioned money not being that important, and tended to place more focus on personal fulfillment as an alternative:

> *Use the skills gained for my benefit. Spend time doing what I want to do not what I ought to do. After being turned down for jobs since I finished study I no longer actively seek work. It was obvious I was being turned down because I was over 50.*
>
> *[went from] looking for full time paid work [to] accepting full time paid work is neither possible or necessary and finding much satisfaction and pleasure in voluntary work.*
>
> *My goals are to enjoy what I am doing – not necessarily for monetary rewards. My health is more important than a high pressured professional job. I will not chase high employment but rather concentrate on craft work where I have some skills and it is much more satisfying.*
>
> *The [goals] are much less focused on economic gains and tend towards self fulfillment.*
>
> *I have opted out and returned to my first love – sewing. Not seen as a good career choice by my parents. I was encouraged into salaried*

employment and the rise up the corporate ladder, but I never did like it all that much.

Reflecting on the last three tables, the top five most prominent themes (excluding job-search unspecified) are given in order of number of times reported in Table 8.12. Applying for alternative jobs was clearly the most frequently mentioned theme. Study and volunteer work were mentioned more often by women. Gave up/accepted futility also includes categories such as focus on retirement or downplaying the importance of money in this table.

Table 8.12

Top Five most Prominent Themes Overall regarding Goals and Goal Change.

Themes	Overall	Males	Females
Applied for alternative jobs	82	50	32
Study	34	9	25
Looked for similar work	28	11	17
Gave up/accepted futility	23	10	13
Volunteer work	20	5	15

The following comments from both males and females illustrate the process of goal adjustment and also the sense of futility that drives that adjustment downward:

Basically, I tired to find a comparable salaried position. When these attempts failed I tried working on commission only and then operated my own business (commission only).

I have applied for over 200 positions of all types and the only interview in that last five years was for the position of a bus driver and I am unqualified for that! But I was offered a position subject to medical and training. CEO/GM of multinational only suited to drive buses!!

I started off applying for the same type of job. Then I tried jobs that I would like to do. Now I try jobs that are menial and don't require much skill. Each approach has the same result – no result!

I focused on trying to find a new job ... I have taken a lesser job but am prepared to give it my best effort to see whether I will enjoy it or not.

I tried to apply for a very similar type of job. It is clear that I am having some difficultly in obtaining a similar job in New Zealand. This brings me to a decision to either stay in NZ or leave or retrain and try to obtain a different type of job.

I am trying not to be as ambitious as in the past – lowering my sights I think it's called.

Given up looking for a top job. Will settle for less prestige/salary.

Both males and females also made mention of age being a factor that worked against them:

Applying for a number of jobs and matching CV info to requirements. Leaving age of CV did not make any difference as this just confirms that a person was over 40. Where age was given, no interviews were ever offered.

Being declined for interviews for jobs which I have the qualifications meant that I am forced to accept that I am too old but money from benefit is not enough to live on so creates a lethargy and despondency as to what is the use of trying.

Have come to the conclusion that a) my age is against me, b) my skills are not needed and not relevant. I feel I basically have to accept the status quo.

Registered with numerous employment agencies with many interviewing but it became clear age was against me.

After several months decided that employers were looking for younger/cheaper people and I was unlikely to get a job in my area of expertise, so started applying for jobs where I had skills but which had not been the predominant part of past roles.

Did not apply for jobs due to hearing about other people's experiences. The workforce has no place for old people like me – the experts have failed.

The above comments also go in some way to explain why the category gave up/accepted futility made it into the top five most common comments. It appears that a number of individuals also turn to volunteer work as a replacement activity:

I have regained my self confidence little by little at my volunteer work.

I was looking for some other job. I couldn't find a paid job so I am contented with the volunteer job for the time being.

Mainly we coped by volunteer work or the odd part time job.

Volunteer work - good to listen to people.

Filled life with voluntary do good unpaid work to distract self, feel good about self, give expression to own value system.

In order to gain understanding into why downward goal adjustment was associated with lower levels of wellbeing in males who worked part-time (as seen in chapter 6), comments regarding part-time work were assessed. Three themes emerged from the comments given below. The first three comments all refer to part-time work as something that is an undesirable resort. The second three comments illustrate that full-time work is preferable to part-time work, and the last two comments indicate part-time roles may not be a good fit for the individual:

Have <u>resorted</u> to very junior tasks just to keep some funds coming in.

Find alternative work <u>even</u> if it was part time.

Would <u>settle</u> for part-time work.

I feel hopeful of getting another <u>full time</u> (permanent) job some time and then maybe I will feel my redundancy opened another door (currently temping)

Since obtaining a part time position as a library assistant I think my best chance for <u>full time</u> employment is in that field.

I really <u>prefer</u> full time employment rather than casual contracts.

I tried to work part time as an unskilled worker. But I <u>did not fit in</u> and had to leave.

I was offered a job (part time) as a handyman/maintenance person in a hotel. <u>Bad mistake</u>.

Plans for the future

Table 8.13 outlines the responses given when respondents were asked what their plans for the future were. Comments linked to personal development or contentment were key, in terms of obtaining qualifications, spending time on hobbies, pursuing happiness, improving/maintaining health and family relationships and generally being occupied (this theme mentioned a total of 125 times overall). A less prominent but related theme was a desire for generativity or sense of purpose through comments related to helping others and a desire to be useful (mentioned a total of 23 times).

Table 8.13

Key Themes Regarding Plans for the Future for Males and Females and the Overall Sample.

Themes	Overall	Males	Females
Get full-time work	48	28	20
Spend time on hobbies	31	16	15
Create/continue with own income	29	22	7
Have enough money for retirement	26	15	11
Travel	24	13	11
Good family relations	23	13	10
Get part-time work	19	10	9
Obtain qualifications	18	9	9
Get job that makes me happy	18	10	8
Improve finances	18	9	9
Be healthy	17	10	7
Work to help others	17	8	9
Be busy/occupied	15	9	6
Be happy	14	6	8
Be employed in usual field	11	9	2

Note. Those mentioned less than 10 times were retire, spiritual or self development, be useful and future holds nothing.

Finances presented another key theme, where it was cited that there is a wish for finances to improve and concern that there is sufficient funds for retirement (mentioned a total of 44 times). While the desire to obtain full-time or part-time work was prominent (67 mentions), there was also a desire to create own business opportunities or to pursue work that suits one's personality, interests or sense of personal fulfillment (47 mention). A desire to obtain work in one's usual field is mentioned relatively infrequently. A few individuals simply reported that retirement was their plan.

Discussion

The discussion of the qualitative results follows the order in which the results were presented.

Finances

The comments observed for financial preparation appear to back up the quantitative results reported in chapter 4 that found females were less likely to be prepared than males. The greater tendency of males to report good redundancy pay-outs and adequate pensions is consistent with the arguments of DeViney (1995) that work history impacts on finances and women are less likely to have adequate pension provisions. Added to this is the tendency for females to be paid less than males (Hyuck, 1999). Given that women have a greater life expectancy than men (Dwyer, Gray & Renwick, 1999) it is likely that New Zealand will see an increasing number of older women living around or below the poverty line. This is especially so if the 50 to 65 years period in a woman's work history is crucial for gathering money together after having cared for family, and they then find themselves blocked from reaching savings goals. Indeed, as stated by Hyuck (1999) "By 2020, poverty among the elderly is likely to be confined primarily to women living alone" (p. 223).

Increased/Decreased Activities

Reading, gardening and exercise were among the most commonly increased activities. Computer use was also prominent, and can be a means of developing skills important for today's work environment. Further, references to study, volunteer work and a host of creative or literary pursuits were commonly mentioned, suggesting

individuals are quite industrious with their time. However, the majority of activities appear to be solitary, with little mention of social interaction on a casual basis.

Gallie et al (1994) employed a diary method of assessing leisure time activities in a sample of unemployed individuals in Britain, and like the current sample found that women were more likely to report increases in study based past-times and social interaction, and men were more likely to report increases in sport. With regard to decreases, past-times that required money were also commonly decreased in both samples. This illuminates the finding in chapter 7 that the impact of strain on wellbeing is partially mediated by a decrease in activities for men, suggesting financial limitations are the primary cause.

Less time with friends and colleagues was notably more prominent in the New Zealand sample than in Gallie et al's (1994) research. If anything, the British sample entertained or visited friends more. These are only tentative comparisons given the different methodologies used in the current study and Gallie et al's research but this does raise the question 'are we as a nation more inclined to be loners?' Do we lack the kind of close relationships found in England because we tend to travel around a lot more and not keep as close a contact with our extended family?

Also the standard of living and less crowding, plus more single people in urban centres (from which the majority of respondents were sourced) means that living alone is likely to be more common in New Zealand. Further, the internet with its email and chat programs may encourage less face to face interaction. Therefore, work colleagues may constitute a more important source of physical social contact to the average New Zealander. This could also be why volunteer work is adaptive for men, given that it is likely to bring them into social contact with others, especially given that they tend to be less social than their female counterparts (Pratt & Norris, 1994).

Age could be another factor. Gallie et al's (1994) sampled individuals aged 20 to 60, whereas the current study is confined to a particular age group. As noted by Antonucci (1991), older individuals tend to identify fewer individuals with whom they have close relationships, who they are less likely to live near or to visit as frequently as their younger counterparts. Their social network members also tend to be older and to have been known for longer. When considering the increased likelihood of losing close ones for this age group, isolation could prove to be a problem, compounded by the loss of contact with work colleagues.

Overall decreases predominated in activities that cost money, or involved social interaction or physical activity. All could be considered limits to engagement in life, with the latter potentially impacting on physical wellbeing and the avoidance of diseases. From Rowe and Kahn (1998) we know that individuals would benefit from increasing or maintaining social contact and physical activity, rather than decreasing it.

With regard to increases in skills, both males and females tended to report increased computer skills, indicating that they perceive computer skills to be the most desirable skill to obtain in the current job market. This goes in some way to allay the perception that older workers are 'techno-phobic'. A number also see job hunting as stretching their interpersonal skills, and creativity is explored more deeply than perhaps has been allowable when employed in a full time job.

Personal Growth and Emotional Changes

While peace and independence are highlighted for personal growth, it is noteworthy that females are more likely to report increases in self-esteem, confidence and assertiveness. Females were also more likely to report decreases in self-esteem when they commented on emotional changes over time. This may be because females are more willing to refer to changes in self-esteem than males are. Males may project their feelings more indirectly through comments like having greater sympathy for others. Alternatively, Phelps and Mason (1991) reported that women are more likely than men to interpret their job loss as personal rejection, and this may influence reference to self-esteem. That women reported increases in assertiveness is in line gender stereotypes that perceive women to become more assertive with age (Hyuck, 1999).

It is encouraging to see that the majority of respondents (74.6%) were able to identify at least one positive area of growth in terms of either new skills or personal growth. This area has been largely overlooked in past research (Hanisch, 1999), and potentially much may be learned from assessing the positive outcomes from job loss more thoroughly, as it informs researchers about the ways through which individuals construct positives out of negative events.

Overall, the common theme under emotional changes was the perception that the situation was beyond their control, with age discrimination being mentioned most frequently. These trends indicate that individuals perceive themselves to be in an

uncontrollable situation, providing the first evidence of support for hypothesis 8a, that themes regarding age discrimination and lack of control over the environment would be common in the sample.

Transitions

The types of transitions mentioned most frequently are in line with those common for this age group (Bahr & Peterson, 1989). Of note was the tendency for negative events to constitute some kind of loss. This is in line with past literature (Brown, et al, 1987). In contrast to negative events, and consistent with past research (Krause, 1988), positive events tended to be additive or a gain in some way.

Focusing on negative events, Brown et al (1987) noted that events that are considered severe typically include loss of financial resources, material possessions, physical health, death and interpersonal separation (based on generalized weightings of life transitions). The majority of these appear to be popular themes under events self-reported as negative, providing confidence in the individualized rating self-report method.

Of note for mixed events was that these events were also often reported as negative events. This indicates that mixed events are skewed towards the negative, but may sometimes present mixed blessings. For family events, a child leaving home, death of a parent or a parent moving to a nursing home may bring new freedom or financial gains/relief, mixed with the grief of loss. Further, family dis-unification and divorce/separation may be painful, but may also bring relief to ongoing negative influences in the individual's life (Wheaton, 1990). Additionally, while identifying and treating an illness is positive, fears associated with the outcomes of treatment may remain.

This skew towards the negative is the likely reason why family mixed events were predictive of lower life satisfaction and higher negative affect in females. Brown et al (1987) noted that women who had higher levels of commitment to a role that was threatened (i.e. wife, mother, daughter) were three times more likely to report depression than women who reported less commitment. To the extent that, on average, females have higher levels of relational commitment than males, this may explain why family mixed events were only significant predictors for females (as seen in chapter 5). This argument is strengthened when it is considered that females may

experience greater role conflicts in such areas (Hyuck, 1999; Wickrama et al, 1995) and that they are more likely to take on primary care-giving responsibilities (Hyuck).

The argument that transitions that cause role conflict are more likely to lead to an onset of depression (Brown et al, 1987) could also explain why a balance towards more positive non-family events was linked to higher life satisfaction for males (as seen in chapter 5). When considering the types of non-family events reported across positive, negative and mixed events, it was seen that males tended to report more events that could be status threatening or enhancing. They also tended to mention travel more often, which implies sufficient financial resources to fund such activities. Added to this, Kendler et al (2001) refer to research that has found that males are more sensitive to the effects of income-related events, while females are more sensitive to relational events.

Comments Regarding Primary and Secondary Control

Of initial note is that some individuals referred to how difficult these questions were to answer, with others also noting that primary and secondary control are intertwined in the coping process. The latter conclusion is in line with how Heckhausen and Schulz (1995) conceptualize primary and secondary control.

Three additional themes came through in this area: male/female socialization, situational uncontrollability and positive construction of secondary control. With regard to male/female socialization, the comments provided indicated that females may be socialized towards passivity, whereas males are socialized towards instrumental control. This reflects traditional gender stereotypes (Hyuck, 1999; Wickrama et al., 1995) and provides a suggestive explanation for why the passive 'accept loss' coping strategy is the only significant strategy for women, and also the low endorsement of confidence for primary control in women.

Situational uncontrollability was a common theme, with the current work environment and age being common points of reference, adding further support to hypothesis 8a. Part of how individuals may be more accepting of this lack of control is reflected in the positive construction of secondary control. The dissonance created by lack of control may lead individuals to put more value on the type of control they have at their disposal. Secondary control was characterized by some respondents as a means to growth and development and as a way of considering others, and in the extreme, primary control was cast as negative. This may be akin to what Rothbaum,

Weisz and Snyder (1982, cited in Heckhausen & Schulz, 1995) term 'interpretive control' (a type of secondary control), where in the face of uncontrollable events, individuals derive meaning that makes the event easier to accept.

The diversity of the types of answers emanating from these questions suggest that there was scope to have had more 'mature' or pinpointed analysis of thoughts towards the use of primary and secondary control. In retrospect, the concepts of primary and secondary appraisal could have been used to assess this area more thoroughly. Primary appraisal refers to what a current or anticipated event will mean to an individual (i.e. a threat, a challenge, harm or loss, positive or irrelevant). Secondary appraisal refers to cognitive appraisal of whether an individual will be able to cope with an event and what methods of coping are likely/not likely to work. These concepts were originated by Lazarus and Folkman (1984). Unfortunately, they were unknown to the author at the planning stage of the thesis.

Secondary appraisal is said to be particularly relevant for analysis when individuals are faced with situations characterized by a lack of control (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). Therefore, attitudes towards situational uncontrollability may have been more systematically assessed had measures of secondary appraisal been included in the survey. This is a limitation of the current study that could be redressed in future research. In particular, analyzing whether appraisal beliefs have a moderating impact on the choice of coping strategies utilized on SWB would benefit from analysis, especially given that many of the coping strategies assessed in this research were also categorized at primary and secondary levels. Further, it could easily be anticipated that more negative a-priori appraisals of success with a given coping strategy should correlate with less endorsement of the use of that strategy.

What Did When First Lost Job and Goal Changes

The weak relationship between the change of goals variable and the goal disengagement variables reported in chapter six (i.e. change of goals correlated with horizontal goal adjustment only) is largely explained through analysis of the responses regarding what individuals tried when they first lost their jobs. Whether or not they reported subsequent changes in goals, goal adjustment was a prominent course of action at the outset of job loss.

Those who reported no subsequent changes were also more likely to have focused on non-work activities than those who did report changes. This indicates that

there were a portion of individuals who saw job loss as a permanent exit from paid employment and did not try to pursue further work. Those who did go on to report changes often referred to creating work opportunities through such activities as study and self-employment.

The reported goal changes once again highlight the prominence of goal adjustment, however, by in large the comments appear to refocus away from paid employment. This indicates that initial attempts to gain employment failed. This was clearly demonstrated in the comments provided that illustrated a sense of futility, with age once again a common reference for their failure. This can be taken as further support for hypothesis 8a.

There was evidence to suggest that males and females may respond to this lack of control by approaching it in difference ways. Phelps and Mason (1991) reported that women are more likely to view job loss holistically and see it as an opportunity to take stock of their lives. This may be why they tended to report an increased focus on personal fulfilment, downplaying the value of paid work or high employment. While men may take stock, it may be more about readjustment of identity labels, in particular from employee to retiree (Hayes & Nutman, 1983).

Overall, goal adjustment was the most commonly mentioned theme among comments regarding goals and goal change. This is in line with the high endorsement of the goal adjustment coping strategies reported in chapter 4. It is also in line with the prediction that goal adjustment would be prominent in a sample faced with limited situational control. Apart from goal adjustment, approximately half of the remaining comments refer to continued striving for work through either study or seeking similar work. The remaining half have given up or taken up volunteer work as a replacement activity. In support of arguments made in chapter 6, part-time work was also viewed as undesirable by some participants.

In summary, it appears that there are five major categories of individuals in the sample: those who make adjustments to get paid employment, those who will accept only the same level of employment, those who seek to improve their employment options, those who are resolved to seek the activity of work but not the pay, and those who have lost interest in work altogether.

Plans for the Future

It is clear what is on the major wish list for respondents in the future. The desire to get work and to improve finances is key, especially in preparation for retirement. More time for creative pursuits and personal development, improved health and time with loved ones were also prominent. In a sense, these plans for the future represent a prescription for positive ageing. It is a world in which financial concerns are alleviated, skills, talents and interests continue to develop and are preferably acknowledged, and where the individual takes care of themselves physically and also nurtures their close relationships. The power of the majority of these positive elements is clearly reflected in the quantitative results, as variables that tap into them predict levels of wellbeing.

Chapter Summary

The chapter helped to illuminate the appropriateness of a number of arguments developed in the quantitative chapters of the thesis. Less financial provisions for redundancy were highlighted for females. Males tended to report more income-associated non-family events, providing some insight into the link between the non-family event balance measure and life satisfaction for men found in chapter 5. Mixed events tended to be weighted towards the negative, and given the likely higher investment in relational roles of women, this was seen as an indication of why mixed family events were predictive of lower life satisfaction and higher negative affect in women.

Support for differences in male/female socialization was also suggested via comments made in relation to primary and secondary control. Females indicated socialization towards accepting the status quo, with males more likely to report a desire to make instrumental changes. These tendencies may underlie the differences found in chapter 4 between the sexes on primary and secondary control confidence.

The way in which exit from the workforce was constructed also hinted at socialization/identity issues, with men more likely to report a swap to the identity of 'retiree', where women tended to downplay the importance of money (the latter is a potential explanation for the weaker predictive power of the financial strain variable for women).

Overall, there was considerable evidence to suggest respondents perceived themselves to be in an uncontrollable situation. Recurrent mention of age discrimination and workforce barriers were made. These appeared in a range of areas, including comments related to control confidence/preference, changes in emotion, goals and goal changes, with the adjustment of goals being the most common theme. There was an indication that individuals may attempt to construct the lack of control in a positive way. It was also noted that future assessment of the OPS-JL may benefit from including measures of secondary appraisal when assessing attitudes towards situational control.

In addition to the swapping of identities or downplaying the importance of money, a number of respondents referred to increased independence and less stress, while others referred to the personal growth possible through adaptation to suit the environment and of having more time to spend on personal interests. Volunteer work appeared to be a means through which to sustain a sense of self-worth.

Regardless, plans for the future indicate that the desire to get work and/or increase financial security remains a primary concern. Personal development and nurturance of close ties were also common. Overall, plans for the future read like a prescription for positive aging, with stimulating activities, continued development, good relationships, sound health and financial security all deemed desirable. This largely reflects back to the quantitative predictors of SWB used in the thesis.

Other outcomes of interest were that negative events were largely loss events, while positive events were largely gain events. With regard to activities, decreases in activity occurred in 3 main areas: financial, social and physical. Of note was that New Zealanders frequently mentioned increases in solitary activities, and decreases in social activities. However, many of these solitary activities appear to be more active, creative or challenging than watching T.V. Regardless, there is some concern that social isolation may be a problem for older New Zealanders.

9

A FOCUS ON WISDOM AND GENERATIVITY

This chapter focuses on the data collected from the 81 life planning (wisdom – an age related gain) interviews that were conducted in the second part of the data collection, as well as focusing in more depth on volunteer work (as a marker of generativity) and its correlates. A number of predictions were made regarding the relationship of wisdom to other variables and these are initially assessed, followed by exploration of other potential correlates. Wisdom is also considered in terms of its contribution to subjective wellbeing and its possible interaction with coping. The results finish with the correlates of volunteer work (generativity) and its relationship to wisdom.

Results

Wisdom

Testing Predicted Relationships with Wisdom

Before looking at the outcomes from predicted relationships, it should be noted that although females (M = 4.09, SD = 1.55) tended to score more highly on wisdom than males (M = 3.58, SD = 1.47), this difference was not significant.

Table 9.1 presents the correlation between predictor variables and wisdom for the overall sample and each sex. Focusing on the outcomes for the overall sample, evidence to support two hypotheses was seen. Namely, as socio-economic status (SES) increased (hypothesis 9a) and the impact of transitions increased (hypothesis 9b) so too did the wisdom scores. SES demonstrated the greatest predictive strength, with job status level showing stronger associations than education level.

Borderline support was seen for hypothesis 9c, that as wisdom scores increased so would the reported use of humour; however, a negative correlation between lack of humour and wisdom was also seen for males, and appears to be in opposition to what would have been expected. It appears that the higher the wisdom score, the less likely males were to report an adequate sense of humour. Further, it

was predicted by hypothesis 9e that higher wisdom would be associated with higher levels of subjective wellbeing. Contrary to what would be expected, higher levels of wisdom coincided with higher levels of negative affect for males. The remaining indicators of wellbeing showed no relationship with wisdom.

Table 9.1

Correlation of Wisdom to Variables with Predicted Relationships for Males (N=47), Females (N=34) and the Overall Sample (N=81)

	Wisdom		
Variables	Males	Females	Overall
Impact transitions	.15	.20	.21*
Socio-Economic Status			
Education level	.26*	.13	.21*
Job status level	-.35**	-.36*	-.33***
Overall SES	.37**	.34*	.35***
Coping			
Use of humour	.18	.10	.15+
Lack of humour	-.27*	.08	-.14
Wellbeing			
Negative affect	.28*	-.02	.14
Positive affect	-.09	-.05	-.10
Life satisfaction	.08	.14	.09
SWB	-.08	.02	-.06

Note. All tests based on Pearson's r 1-tailed correlations. $p \leq +.10$, *.05, **.01, ***.001.

Focusing on the correlations for each sex, of note is that socio-economic status remained a strong predictor for both sexes. Its subsets both contributed significantly for males, but for females only job status level correlated with wisdom scores. Of further note is that impact of transitions was only a significant predictor of wisdom when the two sexes were combined.

Exploration of Other Predictors of Wisdom

Given the amount of effort required to collect the wisdom data, and the limited amount of past research using this methodology, it was decided assess whether any non-hypothesized variables were predictive of wisdom. In order to confine space, only the variables that had significant relationships with wisdom are reported on.

A 2 tailed independent samples t-test on the overall sample demonstrated that those who had not changed their goals ($M = 3.46$, $SD = 1.09$) had significantly higher wisdom scores than those who had changed their goals after job loss ($M = 2.82$, $SD = 1.23$), $t(74) = 2.32$, $p = .023$. T-tests were also significant to varying degrees for both sexes, although the relationship tended to be stronger for males.

Table 9.2 outlines the variables that produced significant correlations for both sexes. There was a non-significant trend for having a greater number of children to be associated with higher wisdom performance for males; however, there was a significant trend for a greater number of children to be associated with lower levels of wisdom in females. There was also a moderate positive correlation between the OPS-JL coping strategy 'goal pursuit' and wisdom for females only. No other significant correlations with wisdom were in evidence in the data.

Table 9.2

Correlation of Wisdom to Variables with Non-predicted Relationships for Males and Females.

	Wisdom	
Variables	Males	Females
Number of children	.24	-.41*
Goal pursuit	.07	.39*

Note. All tests based on Pearson's *r* 2-tailed correlations. $p \leq +.10$, *.05.

Accounting for the Variance in Wisdom Scores – Regression Analysis

Table 9.3 reports on the results of multiple regression analysis that sought to account for as much of the variance in wisdom scores as possible for the overall sample, and for males and females.

Overall sample. Three core variables were entered into the analysis for the overall sample: SES, impact of transitions and use of humour. Goal change was initially entered but held no predictive power when other variables were entered, so was removed from the equation (as was the case for both sexes). Higher levels of SES and impact of transitions were both associated with higher levels of wisdom, whereas use of humour failed to produce a significant beta.

Table 9.3

Multiple Regression of Predictors of Wisdom for the Overall Sample, Females and Males

Predictor	β	*F*	*df*	R^2
Overall				
Socio-economic status	.38***	6.02***	74	.20
Impact transitions	.23*			
Use humour	.12			
Females				
Number of children	-.39*	4.09**	29	.36
Job status	-.10			
Goal Pursuit	.34*			
Impact transitions	.19			
Males				
Socio-economic status	.39**	4.92**	41	.32
Number of children	.24+			
Impact transitions	.23+			
Lack of humour	-.31*			

Note. $p \leq +.10$, *.05, **.01, ***.001

Females. Four variables were entered into the regression analysis for females. As seen in Table 9.3, only two variables produced a significant independent contribution to wisdom, although a sizeable proportion of the variance in wisdom was

accounted for. Having a greater number of children was associated with less wisdom; while higher endorsement of goal [illegible]

[illegible] variables. Although impact of transitions produced a higher beta weight than job status, this too failed to reach significance.

Males. The four variables entered for males all showed borderline to moderate significance levels. SES was the strongest predictor, followed by lack of humour. The direction of the beta weights indicated that those with higher SES and less humour were more likely to have higher wisdom scores. Number of children and impact of transitions both displayed positive beta [illegible]

Table 9.4

Multiple Regression Predictors of Negative Affect for Males

Predictor	β	*F*	*df*	R^2
Wisdom	.33*	7.80***	38	.45
Strain	.35**			
Optimization	-.34**			
Number of Children	-.30*			

Note. $p \leq$ *.05, **.01, ***.001

Moderation between Wisdom and the OPS-JL Coping Strategies on SWB

Hypothesis 9f predicted that wisdom would moderate the impact of coping strategies on SWB (i.e. the scope of our cognitive perspectives (wisdom) influence the actions that we do or do not take (coping strategies) – opportunities effect coping as per Figure 1.4). This was tested across all of the OPS-JL strategies and the humour coping strategies on all four of the outcome measures. Three areas of moderation were in evidence in the data. Specifically, moderation was found for males only with the optimization, goal disengagement and horizontal goal adjustment coping strategies. Further, wisdom was also found to moderate between coping preference and wellbeing, hence partially supporting hypothesis 9f (males only and only for some of the coping strategies).

As seen in Table 9.5, a significant interaction was found between optimization and wisdom on positive affect. Figure 9.1 indicates that higher levels of optimization were more adaptive than lower levels of optimization, with an interaction that suggests it was particularly adaptive for high wisdom scorers to optimize more rather than less. This differentiation was less pronounced for low wisdom scorers.

As depicted in Table 9.6, horizontal goal adjustment produced a significant relationship with SWB when considered on its own, but wisdom did not, however the interaction between the two was significant, producing a substantive increase in the amount of R^2 accounted for. Figure 9.2 depicts an interaction where those low on wisdom reported similar levels of SWB regardless of the level of horizontal goal adjustment endorsed, whereas those high on wisdom appeared to benefit more from using higher levels of horizontal goal adjustment than those low on wisdom.

Significant interactions were also found for positive and negative affect and life satisfaction.

Table 9.5

Wisdom as a Moderator between Optimization and Positive Affect in Males.

Predictors	β	*F*	*df*	R^2	ΔR^2
Optimization	.35*	6.31*	44	.13	--
Wisdom	-.10	3.37*	44	.14	.01
Optimization * Wisdom	1.62**	4.09*	43	.23	.09*

Note. $p \leq +.10, *.05, **.01$.

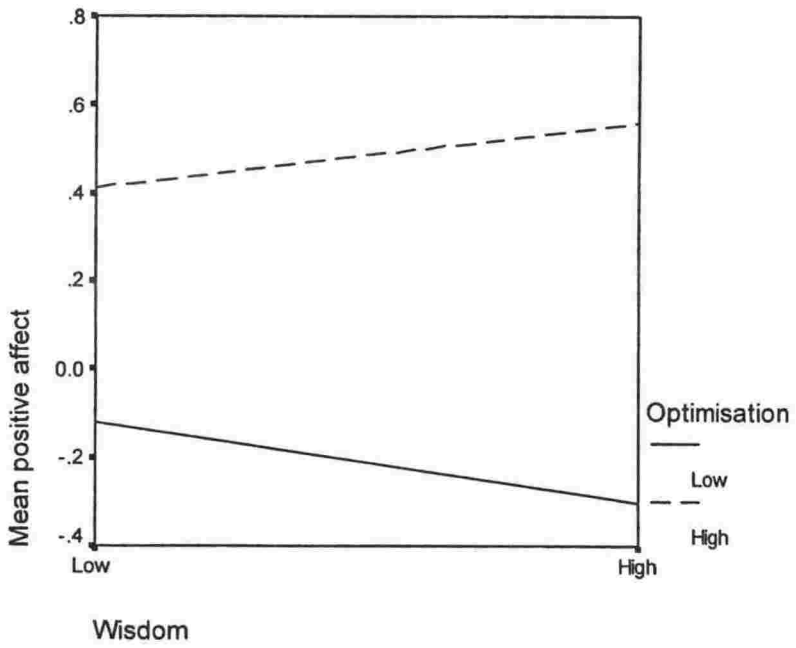


Figure 9.1. The Interaction between Optimization and Wisdom on Positive Affect in Males.

Table 9.6

Wisdom as a Moderator between Horizontal Goal Adjustment and Subjective Wellbeing in Males.

Predictors	β	*F*	*df*	R^2	ΔR^2
Horizontal GA	.33*	5.56*	45	.11	--
Wisdom	-.07	2.87+	44	.12	.006
Horizont. GA * Wisdom	2.24**	5.45**	43	.28	.160**

Note. GA = goal adjustment. $p \leq$ +.10,*.05, **.01.

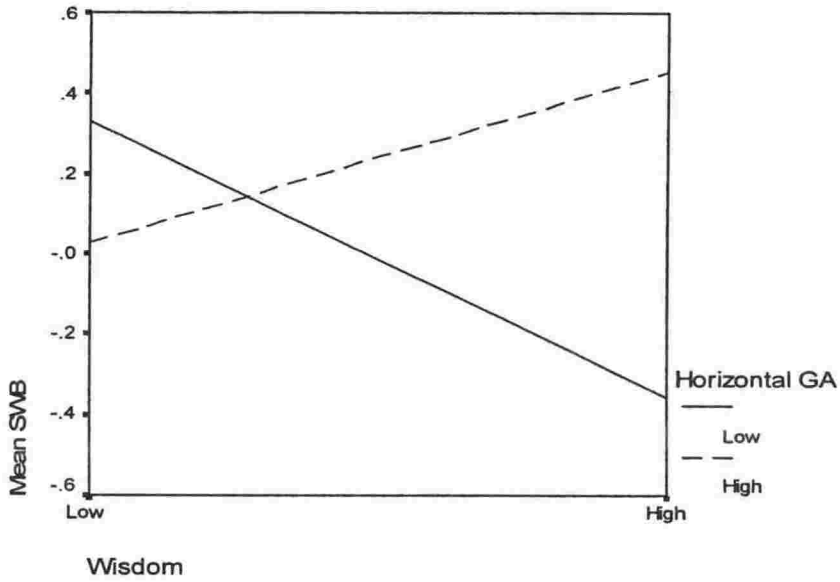


Figure 9.2. Interaction between Wisdom and Horizontal Goal Adjustment on Subjective Wellbeing for Males

The relationship between wisdom and goal disengagement on negative affect is depicted in Table 9.7 and Figure 9.3. The two variables separately failed to produce significant *F* values, although the wisdom beta was stronger than the goal disengagement beta, reaching borderline significance. The interaction was significant (a significant interaction was also found for life satisfaction), accounting for notably more R^2. Figure 9.3 indicates that higher levels of negative affect were experienced by those higher in wisdom than those low in wisdom if they persisted with

unobtainable goals. Conversely, giving up was associated with lower negative affect in high wisdom scorers and higher negative affect in low wisdom scorers.

Table 9.7

Wisdom as a Moderator between Goal Disengagement and Negative Affect in Males.

Predictors	β	*F*	*df*	R^2	ΔR^2
Goal Disengagement	.16	1.17	42	.03	--
Wisdom	.25+	1.85	41	.08	.056
Goal Dis * Wisdom	-1.03*	3.29*	40	.20	.115*

Note. $p \leq$ *.05.

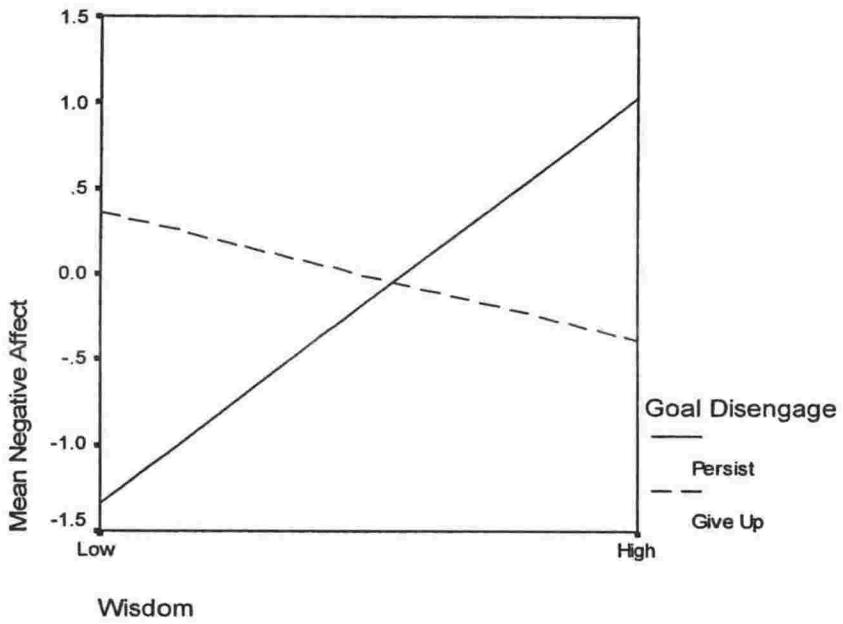


Figure 9.3. Interaction between Wisdom and Goal Disengagement on Negative Affect for Males

Given the three instances of moderation seen above, it was decided to test whether wisdom also moderated the impact of control preferences. A significant moderation effect was seen for males on the positive affect outcome measure (see Table 9.8). Figure 9.4 depicts an interaction where those high in wisdom reported

lower levels of positive affect if they preferred primary control, whereas those scoring low on wisdom benefited more from reported preference for primary control.

Table 9.8

Wisdom as a Moderator between Control Preference and Positive Affect in Males.

Predictors	β	*F*	*df*	R^2	ΔR^2
Control Preference	.11	.51	42	.01	--
Wisdom	-.06	.31	41	.01	.003
Preference * Wisdom	1.45**	2.83*	40	.18	.16**

Note. $p \leq$ *.05, **.01

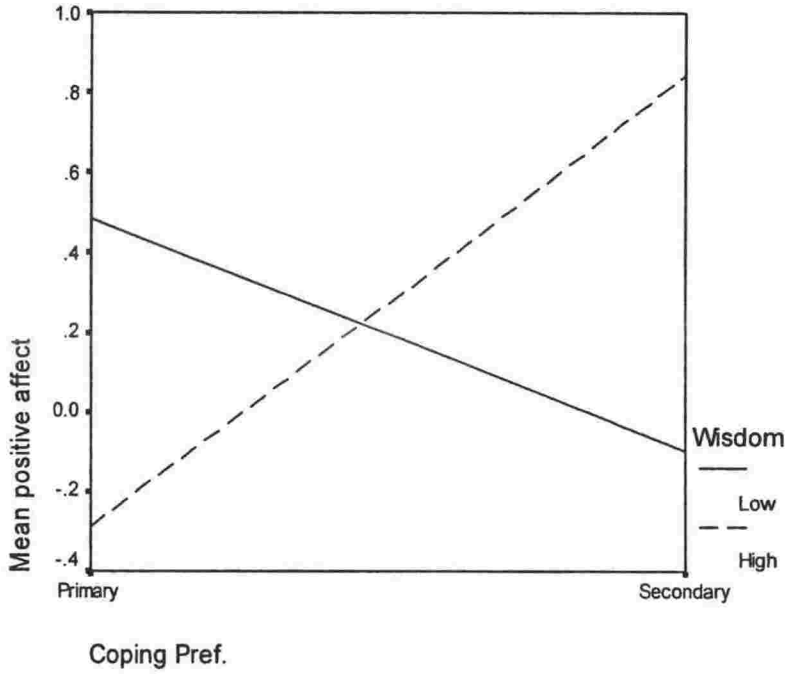


Figure 9.4. Interaction between Wisdom and Coping Preference for Positive Affect in Males.

Generativity

An independent samples t-test found that wisdom scores did not vary as a function of whether individuals worked as volunteers or not, thus not supporting

hypothesis 9d. However, as depicted in Table 9.9 and Figure 9.5, a significant interaction was found between volunteer work and wisdom on life satisfaction for the overall sample (although the *F* statistic was only borderline significant). The interaction depicts a situation where those low in wisdom reported higher life satisfaction if they were volunteers, whereas those high in wisdom reported lower life satisfaction if they were volunteers. This is in direct opposition to the hypothesized relationship between these two variables.

Table 9.9

Wisdom as a Moderator between Volunteer Work Status and Life Satisfaction for the Overall Sample

Predictors	β	*F*	*df*	R^2	ΔR^2
Volunteer Status	.05	.16	74	.00	--
Wisdom	.09	.38	73	.01	.01
Volunteer * Wisdom	-1.14*	2.28+	72	.09	.08*

Note. $p \leq +.10$, *.05

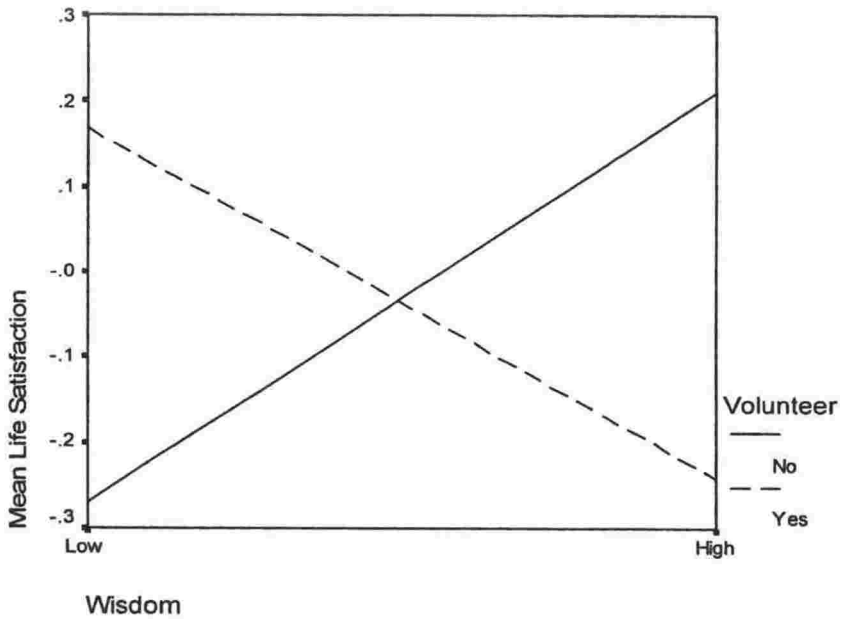


Figure 9.5. Interaction between Volunteer Work Status and Wisdom on Life Satisfaction for the Overall Sample.

A series of 2-tailed independent samples t-tests were conducted to ascertain if working as a volunteer was associated with higher levels of any of the predictor variables. Four main outcomes were observed for the overall sample, and the means and standard deviations are given in Table 9.9. As predicted by hypotheses 9g and 9h (respectively), those engaged in volunteer work were more likely to report higher levels of optimization (opportunities and coping link) and socio-economic status than those not engaged in volunteer work. Further, exploratory analysis ascertained that working as a volunteer was associated with higher endorsement of the accept loss coping strategy. The trends for males and females were similar on the above variables. In addition, males who engaged in volunteer work ($M = 3.49$, $SD = 1.18$) reported significantly higher levels of the coping strategy seeking help than those not engaged in volunteer work ($M = 2.86$, $SD = 1.21$), $t(101) = 2.65$, $p = .009$.

Table 9.10

Variables that Differ Significantly by Volunteer Status for the Overall Sample

				Volunteer Work			
				No(N=91)		Yes(N=83)	
Variable	*df*	*t*	*p*	*M*	*SD*	*M*	*S/D*
Overall SES	165	2.77	.006	-.32	1.66	.38	1.62
Accept Loss	172	3.66	.001	3.34	.75	3.73	.63
Optimization	172	4.49	.001	3.63	.85	4.17	.73

Discussion

The discussion begins with an evaluation of the findings associated with wisdom, followed by evaluation of the findings related to generativity.

Wisdom

The discussion of wisdom is broken down into the following key areas: socio-economic status; number of children; impact of life transitions; humour; wisdom,

coping and SWB; and issues with the wisdom methodology. Each area is discussed in turn.

Socio-Economic Status

The hypothesis (9a) that individuals with higher socio-economic scores would have higher wisdom scores was supported for both sexes. These results are in line with Baltes and Smith's (1990) predictions. Of note in the current sample is that job status was a stronger predictor than education level, indicating that the wisdom measure successfully captures the practical skills gained from the work domain, and is not limited to academic skill. This was particularly pronounced in females, where education level failed to be a significant predictor of wisdom. Of further note is that SES was not a significant predictor when entered with other predictors in regression analysis for females. The effect of SES on wisdom appears to be overridden by variables potentially associated with less time in the role of worker (i.e. higher number of children).

Number of Children

Unlike females, having a greater number of children was associated with higher levels of wisdom for men. To the extent that females are primary caregivers while males tend to be secondary caregivers, with investment in the work role their primary domain, it can be understood why having more children could be limiting for women but not for men. While a greater number of children would indicate more time in the home for women, for men it would provide additional growth beside that gained from work, as the male is given access to a range of temperaments, emotional and situational crises, arising from their children. This would serve to broaden their horizons and understanding of different facets of life aside from the work domain. It may be that the variable number of children captures women who have been house-bound for a number of years, hence living a more secular existence that stifles the growth of wisdom.

It would have been interesting to have also collected data on the work history of women who were parents (i.e. did they work full-time or part-time while looking after dependent children? How many years, if any, did they solely spend in the home?). If the degree to which women had spent time house-bound was assessed it is possible that it would produce a strong negative relationship with wisdom.

Impact of Life Transitions

The hypothesis (9b) that those with higher life events would report higher wisdom scores was supported through the finding that as the reported impact of transitions increased, so did the wisdom score. This was most notably pronounced when the overall sample was considered. It is interesting that it is the overall impact of transitions that is significantly related to wisdom. Baltes and Smith (1990) argued that the acquisition of wisdom is likely facilitated by a mixture of failures and successes and the interplay between gains and losses. It is reasonable to assume that the impact of transitions variable contains a mixture akin to these as it includes the combined impact of positive, negative and mixed events. To the author's knowledge, this is the first evidence of a link between life transitions and this wisdom methodology.

Humour

The hypothesis (9c) that as wisdom scores increase so will the reported usage of humour to cope was supported to a borderline degree for the overall sample. Individual correlations for the two sexes indicated that relationship was stronger for males. However, the findings that males with less humour (lack of) tended to have higher wisdom scores was unexpected and does not support the views of laypersons found in Clayton's (1982) work.

Some explanation for this may be found in other research. Lyster (2001) noted that those scoring higher on wisdom reported lower levels of internal locus of control, and Wooten (2000) reported that humour is linked to higher levels of internal locus of control. Following on from this, it may be that wise individuals who appraise their situation (external locus) to be uncontrollable do not see how having 'more of a sense of humour' is going to improve a situation beyond their control. However, this does not mean that they do not 'use' humour to cope.

Wisdom, Coping and SWB

The hypothesis (9e) that as wisdom increased so too would subjective wellbeing was not supported. Rather the reverse effect was observed for males on negative affect. Added to this, wisdom was shown to capture a significant amount of the variance in negative affect when entered with other core predictors of SWB for

males, indicating that wisdom contributes a further unique facet through which wellbeing can be understood.

With regard to coping, wisdom demonstrated some kind of relationship (either correlation or moderation) with 4 of the 8 OPS-JL coping strategies. Three instances of moderation were found for males only, partially supporting the hypothesis (9f) that wisdom would moderate the impact of coping strategies on SWB, while goal pursuit was the only strategy to correlate with wisdom for females. The results for males add further support for the idea that opportunities effect coping (as per Figure 1.4).

The finding that wisdom correlated with negative affect is contrary to Lyster's (2001) research, which found a positive relationship between wisdom and life satisfaction. Consideration of the relationships observed between wisdom and the OPS-JL strategies may help to illuminate why this occurred. It appears that the impact of coping strategies on SWB may be conditional on the level of wisdom the individual has.

For males, wisdom moderated the impact of optimization, goal disengagement and horizontal goal adjustment on the outcome measures. Specifically, lower levels of wellbeing was experienced by high wisdom scorers if they endorsed optimization and horizontal goal adjustment to a lesser extent, and higher negative affect was experienced by high wisdom scorers if they persisted with unobtainable goals. Further, when looking at coping preferences, it was clear that males scoring high in wisdom experienced lower positive affect if they preferred primary control.

It would seem that those with higher wisdom are happier if they can employ their knowledge to effective ends. Using flexible ways to do this, such as optimization and horizontal goal adjustment, appears to be adaptive. On the other hand, high scorers in wisdom experience lower levels of wellbeing if they continue to pursue unobtainable goals and/or prefer primary control. If wise individuals know a lot about the world and the way it works, and so therefore have a higher expectation that they can manipulate their environment, then they may also find the reality of being unable to effect control particularly frustrating or difficult to accept. That this is affecting wellbeing levels in males only may once again be due to the centrality of the work role to the male identity.

On the other hand, wisdom may also have a direct effect on negative affect in that high wisdom scorers, knowing a lot about the workings of the world, may find it more difficult to avoid a realistic appraisal of the situation they are in, and are

therefore less able to benefit from illusory perceptions of control. As stated by Heckhausen and Schulz (1995) "those [adults] who hold realistic appraisals about the controllability of events and their own control potential tend to be higher in depressed affect" (p. 291).

Added to this, Nurmi, Pullianen and Salmela-Aro (1992) note that control beliefs tend to become more external with age, in part because individuals invest more heavily in areas that are uncontrollable (i.e. children's lives). They speculate that this may also be because the older one is the more realistic appraisals they make, thus leading to decreases in internality. To the extent that wiser individuals are more externally focused in a world that is uncontrollable, their lack of control over the environment should become more salient, which in turn may raise feelings of dissatisfaction.

If these arguments are valid, then it provides insight into how situational constraints may heighten negativity in the wise, rather than facilitate the higher levels of wellbeing found in Lyster's (2001) sample. Specifically, it indicates that wisdom is an asset when it is able to be employed effectively, but may heighten frustration when it cannot. Indeed, 'wise males' are happier when they cite secondary control as their preference, secondary control being the most employable option in a situation characterized by limited control options.

Issues with the Wisdom Methodology

The reason why Lyster (2001) found more external locus of control in high wisdom scorers could be due to the criteria upon which wisdom is assessed. Specifically, the wisdom criteria in this methodology appear to involve knowledge about the external world that surrounds the individual. In a sense it evaluates how thoroughly individuals view the world, its situations and people. It appears to do little to assess the internal state of the individual (i.e. knowledge of the self) so it is arguable that those who score highly on wisdom may tend to be more externally focused in general.

This absence of assessing self knowledge has been a noted issue with the methodology used by Baltes and colleagues. Pratt and Norris (1994) note that only focusing on the cognitive aspects of wisdom overlooks two other important areas: affect and right action. They refer to work by Roth, Pratt, Pancer and Hunsberger (1990, cited in Pratt & Norris) that has generated the idea of the 'golden mean' of

wisdom. This golden mean is summed up as "cognitive skill in seeing the broad implications of an issue, and with a sense of caring and respect for the perspectives of others and the self ... A harmonious balance of knowledge, affect and right action" (Pratt & Norris, p. 161). Therefore, it is the ability to balance these three areas that is viewed as the golden mean. In view of this, although the results found here inform us about the cognitive (or explicit) aspects of wisdom, we are reminded that there are facets of wisdom that have remained untouched (implicit aspects). This is not to say that Baltes and Staudinger (2000) are unaware of such limitations, as they note "wisdom may be beyond what psychological methods and concepts can achieve" (p. 4).

Generativity

The hypothesis (9d) that those with higher wisdom scores will be more likely involved in volunteer work was not supported, and is contrary to the theoretical expectations of Erickson et al (1986). Surprisingly, high wisdom scorers experienced lower levels of life satisfaction if they volunteered. Perhaps the reason for this outcome is that while volunteer work may be an adaptive action to pursue due to the engagement in life associated with it, this may be a further indicator of the futility of the situation faced by those scoring high in wisdom. To be specific, high wisdom scorers who expect or feel they should be able to manipulate the environment consider volunteer work to be an 'unworthy' replacement activity. High wisdom scorers may perceive themselves to have higher expectations to fulfill (i.e. paid work).

In contrast, the hypothesis (9g) was supported that generative individuals (those engaged in volunteer work) would be more likely to optimize than non-generative individuals. This follows, as engaging in volunteer work indicates greater involvement in the community (McAdams et al., 1997), representing fields of activity more diverse than the secular work role. Further, support was also found for the hypothesis (9h) that those engaged in volunteer work would have higher levels of socio-economic status than those not engaged in volunteer work, in line with previous findings by Rumsey (1997) and Warburton et al (1998).

The finding that volunteer workers endorsed accept loss more highly indicates that engaging in such activity may aid the individual in accepting unemployment, as they still feel they are doing something worthwhile for society. Indeed, Weinstein,

Xie and Cleanthous (1995) found retired volunteer workers in their study reported a higher sense of purpose in life. Accordingly, 'volunteer' was one of the top five activities mentioned under goals and goal changes in chapter 8.

Volunteer work was also found to correlate with seeking help for males only, suggesting that it is increased social contact that males benefit from in this area. Again, there is previous research to support this interpretation, with Long (1987), Moen, Fields, Quick and Hofmeister (2000), and Rumsey (1997) all referring to reports from pre/post retirement men that identify access to socializing as a key positive aspect of volunteering. We are also reminded of research referred to in chapter 7 that acknowledges males are more vulnerable to isolation and loneliness than females (Pratt & Norris, 1994).

Chapter Summary

This chapter focused on wisdom and generativity. In the course of the analysis a number of predictions were found to be supported. With regard to wisdom, evidence was found for a link between wisdom and social economic status, humour, transitional history, and the OPS-JL coping strategies (the latter both in terms of direct relationships and moderation). With regard to volunteer work (as a measure of generativity), volunteering was found to correlate with socio-economic status and optimization.

As with previous chapters, a number of differences between males and females were found. These results were once again traced back to differences in male/female work history and socialization. For example, having more children was associated with higher wisdom for males but lower wisdom for females. Further, wisdom acted as a moderator between the OPS-JL strategies and SWB for males only. This was attributed to the greater centrality of the work role for males contributing to (as argued in chapter 7) a more complex coping process than is seen for females.

Overall, the patterns between wisdom, coping and SWB for males suggested that higher wisdom equates with higher expectations that the individual will have control over their environment, with moderation of wisdom on coping suggesting that wiser individuals are happier if they are able to make flexible attempts to overcome these limitations through optimization and horizontal goal adjustments. However, at the same time, wise individuals suffer if they refuse to acknowledge or adapt to the

confines of the situation, and a direct negative relationship between negative affect and wisdom in males suggests that realistic appraisals about situational limitations gives the individual little to be positive about. A proviso on the findings for wisdom is that only the cognitive aspects of wisdom have been appraised in this research.

Additional findings found for volunteer work suggest that volunteer work provides a sense of purpose that may help the individual to accept job loss. Further, males in particular may benefit from the social interaction associated with volunteering.

10

GENERAL DISCUSSION

The aim of this chapter is to synthesize the nine chapters presented in the thesis to date. The predictions related to the major themes outlined in chapters 1 and 2 will be re-dressed, considering support that has or has not been found for themes across the 6 results based chapters in the thesis. These major themes relate to areas such as constraints, opportunities, coping and the relationships between the three areas, as well as differences observed between males and females as a function of coping, work history, identity and socialization. The chapter then goes on to highlight new findings (i.e. those that are unique to the thesis), followed by consideration of limitations in the study and areas for future research. The chapter ends with consideration of the implications of the outcomes of the thesis.

Tables 10.1 and 10.2 have been provided for the reader's reference. Table 10.1 details individual outcomes for each of the predictions made in the thesis for those who are interested in specific areas. Of note here is that of the 61 predictions made in the thesis, 38 were fully supported. Partial support was found for 18, and of these 18, 15 found partial support for males only. Table 10.2 provides a more summarized version of outcomes, indicating the degree to which the major areas/themes in the research were supported. In general, support was most reliably found for predictions related to constraints and gender differences. This is due to two reasons. Firstly, most of the constraint measures were based on self-perceived levels of stress and so more accurately accounted for levels of wellbeing for both sexes, and secondly, although predicted gender differences were largely founded, a number of areas were more strongly affected by gender than expected, with some non-predicted areas also affected by gender, as evidenced by partial support being found on 15 of the hypotheses for males only.

The remainder of this chapter does not attempt to refer to specific hypothesis numbers, as this has already been done throughout the thesis, but instead will focus on synthesizing information on key themes in a clear and concise manner.

Table 10.1

Summary of Outcomes from Hypotheses in the Thesis

#	Chapter 3 – Method	Theme	Out-Come
3a	The three scales used as outcome measures will feed into the higher order construct of SWB (as indicated by adequate model fit)	(CV)	S
3b	Separating items from the three scales into the areas of life satisfaction, positive affect, and negative affect will show a superior model fit in terms of explaining the higher order construct of SWB	(CV)	S
#	**Chapter 4 - Descriptive Summary of Participants**	**Theme**	
4a	Females will report less time in work related roles than males	Work History (G)	S
4b	Females will be less financially prepared for job loss than males	Work History (G)	S
4c	Females will report a higher number of life transitions than males	Work History (G)	S
4d	Females will report higher levels of non-work related activities than males	Work History (G)	S
4e	Females will report higher levels of optimization than males	Work History (G)	S
4f	Males will report higher levels of pressure to find work than females	Identity (G)	NS
4g	Unemployed males will be more likely to still be seeking work than unemployed females	Identity/ Socialization (G)	S
4h	Reported pressure to find work will lessen as males get older	Identity (G)	S
4i	Males will endorse primary control based coping strategies more highly than females	Coping (G)	NS
4j	Males will endorse downward goal adjustment more highly than females	Coping (G)	S
4k	The overall sample will endorse confidence for secondary control more than they endorse confidence for primary control	Situational Un-controllability (CON)	S
4l	Females will endorse confidence for secondary control at higher rates than males endorse confidence for secondary control	Socialization (G)	S
4m	Preference for primary control will be higher than preference for secondary control	Situational Un-controllability (CON)	S
4n	Goal adjustment will be a highly endorsed coping strategy in the sample	Situational Un-controllability (CON)	S
#	**Chapter 5 – Baseline Predictors of Subjective Wellbeing**	**Theme**	
5a	Older males will report higher levels of wellbeing than younger males	Identity (G)	S
5b	Partnered individuals will report higher levels of SWB than single individuals	Social Resources (O)	S
5c	Those with more children will report higher levels of wellbeing than those with fewer or no children	Social Resources (O)	P(M)
5d	The relationship between number of children and SWB will be stronger for males than is seen for females	Identity (G)	S
5e	Those with working partners will report higher levels of wellbeing than those with under- or un-employed working partners.	Social Resources (O)	P(F)

5f	Partners work status will be a stronger predictor for females	Socialization (G)	S
5g	Those with a higher net increase in non-work activities will report higher levels of SWB than those who tend toward a net decrease in activities	Activity (O)	S
5h	Volunteer workers (generative individuals) will report higher levels of wellbeing than non-volunteers	Generativity (O)	P(M)
5i	Those engaged in study will report higher levels of wellbeing than those not engaged in study	Activity (O)	NS
5j	As the current level of employment increases (i.e. from unemployed, to part-time to full-time) so will the levels of wellbeing reported	Activity (O)	P(F)
5k	Those still seeking work will report lower levels of wellbeing than those who are no longer seeking work	Strain (CON)	P(M)
5l	The more roles an individual holds, the higher the reported level of wellbeing	Activity (O)	P(M)
5m	The number of roles held will be a stronger predictor for males than for females	Identity (G)	S
5n	Those who were less prepared financially at the time of job loss will report lower levels of wellbeing	Strain (CON)	S
5o	Lack of financial preparation will impact more heavily on SWB for males than it does for females	Socialization (G)	S
5p	Those with higher levels of pressure to find work will report lower levels of wellbeing	Strain (CON)	S
5q	Both financial preparation and pressure to find work will capture a unique amount of the variance in SWB	Strain (CON)	S
5r	Those who have experienced unemployment more times in the past will report lower levels of wellbeing and financial preparedness	Strain (CON)	P(M)
5s	The total weights score (positive impact subtracted from negative impact) will be a superior predictor of SWB than either total number or impact of events	Transitions (CON)	S
5t	Family related positive events will predict levels of SWB (and not non-family related positive events)	Transitions (CON)	S
5u	Negative events will significantly predict wellbeing regardless of whether they are family related or not	Transitions (CON)	S
5v	Those who have a balance towards more positive events (as determined by total weights score) will report higher levels of SWB than those who have a balance towards more negative events	Transitions (CON)	S
5w	Compensatory secondary control coping strategies, humour based strategies and goal adjustment strategies should be prominent predictors of SWB (relative to other coping strategies, excluding optimization)	Situational Un-controllability (CON)	P
5x	Those who optimize more will report higher levels of wellbeing than those who optimize less	Coping Process (C)	S
5y	Higher endorsement of goal disengagement will correlate with lower levels of wellbeing	Coping Process (C)	P(M)
5z	Downward goal adjustment will be associated with lower levels of wellbeing than that seen for horizontal goal adjustment	Coping Process (C)	P(M)

5aa	Males will have a higher number of coping strategies that are significant predictors of wellbeing than females	Coping (G)	S
5ab	Significant coping predictors of wellbeing for females will be more secondary rather than primary in nature	Coping (G)	S
#	**Chapter Six – In-Depth Analysis of Coping Strategies**	**Theme**	
6a	Optimization's effect on wellbeing will be mediated through subordinate coping strategies	Coping process (C)	P(M)
6b	Those who optimize more will report a higher number of roles and activities than those who optimize less	(CV)	S
6c	Those who report a change in goals will endorse goal adjustment strategies more highly than those who do not	(CV)	S
6d	Those no longer seeking work will endorse goal disengagement more highly than those still seeking work	(CV)	S
6e	Humour will mediate the effect of compensatory secondary control on SWB	Opportunity & Coping Link (INT)	P(M)
#	**Chapter Seven – Moderators, Mediators and Regression Predictors of Subjective Wellbeing**	**Theme**	
7a	Relationship status will buffer the impact of life events on SWB	Opportunity & Constraint Link (INT)	P(M)
7b	Relationship status will not buffer the impact of job-related strain on SWB	Situational Un-controllability (CON)	S
7c	Humour will moderate the impact of other life events and job-related strain on wellbeing	Opportunity & Constraint Link (INT)	P(M)
7d	Level of job-related strain will moderate the impact of coping strategies on SWB	Coping & Constraint Link (INT)	S
7e	Entering opportunity and coping variables into regression analysis will lead to drops in the predictive power of constraint variables	Opportunity & Constraint Link Coping & Constraint Link (INT)	P(M)
7f	Lower levels of financial preparation will negatively impact on non-work related activities, in turn making individuals more susceptible to lower levels of wellbeing.	Opportunity and Constraint Link (INT)	P(M)
#	**Chapter Eight – Qualitative Feedback**	**Theme**	
8a	Themes regarding age discrimination and lack of control over the environment will be common in the sample	Situational Un-controllability (CON)	S
#	**Chapter 9 – A Focus on Wisdom and Generativity**	**Theme**	
9a	As socio-economic status increases, so too will wisdom scores	Age-related Gain (O)	S
9b	Those with higher levels of life events will report higher wisdom scores	Age-related Gain (O)	S
9c	As wisdom scores increase so will the reported usage of humour to cope	Age-related Gain (O)	S (bord)
9d	Those with higher wisdom scores will be more likely to be engaged in volunteer work	Age-related Gain (O)	NS
9e	Those with higher levels of wisdom will report higher levels of wellbeing	Opportunity & Constraint Link (INT)	NS
9f	Wisdom will moderate the impact of coping strategies on SWB	Opportunity & Coping Link (INT)	P(M)
9g	Volunteer workers will report higher levels of optimization than non-volunteers	Opportunity & Coping Link (INT)	S

9h	Volunteer workers will have higher levels of socio-economic status than non-volunteers	Age-related Gain (O)	S

Note. Themes: (C) = coping process predictions, (CON) = Constraints, (CV) = construct validity, (G) = gender differences, (INT) = figure 1.4 interlinks, (O) = Opportunities. Level of Support for hypotheses: NS = not significant, P = partial support, P(M) = partial support - males only, P(F) = partial support - females only, S = full support, (bord) = borderline support.

Table 10.2.

Quick Reference Summary of Support for Key Themes Identified in the Thesis

Key Themes	# Hypotheses	Support for Hypotheses		
		Full	Partial	NS
Constraints	*15*	*12*	*3*	-
Stress related variables	9	7	2	-
Situational uncontrollability	6	5	1	-
Opportunities	*14*	*6*	*5*	*3*
Social resources	3	1	2	-
Activities	4	1	2	1
Age-related gains	7	4	1	2
Coping				
Coping process predictions	4	1	3	-
Gender differences	*19*	*17*	-	*2*
Work history	5	5	-	-
Central identity	6	5	-	1
Socialization	4	4	-	-
Coping	4	3	-	1
Figure 1.4 Interlinks	*9*	*2*	*6*	*1*
Opportunities & constraints	4	-	4	-
Opportunities & coping	3	1	1	1
Coping & constraints	2	1	1	-
Total	61	38	17	6
Percentage of total		62	28	10

Summary of Converging Evidence for Major Themes in the Thesis

The discussion of the major themes in this research have been organized around the integrated framework of positive ageing proposed in Figure 1.4 of chapter 1. Discussion begins with consideration of constraints – how well did the measures

used to capture constraints perform? Outcomes from assessing employer stereotypes are also considered under this heading because they can be viewed as a contributor to reinforcing constraints, although the purpose of discussing them here is to ascertain their validity. Following this, indicators of lack of situational control are highlighted, as evidence in this area demonstrates how robust the constraints are that individuals in this age group face.

Discussion then turns to opportunities, which in turn assesses the adaptive value of variables linked to engagement in life, activity levels and age-related gains. The third component of Figure 1.4 – coping – is then assessed. Specifically, consideration will be given to how well Figure 1.3 – as model of primary control striving – was supported by the results (bearing in mind proposed gender influences). Having assessed the performance of the three separate components of Figure 1.4, discussion then centers on how well the inter-links between the three components is supported. Finally, discussion of the observed differences between males and females, as a function of the areas of difference proposed in Table 2.1 of chapter 2 (coping, socialization, work history and central identity) are considered. Discussion of this area concludes the summary of the central themes in the thesis.

Constraints

Most respondents reported some level of pressure to find work and at least one additional life transition in chapter 4. Chapter 5 saw pressure to find work and financial preparation both predicted SWB levels, with each capturing a unique amount of the variance in SWB. They were combined into a measure of job-related strain, which demonstrated that higher levels of strain were associated with lower levels of wellbeing. Number of times previously unemployed was a further indicator of constraint, demonstrating a negative correlation with SWB for males.

It was argued at the end of chapter 3 that the event balance variable would be appropriately placed between constraints and opportunities. This was backed up by the outcomes in chapters 5 and 8. Positive events had a positive impact on SWB and were 'gain' events, while negative events had a negative impact on SWB and were 'loss' events. The event balance variable, which traded off negative from positive events, showed, as expected, that a balance towards more positive events was associated with higher levels of wellbeing. This variable represented non-job related stress in the analysis.

Employer stereotypes – change resistant constraint. Chapter 2 highlighted that employers held a number of negative stereotypes towards older workers. In general these were associated with the perception that older workers lacked flexibility (Sparrow, 1999; White, 1999). Chapter 4 assessed the validity of these stereotypes and the results indicated that they were largely unfounded. Older workers showed flexibility through high endorsement of goal adjustment and optimization strategies, holding multiple roles, self initiative to retrain/study, flexibility in working arrangements and a resistance to giving up. In addition, chapter 8 indicated that improving computer skills was a central focus, allaying 'techno-phobic' stereotypes.

However, the sample did show considerable stability in their past work history, with few having experienced unemployment more than once. It was argued that it was this stability that employers generally assume coexists with a lack of flexibility. It was argued that such societal developmental deadlines, put in place by employer 'gatekeepers' would mean that evidence would be found in the results that indicated individuals lacked control over their re-employment options.

Situational uncontrollability. Evidence for this lack of control was assessed throughout the thesis and results indicated its presence in a number of areas. In chapter 4 it was seen that level of SES did not influence the likelihood of regaining work, while the sample showed more confidence for secondary control, but more preference for primary control. Downward goal adjustment was also the most highly endorsed strategy in the sample. Despite adjustments a sizeable proportion were still unemployed and had been out of work for an average of a year and a half.

In chapter 5 it was predicted that humour, compensatory secondary control and goal adjustment strategies should be prominent predictors of SWB if lack of control was present. Each category made its presence felt to varying degrees and by the final analysis in chapter 7 accept loss (compensatory secondary control) was the only significant predictor for females, while goal disengagement (compensatory secondary control) and downward goal adjustment were the only significant predictors for males (humour was not included in this assessment but was a predictor in chapters 5 and 6 for males). What's more, the significant coping strategies for males were both negatively associated with higher SWB. The dominance of coping strategies proposed to be enacted following earlier failed attempts at preferable goals was in line with a lack of control over re-employment. Further, goal motivation, a strategy predicted to be enacted earlier in the OPS-process was negatively associated

with wellbeing in chapter 6 for males, suggesting that defensive pessimism (i.e. low endorsement of goal motivation) was more adaptive when control is lacking. Of additional note is that Holonan et al (1994) stated that social support would buffer stress only in controllable situations. Accordingly, while relationship status buffered other life transitions for males, it did not buffer job-related strain (chapter 7).

Themes regarding age discrimination and lack of control were also prominent in chapter 8, adding qualitative validity to the quantitative results. Some individuals used a type of interpretive control, where secondary control was valued over primary control, in order to cope with the situation. Goal adjustment was a prominent theme here also, with many focusing away from paid employment in the extreme, shifting identities, devaluing paid work and creating their own work opportunities. Lack of control was also alluded to in chapter 9 for males, where wise males did not see the benefit of having more humour (presumably if control was lacking), and may have suffered from a lack of illusory control due to realistic appraisals of their situation. As such, higher wisdom was associated with higher negative affect for males, while tenacious goal pursuit and a preference for primary control were maladaptive when wisdom was high, indicating that failure to accept the confines associated with their situation was unhealthy. Previous research had found wisdom to be associated with higher levels of life satisfaction (Lyster, 2001). The contrary outcomes here were deemed indicative of a lack of control.

Opportunities

Engagement in life/activity levels. A number of outcomes in the thesis indicated that engagement in life was adaptive for wellbeing. With regard to social resources, respondents experienced higher levels of wellbeing if they were in partnerships, while males with more children and females with working partners reported higher levels of wellbeing.

With regard to activity levels, respondents had higher levels of wellbeing if they had increased rather than decreased activities since job loss. In a similar manner, those who optimized more had higher levels of wellbeing than those who optimized less, with men benefiting from a higher number of roles and women benefiting from higher levels of paid employment. Chapter 8 also revealed that full-time work was generally seen as more preferable than part-time work, and that New Zealanders tended to be industrious and creative with their spare time, but largely indulged in

solitary activities. Unexpectedly, study was the one area where activity was associated with lower levels of wellbeing (for females) and this was attributed to the strain associated with being a mature student.

Age-related gains. Age-related gains were looked at in 3 areas: generativity (volunteerism), humour and wisdom. Regarding generativity, it was found that volunteering was associated with higher levels of positive affect in males. Volunteers were also more likely to be from higher SES groups. The predicted link between generativity and wisdom was not supported, with results for males indicating lower levels of SWB in wise volunteers, indicating the wise may see this as settling for less than they are capable of.

Focusing on humour, two factors were found within the CHS measure – use of humour and lack of humour. Support for treating the two factors separately was taken from the finding that lack of humour correlated with negative affect but not positive affect, while use of humour showed the opposite relationship (outcomes seen for males only). Inter-correlation between factors indicated that these factors may be more distinct for males and predicted levels of wellbeing for males only. If this effect existed in previous research but was not picked up, this may have led to erroneous interpretation of outcomes relating to the CHS measure, especially if comparisons on the basis of gender were being made. There was also borderline support for a positive correlation between use of humour and wisdom in males.

With regard to wisdom, aside from the results already mentioned under situational uncontrollability above, wisdom was positively correlated with higher SES and a greater impact of life transitions (mastery experiences) and exploratory outcomes indicated having more children was associated with higher wisdom in males but lower wisdom in females, presumably as a result of differential role demands. Despite its negative relationship with wellbeing for males, wisdom showed itself to be a further unique facet through which SWB can be explained, as evidenced by it capturing a unique amount of the variance in wellbeing when entered with other core predictors in the thesis (i.e. social resources, constraints and coping), although this held for males only.

Coping – Testing Figure 1.3

As highlighted in chapter 1, there were a number of predictions made on the basis that figure 1.3 was a valid model of the process involved in primary control

striving. First of all, the figure predicted that optimization would be mediated through subordinate coping strategies (in line with its higher order nature). Partial support was found for this prediction. Partial mediation of some of the OPS-JL strategies (accept loss, goal pursuit and goal disengagement) and partial mediation of one of the new goal adjustment strategies (horizontal goal adjustment) was found for males. The mediation of optimization by horizontal goal adjustment is of particular importance given that HGA is a new addition to the OPS scales, demonstrating that it fits in well as a subordinate OPS-JL coping strategy.

However, goal motivation and downward goal adjustment not only failed to mediate optimization but also failed to correlate with this higher order strategy. This was attributed to a lack of control, where in this context internal resolution to meet original goals (goal motivation) is non-beneficial in the face of robust constraints, and downward goal adjustment, as a last recourse, is a strategy forced out of necessity and not the opportunities created through optimization. The lack of correlation between DGA and optimization necessitates alteration to Figure 1.3.

As expected, DGA was associated with lower levels of wellbeing than HGA for males, further DGA was more isolated in its inter-correlation with other strategies than HGA, relating only to accept loss and HGA, both of which are in closer proximity to DGA in Figure 1.3 than the other strategies. Further, given the moderation of HGA on DGA for males in chapter 6, which found that DGA was more positive for wellbeing if HGA had been applied first, it was acknowledged that it is possible for individuals to skip past HGA straight to DGA (requiring this to be factored into Figure 1.3), and it was theorized that if DGA was employed without first attempting HGA then it could be viewed as a type of giving up prematurely – akin to the goal disengagement strategy (i.e. sights lowered too rapidly).

The amended model of primary control striving for males is given in Figure 10.1. Two changes have been made to the original model proposed in Figure 1.3. Namely, the link between optimization and DGA has been removed and the model now shows the possibility that individuals can employ DGA without first employing HGA. As with goal disengagement, an immediate shift to DGA is associated with lower levels of subjective wellbeing. This is in line with the argument that both goal disengagement and DGA (if premature) equate to lowering ones sights too rapidly, which is maladaptive in terms of wellbeing. Through this adaptation, although DGA

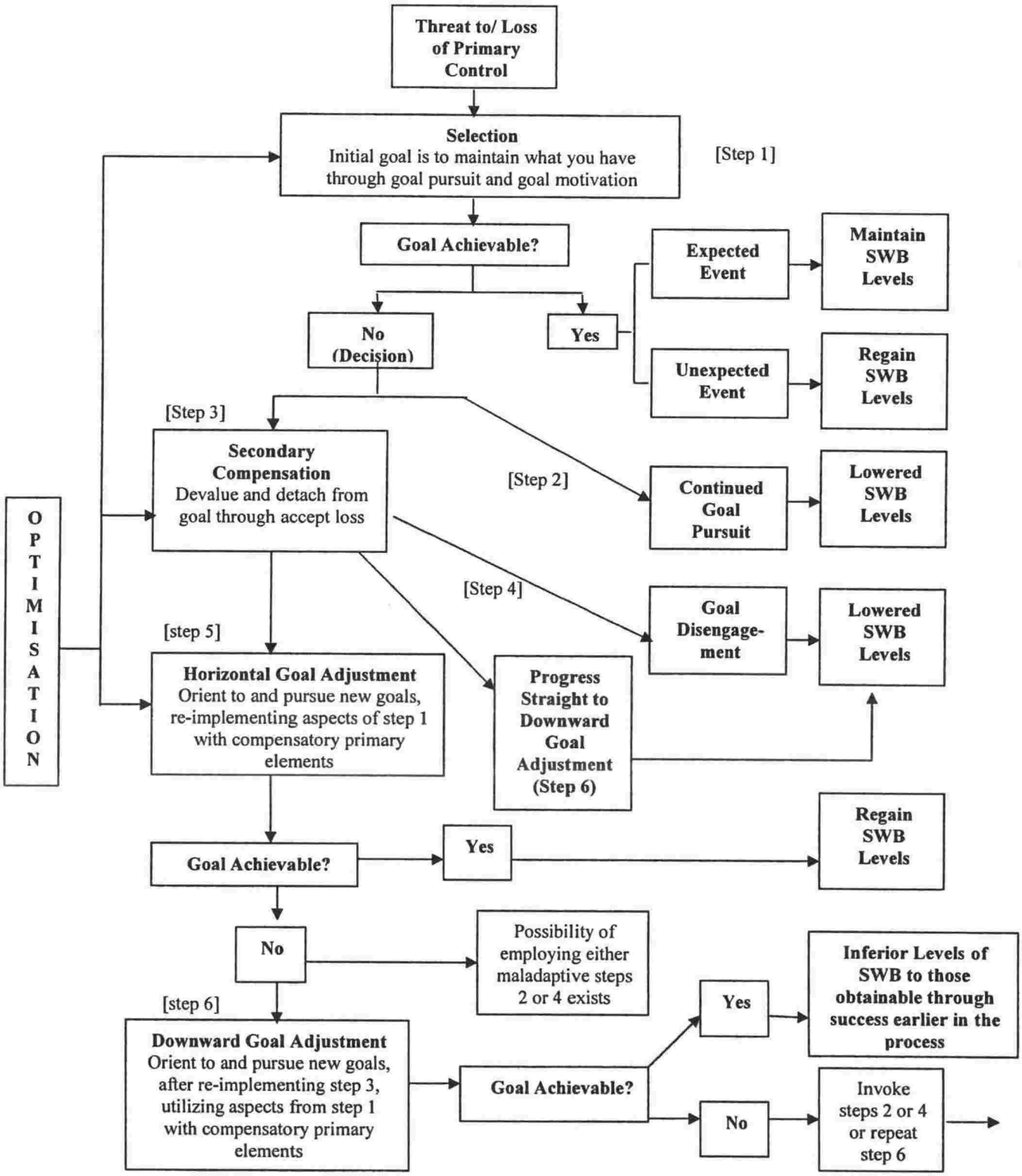


Figure 10.1. Amended Pathways of Primary Control Striving in the OPS Process and the Impact on Subjective Wellbeing for Males

is still proposed to be related to lower levels of wellbeing than those associated with HGA, levels of wellbeing will be even lower if HGA is not employed first.

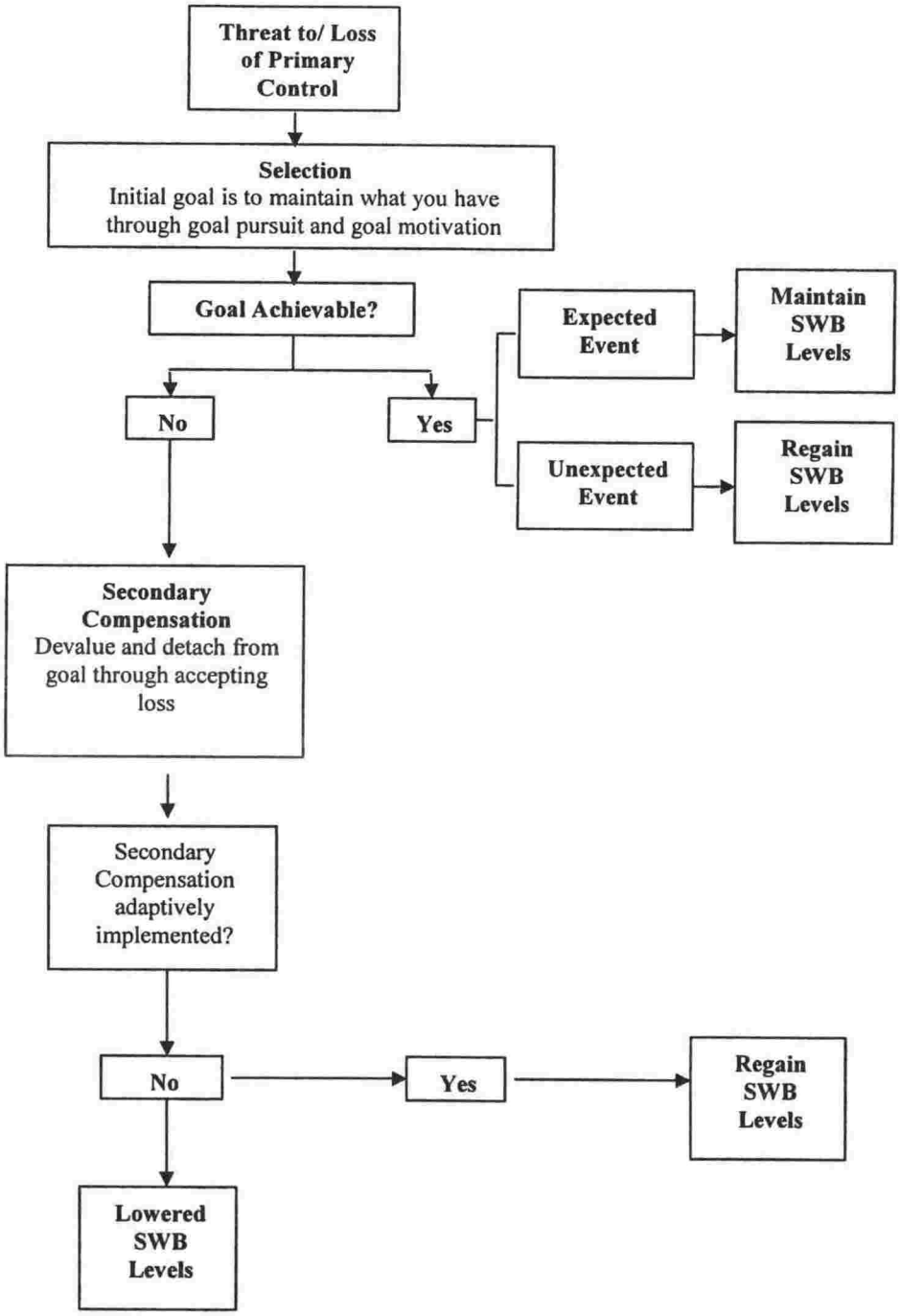


Figure 10.2. A Secondary Control Model of Coping with Job Loss for Females

For females, accept loss was the only significant predictor of wellbeing, with this strategy being more isolated in terms of inter-correlation with other strategies than that seen for males. Specifically, accept loss only correlated with strategies that occurred earlier in the coping process outlined in Figure 1.3 (optimization, goal motivation and goal pursuit). This indicates that in essence females did not demonstrate a primary control model (which was more accurately supported for males) but rather fit in with a secondary control model, this being what is adaptive for their wellbeing. Figure 10.2 presents an amended coping framework for females based on the outcomes observed in the thesis. This indicates that the relationship between coping and wellbeing ends with the application of compensatory secondary control, with wellbeing levels determined by how adaptively this coping strategy is applied.

Inter-Links between Constraints, Opportunities and Coping – Testing Figure 1.4

The vulnerability hypothesis predicted that strains effect on wellbeing is contingent upon the quality of other factors operating within the individual's life. The additive burden hypothesis predicted that the strain of job loss depletes resources or coping capabilities (Ensminger & Celentano, 1988). More evidence was found for the vulnerability hypothesis than the additive burden hypothesis in the results, indicating that on the whole there was more of a tendency for coping and engagement in life predictors to alleviate the effects of constraints, rather than the other way around. Specific instances of bi-directional relationships (as predicted in Figure 1.4) between constraints, opportunities and coping found in the thesis are given below.

Constraints and opportunity links. The link between constraints and opportunities was portrayed through constraints having a negative impact on activities for males in chapter 6. Chapter 8 indicated that activities costing money dropped, with other drops indicated in areas such as social and physical engagement in life. At the same time job loss can also be an opportunity to explore creativity and learn new skills, with 74.6% of the sample identifying at least one area of growth. Further evidence indicating opportunities can have a positive impact on constraints was seen in the moderation between stressors and SWB by relationship status and use of humour in chapter 7 for males. Further, the individual beta weights for the constraint related variables dropped once non-work activity balance and number of roles variables were entered into regression analysis for males. Therefore, evidence was

found for a bi-directional relationship between constraints and opportunities, in line with the predicted direction of relationships outlined in Figure 1.4.

Constraints and coping links. Evidence for a coping and constraint link was seen through the moderating impact of job-related strain between DGA and wellbeing for males (DGA attempts associated with higher wellbeing when strain is high), and seeking help and wellbeing for females (low help seeking leads to lower levels of wellbeing when strain is high). This demonstrates that the level of strain experienced effects the utility of the coping strategy employed. Further, at a foundational level, it can be understood that coping would not be activated had a constraint not emerged in the first place. Evidence for coping alleviating the impact of constraint variables was also taken from the finding that, for males, introducing coping related variables into regression analysis in chapter 7 saw constraint variables drop in their individual predictive strength, the most notable drop being for job-related strain. Together, these outcomes provide some support for a bi-directional relationship between coping and constraints, as predicted in Figure 1.4.

Opportunity and coping links. Volunteer work correlated with seeking help for males and accept loss for both sexes, indicating that it may provide positive benefits in these two areas. Volunteer workers and those high in the use of humour were also more likely to optimize, with humour partially mediating optimization and accept loss in their impact on wellbeing for males. Further, wisdom was found to moderate the impact of coping strategies on wellbeing for males, indicating that wise individuals benefited from higher use of optimization and HGA and should be mindful to avoid tenaciously pursuing unachievable goals or putting too much importance on primary control. The presence of both moderating and mediating relationships between coping and opportunities suggests that a bi-directional link between the two areas was in evidence. Overall, however, more support was found for bi-directional relationships between constraints, opportunities and coping for males than for females.

Male/Female Differences

The summary of the results to date have highlighted that many of the outcomes differed by gender. Chapters 1 and 2 highlighted that this was expected to happen, not only due to differences in male/female socialization, expressed through coping (i.e. agentic vs. passive methods respectively) (Malen & Stroh, 1998), but also

as a function of the type of stressor under assessment. Specifically, gender was used as an expression of identity investment, given that work is typically more central to the male identity (Reitzes et al, 1994), with relationships viewed as more central to the female identity (Wickrama et al, 1995). Based on this argument, and as alluded to earlier, it was expected that a primary control (agency striving) model of coping with job loss would more likely fit the male reality, but that a secondary control model (adapting self to cope with the environment) would more likely fit the female reality because job loss was more central to the male identity and therefore their need for control over this area in their life would be more pronounced than that seen for females. The results indicated that this argument was supported.

Optimization was found to be mediated by subordinate OPS-JL strategies for males only, who had more significant coping predictors overall (all but one of the subordinate strategies was an independent predictor of wellbeing in chapter 5). In comparison, females only had one predictor of wellbeing and this was the secondary control based 'accept loss', although 'seeking help' (the only non-significant predictor for males) did moderate the impact of strain for females in chapter 7. Further, the findings that goal disengagement and downward goal adjustment were significant negative predictors of wellbeing for males (chapter 7) and that downward goal adjustment was more highly endorsed for males (chapter 4) indicated that they are more likely to push primary control striving to the limit. Further, downward goal adjustment was contingent on a number of other factors for males, such as current work status, whether horizontal goal adjustment had previously been used and levels of job-related strain experienced. This suggests greater intricacy in the male coping repertoire.

Humour was also a significant predictor for males only. This was attributed to the findings in previous research that females tend to use humour primarily for social lubrication (Lefcourt & Martin, 1987). Given that use of humour as a social lubricant was not the focal point of the current study, it was assumed that this was why the variable lacked predictive power for females.

In sum, not only did males produce more significant predictors of wellbeing, but their coping hierarchies were more intricate than females, suggesting greater investment in the work domain led to greater coping efforts on the part of males. What is perhaps most telling from the current research is that it is not whether a

coping strategy is used or not (as females did endorse similar levels of coping usage to males – see chapter 4) but how adaptive those strategies are for wellbeing.

Aside from coping, a number of other predicted differences were found that backed up aspects of the four core reasons put forward in chapter 2 that males and females were likely to differ (i.e. work history, central identity, socialization and coping). With regard to work history, it was found, as expected, that females had spent less time in work related roles (although they did not report more instances of past unemployment), and were accordingly less financially prepared for job loss than males (chapter 4, with the latter backed up by qualitative comments in chapter 8). Diversity outside of the work role was also seen in females' higher propensity to study, optimize, have higher non-work activity levels and a higher number of additional life transitions. Further, results in chapter 9 indicated that having a higher number of children was associated with lower wisdom for females but higher wisdom for males, suggesting that raising children is more isolating for females in terms of growth.

These results also link into the argument that work is more central to the male identity. This centrality was used to not only understand why males would be more likely to strive for primary control in this area but also to understand a number of additional findings. It was argued that the greater centrality of the work role for males was demonstrated through the finding that older males but not older females reported less pressure to find work (males shift to the retiree role), that only males benefited from a greater number of roles because they have a larger void to fill, that number of times previously unemployed was a negative predictor of wellbeing for males only, that there were more unemployed males still seeking work than unemployed females, and that depression rates between the sexes were equalized, when previous research has typically shown that for every depressed male there are two depressed females (Nolen-Hoeksema, 1990).

Linking into the identity argument is the socialization argument. Males and females are socialized into certain focal roles. Evidence for differential socialization was taken from the female tendency to endorse more confidence in secondary control, backed up by findings in chapter 8 that indicated females are socialized to 'go with the flow' and 'make do', while in contrast males are socialized to be independent and change the environment to suit their needs. Higher acceptance of financial dependence or making do with less in females was indicated through the findings that

only females benefited from having a working partner, unemployed females were less likely to still be seeking work, and lack of financial preparation was a stronger predictor of SWB for males even though females reported being less prepared overall. This latter finding was interpreted in light of males being socialized to see money as a symbol of status, whereas females may value other areas of life. Females also tended to downplay the importance of money in chapter 8.

New Findings in this Research

A number of findings unique to the thesis were supported or discovered throughout the analysis. A selection of these findings is addressed here.

The finding that the CHS should be divided into two factors was new. The two factor structure was backed up by the finding that use of humour correlated with positive affect but not negative affect, while the opposite was true for lack of humour for males. Chapter 6 showed that the two factors were significantly correlated for females only. This raises concern about previous research using the CHS which may have erroneously concluded that humour was a predictor for females only. When the two factors are separately applied, they clearly demonstrate greater predictive strength for males. Future researchers using the CHS should consider the implications of these outcomes and seek to verify the factor structure of the CHS within their sample.

The moderating impact of wisdom between coping strategies and SWB also represents a new addition to the literature. The outcomes informed us that quality of cognitive thought appears to impact on how adaptive particular coping strategies are for males who are under the influence of limited control. The negative relationship between wisdom and wellbeing for males further indicated that wisdom can be a burden rather than an asset if individuals are in an uncontrollable situation.

The differing relationship for number of children and wisdom between males and females also represents a new addition to the literature. While having more children appears to facilitate wisdom growth in males, the opposite is true for females, highlighting the role disparities between males and females with regard to parenting, and suggesting that higher involvement in the parenting role confines the growth of wisdom for females. It would be interesting to explore this association further in order to understand which particular aspects of parenting for males and females lead to either growth or inhibition in wisdom.

This is also the first testing of a relationship between wisdom and humour and life transitions variables. While the relationship between humour and wisdom was borderline for males only, of particular interest is the link between life transitions and wisdom. It was argued in chapter 1 that a link between these two areas would be found due to life transitions providing mastery experiences which keep wisdom skills honed. However, the fact that this outcome is based on correlation only creates a 'chicken or the egg' situation, given that causality cannot be inferred. Do the wise generate higher impacting events in their lives or do they perform more highly due to mastery experiences derived from recent life events? Future research, tracking the development of wisdom and experience with life events over time, would be required to address this dilemma. However, this initial link suggests that this may be a fruitful path for future inquiry.

The OPS-JL Scale represents a new measurement tool, which is unique from previous OPS Scale versions as it is the first to include goal adjustment within its items. These items appear to have fitted in well with predicted coping pathways (in particular, for males), with HGA demonstrating itself to be a lower order strategy to optimization, as per other subordinate OPS coping strategies. However, the relationships found for DGA were quite different from those seen for HGA. To the Author's knowledge, no one has previously developed coping strategies that differentiate goal adjustment into both horizontal and downward forms.

The outcomes for DGA indicated that the adaptiveness of flexible goal adjustment is contingent on a number of additional factors. First of all, one can be too flexible, to the point where the actions taken may not represent flexibility but a form of giving up prematurely, setting goals too low, or forced choices due to situational confines. These forced choices also represent a quandary to the individual – outcomes suggest that a refusal to 'attempt' to adjust downward in times of high strain is negative, but also that successfully shifting downward is also negative if such a move is insufficient to meet the individual's needs.

Finally, the evidence found for bi-directional relationships between coping, opportunities and constraints informs us that, rather than focusing on single path models of stress and coping (as per the models raised by Ensminger & Celentano (1988)), research may be better directed towards a more holistic and integrated approach to this area. While this would undoubtedly make research more complex, this approach may better fit the reality of life. Although ageing may be linear, life

itself seldom follows an unwavering linear path, and multiple influences and actions emanating from a variety of areas continually exert their influence on each other as we strive to find an optimum balance.

Limitations

There are a number of notable limitations within the current research. Firstly, a longitudinal design was not employed, and therefore conclusions about causal relationships are tenuously drawn. Figure 1.3 inferred a causal relationship for coping, and a cross-sectional methodology is limited in its capacity to validate the pathways suggested. A more complete validation of this process, and further illumination into the idiosyncrasies of how coping strategies work together in environments characterized by differing levels of controllability, is needed. This could include a variety of age bands, in a variety of geographical locations where employment opportunities may differ (i.e. urban versus rural).

A further limitation is that the sample was predominantly Caucasian; therefore the research has told us little about whether the situation is magnified for minority groups. Employment rates in New Zealand indicate that minority groups have higher levels of unemployment than the majority (Statistics New Zealand, 1998b). In this sense, such groups may experience a double jeopardy of racism and ageism, with women potentially encountering a triple jeopardy of racism, ageism and sexism. Future research is encouraged that samples more widely from the ethnic groups within any given country.

Further, it is clear from comparisons with 2001 census data (Statistics New Zealand, 2003) that the current sample was notably more educated than the general population in the same age-group. This limits generalisability of the results. However, it should be noted that this research is unique in the sense that the majority of respondents were self-selecting. An easier way of sampling unemployed populations is to assess only those who are registered on unemployment benefits. However, this would likely lead to over-representation of the under-educated in the sample. The method of selection used in the current research had a better chance of tapping into the 'hidden' unemployed (i.e. those who avoid utilizing government benefits). Future research could attempt to combine such self-selecting methods with

sampling of those receiving benefits in order to try and gain a more balanced representative sample.

In addition, the sample was only representative of 1.1% of the unemployed population in this age group in New Zealand. A larger sampling would increase the confidence with which the results could be generalized. This would require research that was provided with substantial funding, perhaps incorporating a team of researchers rather than a single individual.

Additional limitations of note link into wisdom and how identity was measured. The wisdom methodology employed was limited in that it did not include a life review scenario, which is generally averaged with the scores from the life planning scenario (Staudinger et al., 1994). Do life review and life planning scores tend to correlate with different variables? Are there components of life review that allow for a more complete picture of the 'wise' person? Further, would incorporating assessment of self-knowledge and right action (i.e. assess the golden mean) add further depth into the understanding of wisdom above and beyond that seen when the methodology is based only on cognitive appraisals of the situations other people are in? Further, would high wisdom scores continue to correlate with externality (as found by Lyster, 2001) if all three of these areas were assessed?

Another notable limitation within the study is that it relied on self-report from only one source for the data (i.e. family and friends were not interviewed, so the degree of corroboration (reliability) between the individual and those surrounding them could not be ascertained). This raises the potential for common methods variance. However, in coping research obtaining accurate assessments from other individuals about a person's coping efforts (particularly internal coping processes) is not always feasible. Additionally, the time and resources required to interview or survey additional sources requires a trade off with other factors such as size of sample and breadth of phenomena assessed. This study forfeited the former in favour of the latter. However links between variables established in the current study can be subjected to more targeted and thorough assessment in future research.

Lastly, in hindsight it would have been beneficial to have had direct measurement of identity investment, utilizing measurement tools commonly associated with Symbolic Interaction Theory. This may have helped to solidify the identity argument and also pinpointed which outcomes fed into which aspects of identity. Three main identity aspects are identified by Symbolic Interaction Theory.

These are 1) identity – self meanings given to a role, 2) commitment – attachment to a role, and 3) centrality – importance assigned to a role (Reitzes et al, 1994). Such a theoretical structuring of identity could be employed in future research.

Avenues for Future Research

A number of areas for future research were generated from the thesis and were alluded to throughout the chapters. The areas focused on here were selected because they were considered by the researcher to be important areas for future inquiry. Specifically, the majority of suggestions relate to the OPS-JL and Wisdom measures, as these measurement tools have not previously been applied to the area of job loss or considered in the context of lack of situational control.

Coping. With regard to future research using the OPS-JL it would be beneficial to apply the OPS-JL to different samples (young and old) to ascertain the impact of age on controllability. Further, including more items in each coping sub-category in future research should help to further validate the structure seen in the current research. This research should include confirmatory factor analysis on both the structure found in this study and the original structure proposed by Heckhausen et al (1998).

There were some issues with the measurement of some of the OPS-JL coping sub-types that would need to be addressed in future research. Goal pursuit was a problematic strategy as it involved both selective and compensatory primary control items. These may have become mixed by the time individuals filled in the survey, but may have initially been separate at the beginning of the coping process so may well be separate in the earlier stages of longitudinal analysis (i.e. this may have led to a mixed theoretical factor). Therefore longitudinal analysis is required to address this issue.

The secondary control based 'accept loss' and 'goal motivation' coping sub-types were also problematic. Due to an absence of reverse worded questions, it was unclear whether lower endorsements of these strategies indicated rumination in the case of accept loss or defensive pessimism in the case of goal motivation. To address this, reverse worded questions need to be incorporated in future research using the OPS-JL. Further, to what degree are secondary control strategies influenced by retrospective success/bias? Decisions about internal thoughts may be influenced by past experiences if individuals are not tracked over time (i.e. the case of individuals

currently in work reporting higher endorsement of the strategy 'I know I will achieve the job'), once again highlighting the importance of longitudinal analysis.

Outcomes related to the DGA coping strategy were variable. Deeper exploration into how DGA functions is required, given that outcomes in the current study have already identified that its influence can vary as a function of level of strain, whether HGA was employed prior to its instigation, and current paid work status.

As mentioned in the discussion of chapter 8, it would also be worthwhile to conduct future research using the OPS scales in conjunction with a detailed assessment of primary and secondary appraisal in order to further understanding into the dynamics operating between beliefs/appraisals, choices of action or internal coping mechanisms, and ultimately the wellbeing of the individual. Assessment of secondary appraisal when individuals are faced with limited situational control would be of particular interest.

Wisdom. As alluded to under limitations, some attempt should be made to incorporate assessment of knowledge of self and right action into the assessment of wisdom. Further, it is also desirable to see whether or not wisdom shows a negative or positive relationship with wellbeing when the controllability of a given situation is manipulated.

Given that the correlation found between wisdom and life transitions is new, the effect needs to be replicated in order to raise confidence in the outcomes. Researchers may wish to use the same method of assessing life transitions used here or ascertain whether the effect still holds with more established methods of measuring life transitions. Longitudinal analysis would also allow causative statements to be made about the relationship between the impact of transitions and wisdom.

The final suggestion in this section relates to gender. It is proposed that future research should compare the coping complexity of males and females across work and relational domains (using the same sample in both areas). Concrete measures of identity investment should also be used, as per the three domains outlined above for Symbolic Interaction Theory. This would allow conclusions to be drawn about whether coping complexity alters as a function of degree of identity investment, or whether males and females tend to differ in their coping complexity more generally.

Societal Implications of the Outcomes

There are a number of implications arising from the outcomes of the thesis. Of initial note is that evidence was found for a lack of situational control in the sample. The finding that over 40% of the sample met the cut-off for depression highlights the psychological cost associated with this lack of control. This is far too large a percentage to ignore, and requires redress, not just from the government, but from gatekeepers to employment in the private sector. There appears to be little reason to block older workers from the workforce, especially if this 'block' is based on the view that older workers lack flexibility – engagement in flexible actions was evidenced in a substantial portion of the sample.

It is clear that individuals do use engagement in non-work activities, part-time work and volunteering to help alleviate some of the side effects of job-loss, but these are in large part symptom focused coping – making do with the methods of coping one has at their disposal. When secondary or primary control based coping is considered, the significant predictors in the final regression analysis indicated that the major predictors for males were those that were associated with giving up in some way – leading to lower, rather than higher levels of wellbeing, while accepting the situation worked best for females. These are less than optimal outcomes. While individuals may be able to negotiate their situation and focus on other positive areas of life, members of society have to ask themselves "is this enough – is this all I would deserve too?"

Further, it would be tempting to conclude that females are happy with simply accepting their situation. While this does improve their reported levels of wellbeing, it must be remembered that the introduction of this coping strategy into regression analysis did not lead to a drop in the predictive power of constraint related variables. Further, we are reminded by Hyuck (1999) that "By 2020, poverty among the elderly is likely to be confined primarily to women living alone" (p. 223). The onus will be on New Zealand society to provide for these women. If confidence in using more agentic methods is limiting the future prospects of older unemployed New Zealand females, then it may be appropriate for those counseling these individuals to look at ways to encourage women to feel more confident about using action based strategies. However, this will only be useful to the extent that the labour market would be receptive to such actions.

In sum, the thesis highlighted a number of predictors of positive ageing, and this could have been the greater focus of the implications. However, it is felt that this would not have done justice to the situation faced by respondents. The ever increasing number of individuals who find themselves in this situation will no doubt continue to be, in large part, creative, resourceful and focused on continued learning and development. It is of benefit to New Zealand society that these attributes are put to good use, but also that they are not exploited. Under-paying older workers, or over-relying on them in the volunteer industry with little or no pay, may have short term economic benefits, but in the long term, will create an ongoing financial dependency that is likely to span decades.

Conclusion

This thesis explored predictors of positive ageing in a sample of New Zealanders coping with job loss when aged between 50 and 65. Three inter-linking predictors of subjective wellbeing were proposed: constraints, opportunities (including age-related gains such as humour, wisdom and generativity) and coping. Support was found for bi-directional relationships between these three areas, suggesting that a holistic approach to the assessment of ageing positively when coping with loss is required. Substantial support was also found for differences between males and females, attributed to differences in central identity investment, socialization, coping and work history. The greater centrality of the work role for males was shown through greater complexity in their coping hierarchies than seen for females. While a number of predictors of positive ageing were in evidence, demonstrating the flexibility, resourcefulness and creativity of the sample, additional outcomes suggested that gaining re-employment for those in this age group is limited by blocks imposed by employer attitudes. The finding that over 40% of the sample met the cut-off for depression was attributed to this lack of control. If New Zealand society wishes to encourage positive ageing, then the blocks that limit access to optimal levels of positive ageing must be dismantled.

Appendices

MEDIA RELEASE 5 July 2000

Communications Unit *Ph: 463-5108; Fax: 495 5210*

Coping with job loss when you're over 50

"Coping with job loss is tough for anyone, but especially for mature workers," says Victoria University researcher Joanne Brown, who is looking at how people aged 50-65 cope with job loss for her Ph.D. in Psychology.

Joanne says mature workers often find it harder to regain employment than younger people. "Mature people face a number of barriers in the workforce," she says. "A lot of Employers are worried that mature workers will cost more to employ and won't be as quick and up-to-date as younger people." She adds "Employers often dismiss people due to over-qualification, ignoring the fact that the person just wants a job".

But Joanne says mature workers bring employers a number of benefits. "They have a wealth of experience and knowledge. Not just about a particular field of work, but about living in the world. This practical knowledge allows them to identify pitfalls more easily. They are also likely to be more reliable than younger workers."

Joanne's research indicates that job status or level of education has little to do with somebody's chance of experiencing job loss over 50. "Respondents to date have ranged from cleaners to doctors," she says. "They all have similar concerns and difficulties."

Joanne says her research will help people who experience job loss in the future. "It will help identify what strategies, tools and tactics people find most effective in dealing with job loss. Counsellors will be able to give better advice to people on how to handle their situation."

Joanne is interested in talking to anyone who has experienced job loss over 50, and who are currently between the ages of 50 and 65. "Your current job status doesn't matter," she explains. "You can be working again, studying, doing volunteer work, or unemployed."

The research involves a postal survey and an optional face-to-face interview. Participants in the postal survey have a one in twenty chance to win $50 and those prepared to do the face-to-face interview have a chance to win another $50.

People who would like to take part in the research should contact Joanne on 04 476 2855, email her at jojo22@xtra.co.nz or write to her c/- the School of Psychology, Victoria University, PO Box 600, Wellington.

Joanne's research is part of the Positive Aging Taskforce at Victoria University. Joanne, a mature student who has a Ph.D. scholarship from Victoria, is also working with staff from the renown Max Planck Institute of Aging in Berlin.

ENDS

Issued by the Communications Unit of Victoria University of Wellington. For further information please contact Joanne Brown on 04 476 2855.

Information Sheet
Project: Coping with Job loss over 50

Dear Sir/Madam

Hello, my name is Joanne Brown. I am a research student from the School of Psychology at Victoria University of Wellington. I am interested in talking to individuals aged between 50 and 65 who have experienced job loss after the age of 50. If this fits your situation, I would like to invite you to take part in my questionnaire. Should you decide to participate, the information you provide will be part of a research project that I am conducting.

What is the questionnaire for?

I would like to find out how people over 50 years of age think and act when experiencing job loss. By doing this, I can begin to understand what particular types of thought and action determine the level of wellbeing experienced by individuals going through this particular predicament. Your answers will be put together with those of other people to form a general picture of how people cope in this situation. It is anticipated that the information gathered would be presented in reports, papers and conferences to inform researchers, policy-makers and groups that help mature adults.

What would I do?

Your participation is entirely voluntary. You do not have to take part in this questionnaire. If you would be prepared to help I would like to ask you some questions about:

- how you use humor
- who you are, what you do and where you've been
- where you are now and where you want to be
- how you think and feel

You may skip any question you do not wish to answer. The questionnaire will take approximately 45 minutes to complete. There is a later face-to-face interview that you may indicate a willingness to take part in. If you do indicate an interest, I will contact you with more details about this in the future.

Who will know my answers?

The information you provide me with will be kept strictly confidential. If material from your questionnaire is referred to in the report, I will remove any information that might identify you. I will never name you, or provide information that could identify you, in any report that I write about the results.

Thank you for your help

To say thank you for your help, I will enter your name (if you consent) in a draw to win one of several prizes of $50. (Approximately one out of every 20 people will win $50).

If you wish to participate in this research, please complete the attached questionnaire (and if you choose, the optional response form that has been enclosed for indicating interest in entry into the prize draw, interview participation, and/or contact regarding the findings) and return it/them to me in the postage paid envelope provided. It would be appreciated if you would complete and return the questionnaire at your earliest convenience, preferably within four weeks of receipt. If you wish to know more about the project, please contact either myself, or my Research Supervisor Sik Hung Ng, on the phone numbers listed below.

Yours sincerely

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School of Psychology
P O Box 600, Wellington
Phone: 04 463 5373

jojo22@xtra.co.nz

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Victoria University of School of Psychology Wellington

Research Project: Coping with Job loss over 50 – The Questionnaire

OPTIONAL RESPONSE FORM

I. **Please write your name and contact phone/address below. The information will be used to send you the prize (if you wish), and a summary of the findings, and to contact you for a follow-up interview (if you wish to participate). If you don't want any of these, please ignore this sheet.**

II. **Follow-up Interview**

There is a follow-up face-to-face interview that exists with this project. If you are interested in taking part in this additional exercise, you will initially be trained in the method of thinking aloud. This will be done using a number of warm up tasks. Then you will be asked to discuss a possible plan of action for an individual in a difficult life situation. Your answer will be recorded on tape. There is no right or wrong answer for this task. This is to see if any relationships exist between life planning and the types of coping utilized. The interview will take approximately 45 minutes to complete and your participation will mean you have a second chance to win a prize of $50. If you would like to be contacted about the possibility of taking part in the interview please indicate your interest below and provide a phone number that we can contact you on.

III. **I wish to enter for the prize draw** Yes ☐ No ☐

I wish to receive a copy of the findings Yes ☐ No ☐

I am interested in finding out more about the interview Yes ☐ No ☐

IV. If you answered yes to one or more of the above, please write your name, address and contact phone number below:

Name: _____ Phone: _____

Address: _____

_____

NB: Please note that you will be entered into the prize draw only if you return this sheet with a completed questionnaire. In order to keep your responses as anonymous as possible, this sheet will be kept separate from your questionnaire.

COPING WITH JOB LOSS OVER 50

School of Psychology
P O Box 600, Wellington, New Zealand, Telephone +64-4-463 5373, Facsimile +64-4-463402
E-mail Psychology@vuw.ac.nz

Coping with Job Loss after 50

Questionnaire instructions

Thank you for being part of the Coping with Job Loss after 50 Project. This questionnaire is not a test. We are simply interested in your experiences.

Please answer by ticking an option ☐ ☐ ☐

Or by filling in the blank space _____

Some questions are inside a shaded box like this:

Number of years living together _____

These are questions that are only relevant to some people (in this example people that are married or living as a couple).

If you fit the description, please answer the questions in the box.

If you do not meet the description, please ignore the questions in the box.

Please complete the questionnaire now or as soon as it is convenient. The questionnaire generally takes around 45 minutes to complete.

Thank you for your help

Section 1: General Information

These questions ask some for some general background information about you.

1. Age _____

2. Gender Male ☐ Female ☐

3. Marital status Married/Living with partner ☐ Single ☐

Divorced ☐ Separated ☐ Widowed ☐

If married, fill out box below. If not, go straight to question 4.

Number of years married/living together _____

Work status of partner: Full time ☐ Part time ☐ Not Working ☐

4. Do you have any children? Yes ☐ No ☐

If do have children, fill out the box below, if not go straight to question 5.

Number of children _____ **Number of Dependent Children (living at home)** _____

(if have children at home)
Age youngest child at home _____ **Age eldest child at home** _____

5. Highest level of educational attainment _____

_____

_____

6. How do you describe yourself in terms of the ethnic group that you belong to?
(i.e. European New Zealander, etc)

_____
_____
_____

Section 2: Job Loss and Current Status

This section asks for general information about your job loss (this refers to the job loss that you consider is the most significant job loss you have experienced after the age of 50).

1. Length of time since lost job _____

2. Former job title _____

3. How long did you work there? _____

4. How long did you work in that type of industry? _____

5. Was the industry tight knit? Yes ☐ No ☐ Somewhat ☐

6. Amount of notice (time) given before lost job _____

7. Reason for job loss _____
_____
_____

8. Did you like your job? Yes ☐ No ☐ Somewhat ☐

9. Was the job: Full time ☐ Part time ☐ Other ☐

10. To what degree do you think the job loss caught you unprepared financially?
(Please tick the response you find most appropriate)

☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Not at all	Not very	Somewhat	Fairly	Very

Comments _____
_____
_____

11. Is this the first time you have been made unemployed? Yes ☐ No ☐

If no fill out the box below, otherwise go straight to question 12.

Number of previous times unemployed in lifetime _____

12. Do you currently have full time work? Yes ☐ No ☐

If yes, fill out the box below, otherwise go straight to question 13.

Is the job higher, comparable or a lower level to your last job in terms of:

Money	higher	☐	comparable	☐	lower	☐
Status	higher	☐	comparable	☐	lower	☐

New job title _____

13. Do you currently have part-time work? Yes ☐ No ☐

If yes, fill out the box below, otherwise go straight to question 14.

Was this work acquired after job loss? Yes ☐ No ☐ Partly ☐

Hours per week (on average) doing part-time work _____

SECTION 4: COPING

This section asks you some questions with regard to coping with job loss and coping in general. It does not matter if you are not actively seeking work at present. Just answer the questions in accordance with what your response WOULD be if you WERE in the given situations described.

To what extent does each of the following statements apply to you? For each statement, please indicate whether the statement is: [OPS-JL]

almost never true
seldom true
sometimes true
often true
almost always true

	Almost never true	Seldom true	Sometimes true	Often true	Almost always true	Don't Know
. When I have decided on seeking a job, I avoid anything that could distract me.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
:. When I have set my ambitions for a new job, I imagine how proud I will be when I have got(ten) the new job.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
3. When I cannot find a new job, I don't hesitate asking others for advice.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
4. When I experience difficulties with finding a job, I remind myself that in many ways I am better off than other people.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
5. If I am unable to regain employment in my usual occupation, I focus on the positive sides of other jobs.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
6. When I have a certain vocation in mind, I am willing to work hard at sharpening my skills in order to achieve it.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
7. If I am unable to regain employment in my usual occupation, I try out other jobs.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
8. When I have decided on seeking a certain type of job, I know that I will achieve it.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
9. When I really want a specific job, I am able to work hard to achieve it.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
10. If I can not get a comparable job to the one I lost, I remind myself that prestige is not the most important aspect of work.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

	Almost never true	Seldom true	Sometimes true	Often true	Almost always true	Don't Know
11. When it turns out that I can not get the job I sought in any way, I give up the search.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
12. If I cannot get a job with the same pay as the one I lost, I will apply to other jobs that pay less.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
13. When getting a certain job really matters to me, I invest as much time as I can for the search.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
14. When I do not get the job I wanted, I often tell myself that it wasn't my fault.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
15. I don't waste my time struggling with problems if it uses up energy I need for more important things.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
16. When obstacles get in the way of finding new employment, I try to think of new ways of reaching my goal, even if they are unusual.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
17. If I cannot get a job with the same pay as the one I lost, I tell myself that I can get along with less pay.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
18. I stay active and involved in several different areas of life.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
19. I invest my time in developing broad skills that can be used in many areas.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
20. When I can not get the job I wanted, I console myself by thinking about other areas of life where I have more success.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
21. When I have decided on a seeking a certain job, I always keep in mind its benefits.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
22. If I cannot get a comparable job to the one I lost, I apply for other less prestigious jobs.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
23. When I can not find employment by myself I ask others for help.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
24. When I cannot get a new job in the usual way, I find another way to get what I want.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
25. When getting a certain job is more difficult than expected, I try harder to achieve it.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
26. I avoid becoming too narrow in my interests, so that I can switch to something else if I need to.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

The following questions are concerned firstly with your confidence with regard to certain types of coping, and secondly with your actual preference. This distinction is important. It may be that you would prefer to use one style of coping, but actually have more confidence to use the other.

- **Do you see yourself as a person who is more *confident* with either:**

a) Trying to change the situation/environment around me to suit my needs ☐

Or

b) Trying to change the way I think to suit my circumstances ☐

- **Which method of coping would you *prefer* to use?**

a) Try to change the situation/environment around me to suit my needs ☐

Or

b) Try to change the way I think to suit my circumstances ☐

Comments

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

3. Were there any differences in how you felt able to cope emotionally over the time since job loss to the present day?

Yes ☐ No ☐

If yes, fill out the box, if no go straight to question 4

Please explain the differences as you see them.

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

14. Over the last eight weeks, have you engaged in any volunteer work?

Yes ☐ No ☐

If yes, fill out the box below, otherwise go straight to question 15.

Please describe the kind(s) of volunteer work you did *(i.e. who for, what did).*

_____

_____

_____

_____

Hours per week (on average) doing volunteer work _____

Was this work acquired after job-loss?

Yes ☐ No ☐ Partly (show increase in time spent) ☐ _____

If need to elaborate _____

_____

_____

15. Do you currently study in any capacity? Yes ☐ No ☐

If yes, fill out the box below, otherwise go straight to question 16.

Is the study: Full time ☐ Part time ☐

Number of hours spent in study per week _____

16. Are you actively seeking work? Yes ☐ No ☐

17. How much pressure would you say there is on you to find work:

None ☐ A little ☐ A lot ☐

18. Are there any other activities you have taken up since you lost your job, or activities you have increased since the job loss (i.e. more time in gym, gardening, reading, etc)? Please give details on as many as you can recall, and how much time you spend on them on average each week.

19. Are there any other activities you have ceased since you lost your job, or activities you have decreased since the job loss? Please give details on as many as you can recall, and how much time you have recouped on average each week from desisting them.

20. Is there any skills you have gained or any personal growth you feel you have gained since the job loss? How so?

Section 3: Wellbeing and Life Events

This section asks you some questions about your general wellbeing, and any other significant life events (apart from job loss) that you may have experienced recently. Some of these questions could have the potential to trigger certain feelings or concerns. If you feel you need to talk to anyone about any issues that may arise, please refer to the contacts at the end of this questionnaire.

. **Here is a list of the ways you might have felt or behaved. Please indicate how often you might have felt this way during the *past week*. Please rate your answers in line with the following scale:** **[CES-D]**

Rarely or None of the Time (less than 1 day)
Some or a little of the time (1-2 days)
Occasionally or a moderate amount of the time (3-4 days)
Most or all of the time (5-7days).

	Rarely/ None	Some/ Little	Occasionally/ moderate	Most/ all
I was bothered by things that don't usually don't bother me.	☐	☐	☐	☐
I did not feel like eating: my appetite was poor.	☐	☐	☐	☐
I felt that I could not shake off the blues even with help from my family or friends.	☐	☐	☐	☐
I felt that I was just as good as other people.	☐	☐	☐	☐
I had trouble keeping my mind on what I was doing.	☐	☐	☐	☐
I felt depressed.	☐	☐	☐	☐

	Rarely/ None	Some/ Little	Occasionally/ moderate	Most/ all
I felt that everything I did was an effort.	☐	☐	☐	☐
I felt hopeful about the future.	☐	☐	☐	☐
I thought my life had been a failure.	☐	☐	☐	☐
I felt fearful.	☐	☐	☐	☐
My sleep was restless.	☐	☐	☐	☐
I was happy.	☐	☐	☐	☐
I talked less than usual.	☐	☐	☐	☐
I felt lonely.	☐	☐	☐	☐
People were unfriendly.	☐	☐	☐	☐
I enjoyed life.	☐	☐	☐	☐
I had crying spells.	☐	☐	☐	☐
I felt sad.	☐	☐	☐	☐
I felt that people dislike me.	☐	☐	☐	☐
I could not get "going".	☐	☐	☐	☐

Please answer the following questions by focusing on your feelings over the *past few weeks.* **[ABS]**

	Yes	No
Did you feel particularly excited or interested in anything?	☐	☐
Did you feel so restless that you couldn't sit in a chair for long?	☐	☐
Did you feel proud because someone complimented you on something you had done?	☐	☐
Did you feel pleased about having accomplished something?	☐	☐
Did you feel very lonely or remote from other people?	☐	☐
Did you feel upset because someone criticized you?	☐	☐
Did you feel on top of the world?	☐	☐
Did you feel depressed or very unhappy?	☐	☐
Did you feel that things were going your way?	☐	☐
Did you feel bored?	☐	☐

The following questions ask about your life in general these days. Please indicate how satisfied you are with your current life situation, using the following scale:

Very dissatisfied
Dissatisfied
Neutral
Satisfied
Very satisfied

[LSS]

	Very Dissatisfied	Dissatisfied	Neutral	Satisfied	Very Satisfied	Not Applicable
Your activities – hobbies, etc	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Your spouse or steady companion	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Your family life	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Your friendships	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Your community as a place to live	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Your current job situation	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Your relationship with your children	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Your social life	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Your overall financial situation	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
The house or apartment you live in	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Your standard of living (the things you can do or buy)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Your present state of health	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
What you are accomplishing in life	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
What the future seems to hold for you	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Everything together, your life as a whole these days	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

In the last two years, have there been any major changes in your life other than job loss? If yes, please name the life event(s) that occurred, and whether it/they had no, a small, a moderate or a large impact on you *(record up to three major ones).*

Type of Transition/Life Event _____

_____

Impact level None ☐ Small ☐ Moderate ☐ Large ☐

Was this impact: Positive ☐ Negative ☐ Mixed ☐

Type of Transition/Life Event _____

_____

Impact level None ☐ Small ☐ Moderate ☐ Large ☐

Was this impact: Positive ☐ Negative ☐ Mixed ☐

Type of Transition/Life Event _____

_____

Impact level None ☐ Small ☐ Moderate ☐ Large ☐

Was this impact: Positive ☐ Negative ☐ Mixed ☐

Any additional comments _____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

2. **When you first left your job, what sort of things did you try doing?**

Are you still trying to do these things? Yes ☐ No ☐

If no, fill out the box, if yes go straight to question 5

How have your goals changed?

3. **What do you want to do in the future?**

4. This next set of questions is concerned with the way you express and experience humor. Please indicate for each statement whether you: [CHS]

strongly agree
agree
disagree
strongly disagree

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
I often lose my sense of humour when I'm having problems.	☐	☐	☐	☐
I have often found that my problems have been greatly reduced when I tried to find something funny in them.	☐	☐	☐	☐
I usually look for something comical to say when I am in tense situations.	☐	☐	☐	☐
I must admit my life would probably be easier if I had more of a sense of humour.	☐	☐	☐	☐
I have often felt that if I am in a situation where I have to either cry or laugh, it's better to laugh.	☐	☐	☐	☐
I can usually find something to laugh or joke about even in trying situations.	☐	☐	☐	☐
It has been my experience that humour is often a very effective way of coping with problems.	☐	☐	☐	☐

THANK YOU FOR YOUR

PARTICIPATION

Contact Numbers:

Citizens Advice Bureau: 0800 367 222
Samaritans: 04 473 9739

LIFE PLANNING INTERVIEW

Instructions
(Adapted from Staudinger et al., 1994)

"In this interview I am interested in what you spontaneously think about when you are presented with a certain problem to be solved. In order to find out what goes on in your mind while you are solving the problem, I ask you to think aloud. I want you to say <u>everything</u> that goes through your head, from the moment when you first read the problem, until you are finished. Please speak continuously while you are working on the problem. Also, please do not try to plan or explain what you say, simply imagine that you are sitting alone in a room, talking to yourself. It is very important for me that you <u>speak continuously</u>. For this reason, if you should stop talking for an extended period of time, I will prompt you to continue speaking. Is it clear what I mean by thinking aloud? If you have any questions then we should resolve them now, before you start working on the problem.

Alright. We will start with some warm-up tasks, so that you can get used to the method of thinking aloud. First,

Name 20 animals. I will count the numbers for you.

Feedback: While naming the animals, subjects tend to pause between different animal species, S should be encouraged to describe thoughts while searching for other species.

After 20 animals have been named…

"Now please try to remember the main steps of your train of thought, beginning with when you first read the task until you solved it. I am mainly interested in what you actually <u>remember</u>, rather than what you think you might have thought. If possible, recount what you remember in the same sequence that your thoughts occurred to you when you were working on the problem. Please tell me whenever you feel uncertain about any of your memories. I do not want you to work on the task again, but just tell me your thoughts while you were working on it. And now, please tell me what you can remember."

These instructions are meant to check on the reliability of the subject's verbal reporting. If S relates ideas that obviously must have occurred in the first phase of the problem solving but had not been verbalized, then Int. should remind S that it is very important that all thoughts are verbalized. Int. gives S general feedback concerning the method of thinking aloud, and emphasizes the importance of verbalizing all steps in thinking, even those which normally would never be spoken.

"The last two practice problems are somewhat different since there isn't necessarily a right or wrong answer, nor is there a specific end to the solution. In this respect, they resemble the kind of task that I am concerned with in this study. Please proceed exactly as you did before by telling me <u>everything</u> that comes to mind while you are working on the problem. Continue speaking until you feel that you have nothing more to add."

1. ***Assume that you have unlimited resources. Your task is to plan a menu for a very special dinner party for eight people.***

2. ***Imagine that you have to organize a move to another city. What matters would you have to pay attention to?***

Feedback: The participants are asked to (a) pay attention to all the information in the text (e.g. in what way the dinner should be "special"; who should be invited); (b) consider several possibilities; (c) answer in detail (e.g., description of the preparation, the setting, and the dinner itself); (d) to reflect on their own suggestions (for example, to critically evaluate the suggestions).

Also ask to go over the main steps in their train of thought.

<u>*Main Task*</u>

"Now we are onto the main task, which involves life planning. There are many different occasions which can prompt you to think about and make plans for the future. One may plan for

a day, a week, or a month, but there are also times when one reflects on the direction one should take in the years to come. In this study, when I speak of life planning, I am interested in the latter kind of planning (i.e. the years to come). Life planning implies considering and evaluating various options, as well as considering the possible consequences of these options and weighing one against the another." In the story I am about to give to you, a person is precisely in such a situation where life planning is called for. Please, read the story aloud and then formulate a realistic life plan for this person. It should be clear from the plan what the person should do and consider within the next two to five years.

Once again, please think aloud while you are formulating the plan. Talk about all aspects of the problem, as you see it. Which decisions should be made? Which opportunities are available? What plans must be made?

As you are thinking through the plan, you might find that you need answers to certain questions or that you need additional information. If this is the case, then simply ask me what you would like to know, for example, "I need to know about X", or "I would like to know why this happened or what happened, etc". I can't give you the answers to these questions, but I am interested in finding out what extra information you feel you need in order to work on the problem. So please don't feel discouraged if you don't get an answer. Ask as many or as few questions as you like. So then, I would like you to do two things: first, to formulate a plan in which you describe what the person should do and consider within the next two to five years, and second, indicate what additional information you need to do this."

S is given a card with the typed problem. S's response is recorded on tape for later transcription; S is asked to read the problem text aloud. Interviewer remains silent and only interrupts when S is silent for more than 10 seconds.

Joyce, a 60-year-old widow, recently completed a degree in business management and opened her own business. She has been looking forward to this new challenge. She has just heard that her son had been left with two small children to care for.

Joyce is considering the following options: She can plan to give up her business and live with her son, or she can plan to arrange for financial assistance for her son to cover child-care costs.

What should Joyce do and consider in making her plans? What additional information is needed?

After the problem, when S is finished, Int. says

"Could you, please, repeat the main steps of your train of thought and, if possible, in the same chronological order. Please do not work on the problem again but simply list all the thoughts you can remember".

These general comments usually prompt S to voice more (additional) thoughts:

"Thank you. Now I will ask you several questions about your answers."
"What was the most important additional information that you needed?"
"Why was this the most important information?"
"What advice would you give the main character, and why?"
"How do you picture Joyce's personality, and why?"
"From what perspective did you formulate your plan: from Joyce's perspective, from that of another person, or from your own (meaning you identified with Joyce)?"

(Adapted from Staudinger et al, 1994)

Appendix 7

1. RFK: (Rich Factual Knowledge)	
a) The problem of the main character is clearly defined, not simply by recapitulating the text, but in a larger context (e.g., in relation to life as a whole)	
b) Several themes and alternatives are mentioned, and the problem is viewed from different perspectives, not simply in the form of a list but on the basis of deliberate and constructive thinking.	
c) Events are not just enumerated but discussed on the basis of motives and emotions of the main character and of other persons involved.	
d) The nature of social networks (society, family) and the mortality of man (sickness, death) are discussed.	
e) A variety of themes and observations concerning human nature and the conditions of human existence are discussed: typical events, decisive situations and the satisfaction of basic needs (e.g. self esteem, health, social relationships)	
AVERAGE SCORE:	

2. RPK: (Rich Procedural Knowledge)	
a) The important aspects of a problem are discussed in a manner showing that much thought has been given to the difficulties in life and the problems of making life decisions	
b) Specific questions are asked pertaining to the central themes and it is explained why the answers to these questions are important for solving problems.	
c) Rich knowledge about life questions: choice and decision-making, future goals and options and strategies for attaining these goals;	
d) Alternative options for the main character are offered and one or two plausible scenarios are described in detail	
AVERAGE SCORE:	

3. LSC: (Life Span Contextualism)	
a) Important social relationships of the main character (spouse, family, friends) in relation to age, historical period and individual life situation	
b) Time-dependent developments during the main character's life (past, present, future) as a result of mutually influencing events and relationships.	
c) Socio-historical context of a life problem	
d) Possible tensions and conflicts, especially affecting the lives of others; various priorities and compromises are discussed	
e) Short and long term solutions are discussed by considering the various contexts, relationships and conflicts in terms of the temporal dependence and their change in meaning over a life course.	
f) priorities set are within the different contexts, depending on their importance for long and short term solutions	
AVERAGE SCORE:	

4. VR: (Value Relativism)	
a) Can separate his/her personal values, preference and experiences from their consideration of the problem at hand.	
b) Describes a variety of life goals, solutions and assessments according to the personal structure, values and motives attributed to the main character. One does not have the impression that there is only one solution or one way to approach the problem and that, therefore, any extra information's would be superfluous.	
c) Points out the relatively best out of a variety of possible solutions and assessments, presuming certain values and motives of the people involved.	
d) Recognizes the validity of certain fundamental values mentioned in the problem at hand, regardless of his/her personal point of view	
AVERAGE SCORE:	

5. U: (Uncertainty)	
a) When making plans and decisions one has to take certain risks	
b) Unexpected events might come up and things might turn out differently than one expected. For this reason, decisions should constantly be re-examined with the possibility to reverse them if necessary. When reviewing decisions, one has to take into account that there might be other interpretations. While making decisions or evaluations, one should be aware that not all the necessary information is available.	
c) Regardless of the uncertainties in life, decisions, assessments and plans must be made	
d) When advising others, this inherent uncertainty must be taken into consideration. Therefore, advice, too, should always be re-examined and, if necessary, revised.	
AVERAGE SCORE:	

Notes:

HELLO ☺

Are you aged between 50 and 65?

Have you experienced job loss over the age of 50 or know of anyone who has?

If so

PLEASE HELP

My name is Jo Brown

I am a psychology Ph.D. student at Victoria University, working with a team looking into positive aging. I am seeking individuals who meet the above criteria to take part in a postal questionnaire. Participants who take part have the option of entering a prize draw for $50 cash, which they have a 1 in 20 chance of winning. You also have the option of remaining totally anonymous for your questionnaire responses if you desire.

INTERESTED?

I hear you say "what do you want to know Jo?"

The four main sections of the questionnaire cover the following areas:

- General information (standard demographics).
- Job loss and current status (in terms of work).
- Wellbeing and life events.
- Coping (including how you use humour to cope)

STILL INTERESTED?

Then please contact me. My home number is 04 4762855. If I am not there, please leave a message. If you want to find out more about the survey before deciding whether you would like to take part then leave your name and number and I will call you. If you would like the questionnaire sent out to you, leave your name and address and I will pop a survey in the mail.

Kind regards,
Joanne Brown

GLOSSARY OF ACRONYMS

Acronym	Full name
ABS	Affect Balance Scale
C	coping process predictions
CES-D	Center for Epidemiological Studies Depression Scale
CHS	Coping Humour Scale
CON	constraints
CSGA	Compensatory Secondary Goal Adjustment
CPGA	Compensatory Primary Goal Adjustment
CV	construct validity
DGA	Downward Goal Adjustment
EEO	Equal Employment Opportunities
G	gender differences
GA	goal adjustment
HGA	Horizontal Goal Adjustment
INT	figure 1.4 interlinks
LSS	Life Satisfaction Scale
NZIRA	New Zealand Institute of Research on Ageing
O	opportunities
OPS	Optimization in Primary and Secondary Control
OPS-JL	Optimization in Primary and Secondary Control - Job Loss
SES	Socio-economic Status
SOC	Selective Optimization with Compensation
SWB	Subjective Wellbeing

GLOSSARY OF TERMS

Accept loss OPS-JL coping strategy type, containing primarily compensatory secondary control strategies aimed at aiding individuals to view failure positively.

Activity Balance A measure which has subtracted activities that an individual reports have decreased from those they report have increased.

Age-Graded Developmental term. For example, certain events may be more common in certain age groups.

Age-related gains Tools such as humour, wisdom and generativity that have the potential to evolve with the passing of time.

Compensation Coping strategies invoked so as to minimize the negative impact of loss or failure.

Compensatory Primary Control Primarily physical actions taken to minimize the negative impact of loss or failure.

Compensatory Secondary Control Primarily internal thought processes directed toward the minimization of the impact of loss or failure.

Constraints Factors that work to produce barriers to the ability to age positively or to have an effective impact on the environment.

Construct validity Extent to which operational measures of variables match or encompass the intended theoretical construct.

Controllable event The ability to rectify or sufficiently compensate for a loss.

Defensive pessimism Anticipating negative outcomes so as to not be so disappointed when failure occurs.

Developmental deadlines These deadlines come about as a result of age-graded sequences for developmental tasks that have upper boundaries (i.e. deadlines). Socio-structural, biological and age-normative factors, as well as historical context, determine these deadlines.

Downward goal adjustment Choosing new goals that are less ambitious than previous goals (i.e. downward).

Event balance Measure used in the study which subtracts the impact of negative events from positive events, in order to gain a balanced measure of the impact of other life events in the individual's life.

Expected event An event that was anticipated by the individual or for which they were given advance warning of.

Generativity An adult's concern for and commitment to the well-being of the next generation, as manifest in parenting, teaching, mentoring, and other behaviours and involvements that aim to contribute a positive legacy that will outlive the self.

Goal adjustment The process of altering current goals to new goals.

Goal disengagement OPS-JL coping strategy category. Giving up the pursuit of a goal.

Goal motivation Thoughts aimed at increasing motivation for pursuing goals.

Golden mean An integrated view of wisdom defined as cognitive skill in seeing the broad implications of an issue, and with a sense of caring and respect for the perspectives of others and the self ... A harmonious balance of knowledge, affect and right action.

Horizontal goal adjustment OPS-JL coping strategy category. Used to describe the situation where a goal is changed to another which yields comparable benefits if achieved.

Humour A quality of action, speech, etc., which causes amusement; facetiousness, comicality; (more fully sense of humour) the faculty of perceiving and enjoying what is ludicrous or amusing; a sense of the ludicrous or amusing.

Life satisfaction A measure used in assessing subjective wellbeing. It captures cognitions about one's life, in particular how satisfied they are with different aspects of their life (i.e. family, social standing, etc).

Life transitions Events that occur in an individuals life that mark a significant change in their lives.

Low inference descriptor Verbatim qualitative comments.

Mastery experience Experiences (both negative and positive) that the individual can learn from and that help them master the areas effected by such experiences in their lives (i.e. learn how to better deal with other people through both positive and negative feedback resulting from past interactions).

Mediation An independent variable may be considered a mediator if it carries the influence of another independent variable to the dependent variable.

Mixed events Events/transitions that are perceived by the individual to have both costs and benefits.

Moderation The degree of presence and/or strength of a more enduring background variable (i.e. intelligence, etc) effects the influence of a more recent or transient/unstable variable on the dependent variable. This is identified by the presence of an interaction between the two variables on the dependent variable.

Negative affect Negative perceptions about the self and the world – negative emotions in general.

Negative events Events/transitions identified by individuals as having a negative/unwelcome impact on their lives.

Opportunities Resources available to the individual that are likely to aid them in life should they utilize them.

Optimization The process of practicing chosen goals and evolving new domains of knowledge/ technology.

Positive events Events/transitions identified by individuals as having a positive/welcome impact on their lives.

Positive affect Positive emotions/outlook.

Positive Ageing Broad ranging term – those who age positively could be said to have a number of positive aspects operating in their life (i.e. high levels of wellbeing, good health, good resources, etc) which aid them to progress through life in an optimal manner.

Primary Appraisal Cognitive appraisal of what a current or anticipated event will mean to an individual (i.e. a threat, a challenge, harm or loss, positive or irrelevant).

Primary Control Actions taken by individuals in order to fashion their environments to their needs (assimilation).

Qualitative analysis Information gathered that is not in numerical form (i.e. comments).

Quantitative analysis Information about a phenomenon in numerical form which consists of measurement or frequency values.

Secondary Appraisal Cognitive appraisal of whether an individual will be able to cope with an event and what methods of coping are likely/not likely to work.

Secondary Control Internally-directed attempts to mould the self to the environment (accommodative).

Seeking Support OPS-JL coping category. Consists of compensatory primary control items, where actions are taken so as to get needed advice/help.

Selection Refers to being selective in focus/effort when pursuing goals.

Selective Primary Control Instrumental or action based activities (i.e. invest effort/time) directed toward achieving goals.

Selective Secondary Control Internal or thought based methods (i.e. tell self can achieve a goal) directed toward enhancing motivation to achieve a goal.

Strain Measure used in the current study which combines the variables 'pressure to find work' and 'financial preparation' as a way of ascertaining the amount of difficulty individuals experience as a result of job loss.

Subjective Wellbeing Includes both cognitive and affective evaluations by the individual of how content they are with their life.

Uncontrollable event The inability to rectify or adequately compensate for a loss.

Unexpected event A loss that occurs without forewarning.

Wisdom Dictionary - (possession of) experience and knowledge together with the power of applying them critically or practically. Cognitive definition - expert knowledge involving good judgement and advice about important but uncertain matters of life.

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