ADAPT OR PERISH: HOW LONG-TERM UNEMPLOYMENT IMPACTS VOCATIONAL SOCIALIZATION AND PROFESSIONAL IDENTIFICATION

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ABSTRACT

The present study examined 84 online narratives authored by 11 Suits—college-educated, middle-aged, white men—to examine how involuntary exit and long-term unemployment impacted their vocational socialization and professional identification. Closed-coding found Suits used Jablin's (2001) and Kramer's (2010) five sources of vocational socialization. Differences occurred, however, in source definitions, sub-categories, and prevalence of use. Additionally, Suits reported "recruiters" as a sixth source. Analysis went beyond Jablin's original definition of socialization to include support and encouragement as a form of vocational socialization. Results of thematic analysis showed Suits communicated four forms of professional identification (job seeker, stable, adaptable, and broken), each with seven defining characteristics. Suits communicated multiple forms of professional identification simultaneously, and identifications that shifted throughout their unemployment process. Practical implications for unemployed Suits and the professionals who serve them are discussed.

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CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION

Unemployment in America continues to be a vital issue and concern for our country. In 2008, unemployment rose from 5 to 7.3%; by October of 2009, 10% of workers were unemployed—the highest since the recession of the early 1980s (BLS, 2012b; Urquhart & Hewson, 1983). Today, unemployment is at 7.8%, leaving almost 13 million Americans out of work (BLS, 2012a). America has experienced recessions in the past, but this time there were two uncommon phenomena. First, the recent recession had a profound impact on the long length of unemployment; the average length of unemployment has doubled and many remain jobless for more than a year (BLS, 2011b). Second, for the first time since the Great Depression, college-educated, middle-aged, white men—referred to as “the Suits” by popular media—were being hit hard by the crisis and were losing jobs fast (Marin, 2011, para. 5).

The question guiding this study was how involuntary exit and long-term unemployment impact Suits’ vocational socialization and professional identification? To answer this question, the study used closed coding and thematic analysis to examine online narratives authored by Suits who were experiencing long-term unemployment after an involuntary exit. Professional identification is defined as “the set of attributes, beliefs, values, and experiences that individuals use to define themselves as members of a professional group” (Russo, Mattarelli, & Tagliaventi, 2008, p. 1). More simply put, professional identification produces a feeling of oneness with a profession. For example, in highly unique or skilled professions like journalism, individuals feel more connected to the professional group than their organization as a whole. Professional identification produces beneficial outcomes for individuals and organizations. For individuals, professional identification produces feelings of inspiration, energy and strength in the workplace; it also helps workers better manage challenges and frustrations in their everyday routines (Russo,

1998). Professional identification has also been found to unify workers, which benefits the organization by getting objectives and goals accomplished in a speedy and congruent manner (Russo, 1998). Antecedents of professional identification include positive perceptions of the professional group (Bamber & Iyer, 2002; Brooks, Riemenschneider, Hardgrave & O'leary-Kelly, 2011), on the job sense making (Pratt, Rockmann, & Kaufmann, 2006) and task autonomy (Bamber & Iyer, 2002; Russo, 1998). Socialization is also studied as complex process that impacts identification (Ashforth & Saks, 1996; Pratt, Rockmann, & Kaufmann, 2006; Yi & Feng Uen, 2006). Vocational socialization is a process that contributes to the product of an individual's professional identification. Vocational socialization begins in childhood and is the process of limiting choices of, or choosing, an occupation (Jablin, 1982). Vocational socialization is impacted by family, educational institutions, previous organizational experience, peers and friends, and the media (Jablin, 2001; Kramer, 2010). Although the constructs of socialization and identification have been largely studied independently, this study examined the mutually informing relationship between vocational socialization and professional identification; specifically the how they are impacted as Suits experienced long-term unemployment after an involuntary exit.

Unemployment

Unemployment in America continues to be a vital issue and concern for our country. The Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) (2012c) defines someone as unemployed if, "they do not have a job, have actively looked for work in the prior four weeks, and are currently available for work" (para. 1). In the most current report from the BLS (2012a), unemployment for the month of Sept. 2012 was at 7.8%, leaving more than 12.8 million workers unemployed. Although this percentage shows a decrease from the average unemployment in 2010 (9.8%) and 2011 (9.0%),

it continues to remain near rates last seen in the severe recession of the early 1980s (BLS, 2012a,b; Urquhart & Hewson, 1983). Labeled an "unprecedented problem" by the BLC (2011a), high unemployment rates and a slow-to-recover labor market had a profound effect on the length of unemployment. According to the BLS (2011b), from 1994 to 2008, 50% of unemployed workers found a new job within 5 weeks; in 2007, less than 3% of unemployed workers remained jobless for more than 52 weeks. By 2010, only 34% of workers found a job in less than 5 weeks and 11% of unemployed workers remained jobless for more than a year (BLS, 2011b). Overall, the "median number of weeks unemployed doubled—from 5 to 10 weeks—and a far greater share of successful jobseekers spent in excess of a year in their search for employment" (BLS, 2011b, para. 8). To adjust to and capture this change, the BLS modified their Current Population Survey in 2011 to allow participants to report durations of unemployment up to five years; their previous survey only allowed a maximum duration of two years unemployed (BLS, 2011a).

Unemployment produces a variety of negative effects on individuals and organizations. In individuals, unemployment is shown to increase mental illness (Paul & Moser, 2009; Price, Choic, & Vinokur, 2002), physical illness (Gallo, Bradley, Siegel, & Kasl, 2000; Linn, Sandifer, & Stein, 1985), the likelihood for alcohol abuse (Catalano, Dooley, Wilson, & Hourgh, 1993; Dooley, Catalano, & Hough, 1992), and marital/relationship dissatisfaction (Hansen, 2005; Kraft, 2001; Vinokur, Price, & Caplan, 1996). The termination of an individual and the resulting unemployment also produces negative effects for organizations. When an individual is terminated from an organization, it is a stressful event for those who remain: "Those remaining usually experience uncertainty as a consequence of the changes in their work environments" (Jablin, 2001, p. 791). An individual's exit also provides those who remain with a "window in

time to publicly vent their frustration about their jobs, work groups and organizations" along with "an opportunity to discuss numerous topics that are usually taboo to openly talk about, such as problems with the firm's produce or services, management's lack of understanding of what is 'really' going on in the organization, examples of bad decision making by the boss, fairness and equity in salaries and so forth" (Jablin, 2001, p. 791).

The Suits

In past recessions, one group has remained fairly unharmed—middle-aged, college-educated, white men. Anecdotally referred to as "the Suits" by popular media, this demographic is "doing worse than they have at any time since the Great Depression" (Marin, 2011, para. 5). According to the Fiscal Policy Institute, men ages 34-54 in New York City have lost jobs faster than any other group, including teenage girls (Marin, 2011). In the first quarter of 2011, 600,000 college-educated, white men were unemployed, more than double the amount who became unemployed in the recession of the 1980s (Marin, 2011). Many variables are being blamed for this historic change and unusual hit to this population. One reason may be due to the enhancement and increase in technology. New software programs are cheaper, more efficient and produce less error than the human counterpart—slowing job growth in management, technology, and media businesses (Marin, 2011). Technology advocates argue that their products create jobs, but Foroohar (2011) points out that "those jobs tend to be skewed toward the very top (software engineer) or the bottom (sales clerk). The jobs in the middle have disappeared" (para. 13). Suits are also losing their jobs because organizations need to cut the elite ranks, or the high earning employees, to get expenses under control in the current recession (Fitzpatrick & Cimilluca, 2012). Finally, men are employed in industries that are sensitive to economic ups and downs, leading to organization/corporate downsizing; thus, more job turnover for the Suits (Rampell,

2009). But job loss isn't the only detriment to this demographic. Once out of a job, new jobs are hard to come by.

Job loss for Suits is a major problem, but the crisis is the length they remain unemployed. Long-term unemployment—looking for work for 27 weeks or longer—is the tragic reality for 5.2 million Americans, or 40%.7 of the total unemployed (BLS, 2012a). The longer an individual is unemployed, the less attractive he or she is to potential employers and chances for re-employment sharply deteriorates (Baker & Hassett, 2012). According to Christine Owens, executive director of the National Employment Law Project, "excluding the unemployed is becoming business as usual" (Cohen, 2011, para. 5). One reason is because employers believe that long durations of unemployment will weaken the employee's skills, giving employers the right to discriminate against those individuals (Cohen, 2011; Matthews, 2012). Long-term unemployment is most often experienced by Suits over the age of 45 (Marin, 2011). Employers believe these "older" workers have developed unique skills that aren't easily transferable to new positions (Gallo, Bradley, Siegel, & Kasl, 2000, p. 131). Organizations also find these workers to be less flexible and less technologically savvy (Casselman, 2012). Finally, suits in their fifties are seen as a risk to firms, who are trying to avoid the recent surge of age discrimination complaints in America. As age discrimination complaints continue to rise, firms shy away from hiring members within this "contentious group" (Marin, 2011). Organizations aren't the only ones to blame; the Suits can also be at fault for the long length of unemployment. Older workers are more reluctant to change industries, relocate, or accept entry level positions (Casselman, 2012).

Vocational Socialization and Professional Identification

The constructs of socialization and identification have been largely studied independently—socialization as a process and identification as a product. This study examined how involuntary exit influences their mutually informing relationship; specifically the relationship between vocational socialization and professional identification. The four stages of socialization are described as a "life-span developmental process," that begins in childhood (Jablin, 2001, p. 733). The four stages include anticipatory (vocational and organizational), encounter, metamorphosis, and exit (voluntary and involuntary); products of identification can be connected to stages throughout this process. The first stage of socialization is anticipatory, and involves two interrelated phases: vocational socialization and organizational socialization (Jablin, 1982). As stated previously, vocational socialization begins in early childhood and is the process of choosing, or limiting choices of a career. This is the first connection between socialization and identification. Vocational socialization is a process that leads to an individual's professional identification. This study, therefore, examined how involuntary exit from an organization leads to a new vocational anticipatory socialization stage for Suits. Because vocational socialization is a process that impacts an individual's professional identification, the study also sought to understand how involuntary exit and the new anticipatory stage of socialization will effect professional identification.

The second stage of socialization is the encounter stage. During this process, an individual actually enters an organization and expectations are met or not met (Jablin, 1982). This stage is greatly impacted by the expectations formed during the anticipatory stage. Metamorphosis is the third stage. Jablin (1982) considered this the "change and acquisition" stage where an individual learns appropriate attitudes and behaviors, adjusts or changes to reflect

the norms of the organization, and finally, internalizes the norms, values and practices of the organization. The metamorphosis stage is another point of connection between socialization and identification. It is within this stage where organizational identification—a feeling of oneness with the organization—is shaped and produced.

Finally, exit is the fourth and final stage of socialization. There are two types of organizational exit: voluntary (an individual initiates the decision to leave) and involuntary (when someone else forces an individual to leave) (Kramer, 2010). Involuntary exit is the type of exit that will be focused on within this study; all of the texts analyzed in this study were written by Suits who experienced an involuntary exit from their organization. Although not a focus of the present study, this stage of socialization presents a connection to organizational disidentification, defined as "feelings of disconnection, separateness, and exclusion from the organization" (DiSanza & Bullis, 1999, p. 367).

Socialization and identification are two mutually informing constructs within the study of organizational communication. Connections between the two concepts can be identified throughout the four stages of socialization. Particularly, the connection can be found between vocational socialization and professional identification, metamorphosis and organizational identification, and exit and disidentification. To fully understand the experiences of workers after an involuntary exit, this study focused on the connections between vocational socialization and professional identification.

Rationale

Given the historic impact of long-term unemployment on Suits, a greater understanding of their experience and ways in which it influences vocational socialization and their perceptions of professional identification have theoretical and practical applications. On a theoretical level,

this study considered the mutually informing relationship of socialization and identification; particularly the connection between vocational socialization and professional identification. This connection has been missed by scholars who largely study these constructs independently. However, some scholars (Hinkeraker & O'Connor, 2011) have noted the challenge of bifurcating these two concepts. Secondly, this study filled a void in the vocational socialization literature and strengthened a weakness in the original theory. Vocational socialization is largely studied as a process that begins in childhood and is primarily impacted by parents; scholars have ignored to examine how vocational socialization is experienced by adults who have reentered this process. This study examined vocational socialization during adulthood, focusing specifically on Suits who are re-entering the process. By including encouragement and support as a form of vocational socialization, the analysis within this study went beyond Jablin's (2001) original definition of socialization and strengthened the original theory. Third, this study added to current literature by examining Suits—a population not researched in academic literature. Finally, this study added to the literature on involuntary exit which remains to be difficult to fill due to methodological challenges of finding participants. The blogs analyzed in this study are authored by Suits who have recently experienced involuntary exit and provided text free of researcher intrusion, thus making it less likely to be contrived by a particular research agenda.

On a practical level, this study provides information for the 600,000 Suits who are unemployed in America (Marin, 2011), along with organizations and the professionals who serve them. Unemployed Suits will learn about the sources of vocational socialization most used, which are being neglected, and how this impacts their vocational socialization process. Unemployed Suits will also be able to better understand the impact job loss may have on their professional identification and how it affects their unemployment experience. Organizations and

the professionals who serve unemployed Suits will also gain practical information from this study. Similarly to unemployed Suits, professionals will gain knowledge on the sources Suits use during a new phase of vocational socialization. This will help them point unemployed Suits toward sources which may be forgotten or bypassed during a job search. Professionals who work one-on-one with unemployed Suits, like a career counselor or coach, will also be able to help them acknowledge and understand how their professional identification has changed since their job loss. Thus, helping unemployed Suits avoid or reduce the negative effects of unemployment.

Conclusion

America's unemployment crisis has left millions of workers jobless. Suits—middle-aged, college-educated, white men—are not only losing their jobs, they are experiencing unprecedented long lengths of unemployment. To fully understand the experiences of Suits after an involuntary exit, it is helpful to acknowledge the mutually informing relationship between socialization and identification; particularly the connections between vocational socialization and professional identification. This study, therefore, picks up this challenge and offers a platform for a broader discussion of these mutually informing concepts. Examining Suits' perceptions provides insight for other unemployed Suits and the professionals and organizations who serve them.

This chapter offered an introduction to America's unemployment crisis, its impact on Suits, and its connection to vocational socialization and professional identification. Finally, the chapter provided theoretical and practical reasons for studying unemployment's impact on Suits' vocational socialization and professional identification after an involuntary exit. The next chapter presents relevant literature related to the theoretical frameworks of vocational socialization and professional identification and introduces this study's two research questions.

CHAPTER 2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

America's unemployment crisis has left millions of workers jobless. This study examined how involuntary exit and long-term unemployment impacted college-educated, middle-aged, white males—the Suits; more specifically, the way in which it influenced the mutually informing constructs of vocational socialization and professional identification. This chapter presents a review of literature relevant to this study. First, an overview of the four stages of socialization is provided. Although all four stages will be briefly discussed, involuntary exit and vocational socialization are two focus areas within this study and will be explained in greater depth and detail. Professional identification is then reviewed and connected to the vocational socialization literature.

Phase Model of Socialization

Socialization is one part of a larger process called assimilation. Briefly, assimilation refers to the process by "which organizational members become a part of, or are absorbed into, the culture of an organization" (Jablin, 1982, p. 256). Assimilation is made up of two components: socialization and individualization. Individualization is an individual's attempt to influence the organization to meet his or her own needs. Socialization is commonly referred to as a process of *learning the ropes*, but was initially defined as "the organization's attempts at 'socializing' the new employee to acceptable organizational behaviors and attitudes" (Jablin, 1982, p. 256). The four stages of socialization are described as "a life-span developmental process," beginning in childhood (Jablin, 2001, p. 733); the four phases include: anticipatory (vocational and organizational), encounter, metamorphosis, and exit (voluntary and involuntary). Although all of the stages will be reviewed briefly, more space will be devoted to the phase of involuntary exit and the phase of vocational socialization which are two foci within this study.

The first stage of socialization is the anticipatory stage and refers to the time period before an individual enters an organization. The anticipatory process involves two interrelated phases: vocational socialization and organizational socialization (Jablin, 1982). Vocational socialization is the process of choosing, or limiting choices of, a career based on external influences, internal self-concepts, evaluation of personal efficacy, and discriminating alternatives (Jablin, 1982). The five main sources of influence on an individual's vocational socialization process are family, educational systems, peers, previous work experience, and the media (Jablin, 2001; Kramer, 2010). Vocational socialization is a process that contributes to the product of an individual's professional identification. The second phase of anticipatory socialization is organizational socialization. During this phase, individuals form expectations of the job/work environment within a specific organization prior to entry (Jablin, 1982). Information acquired during this phase usually comes from two sources: "organization literature (e.g. job advertisements, annual reports, training brochures, job preview booklets), [and] interpersonal interactions with other applicants, organizational interviewers, teachers, current employees, and other direct and indirect social network ties" (Jablin, 2001, p. 743). Thus, individuals experience the interrelated phases of the anticipatory socialization stage through *selecting a role* to perform in some organization (vocational socialization) followed by *selecting an organization* to perform that role (organizational socialization) (Kramer, 2010).

Research on the anticipatory stage of socialization has focused on: identifying communication activities and processes that occur prior to organizational entrance or vocational choice, who are involved in those activities, when they occur, and how expectations formed from those processes impact the later stages of socialization. One of Jablin's (1984) foundational pieces researched nursing home assistants and the anticipatory (organizational), encounter and

metamorphosis stages of socialization. Jablin found that communication climates of previous work environments were influential on expectations formed during the anticipatory stage of socialization. Results revealed that exaggerated or overly high expectations for the new organization's communication climate led to higher levels of organizational exit. Gibson and Papa (2000) looked at the anticipatory socialization process of blue collar workers at "Industry International." They found that socialization for these workers was a sort of "indoctrination at the dinner table" that began in early childhood, was influenced most by family, and led to less traumatic and time-consuming encounter and metamorphosis stages (Gibson & Papa, 2000, p. 79). Research, however, has failed to look at vocational anticipatory socialization that happens in later stages of life and how this process and experience may differ for adults.

The second stage of socialization is the encounter stage. In this stage the individual actually enters the organization, expectations are met or not met, and reality shock begins (Jablin, 1982). This stage, and the level of reality shock, can be greatly impacted by the anticipatory stage. On one hand, "If the recruit's expectations resulting from anticipatory socialization are accurate with the reality of organizational life, the encounter stage is one of reaffirmation and reinforcement of existing beliefs and behaviors" (Jablin, 1984, p. 596). On the other hand, if an individual forms overly high or unrealistic expectations during the anticipatory stage, the encounter stage will be traumatic and lead to either a detachment from the organization or a time consuming process to readjust.

Research on the encounter stage of socialization focuses on the initial experiences as newcomers enter an organization; whether or not expectations were met, how sense-making was used to help normalize the new environment, and impact on the socialization process. Flanagin and Waldeck (2004) researched the stages of socialization, looking specifically at whether they

have changed in light of advances in communication and information technology used by organizations. They found that stages, like the encounter stage, are still consistent with traditional structure and form but the duration may decrease due to “fluid communication networks and highly efficient information sharing” used during sense-making in the encounter stage (Flanagin & Waldeck, 2004, p. 157). Kramer (2011) studied the assimilation process of volunteer members of a community choir. Encounter began at the first activity/rehearsal of the members. Some expectations, like the chance to meet new people and the opportunity to sing and perform, were met. Other experiences weren’t expected and produced negative feelings from the newcomers; for example, many newcomers didn’t expect the songs to be so difficult or the financial commitment to be as costly. Through communication with members and the director, the newcomers’ negative feelings and uncertainties were reduced and they continued through the socialization process.

The third stage of socialization is organizational metamorphosis. Jablin (1982) considered metamorphosis the “change and acquisition” stage (p. 268). In this stage an outsider becomes an insider by learning appropriate attitudes and behaviors, adjusting or changing to reflect the norms of the organization, and finally, internalizing the norms, values and practices of the organization. It is within the metamorphosis stage where scholars make a connection to organizational identification. Identification has been described as a sense of oneness with the organization (Cheney & Tompkins, 1987; Gossett, 2002). This closely aligns with the metamorphosis stage of socialization. Similarly, the metamorphosis stage of socialization—where an individual internalizes norms, values and practices—is the process where the behavioral outcome of organizational identification is shaped and produced.

Studies that examine the metamorphosis stage focus primarily on sources newcomers use to learn appropriate organizational behavior and signs that signal newcomers have become insiders. Bernardi (2006) researched the socialization process of newcomers entering graduate school. The new graduate school students used information seeking and peer relationships of more experienced members to learn the norms of graduate school culture. Signs that the graduate students had reached the metamorphosis stage were signaled by the use of new language and by stepping out of the newcomer role by helping new graduate students find their way. Hinderaker (2009) researched the ways young men experience assimilation into the missionary system of the Church of Latter-day Saints. A sign that signaled metamorphose was the men's ability to use personal language that expressed an internalization of church teachings and scripture. Hinderaker, like Gibson and Papa (2002), discussed that getting to the metamorphosis stage can be seemingly effortless when individuals experience high levels of anticipatory socialization.

The fourth stage of socialization is organizational exit. Organizational exit is defined by Kramer (2010) as, "an inevitable conclusion of the assimilation process as individuals leave the organizations they join as some point" (p. 186). There are two types of organizational exit: voluntary exit (when an individual makes the decision to leave) and involuntary exit (when an individual is forced to leave). Lee, Mitchell, Wise and Fireman (1996) suggested four paths to voluntary exit: planned exit, shock resulting in quitting, shock resulting in a job search before quitting, and gradual disenchantment. Kramer (2010) added three additional paths: recruited by other jobs, voluntary career changes, and retirement. *Planned exits* are planned ahead of time, are not work related (i.e. pregnancy, graduation, etc.), and are usually communicated about openly and celebrated with farewell parties. *Shock resulting in quitting* "involves some sort of shock that is serious enough to cause the individual to quit immediately" (Kramer, 2010, p. 172).

Communication in this path is limited. *Shock resulting in a job search before quitting* occurs when job opportunities are too scarce to quit before finding new employment or the shock is not severe enough to result in immediate departure. Communication during this path is usually secretive and limited during the job search, but will become open once the exit is announced. *Gradual disenchantment* does not have a specific motivating factor, but rather "individuals become dissatisfied over time" (Kramer, 2010, p. 174). *Recruited for other jobs* is a type of voluntary exit where employees leave after a different organization approaches them with a more desirable position. *Career changes* occur when individuals leave to pursue an entirely different career choice. Finally, *retirement* is a form of voluntary exit where an individual leaves both the career and the organization. Communication usually increases for individuals prior to voluntary retirement; this is due to an increased need to plan retirement decisions with family members and to increase nonwork networks that will be more actively involved in his/her life as a retiree (Kramer, 2010).

Voluntary exit involves three phases: 1) preannouncement, 2) announcement and actual exit, and 3) post exit (Jablin, 2001). The *preannouncement* phase involves cues or signals used to communicate dissatisfaction or disidentification. Depending on the reason for exit, cues may be active and intentional, or passive and unintentional; they may be communicated internally to coworkers and supervisors, or externally to customers or organizational outsiders (Jablin, 2001; Kramer, 2010). The second phase of voluntary exit, *announcement of exit and actual exit*, focuses on the public aspects of the exit: the announcement of the exit and "numerous rites and rituals, such as office parties, gift giving, and speeches" (Jablin, 2001, p. 789). The third phase of voluntary exit is the *postexit* phase. This phase is usually a stressful event for "both the person exiting the organization and those remaining ... [because they] experience uncertainty as a

consequence of the changes in their work environments" (Jablin, 2001, p. 791). Kramer (2010) noted that "the presence and duration of these phases likely differs" relative to the reason for exit (p. 179). Voluntary exit, then, can occur for a variety of reasons and involves three primary phases. Similarly, involuntary exit occurs for a variety of reasons and involves three primary communication activities that occur prior to an individual being forced to leave.

Involuntary Exit

One focus area within this study is the second type of exit—involuntary exit. As stated before, there are two phases within the exit stage of socialization: voluntary and involuntary exit. Kramer (2010) defines involuntary exit as an exit that occurs "when someone else initiates the process of forcing individuals to leave so that they have little or no choice" (p. 172). Reasons for involuntary exit include organizational changes such as reductions-in-force and mergers and acquisitions. Other reasons for involuntary exit are based on an employer's "gradual disenchantment with the employee's performance" due to "illegal activities such as stealing, drug or alcohol abuse, or blatant sexual harassment, as well as gross insubordination ... [or] excessive lateness or absence" (Kramer, 2010, p. 180).

While involuntary exit from organizations are common, most studies and models on the exit phase of socialization focus on voluntary exit (Klatzke, 2008). Jablin (2001) stated that the limited amount of research on involuntary exit is "curious" and called for future research on the topic. Limited research can be attributed to methodological issues concerning the challenge of finding research participants willing to discuss their involuntary exit experiences. In 2010, Kramer (2010) heeded Jablin's call and examined communication activity—progressive discipline—that occur prior to termination. Progressive discipline is a process where "a series of steps are taken to hopefully retain the employee and dismissal occurs only when those steps fail"

(Kramer, 2010, p. 180). Kramer presented the communication activities within three progressive disciplines: problem-solving breakpoint, elimination breakpoint, and termination meeting. In the *problem-solving breakpoint*, supervisors have an "optimistic belief" that things will improve by using "more formal communication to explicitly address performance problems ... making expectations clearer and providing training" (Kramer, 2010, p. 181). *Elimination breakpoint* occurs when "efforts surround the problem-solving breakpoint fail to create acceptable employee performance" (Kramer, 2010, p. 181). The manager accepts that things aren't going to improve and gathers documentation to move forward with termination. The *termination meeting* is used to ask the employee about his or her performance, provide documentation/evidence of the problem, and communicate the termination.

Jablin (2001) recognized the limited research on involuntary exit and challenged researchers to fill this gap. Kramer (2010) conducted research on the forms of involuntary exit and communication practices prior to termination. No research, however, has focused on the aftermath of involuntary exit, especially for older workers experiencing long-term unemployment. This study, therefore, explored Suits' experiences with long-term unemployment after an involuntary exit and how it impacted vocational socialization and professional identification.

Vocational Socialization

Involuntary exit, or any exit, often signals the beginning of a new socialization process. As stated earlier, the anticipatory stage is the first of four stages within the socialization process and has two interrelated phases: vocational socialization and organizational socialization (Jablin, 1982). Vocational socialization was the second focus within this study. Vocational socialization involves the process an individual goes through as he or she selects an occupation/career.

Vocational socialization is said to be a life-long process that begins early in childhood (Jablin & Krone, 1987). During the process, individuals limit choices, and then choose an occupation, in "an attempt to enact desired self-concepts" and consistent with how she/he pictures herself/himself (Jablin, 1982, p. 262). Jablin also believed that it is within this phase where "people learn the initial (and often dysfunctional) communication styles they will use in the work world" (Jablin, 1982, p. 262). But this process isn't something an individual is in total control of; many other sources influence the vocational socialization process, including family, educational institutions, previous organizational experience, peers and friends, and the media (Jablin, 2001; Kramer, 2010).

One of the most important sources of influence during the vocational socialization process is family, specifically parents (Jablin, 2001). Parents are the first source of vocational information. Parents have the power to teach their child what work *means*. This is two-fold. Parents teach children a lot about work that is done in the home; whether it is valued or devalued, expected or performed for a reward/benefit, or governed by gender roles. Parents also influence children's perspective of work outside the home. Dinner-time or after-dinner conversations between parents (with children frequently listening) focuses on "the general day's events at work; company news; and relationships with supervisors, customers, and coworkers" (Jablin, 2001, p. 736). Parents are also a major source of influence on occupational choice by "encouraging or even pressuring children to pursue certain roles, either by following in the parents' footsteps to similar careers or pursuing some higher-status job" (Kramer, 2010, p. 28). Finally, parents can teach children attitudes, skills, and behaviors that are expected for certain vocational choices. Gibson & Papa (2000) studied blue-collar workers found that familial influence was a major source of information, concerning the knowledge that industry work

demands a “tough breed of workers” who can withhold the physically demanding, hard work, long hours and tedious tasks that would be expected (p. 74). Research has failed, however, to examine how influential family is on adults experiencing a new phase of vocational socialization, or how influential parents are on their adult children.

The educational system is another influential source of vocational socialization. Classroom activities teach children about various careers and communication styles typical in those occupations (Kramer, 2010). Many classes assign students with research projects designed to get students information about their vocational choices. Larger schools offer classes that provide students the opportunity to explore and practice different vocational skills; further more, schools coordinate internships so students can get real world experience in different occupations (Kramer, 2010). Research has not explored how or if educational systems influence adults experiencing the vocational socialization process.

Peers are a third source of influence on the process of vocational socialization. Peer influence is similar to influence from family; throughout this stage, peers will confirm or disconfirm career choices (Kramer, 2010). Peer interactions during adolescence are important in the vocational socialization process. These interactions may influence co-worker interactions and how to handle conflict in their future vocation. Peer influence is one source that has been connected to vocational socialization later in life. Kramer (2010) theorized that “peers [would] continue to influence occupational choices later in life as they confirm or disconfirm previous choices or future career choices” (p. 32). Kramer also cited an unpublished dissertation by Tan (2008) who found that peers are the most consulted source of vocational socialization for adults.

Previously labeled *part-time employment* (Jablin, 2001), Kramer (2010) refers to the fourth information source as *previous organizational experience* because the prior term “fails to

recognize that individuals change careers frequently throughout their lives, that individuals may move back and forth between part-time and full-time employment, that individuals join organizations as volunteers, and that volunteer experiences may influence employment decisions" (p. 32). Previous organizational experience influences the vocational socialization process by impacting relationship skills, communication skills, and professional skills (Kramer, 2010). Although Kramer recognized that part-time employment ignored individuals who change their careers later in life, thus changing the name to incorporate previous organizational experience, no research has been conducted on this divergence from Jablin's original theory.

Finally, media is the fifth source of influence on an individual's process of vocational socialization. Jablin (2001) focused media influence on the medium of television. Because exposure to television is extremely high in America—for kids, youth, and adults, alike—scholars have studied television programs and have reported representations of sex-role-stereotyped occupations, over-representation of managerial and professional occupations and under-representation of jobs of lesser prestige, unrealistic amounts of glamorous activities, and overly negative portrayals of business communication in general (Jablin, 2001; Kramer, 2010). Kramer (2010) stated that these representations impact young people's career aspirations and decisions. Hylmö (2006) examined films released between 2000 and 2004 and found that films targeting teenage girls downplayed the importance of careers. Instead, films suggested girls should "look toward their fathers and boyfriend for protections, guidance, and financial support" (p. 167). Again, adolescents are the focus of this research; research largely ignores the impact media has on adults experiencing the vocational socialization process. Due to when most of the research was published, it also neglects to examine the impact of online media.

When individuals exit from an organization, they begin a new anticipatory socialization process impacting both vocational and organizational phases. Vocational socialization is largely studied as a process that begins in early childhood, continues through young adulthood, and is impacted primarily by parents. Research left a gap in the literature by ignoring the differences that may occur for people who experience vocational socialization later in life. Not only may the amount of impact or influence of sources differ, sources as a whole may change. This study, therefore, focused specifically on vocational socialization experienced by older workers—the Suits. Moreover, because vocational socialization is influenced by five sources—family, educational institutions, previous organizational experience, peers and friends, and the media (Jablin, 2001; Kramer, 2010)—the following research question was examined:

RQ1: What sources of vocational socialization do Suits identify after an involuntary exit?

Professional Identification

Research on professional identification has been largely "overshadowed" by the immense interest in organizational identification as a whole, but this may begin to change "in light of the frequency with which modern workers switch to different organizations, [and] the relevance of one's professional ideologies rather than one's organizational affiliation" (Russo, Mattarelli, & Tagliaventi, 2008, p. 1). Whereas organizational identification is broadly defined as a feeling of oneness with the organization, professional identification (also known as occupational or career identification) is an individual's feeling of oneness with a profession. More specifically, professional identification is defined as "the set of attributes, beliefs, values, and experiences that individuals use to define themselves as members of a professional group" (Russo et al., 2008, p. 1).

Antecedents. Scholars have found many antecedents of professional identification, specifically in relation to the perceived image of the professional group, on the job sensemaking, and exposure to sources vocational socialization. Because some occupations require unique knowledge and skill sets, high levels of prestige are produced and serve as "major identity badges," leading individuals to identify themselves in terms of their occupation instead of their organization (Ashforth, Harrison, & Corley, 2008, p. 351; Pratt, Rockmann, & Kaufamann, 2006). Brooks, Riemenschneider, Hardgrave & O'leary-Kelly (2011) studied the professional identification of IT professionals and found one's own positive perception of the profession and a perceived public positive perception of the profession to be two antecedents of professional identification. Bamber and Iyer (2002) studied the professional identification of auditors and also found the image of the profession to be a significant antecedent. One's own and the public's positive perception of the profession is only the first antecedent of professional identification; the second antecedent has to do with individual's on-the-job sensemaking.

Pratt and colleagues (2006) looked at how physicians constructed and made sense of their professional identity during residency training. Their findings revealed that construction was triggered when the physicians "experienced a mismatch between what physicians did and who they were" (Pratt et al., 2006, p. 235); these mismatches led physicians to *splint, patch, or enrich*. According to Pratt and colleagues, the identity customization process of splinting refers to when residents' sense of self "lacked sufficient explanatory power to make sense of the work they were doing" and "the residents temporarily used the prior student identity as a splint" (p. 248). Like a real splint, once the identity become strong enough to overcome the current mismatch, the splint was no longer needed. Patching refers to when "residents drew upon one identity to permanently patch up 'holes' or deficiencies in their understandings of who they

were" (Pratt et al., 2006, p. 247). When minor mismatches occurred, residents continued to construct their professional identity with identity enriching—a "growing recognition regarding the scope of responsibility toward patients" (Pratt et al., 2006, p. 246).

Finally, an individual's exposure to sources of vocational socialization is a factor in his or her level of professional identification. As stated earlier, there are five main sources that influence the vocational socialization process: family, educational institutions, previous organizational experience, peers and friends, and the media (Jablin, 2001; Kramer, 2010). In Russo's (1998) study on the professional identification of journalists, extensive vocational socialization of all five sources "established early expectations about what their roles and their work lives would be like and ... continued to serve as a powerful frame of reference" (p. 96). Many journalists reported, as Jablin (1982) suggests, that the vocational socialization process began in childhood and led to their levels of identification with their profession. Many reported the influence family had on their decision; one stated that her grandfather's and father's love of the news guided her decision. Education was also influential; many studied journalism in college where programs emphasized the principles and history of American journalism. Peers and previous work experience overlapped for many journalists because many of them had trained and worked together in the past. Finally, the media was also reported as an influential source of vocational socialization leading to professional identification. One journalist said, "'As I grew up with this news, it just infiltrated my life. From the Kennedys and Vietnam and the wars ... it never occurred to me to think about anything else'" (Russo, 1998, p. 93).

Outcomes. There are many benefits for individuals who identify with their profession. Russo (1998) studied journalists and found that professional identification produces feelings of inspiration, energy and strength in the workplace; it also helps workers better manage challenges

and frustrations in their everyday routines. Russo also found that professional identification produces commitment and attachment to the interrelated groups connected to the profession—journalists reported "interwoven attachments to subordinates, coworkers, and readers" (p. 90). Lastly, professional identification is beneficial for individuals because it provides them with a sense of self—consistent with the social identity theory. Tajfel and Turner (1979) developed the social identity theory where they revealed that a substantial part of our self-concept comes from memberships with groups—our in-groups—and is maintained by distinguishing ourselves positively from an out-group.

Individuals with high levels of professional identification consider their profession to be a major part, if not their main source, of identity; when an individual is forced to go against this identity, research has found negative consequences. Russo and colleagues (2008) found that levels of professional identification continue to increase and become an enduring reference for individuals. As a consequence, workers are sensitive to changes or actions that affect their professional identity, thus "trying to change who they are in the workplace may undermine one of their most precious categorization of self" (Russo et al., 2008, p. 6). Ashforth and colleagues (2008) found potential conflicts with high levels of professional identification and change in the workplace, stating "the more strongly and exclusively one defines oneself in terms of a particular identity, the more difficult it is to exit that identity and the greater the risk of deleterious consequences such as anomie and depression" (p. 352).

Professional identification is an individual's connection to his or her career; vocational socialization is a process that helps produce a level or feeling of professional identification. Because involuntary exit results in a new vocational socialization process, and because of the

mutually informing relationship between vocational socialization and professional identification, the following research question was examined:

> RQ2: After an involuntary exit, how do workers describe their professional identification?

Conclusion

This study examined Suits' experiences of long-term unemployment after an involuntary exit and how it impacts the mutually informing constructs of vocational socialization and professional identification. This study helped fill gaps in the areas of involuntary exit socialization literature, vocational socialization literature, and professional identification literature. First, little research has been conducted on involuntary exit due to methodological issues of finding participants. This study analyzed blogs authored by Suits who are unemployed due to an involuntary exit.

Secondly, after an involuntary exit, Suits experience a new vocational anticipatory socialization process. This process is influenced by five sources: family, educational institutions, previous organizational experience, peers and friends, and the media (Jablin, 2001; Kramer, 2010). Because vocational socialization is traditionally researched as a process beginning in childhood with parents as the most influential source (Jablin, 2001), this study explored the process of vocational socialization experienced later in life by examining sources used by the Suits.

Finally, literature shows a mutually informing relationship between vocational socialization and professional identification. Professional identification is an individual's feeling of oneness with his or her career; they identify with and define themselves as part of a professional group (Russo et al., 2008, p. 1). Vocational socialization is a process that produces

professional identification. Thus, because involuntary exit results in a new vocational socialization process and research shows that vocational socialization is a process that develops an individual's professional identification, this study examined how workers describe their professional identification after an involuntary exit.

CHAPTER 3. METHODOLOGY

Thirteen million workers are currently unemployed in America (BLS, 2012a). High unemployment rates and a slow-to-recover labor market have doubled the length of unemployment since 2007 and left a large amount of workers unemployed for more than a year (BLS, 2011b). One population who has been uncommonly impacted by the current recession are the Suits—college-educated, middle-aged, white men (Marin, 2011). Not only are they losing jobs, they are struggling to find their way back into the labor force (Marin, 2011). This thesis explored how involuntary exit and long-term unemployment impact the Suits' vocational socialization and professional identification, thus asking:

RQ1: What sources of vocational socialization do Suits identify after an involuntary exit?

RQ2: After an involuntary exit, how do workers describe their professional identification?

Research Design

This study examined blog posts authored by unemployed Americans obtained from the blog *Laid Off and Looking* on Wall Street Journal's blog page (http://blogs.wsj.com). "As a way for WSJ readers and job seekers to learn firsthand about how rising unemployment was affecting Americans" the Wall Street Journal asked 29 laid off professionals "to share what it was like for them to deal with suddenly becoming unemployed and having to search for a new job" (Dizik, 2010, para. 1). The blog was launched in December of 2008, during the height of America's Great Recession. The first blog posted was on December 2, 2008 the last blog posted was on March 4, 2010. In total, 84 (N=84) blog entries (3039 lines of text) were collected and analyzed. The blogs were publicly available and could be viewed without a subscription to the Wall Street Journal paper or website. Real names and short biographies of each blogger were provided on the

site. Because the blogs and blogger demographics are public information, pseudonyms were not used in this study. Webcitation.org was used to archive the blogs ensuring posts used for data analysis would not disappear, become inactive, or change. Appendix 1 provides information on the Suits selected for this study, along with information on the blogs used for data analysis.

Blogs were chosen as the source of data for four reasons. First, "qualitative research uses discourse as its data" (Keyton, 2006, p. 59). Blogging is a distinct method of computer-mediated discourse (Boicu, 2011). Secondly, narratives are a qualitative method of data collection that can be used as "a reliable guide to the storyteller's beliefs, attitudes, values, and actions" (Keyton, 2006, G-7 & p. 282). Blogs are an excellent source of narratives that are free of bias or influence of the researcher's goals for the study. Thirdly, blogs are an excellent way to "collect stories from many individuals about the same type of event" (Keyton, 2006, p. 283). All of the selected blogs' authors are sharing their experiences of unemployment during the Great Recession. Finally, and most importantly, the *Laid Off and Looking* blogs provided data that helped fill gaps in socialization and identification literature, and more specifically, answered the research questions posed in this study.

Sample

Nonprobability sampling techniques were used to limit the initial sample of 29 *Laid Off and Looking* bloggers to a total of 11. Nonprobability sampling "does not rely on any form of random selection" (Keyton, 2006, p. 125). More specifically, inclusion criterion was the nonprobability technique used to narrow the sampling pool. Inclusion criterion "identifies the people or elements that meet some specific characteristic" (Keyton, 2006, p. 128). To qualify for this study, the following criteria were used: 1) the blogger must be male, 2) the blogger must be between the ages of 35 and 60, 3) the blogger must be white, 4) the blogger must be college-

educated, and 5) the blogger must have experienced long-term unemployment (unemployed for 27 weeks or longer). The inclusion criterion were selected so that the bloggers in the study had defining characteristics that matched the demographic targeted for this study—college-educated, middle-aged, white, men. Eleven of the 29 bloggers met all of the characteristics. Of the selected bloggers, the youngest was 35, the oldest was 59, and the mean age was 46. Of the selected bloggers, each posted between 3 and 16 entries. Of all those who found full-time positions, the average length of time unemployed was one year (Dizik, 2010).

Data Analysis

The research questions posed in this study required qualitative methodology because "qualitative research questions start with how or what" and are used "to discover, explain or seek to understand, explore a process, or describe the experiences of participants" (Keyton, 2006, p. 67). The questions posed in this study demanded different types of data analysis. To answer RQ1, a closed coding scheme was used. Closed coding allowed the researcher to look specifically for Jablin's (2001) and Kraemer's (2010) five sources of vocational socialization in the data, while allowing for new sources to emerge. Thematic analysis was used to answer RQ2. Thematic analysis allowed the researcher to inductively analyze the data for themes that appeared in the Suits' vocational socialization process.

The first step in coding was to prepare the data. The blogs were transferred from the site *Laid Off and Looking* to a Microsoft Word document. The text was doubled spaced on the left two-thirds of the page; the right third of the page was left open so the researcher could write codes and notes (Saldaña, 2009). Prior to the first and second cycle coding (Saldaña, 2009), all narratives were read in their entirety twice. This step served to familiarize the researcher with the narratives and allowed for pre-coding. The researcher pre-coded by underlining significant

quotes or passages that seemed like “codable moments worthy of attention” (Saldaña, 2009, p. 16).

Closed coding. To answer RQ1, the researcher used Adler’s (1995) five-step, closed coding scheme. The closed coding scheme was used to analyze the data for the five sources that influence vocational socialization: family, educational institutions, previous organizational experience, peers and friends, and the media (Jablin, 2001; Kramer, 2010). A codebook with source definitions and examples were developed to avoid definitional drift and other human error. The unit of analysis for closed coding was a sentence. The first step of coding was to identify if the sentence included an influential sources of vocational socialization. The second step was to code the sentence as ‘non-identificatory’ if the sentence did not include sources of vocational socialization. Third, if the sentence had a source of vocational socialization, the researcher would identify which of the five sources it best fit within. For example, if the sentence mentioned influence from a father, the researcher would code it as ‘family/father.’ Fourth, “for those [sentences] which appear to continue the purpose of the preceding [sentence], the researcher will determine if it repeats the previous purpose or if it develops a new [source]” (Adler, 1995, p. 32). Finally, for sentences which contained dual sources, the researcher coded for both sources of vocational socialization. Throughout the process the coder allowed for the emergence of new sources to be accounted for. As previously noted, codes were written in the right margin of the document.

Thematic analysis. Thematic analysis was used to answer RQ2. Thematic analysis, a form of analytic induction, was done in two cycles. In the first cycle, the author analyzed the full set of data line-by-line to develop an initial coding scheme. Initial coding isn’t a specific method, but rather an “open-ended approach to coding the data with some recommended general

guidelines" (Saldaña, 2009, p. 81). In this cycle all codes are tentative and provisional, but provide a starting point for further exploration (Saldaña, 2009). During the first cycle, the researcher used descriptive coding and allowed for simultaneous coding. Descriptive coding "summarizes in a word or a short phrase—most often as a noun—the basic topic of a passage" (Saldaña, 2009, p. 70). For example, "flexibility" was used to summarize the following comment by Geoff, a 59-year-old former CFO: "If anything, I'm flexible and always ready to consider a new challenge" (lines 1219-1220). "Adaptable" was used to summarize, "Survival is achieved by being the most adaptable"—a comment made by John, a 54-year-old and former Senior Manager. Following research by Sanderson's (2008) study that used thematic analysis on blog posts, the researcher allowed for simultaneous coding of the data. Simultaneous coding is "the application of two or more different codes to a single qualitative datum, or the overlapped occurrence or two or more codes applied to sequential units of qualitative data" (Saldaña, 2009, p. 62). Michael, a 54-year-old and former Senior Vice President, said, "I wish I had been better at networking, although I felt I did a slightly above average job of reach out to people" (lines 2257-2259). This was coded as "networking" and "reflection."

Once the initial coding was completed, the researcher engaged in focused coding as a second cycle analytic process (Saldaña, 2009). Second cycle coding is used to "develop a sense of categorical, thematic, conceptual, and/or theoretical organization" (Saldaña, 200, 149). Focused coding is a method that "categorizes coded data based on thematic or conceptual similarity" (Saldaña, 2009, p. 151). During this cycle, the researcher reviewed the codes from first cycle coding—written in the right margin of the data document—and looked for similarity and/or repetition. On a separate document, the researcher clustered together similar codes and placed them in general categories and themes (Conaway & Wardrope, 2010; Saldaña, 2009). For

example, Geoff's and John's comments (as cited above) summarized as flexible and adaptable were clustered together. These, together with other comments that highlighted the importance of changing/adapting to meet the needs of employers, formed a thematic category of adaptability. Initially, five thematic categories were identified: identified as a job-seeker and prioritizes job-seeker activities, commitment to adaptability in the job search, negativity toward self-image, negativity toward the employment search, and commitment to past professional identity. Negativity toward self-image and negativity toward the job search were combined into one theme, narrowing the total to four themes of professional identification: job-seeker, adaptable, broken, and stable.

The researcher then examined if Suits experienced stable professional identities, multiple forms of professional identification simultaneously, or shifting professional identities. To do this, the researcher treated each blog entry as a unit and re-read them to code for the four professional identifications. For example, 52-year-old and former IT Finance Director, Kevin H. wrote his entire first blog post about how he is treating his job search as a full time job; this post was coded as "job seeker." His six following posts were all coded as "job seeker." His seventh post, however, was coded as "adaptable" because of his new focus on adapting to what he thought hiring managers are looking for in a new employee. This showed a shift in professional identification. Brian, 35-year-old and former Investment Banking Associate, communicated a stable professional identification in all of his five blog entries—showing how identities can remain constant. Again, the researcher allowed for simultaneous coding which allowed multiple professional identities to be coded for in the same blog post—showing how multiple professional identities can be experienced simultaneously. This was seen in 41-year-old and former Relationship Manager, Henry's post on January 25, 2010 when he blogged about his dedication

to *job-seeker* goals while adjusting his profile to *adapt* to what potential hiring managers might look for in a candidate. If a blog entry didn't touch on any of the themes or anything relevant to the study, it was coded as "n/a." For example, 52-year-old and former IT Finance Director, Kevin H. blogged about his daughter's experience in the job-market. This was not relevant to his experience or professional identification and was therefore coded "n/a."

The next step of the process was to find points of convergence and divergence between the four themes of professional identification. To do this, the researcher separated blog entries into 5 groups, 1 grouping for each professional identification, and 1 grouping of the entries that were labeled n/a. The narratives in each theme were then read a final time; the researcher noted characteristics that emerged in the data. Shared characteristics of each theme were then compared to discover the similarities and the differences between the four themes of professional identification. For example, blog posts coded as "job seeker" and "stable" shared "control" as a common characteristic. Bloggers who communicated these two identifications reported feeling in control of their unemployment process. In blog posts coded "adaptable," bloggers communicated little control. A feeling of no control was a characteristic communicated in blogs coded as "broken."

Conclusion

This study examined Suits' experience with long-term unemployment after an involuntary exit and its impact on vocational socialization and professional identification. To do so, the researcher examined 84 blog posts published by 11 Suits on *Laid Off and Looking*—a blog connected to the Wall Street Journal. Research questions posed in this study required two separate types of data analysis. To answer RQ1, the researcher used a closed coding scheme. Thematic analysis was used to answer RQ2. Descriptive coding, while allowing for simultaneous

coding, was used during the first cycle and focused coding was used as the second cycle coding method. The researcher also examined the data for shifting professional identities and professional identities experienced simultaneous. Finally, points of divergence and convergence were examined between the four themes of professional identification.

CHAPTER 4. RESULTS

This study explored how involuntary exit and long-term unemployment impact Suits' vocational socialization and professional identification by examining 84 blog entries authored by 11 unemployed Suits. Specifically, this study used closed coding to discover if vocational socialization experienced in adulthood continues to be impacted by Jablin's (2001) and Kramer's (2010) five sources of vocational socialization: family, educational systems, previous organizational experience, peers and friends, and the media. This study also examined Suits professional identification—a feeling of oneness with their profession—by conducting a thematic analysis of the blog entries. This chapter presents the results of these findings. First, the chapter will cover the influential sources of vocational socialization found within the data. The Suits' professional identification will then be reviewed.

Suits' Sources of Vocational Socialization

Adler's (1995) closed-coding scheme was used to answer research question one, *"what sources of vocational socialization do Suits identify after an involuntary exit?"* A closed coding scheme allowed the research to analyze the blogs for the five sources that influence vocational socialization: family, educational systems, previous organizational experience, peers and friends, and the media (Jablin, 2001; Kramer, 2010). The blog entries (totaling 3039 lines of text) were read seven times; once for each of the five vocational socialization sources, then two additional times to code for two sources (recruiters/headhunters and conventional wisdom) that emerged in the data but didn't fit within the five sources. To examine the collective experience of Suits, versus the experience of individual bloggers, the data was treated as one large data set; numbers are presented as incidences across all 11 blogs. Figure 1 and Table 1 provide a summative report.

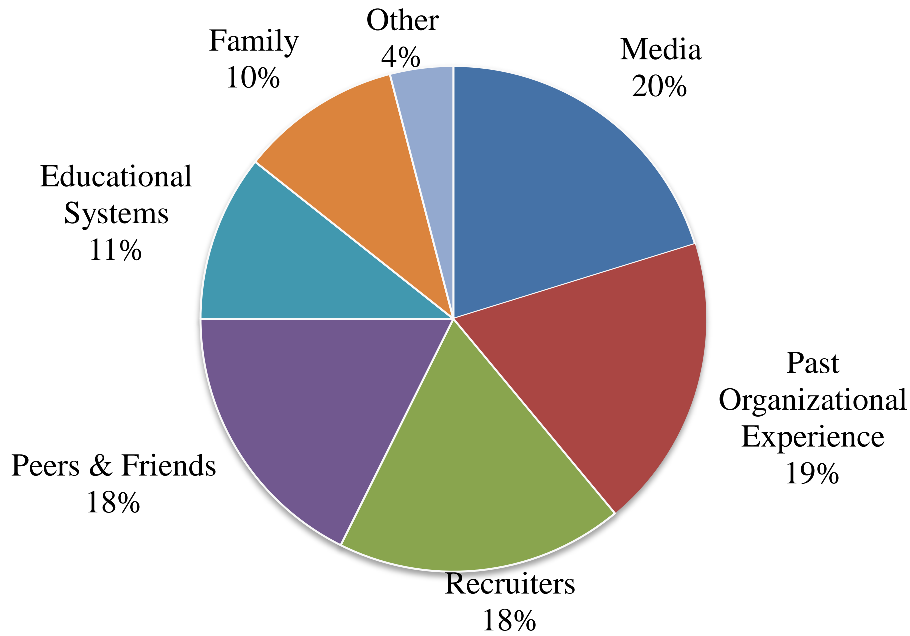

Figure 1. Percentage of Suits' vocational socialization source usage.

Table 1
Sources of Vocational Socialization Used by Suits

Source	Count
Media	
Online	46
Print	6
Broadcast	3
Total	55
Past Organizational Experience	
Past FTE	30
Volunteering	11
Consulting	10
Total	51
Recruiters	
Total	50
Peers and Friends	
Past Colleagues	15
Friends	11
Unemployed workers	8
College friends	7
Business acquaintances	7
Total	48
Education	
Training/Courses	13
Career Coaches	9
Career Center	2
Job Fairs	3
Outplacement	2
Total	29
Family	
Spouses	12
Family	6
Parents	4
Children	3
Siblings	4
Total	28
Other	
Conventional Wisdom	8
Un-named source	3
Total	11

The results of this analysis show that all five sources of vocational socialization were present within the data. Media was the most commonly cited source of vocational socialization (n = 55). Previous organizational experience (n = 51) and peers/friends (n = 48) were also found to be sources of vocational socialization for Suits. Although commonly reported to be the most influential vocational socialization sources for children and youth, educational systems (n = 29) and family (n = 28) were the least commonly cited sources for Suits. Throughout the coding process, the researcher allowed for the emergence of new sources to be accounted for in the data. The results from this analysis identified an additional source of vocational socialization for Suits: recruiters/headhunters (n = 50). Conventional wisdom (n = 8) and un-named sources (n = 3) were placed in a category of "other." By including support and encouragement as a form of vocational socialization, analysis went beyond Jablin's (2001) original definition of socialization. All of the sources will be broken down and discussed in detail below.

Media. Media was the most common source of vocational socialization within the data (n = 55). Media included broadcast media (n = 3), print media (n = 6) and online (n = 45) media. Online media, which includes social media, websites, and other online material, was the most commonly cited source of media accounting for 83% (n = 45). Social media, more specifically Facebook, Twitter, blogs, and LinkedIn, were also identified in the Suits' vocational socialization process (n = 29). Many of the Suits' believed that social networking would get them out of the unemployment pool; it was said to magnify opportunities for new careers and opportunities for personal connections. Steve, a 50-year-old and former Director of Marketing, said, "social networking is the way personal connections are made. And ultimately, it will be a personal connection that leads to my next job" (lines 32-33). The *Laid off and Looking* blog also became a source of vocational socialization. Geoff said his readers had "valid comments" that he

needed to consider as he decided to take a consulting role or wait for better career opportunity (line 1519). Suits were also influenced by online articles that were emailed to them or found online. For example, after reading an article targeting unemployed senior-level workers, Steve decided to explore new positions instead of defining himself on his past experience. Finally, online media provided Suits with online self-assessments that allowed them to discover new interests and career opportunities.

Broadcast media included television, radio, and film/movies. Radio and film/movies were never mentioned in the data, but television was cited as a source of vocational socialization three times (n = 3). Suits said television reported the negativity associated with being unemployed. It aired news stories covering the "millions of Americans going through the daily stress of the job search" (line 2021), reported on the "trickle down effect" occurring because unemployed customers are no longer supporting businesses (line 2061), and covered "tearful scenes in which a recently laid-off father or mother has to confront the children with the news of a job loss and its effect on the family" (lines 2115-2117). These messages impact the vocational socialization process by increasing stress of being unemployed and forced many to consider taking on new roles and positions that are under the level of their previous role. As Michael stated, "someone in my position must come to accept that future compensation will not be near past levels, so we face this reality and move forward" (lines 2070-2071).

Print media (n = 6) was also a source of vocational socialization and included books (n = 1), newspapers (n = 1), magazines (n = 2), newsletters (n = 1), pamphlets/brochures, and journals (n=1). Kevin C., 40-year-old and former Senior Consultant, wanted to switch his career from investment banking to solar energy and used journals as a way to educate himself and "keep in touch" with this new field and career opportunity (line 640). Newsletters and alumni magazines

provided information on career opportunities, while books were listed as educational tools on resume writing.

Previous organizational experience. Previous organizational experience was the second most commonly cited source of vocational socialization (n = 51). This source included volunteer experience (n = 11), consulting/part-time work (n = 10), and past full-time employment (n = 30). Consulting impacted the vocational socialization process by providing the Suits with new skills and an opportunity to work their way into a new career. Steve said, "I'm particularly excited about applying my skills to a new field" (lines 140-141). Henry said "since I'm currently doing consulting work at a startup I am strongly considering working at one [a startup organization]" (lines 292-294). Kyle's consulting position, led to a full-time position as the company where he was consulting.

Volunteering was also a source of influence during Suits' vocational socialization process (n = 11). Kevin M., 40-year-old and former Product Manager, said volunteering gave him a "feeling of self worth" (line 610). Christopher, 41-year-old and former Senior Vice President, said his volunteering experience "has been eye opening, rewarding and and [sic] excellent way to keep my organizational and project management skills working" (lines 1654-1656). Kevin H. volunteered because he heard it was "one avenue to pursue to find that next great job opportunity is to become a volunteer and seek out new friends and relationships" (lines 2589-2591).

Suits' past full-time employment experiences were very influential on Suits' vocational socialization process (n = 30). Many of them were basing their future career choice on their last career. Henry blogged about this when discussed how connected with perspective employers by defining and discussing his past full-time position. John said his past career limited his choices

because when he applied for positions below his last position, he was weeded out for being "overqualified, overpaid and maybe overage or overconfident" (lines 820-821).

Recruiters. Although not included in Jablin's (2001) or Kramer's (2010) five original sources of vocational socialization, careful analysis of this data found *recruiters* to be an additional source that influences the vocational socialization process of Suits (n = 50). There are two main types of recruiters (Fertig, 2012). First, there are executive recruiters (also known as headhunters) who work for search firms. Their job is to fill job openings within outside companies who are paying a fee for their service. Other recruiters are in-house—usually part of the HR team—and do the upfront work before the individual is interviewed by a hiring manager. One important thing to note is that recruiters do not "help people to transition to new fields, but rather to find talented individuals who have done the job already in a different context, or people ready to move up to the next level in their same career path" (Fertig, 2012, para. 3). Both types of recruiters were found within this study.

Recruiters were a major source of influence during their vocational socialization process. With the other five sources, the Suits were still the decision maker in the vocational socialization process of limiting or choosing their career. This source does the decision making for the Suits. As stated by Keith, recruiters determine "a good fit" for the Suits and the "fit" is based on their past experience and skills (line 408). Kevin C. stated that "recruiters can definitely improve market penetration and potential interviews, but it's important to understand which ones have the job seekers' interest at heart and which are looking for a body to fill a position" (lines 753-756).

Peers and friends. Peers and friends were the fourth most cited source within Suits' vocational socialization process (n = 48). Past co-workers (n = 15), friends (n = 11), fellow unemployed workers (n = 8), college friends (n = 7), and business acquaintances (n = 7) were all

mentioned within this source. These sources were often the first place Suits went when spreading the news they were unemployed and to look for help. Brian, 35-year-old and former Investment Banking Associate, said, "what I've taken away from this is that while situations may vary, you shouldn't hesitate to reach out to friends, or acquaintances who you've previously worked to ask for advice or to see if there is anything they can do to help your cause" (lines 2324-2327). As stated briefly above, the researcher coded support and encouragement as a form of vocational socialization; this form of socialization was found within this source. For example, instead of providing vocational socialization messages specifically concerning vocational roles, John said his friends supported him through the process by praying for him, supporting him and encouraging him. His business acquaintances, however, impacted the process helping him find opportunities, make contacts and open doors. Many others, however, also credited friends helping them make business connections. What was interesting was the impact fellow unemployed workers had on Suits vocational socialization process. Other unemployed workers added much anxiety to the process and seemed to add pressure to find a job, even if it meant changing careers. Christopher attended a golf outing, where he encountered many unemployed workers, including an ex-boss of his. This experience and being surrounded by "a significant number of job seekers" led him to fully embrace change and focus on pursuing a new career (line 1545).

Educational systems. Educational systems were another source of vocational socialization for the Suits (n = 29). For adults, educational sources of influence included job fairs (n = 3), training/courses (n = 13), alumni career centers (n = 2), career coaches/counselors/advisors (n = 9), and company outplacement programs (n = 2). Training courses allowed Suits to not only refresh and enhance current professional skills, but provided an

opportunity to explore and learn new skills that would help them break into new careers. Henry participated in an eleven-week course designed to give displaced corporate workers information on working for smaller firms, start-ups, or nonprofits. Kevin C. completed a course titled "Business of Solar" to help break into his new career field of solar energy. Career counselors were also seen as a valuable source of information in the vocational socialization process. Kenneth's career counselor helped him explore new interests and "provided professional contacts so I could discuss alternative career paths" (lines 1787-1788). Job fairs provided Suits with opportunities to learn about many different roles within many different organizations. Company outplacement centers and alumni career centers also provided Suits with a variety of material on various careers and vocational choices.

Family. Siblings, siblings in-law, parents, spouses/partners, cousins, grandparents, aunts/uncles, children, and family were all included in this source. In total, this source was coded 28 times, specifically: spouses (12), family (6), parents (4), siblings/sibling in-laws (3), and children (3). Cousins, grandparents, aunts and uncles were never mentioned in the data set. Again, support and encouragement was coded as a form of vocational socialization. Spouses were mentioned the majority of the time within this source (n = 12). More than half of the time, wives were said to influence the process by being supportive, encouraging, loving, and trusting in whatever choices the Suits were making. For example, Christopher said his wife "trusted me to approach the [job] search the way I wanted ... Her understanding and patience made the situation easier on me and allowed me to pursue the search in the way that I saw fit" (lines 1768-1772). Twice, wives were said to influence the process by helping their husbands evaluate different roles by bringing in a new perspective. Michael said his wife brought in new perspective by "ask[ing] me things about the job that I have not addressed myself, or perhaps

point[ing] out an issue or concern I missed" (lines 1924-1926). Only once was the influence of a wife seen as a negative influence on the vocational socialization process. Kevin H. said he began to get anxious when he wasn't actively searching for a new job or career which made him "silently resentful when my wife was home on a weekday" or when set "expectations that some housework gets done during the day" (lines 2472-2479).

Family, as a whole, was mentioned quite often a source of the vocational socialization process (n = 6). Kevin C. went so far as calling the process "a family affair" (line 757). Most of the men said family influence was a factor because they knew the end result impacted the entire family. When Kevin M. accepted a job offer, he first reviewed the position with his family to determine if it was a good fit. Michael also included his family in the decision-making process because, "whatever happens to me happens to her [his wife] and the kids" (line 1927). Although they were the least cited, Suits' parents and siblings were the most direct in the vocational socialization process by sharing articles, information on job openings, and other assistance. Kevin C. said, "... my parents have really started to become involved. In particular, my mom has been more active in going online to find potential positions, and sending me some of her postings" (lines 758-760).

Other. Conventional wisdom (n = 8) and un-named sources (n = 3) were also mentioned by Suits to be sources of vocational socialization. Conventional wisdom is "the generally accepted belief, opinion, judgment, or prediction about a particular matter" (Conventional wisdom, n.d.). Within the data, conventional wisdom was coded when Suits blogged about common knowledge related to the unemployment crisis and how it would impact them. For example, Geoff blogged, "I'm under no illusions about the challenges of changing careers, particularly during the worst recession since the Great Depression" (lines 1561-1562). Other

Suits blogged about how the downturn left countless other job seekers competing for few positions: "... the credit crisis led to significant cuts and outright closure of many of these shops. What it left was very few leveraged lending jobs and a significant number of job seekers to compete for anything that might be even remotely related" (lines 1543-1546); "the jobs in the space were non-existent and there was a very high unemployment rate in Chicago among those with the same background as mine" (lines 1705-1707); "I hear about the thousands of additional layoffs coming each week ... [they] will soon be competing with me for the small number of opportunities out there" (lines 1955-1963).

There were also sources in the Suits' vocational socialization process who were un-named, but deserve attention. These sources were considered as having legitimacy but were not specified as having a specific job title, or relationship to the Suit. For example, Geoff said "there are *some* who think I should give up and take any financial position that might be available" (lines 1422-1423). Geoff also blogged that "*experts* familiar with employment transition issues often indicate that a person's job search will usually take, on average, one month for each $10,000 in annually salary that person had previously been earning" (lines 1409-1412).

In summary, closed-coding found that Jablin's (2001) and Kramer's (2010) five sources of vocational socialization were used by Suits. Media (n = 55) was the most common source used, followed by past organizational experience (n = 51), peers and friends (n = 48), family (n = 28), and educational systems (n = 29). Recruiters/headhunters (n = 50) were found to be an additional source of vocational socialization used by Suits during this process. Support and encouragement was coded as a form of vocational socialization and was found within two sources: peers and friends, and family.

Suits' Professional Identification

Thematic analysis was conducted to answer research question two, "*after an involuntary exit, how do workers describe their professional identification?"* During the first cycle of this process, the researcher engaged in descriptive coding. This allowed the researcher to summarize the basic topic of each passage which allowed for provisional codes to be used for further exploration (Saldaña, 2009). Once the descriptive coding was complete, the researcher used focused coding as the second cycle process. This allowed the researcher to develop a sense of thematic or categorical organization. The researcher then developed a codebook with definitions and examples of the four themes that emerged within the data (Job Seeker Professional Identification, Stable Professional Identification, Adaptable Professional Identification, and Broken Professional Identification). Each narrative was then read a second time. This time the narratives were coded for the four identified themes of professional identification. If the blog post wasn't relevant to his unemployment experience or professional identification, it was coded as "n/a." The researcher allowed for simultaneous coding, which allowed multiple themes to occur in one narrative/blog. In the next step of the process, the researcher separated the data into the four themes of professional identification and read them a third time to discover each theme's shared characteristics. Each theme's characteristics were then compared to the other themes' characteristics to determine distinctions and similarities. The results are summarized in Table 2.

The results of the thematic analysis showed Suits identified with one (or more) of four forms of professional identification. As demonstrated by Russo (1998), this study also found that identification is not a zero-sum phenomenon. Some suits were found to have two forms of professional identification simultaneously, and many Suits' identification changed as their length of unemployment increased. The most common identity communicated by Suits was a *job seeker*

professional identification, where they developed a new identity as a job seeker (n = 34, 42%). Many Suits developed an *adaptable professional identification*. This identity was demonstrated by a lack of commitment to any professional identification and a focus on trying to fit into others standards and/or professional ideals (n = 21, 26%). Suits who communicated a *stable professional identification* remained committed to their past professional identity (n = 13, 16%). Finally, Suits who experienced a *broken professional identification* felt defeated and their professional confidence was crushed (n = 13, 16%).

Job seeker professional identification. The most common professional identification among Suits was a professional identification communicated as identifying as a job seeker (n = 34, 42%). Suits experiencing this form of professional identification defined themselves "as a job seeker" and felt their priority was "my job search." For example, Kevin C. demonstrated this job seeker self-definition when he said "as a job seeker" he became consumed with the amount of articles intended for "job seeker woes" and other "job seeker mantras" (lines 774-779). Kenneth clearly demonstrated how this identity puts emphasis on job-seeking when he said, "My first priority was to begin building a relationship with the career center and to launch my job search" (lines 1776-1778). Suits experiencing this new identity treated their search as they would a normal job by infusing structure and strategy into the job search. Henry said his career center was in downtown Manhattan and was open full time; he went there daily, "making it just like going to the office, bringing some structure to my days" (lines 169-170). Kenneth structured his job search activities by meeting weekly with his career coach and reviewing a spreadsheet that tracked all the jobs he was actively pursuing. Geoff used a sales force tactic and transferred it to his job search.

Table 2
Suits' Four Themes of Professional Identification

Professional Identification	Job Seeker	Stable	Broken	Adaptable
Definition: Definition of the four professional identifications	Identifies as a job seeker *"As a job seeker"*	Committed to past professional role *"I am an engineer"*	Feels deflated about profession and job search *"numb .... sad"*	Adapts to any position needed, flexible to what others need *"I'm flexible"*
Focus: Point of concentration within the job search	Finding a job *"My first priority was ... to launch my job search"*	Finding the same role *"I never fully embraced the idea of change, always keeping one foot solidly planted in the leveraged finance and commercial banking world*"	No focus	Fitting into an any open position *"I will find a job by being adaptable"*
Attitude: Feelings toward the unemployment experience	Enthusiastic, energetic *"there [at training session for unemployed workers] was a high level of energy and excitement"*	Determined, committed: Determined to find a specific role and committed to applying only for that role	Pessimistic, negative *"Like a football quarterback who has been sacked ...I'm constantly being asked to pick myself up, dust off, clear my head, and jump back into the fray"*	Flexible *"If anything, I'm flexible and always ready to consider a new type of challenge."*
Perspective on other unemployed workers: How unemployed workers will affect their job search or overall view in relation to the unemployment process	Helpful friends *"a strong sense of camaraderie*"	They don't connect with this group. *"I've maintained contact with many of my former colleagues... because of the deep friendships that were formed"*	Opponents, competitors *"[new unemployed workers] will soon be competing with me for the small number of opportunities out there"*	Receptive to their ideas *"One [unemployed] person I've met compiles [and emails] a very comprehensive list of New York City event ... I decided to go"*

(continued)

Table 2. Suits' Four Themes of Professional Identification (continued)

Professional Identification	New	Stable	Broken	Adaptable
Do they report stress: Feelings of stress, tension, or worry	No	No	Yes *"The key for us is to minimize the potentially damaging stress that comes with the frustrating job search and the harsh realities of paying the bills"*	Yes *"The most difficult thing about being unemployed is not knowing when it is going to end."*
Search strategy: Overall approach used to find a job	Structured, organized *"Making it [the job search] just like going to the office, bringing some structure to my days"*	Targeted on one role *"Because there is only one CFO position in any company, I have only that one very specific position to target at any one company"*	Move forward, but expect the worst *"Similar to golf ... you have to assume that your opponent will know it in regardless of where they are swinging from"*	Adapt to anything available *"One recruiter told me the department was 'one of one' ... I replied that I am a hands-on worker and that I know the software (and I have a kid in high school for technical support)"*
Feeling of control: Ability to guide or direct the unemployment process	Yes *"One of the upsides of being unemployed is having complete control over my day"*	Yes	No *"I was upset by not feeling in control"*	Some/Little *"I have little control over the bias of others"*
Potential job fit: Potential fit of their future position	Good fit *"I cannot give up and I continue to apply to jobs that I believe I am a good fit for."*	Perfect match, solid fit *"I am fortunate to not have to take just any job"*	Anything, I just want the search to end *"I would like for this process to be over with"*	Anything I can fit into or make fit. *"Sometimes you have to work yourself into an industry."*

A former colleague taught him to ‘constantly fill the pipeline’—meaning that only a certain percentage of sales result in completed contracts so you have to identify and follow-up on more leads than needed to meet sales goals. Geoff followed this instruction by “looking for ways to keep filling the front end of the pipeline because I know that it may take a lot more leads to finally end up with the one right offer” (lines 1310-1312). Finally, Suits who identify as a job-seeker experienced a transference of attachment from co-workers to other unemployed workers. Henry attended a program for displaced financial service workers and felt a “strong sense of camaraderie” among those who were unemployed (line 211). Michael also blogged about friendships developed and a sense of shared frustration with other unemployed workers who are all going through similar experiences.

Adaptable professional identification. The second most common identity communicated by Suits was an adaptable professional identification (n = 21, 26%). When Suits experienced this identity, they didn’t have a sense of who they were and often defined themselves based on others’ needs or ideals. Suits adapted to others expectations and requirements by attending training, accepting lower pay, moving to other cities, or adjusting career aspirations. This identity was a survival skill for many of the men. John said “Survival is achieved by being the most adaptable ... I will find a job by being adaptable” (lines 872 & 887). For many men, they began this adaptability in how they defined themselves—internally and on paper. Steve began “reexamining how I define myself” in order to open his eyes to new opportunities (line 92). Defining themselves on paper was a whole other issue. The men struggled with what others wanted to see. Chalin and Michael continuously reconstructed their resumes to emphasize what they thought the hiring managers were looking for in a new employee. Steve “dumbed down” his resume to avoid looking overqualified and only included to

the most relevant experience to look more like a specialist instead of an applicant with versatility (line 48). After learning that two fellow *Laid off and Looking* bloggers under the age of 50 received job offers, Kevin H. tried to appear younger and adapted by taking graduation dates off his resume and only listed the last 15 years of his experience. Suits also adapted to others requirements and expectations by taking training courses. As you will see later, training was also seen in stable professional identification. The difference here is that Suits were taking training to adapt to what others wanted and expected, not as a way to improve their brand. For example, Kevin C. said "Sometimes you have to work yourself into an industry" by becoming more knowledgeable and completing coursework for specific certifications (line 689). Steve began to learn about patent law, not because he considered it a valuable skill, but because companies were finding it increasingly valuable. Finally, Suits experiencing this identity were adaptable to any position available. After 17 months of unemployment, Michael took on a completely different vocational role, with less pay, and had to move to a different state. John also showed how adaptable one is when experiencing this identity when he stated the following:

> I will find a job by being adaptable. For example, when a health care organization opted for a much less expensive (and less experienced) candidate, even though the job responsibilities were extensive, I followed-up with an offer to act as a consultant to address some of the more technical and higher value-added items. I convinced a hiring manager without relocation funds to evaluate me as a local and to delay (or disregard) a discussion about expenses until later in the process. I suggested a virtual office to reduce expenses when a job required extensive travel. One recruiter told me the department was "one of one", meaning there would be no administrative support. I replied that I am a hands-on worker, and that I know the software (and I have a kid in high school for

technical support) and I will do my own schedule, communications, and presentations. (lines 887-899)

Stable professional identification. A third identity communicated by Suits was a stable professional identity (n = 13, 16%). When Suits were experiencing this identity, they were committed to their past professional identity and defined themselves as members of their previous professional group. As demonstrated by Russo and colleagues (2008), this study also found that Suits with a strong professional identity defined themselves as members of a professional group with shared attributes and experiences, along with an attachment to subordinates and co-workers. John and Kevin M. provided many clear examples of how one in a stable professional identity defines himself as his profession. For example, John started one of his blogs with, "I am an engineer" (line 868). Kevin M. blogged about promoting "my brand," adding value to "my brand," and wanting to be hired by an organization who found "value in *me*" (lines 380, 399, 415). When Suits with a stable identity considered additional training, it was to become better at their profession—the value to the potential organization was not the priority. Suits with a stable professional identification also defined themselves based on their experiences and attributes of their past profession. Brian defined himself based on his past experiences and said it was "what differentiates me" (lines 2348-2349). Keith, "Being an MBA" clearly defined himself by this educational attribute (line 450). Suits with a stable professional identification were specific in what role they were searching for during unemployment. Christopher said he was, "always keeping one foot solidly planted in the leveraged finance and commercial banking world" (lines 1552-1553). Geoff said he would not "take just any job that pays" and focused solely on CFO positions (line 1106). Finally, Suits experiencing a stable professional identification still felt attached to their past co-workers. Brian said he maintained contact with

former colleagues, not because they may help him get a job, but because of their deep friendships.

Broken professional identification. The last form of identity communicated by Suits was a broken professional identification (n = 13, 16%). This identity was signified by an overall pessimistic outlook for one's professional future, a negative attitude towards one's current unemployment, and a lack of professional confidence. Broken Suits felt completely deflated and described unemployed as an emotional roller coaster that left them feeling depressed, frustrated, devastated, numb, disappointed, angry, and sad. Suits with a broken professional identification also had a pessimistic outlook on their future. Kevin M. said, "your entire professional life is centered on landing a job ... the longer I wait the more negative I get" (lines 470-471). This negative outlook continued when he later compared interviewing to playing golf: "you have to assume that your opponent will knock it in regardless of where they are swinging from" (lines 535-537). Kevin H. also had a negative outlook on the future, saying, "the longer my search goes on, I fear that I am competing with increasing numbers of the more recently laid-off" (lines 2825-2826). After hearing about thousands of future layoffs, Mark's outlook on the future was far from positive. He said, "From a selfish, though practical point of view, I wonder how many of these newly unemployed—especially if they're from financial services—will soon be competing with me" (lines 1960-1962). Finally, Suits experiencing a broken professional identification also described a decrease or lack of professional confidence. Christopher said the inability to land a position has been "confidence-crushing" (line 1679). Michael said constant rejection led to much "self-doubt" and "self-examination" (line 2112). What makes rejection even worse, he said, is having to share the bad news with his wife. Michael said, "it's not fun having one's ego kicked time and time again, and then to have to relive the experience with a

loved one" (lines 1936-1937). Two months later he said he is constantly faced with bad news and, "like a football quarterback who has been sacked, as a job hunter these days I'm constantly being asked to pick myself up, dust off, clear my head, and jump back into the fray" (lines 1950-1952). Rejection was seen as a personal attack on Broken Suits. After losing a job offer, John compared it to "being jilted at the altar" (line 1050).

Overall, results of the thematic analysis showed four forms of professional identification. The most common identity was a professional identification where Suits identified as a job seeker (n = 34, 42%). The second most common form of professional identification was adaptable professional identification, where Suits focused on adapting to others' professional expectations and ideals (n = 21, 26%). A stable professional identification was found when Suits remained committed to their past professional identity (n = 13, 16%). Finally, Suits experienced a broken professional identification when they began to feel hopeless, defeated, and their professional confidence was crushed (n = 13, 16%).

Distinct and Shared Characteristics

In the final phase of coding, the blogs were read to discern points of convergence and divergence. Analysis found that each of the four professional identities had seven defining characteristics: focus, attitude, perspective on other unemployed workers, feeling of stress, search strategies, feeling of control, and potential job fit. Some of these characteristics made the identities distinct from each other, while others were shared similarities. Table 2 provides a summary of these findings.

Focus. The first characteristic is focus. Each identity had a specific focus, prioritizing a point of concentration during the job search. Job seeker identities focused on finding a job and made it their priority. When Kenneth communicated this identity he said his priority and focus

would be "to launch my job search" (lines 1776-1778). Stable identities were focused on their past professional role—enhancing their professional abilities and targeting that role in the job search. Geoff was focused solely on CFO positions and made those positions the priority in his job search. Broken identities had little focus; prior strategies had failed them and they were feeling defeated and hopeless. Adaptable identities focused on doing whatever it took to adapt to what perspective employers wanted or needed. They focused on getting training, rewriting their resumes, and increasing their online presence in order to adapt to what they believed perspective employers wanted.

Attitude. The second characteristic is attitude. Each identity had an overall attitude that captured the Suits' feelings toward the experience. Broken identities developed a pessimistic and negative attitude. While experiencing a broken identity Michael said, "Like a football quarterback who has been sacked or a boxer, as a job hunter these days I'm constantly being asked to pick myself up, dust off, clear my head, and jump back into the fray" (lines 1950-1952). Suits experiencing job seeker, stable, or adaptable identities had similar attitudes to each other. Suits who identified as job seekers had enthusiastic and energetic attitudes toward the unemployment experience. Henry attended an event for displaced financial workers and described them to have a "high level of energy and excitement" (line 212). Stable identities communicated determined and committed attitudes during the unemployment process. Even though Geoff knew there were few CFO positions available, he was committed to that position and determined to find a perfect match for what he was looking for. Adaptable identities had more of an easy going attitude that allowed them to be much more flexible in their job search. Geoff 's attitude changed when he shifted from stable to adaptable, stating, "If anything, I'm flexible and always ready to consider a new type of challenge" (lines 1219-1220).

Perspective on other unemployed workers. The third characteristic between the four identities was the Suits' perspective on other unemployed workers. Perspective was based on Suits' view of unemployed workers in relation to their unemployment experience and how the unemployed workers may affect their job search. When Henry identified as a job seeker, he described "a strong sense of camaraderie" with other unemployed workers (line 211). Adaptable identities were receptive to suggestions from other unemployed workers. As Henry began to develop an adaptable identification, he decided to attend a job fair based on a suggestion from an unemployed worker. Suits experiencing a broken professional identity saw other unemployed workers as competitors and opponents in the unemployment field. Michael was experiencing a broken identity when he said other unemployed workers would "soon be competing with me for the small number of opportunities out there" (lines 1962-1963). Stable suits didn't think much of other unemployed workers; they were still attached to past co-workers. Geoff said, "I've maintained contact with many of my former colleagues... because of the deep friendships that were formed" (lines2313-2315).

Stress. The forth characteristic is stress. Stress was coded when the specific word was mentioned and when Suits described feelings of tension or worry. Job seeker and stable identities reported little-to-no stress; broken and adaptable identities reported stressed emotions and frustrations. While experiencing a broken professional identification Michael stated, "the key for us is to try to minimize the potentially damaging stress that comes with the frustrating job search and the harsh realities of trying to pay the bills" (lines 2073-2075). As Kevin H. experienced an adaptable identity, he described anxiety due to "not knowing when it is going to end" (line 2649).

Control. As would be expected, stress correlated with the fifth characteristic—Suits' feeling of control over the unemployment process. Job seeker and stable identities felt in control of the unemployment process. Steve identified as a job seeker and thought the feeling of control was the best part of employment. He said, "One of the upsides of being unemployed is having complete control over my day" (line 132). Broken and adaptable identities felt they had less control over the situation. After learning two fellow *Laid off and Looking* bloggers—both under the age of 50—found employment, Kevin H. tried to adapt by taking graduation dates off his resume and highlighting only the last 15 years of his experience. Later he said, "However, in the end I have little control over the bias of others" (line 2749-2750). As Geoff shifted into a broken identity, he said "I was upset at not being in control and at not being able to gain any responses [from a perspective employer]" (lines 1467-1468).

Job search strategy. The sixth characteristic is strategy. This was overall approach used by Suits to find a job. Job seeker identities were very organized in their search activities and structured their day to feel like a normal job. For example, spreadsheets were used to organize and track their job search activity. Henry treated his outplacement program like, "going to the office, bringing some structure to my days" (line 170). The strategy for stable identities was to target specific roles and focus on those only. Geoff said, "Because there is only one CFO position in any company, I have only that one very specific position to target at any one company" (lines 1420-1422). The search strategy for adaptable identities was to adapt to anything available. John gave multiple examples on how he tried to adapt to what perspective employers were looking for. He said, "One recruiter told me the department was 'one of one' ... I replied that I am a hands-on worker and that I know the software (and I have a kid in high school for technical support)" (lines 895-898). Broken identities did not communicate a specific strategy

other than continuing to move forward in the search while expecting the worst. Kevin M. was experiencing a broken identity when he said, “Going forward, I am assuming that the job will go to someone else” (line 537).

Job fit. The final characteristic found within all of the identifications was the potential job fit that each were looking for in the job hunt. This was unique for each identity. Suits experiencing a job seeker identity were looking for a “good fit” for them and the company. Stable identities were searching for a perfect match based on their past role. Brad, who remained stable throughout his unemployment process, didn’t stop his search until he found exactly what he was looking for. Adaptable identities were looking for a fit, but rather were trying to fit or grow into any position available. Kevin C. was trying to enter a new career field of solar energy by adapting in various ways. He then said, “Sometimes you have to work yourself into an industry” (line 689). Broken identities didn’t really care about a specific fit; they just wanted the unemployment process to end. John experienced a broken professional identity before he was “finally” offered a job (line 1052). Even then he said, “As far as I can tell, there is nothing remarkable about this position” (line 1055).

Multiple and Shifting Professional Identification

At different times throughout the unemployment process, Suits were found to have two forms of professional identification simultaneously. This confirmed Russo’s (1998) findings that identification is not a zero-sum phenomenon; individuals can have more than one form of identification. Russo also found that although two identities could be held simultaneously, there is usually a dominate identity. In this study, simultaneous identities were found within the Suits but the researcher was also able to identity a dominate identity. For example, Henry communicated two forms of professional identification simultaneously—job seeker professional

identification and adaptable professional identification. Henry identified as a job seeker and structured his day to make it similar to a normal work day. As he pursued a new career outside of his past professional position, he also communicated the need to and importance of adapting to what perspective employers would be looking for in a candidate. Although he went through a period of holding simultaneous identities, due to the importance Henry place on his job seeker identity and the amount of time he dedicated to that identity, the researcher could conclude Harry's primary identity was that of a job seeker. Geoff also communicated two forms of professional identification simultaneously—stable professional identification and job seeker professional identification. Geoff was focused and committed to finding a CFO position, which he had prior to unemployment. He also became very energetic and enthusiastic about his search, linking him to a professional identification as a job seeker. Similar to Harry, due to the emphasis Geoff placed on his stable identification, the researcher could identify his primary identity as stable. Geoff didn't communicate simultaneous professional identities when he began blogging; he began as stable, shifted to adaptable, then resurged with simultaneous identifications of stable and job seeker. This leads us to the next section of shifting professional identifications.

Many Suits' identifications changed as their length of unemployment increased. Of the 11 Suits in this study, only three maintained a consistent professional identity throughout all of their narratives. Suits' professional identifications changed for a variety of reasons. As briefly mentioned above, Geoff experienced a shifting professional identification. He began with a stable identity, focused solely of CFO positions, and said he was lucky to not have to take just any job. Two months later Geoff said he hit a "low" after interviewing for and then losing a CFO position. His stable identity shifted to adaptable and was signaled by his statement: "If anything, I'm flexible and always ready to consider a new type of challenge" (line 1219-1220). A month

later, he began “to realize how important it is to actively work at ‘constantly filling the pipeline’” – a sales tactic used by a former colleague of his (line 1272-1273). It was at this time when he shifted again and started to experience job seeker and stable professional identifications simultaneously.

Patterns within the Suits’ professional identifications were also examined. Specifically, patterns within simultaneous identifications and patterns of shifting identifications were explored. One interesting finding was that when Suits entered a broken identification, they did not shift back into any of the other identifications. Three Suits began with stable identifications and ended with broken identifications. After nine months of unemployment Christopher began to communicate a broken professional identification. The experience had turned into a “frustrating ... confidence-crushing” process and “would like for this process to be over with” (lines 1677-1690). Seven months into unemployment Kevin M. began to communication a broken professional identification. He called the process a “roller coaster ride of emotion” and said “the longer I wait the more negative I get” (lines 461, 462, 470). Eleven months after John became unemployed he began communicating a broken professional identification. His blog described three interviews where he was “rejected” and described it feeling “like being jilted at the altar” (lines1049-1051). Michael was the only Suit to shift out of a broken identification. He began his blogs experiencing a broken identity, briefly shifted into a job seeker identity, but then ended and remained with a broken identity. The researcher also explored patterns within simultaneously held identifications. The only pattern found within the data was that broken identities were never held simultaneously with any other identity.

Conclusion

This study examined 84 blog entries authored by 11 unemployed Suits to explore how involuntary exit and long-term unemployment impact Suits' vocational socialization and professional identification. Analysis using a closed coding scheme was used to answer research question one, *"what sources of vocational socialization do Suits identify after an involuntary exit?"* Results indicated that Suits use Jablin's (2001) and Kramer's (2010) five sources of vocational socialization—media (n = 55), previous organizational experience (n = 51), peers and friends (n = 48), educational systems (n = 29), and family (n = 28). Results also indicated Suits use recruiters/headhunters as a sixth source of vocational socialization (n = 50). Support and encouragement was coded as a form of vocational socialization and was found within two sources: peers and friends, and family.

Thematic analysis was conducted to answer research question two, *"after an involuntary exit, how do workers describe their professional identification?"* The results showed four forms of professional identification. The most common identity was professional identification where Suits identified as a job seeker (n = 34, 42%). The second most common form of professional identification was adaptable professional identification. In this identity Suits were not committed to any professional identification and focused on adapting to others' professional expectations and ideals (n = 21, 26%). A stable professional identification was found when Suits remained committed to their past professional identity (n = 13, 16%). Suits experienced a broken professional identification when they began to feel hopeless, defeated, and their professional confidence was crushed (n = 13, 16%). Results also indicated that Suits can experience multiple professional identities simultaneously. Professional identities were also shown to shift

throughout the Suits’ unemployment experience. Theoretical and practical implications of these results are discussed in the following chapter.

CHAPTER 5. DISCUSSION

This study explored Suits' vocational socialization and professional identification during long-term unemployment after an involuntary exit. The study sought to answer two research questions: "*what sources of vocational socialization do Suits identify after an involuntary exit?*" and *"after an involuntary exit, how do workers describe their professional identification?"*. The results provided evidence that Suits use Jablin's (2001) and Kramer's (2010) five sources of vocational socialization. Results indicated, however, that for Suits the order of prevalence of the sources is different from previous studies, the definitions and subcategories of the sources need to be modified, and "recruiters" is an additional source of vocational socialization. Analysis went beyond Jablin's original definition of socialization, by including support and encouragement as a form of vocational socialization. Results also indicated that after an involuntary exit Suits communicated four types of professional identification: job seeker professional identification, stable professional identification, adaptable professional identification, and broken professional identification. Along with that, some Suits were found to have multiple forms of professional identification simultaneously and others showed a shifting professional identification as their length of unemployment increased. The remainder of this chapter provides a discussion of the results, limitations, and future research recommendations.

Suits' Vocational Socialization

Research conducted on vocational anticipatory socialization has largely focused on the process experienced during childhood, ignoring adults' experiences who are entering the phase later in life. This studied aimed to fill this void by examining Suits who are experiencing vocational socialization as adults. Jablin (2001) and Kramer (2010) found vocational socialization to be influenced by five primary sources: family, education, peers/friends, past

organizational experience, and media. This study confirmed those sources, but revealed they are used differently by Suits and some sources need to be redefined. For example, in socialization literature, family—specifically parents—are the most influential source that impacts the vocational anticipatory socialization process. This was different for Suits in two ways. First, spouses—not parents—were the most commonly cited source within the category of family. When Suits reported "family" influence as a whole, this still bypassed parental influence and instead reflected the influence of their spouses and children. Although parents were reported as sources of vocational socialization, they were mentioned primarily by one Suit who was not married. Secondly, family was the least commonly cited source of vocational socialization (n = 28, 10%). Suits primarily used media, peers/friends, and past organizational experiences as sources of vocational socialization. This supported Tan (2008) and Kramer (2010) who theorized peers would continue to influence vocational socialization in adults.

Results from this study also indicated that Jablin's (2001) and Kramer's (2010) five sources need to be redefined for vocational socialization experienced by Suits, specifically family and educational systems; Kramer's (2010) prior redefinition of past organizational experience was confirmed in this study. Family, as discussed above, initially focused on parents, aunts/uncles, grandparents, etc. As adults, parents are no longer the forefront of family; spouses and children become the motivating factor within an adult's family structure and need to be included in the family category. Educational systems also need to be redefined. Educational systems were initially limited to include schools and their classroom activities, research projects, and coordination of internships. Educational systems look different for Suits. This study found that educational systems are still used to learn about career opportunities, explore new vocational choices, and learn and practice different vocational skills but it didn't come from "school."

Instead, Suits used training courses, career coaches, alma matter career centers, job fairs, and outplacement programs. All of these sources were educational tools that helped Suits' vocational socialization and should be included as subcategories within the vocational source of education. Lastly, media needs to include online media as a subcategory. Jablin (2001) and Kramer (2010) focused on the medium of television as the most influential source within media. Online media was ignored. This study found media, as a whole, to be the most commonly cited source of vocational socialization for Suits; online media accounted for 84% of the category. One source definition—past organizational experience—was confirmed in this study. Jablin (2001) initially defined this source as part-time employment. Kramer (2010) renamed this source "past organizational experience" and redefined it to include prior part-time employment, prior full-time employment, and volunteer experience. This study also found that Suits past full-time and part-time employment, plus volunteering where influential subcategories within this source.

This study also found an additional source of vocational socialization that was used by Suits. Recruiters were the third most commonly cited source. As stated earlier, one important thing to note about recruiters is that they do not "help people to transition to new fields, but rather to find talented individuals who have done the job already in a different context, or people ready to move up to the next level in their same career path" (Fertig, 2012, para. 3). This is interesting for a couple of reasons. Vocational socialization is the process of choosing or limiting career choices. Recruiters, one of the most used sources of vocational socialization, was doing the choosing for the Suits—taking it out of the Suits hands. It is also interesting because this process is limited to, as stated in the definition of recruiters, the Suits prior professional experience. This means if Suits use recruiters, they drastically limit their next role and are giving up much power in the decision-making process.

Finally, by including support and encouragement as a form of vocational socialization, this study's analysis went beyond Jablin's (2001) original definition of socialization. Originally, vocational socialization focused on messages specific to a certain vocational role. Parents, for example, would socialize their children to pursue a certain occupational role, like a lawyer or teacher. The theoretically weak part of this original theory is how general encouragement and support are ignored. For example, parents who tell their children "you can be anything you want to be" are providing a vocational socialization message, but it wouldn't fit Jablin's original definition because it isn't role specific. This study coded for support and encouragement as part of the vocational socialization process. For Suits experiencing a new phase of vocational socialization, it appears that family—spouses and children—are more of a source of emotional support than a source that provides messages specific to a role. Friends of Suits were also found to provide as much support and encourage as they did of role-specific socialization messages.

Overall, Suits vocational socialization processes showed many differences from the vocational socialization process experienced in childhood. First, the source of family was different in two ways. Parents were not the forefront of this source, instead, children and spouses were the main influence. Secondly, family is the most commonly cited source of vocational socialization during childhood while Suits reported it as the least common source of vocational socialization. Suits vocational socialization process also showed the need to redefine the sources of family and educational systems, and confirmed the prior redefinition of past organizational experience. Finally, support and encouragement is a form of vocational socialization that was ignored in Jablin's (2001) original theory but included in the analysis of this study.

Suits' Professional Identification

Professional identification is defined as a feeling of oneness with a specific professional group. Individuals define themselves as members of a professional group because of shared attributes, beliefs, values, and experiences (Russo et al., 2008). The findings in this study confirmed and expanded current literature on professional identification. To review, this study found Suits communicated four types of professional identification throughout their unemployment experience: job seeker professional identification (identifies as a job seeker), adaptable professional identification (no commitment to a professional identity – adaptable to other's professional ideals), stable professional identification (committed to past professional identity), and broken professional identification (deflated professional identification). Results also found that Suits experienced multiple forms of professional identification simultaneously. This confirmed and expanded research by Russo (1998) where newspaper journalists reported substantial identification with both their organization and profession. It confirmed that multiple identities can be experienced simultaneously. It also confirmed that although two identifications can be held simultaneously, there is usually a dominant identity. Finally, the current study expanded the literature by showing multiple professional identities—not just organizational and professional—can be experienced simultaneously. What this means is that researchers need to study professional identification differently. Current research primarily focuses an examining or measuring an individual's professional identification as a single identification. Researchers have ignored that *multiple* professional identifications may be influencing the individual.

The results in the current study confirmed Pratt and colleagues (2006) findings and expanded their research into a new context. Their longitudinal study looked at medical students' professional identification. Overall, they found that professional identification isn't always a

stable phenomenon. This was clearly confirmed in the current study which found Suits' professional identities changed throughout their unemployment experience. Pratt and colleagues also found that certain changes to a student's professional identification were customized to fit the work at hand. This is similar to the current study's job seeker professional identification. For Suits, the work at hand was finding employment which is why they began to identify as a job seeker. Lastly, Pratt and colleagues found that some changes "lead to a devaluation of the identity" (p. 242). This is similar to the current study's broken professional identification where certain events, like experiencing a loss of three job positions in a row, triggered Suits to feel deflated and then questioned their professional value. Because professional identities are shown to shift, adapt and break, both studies highlight the importance for current research on professional identification to be conducted longitudinally. Finally, the current study expanded Pratt and colleagues findings into a new context—from a medical/health setting to corporate America. This confirmed that professional identification can be experienced, and therefore studied, in many contexts. Studying professional identification in various contexts will provide richer research and greater awareness of how it affects professionals and their organizations.

The findings on Suits professional identification confirmed and expanded current research. Confirming Russo's (1998) study, Suits were able to experience multiple professional identifications simultaneously, but still held a dominant identity. It expanded Russo's study by demonstrating that two professional identities can be held simultaneously. To adapt to these findings, researchers need to examine individuals' multiple professional identifications. Finally, the current study confirmed Pratt and colleagues (2006), showing that professional identities shift, adapt to the work at hand, and can be broken. This sheds light on the importance of

studying professional identification longitudinally. The current study also expanded their research from a medical context to the corporate world.

Practical Implications

This study presents practical implications for unemployed Suits and the organizations and the professionals who serve them. First, unemployed Suits need become more aware of the sources they use during the vocational socialization process. In doing so, they can identify which sources are being neglected and which need more attention. They can also begin to focus on the sources that are providing the most helpful information. Unemployed Suits should also become more involved with educational systems. Educational systems were close to being the least cited source of vocational socialization, yet it includes a variety of subcategories (training, career coaches, alma matter career centers, job fairs, company outplacement programs) that provide information valuable during the vocational socialization process. Finally, unemployed Suits should be aware and understand the implications of using recruiters as a primary source of vocational socialization. When they use recruiters, they are letting someone else take the reins in the decision-making process for their future role and it will be limited to past professional experience. This may lengthen the unemployment experience, therefore increasing the chance of a broken professional identification.

Second, it is important for unemployed Suits to become more aware of their professional identification after a job loss. Unemployed Suits should focus on their new identity as a job seeker. Even if they are adaptable to a new career, or stable in their past professional identity, if unemployed Suits make the job search their priority and treat it like a normal job, they will feel less stressed and more in control of the situation. This was demonstrated in this study by the little-to-no stress reported by Suits who identified as stable or as a job seeker. Unemployed Suits

should also try to identify events that may trigger a broken identification and signs that they are shifting into that identity. For example, after an individual experiences a number of road blocks and begins to feel a sense of hopelessness, he or she should refocus energy on a past professional role or the structure of a job seeker.

This study also presents practical implications for organizations and the professionals who serve unemployed Suits. Educational systems were one of the least cited sources of vocational socialization. Some of the Suits reported not knowing about the different types of educational sources, while others questioned the benefits of using them. Organizations and professionals who provide educational sources of vocational socialization need to better promote their services and why their services are beneficial. This will help get their services used by those they are targeting. They also need to encourage unemployed Suits to focus on a new identity as a job seeker. As stated above, this will give unemployed Suits an increased feeling of control and decreased feeling of stress. For professionals who work one-on-one with unemployed Suits, like career counselors/coaches, it is also important for them to recognize when an unemployed Suit is developing a broken identity and to refocus his or her energy. Sometimes it may be difficult for unemployed Suits to identify broken identifications in themselves, which is why it is important for professionals to notify them of signs of a broken identification and keep them on track as a job seeker.

Limitations and Future Research

There are at least three limitations within this study that present direction for future research. The first is the limitation presented by using blogs as the data; this limitation presents two challenges. The researcher could not ask specific questions or follow-up questions to help answer the study's research questions. The findings were limited to what the Suits chose to share

on their blog. Second, the blogs were posted on a highly publicized medium (the Wall Street Journal Website) and the site disclosed their names along with other demographic information. This may have limited what they chose to share. Along these lines, the only perspective offered is the Suits'. Individuals close to the Suits may report different forms of professional identification, or different types or prevalence of sources used by the Suits. A third limitation is the focus on the Suits which limits the transferability of findings to other unemployed populations.

These limitations offer directions for future research. By interviewing unemployed Suits, the researcher may be able to get more specific information relating to sources of vocational socialization and forms of professional identification. Like stated above, this is because the researcher would be able to ask specific questions and follow-up questions. Interviewing Suits would also grant them confidentiality within the study, which may allow them to open up and disclose information they felt was too private to share on a public blog. Future research could include interviews with individuals who are close to Suits—spouses, children, friends, etc. This could provide a different perspective and allow for deeper contextualization in the unemployment experience of Suits. Finally, this study should be conducted with various adult populations to get a broader picture of how involuntary exit and long-term unemployment affects unemployed adults.

Conclusion

This study confirmed and expanded current literature on professional identification and vocational socialization. In doing so, it shed light on new findings that have practical implications for unemployed Suits and the organizations who serve them. At different points throughout the unemployment experience, Suits experienced professional identities that shifted,

adapted to the work at hand, and broke. This confirmed findings from Pratt and colleagues (2006) and expanded their findings from the medical field to corporate experience, thus highlighting the need for researchers to study professional identification longitudinally and richen research by studying professional identification in various contexts. The findings about Suits' professional identification also confirmed research by Russo (1998). Suits could experience multiple identifications simultaneously, but still held a dominant identity. It expanded Russo's study by demonstrating that two professional identities can be experienced simultaneously and, therefore, should be studied as such. Suits' vocational socialization processes confirmed the use of Jablin's (2001) and Kramer's (2010) five sources of vocational socialization: family, education, peers and friends, media, and past organizational experience. Suits, however, showed quite a few differences from the vocational socialization process experienced in childhood. The order of prevalence and the internal sub-categories of the sources were different for Suits; suits also used recruiters as an additional source of vocational socialization. Finally, by including support and encouragement as a form of vocational socialization this study's analysis went beyond Jablin's (2001) original definition of socialization—strengthening a theoretically weak part of Jablin's original theory.

This study also provided numerous practical implications. Unemployed Suits need to use more sources within the educational category, become aware of implications that come from focusing on recruiters as a primary source of vocational socialization, and focus on a new identity as a job seeker. Professionals, like career coaches or outplacement service workers, who serve unemployed Suits need to work harder to promote their services and promote the benefits of using their services. Professionals who work one-on-one with unemployed Suits need to encourage a job seeker identity and help them avoid a broken identity. Overall, as the

unemployment crisis continues to affect American workers, researchers must focus on studies that provide practical guidelines that help the millions of unemployed workers and the organizations who are trying to help.

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APPENDIX. INFORMATION ON SUITS AND THEIR BLOGS

Name	Age	Past Occupation	Reason for involuntary exit	Total Posts	Unem-ployment date	First post	Last post	Time unem-ployed	New Job
Steve McConaughey	50	Director of Marketing	Position eliminated	5	11/2008	12/9/09	2/25/10	n/a	n/a
Henry Chalain	41	Relationship Manager	Position eliminated	5	5/2009	12/17/09	3/4/10	n/a	n/a
Kevin Mergens	40	Product Manager	Position eliminated	8	6/2009	10/8/09	2/17/10	n/a	n/a
Kevin Chenoweth	40	Senior Consultant	Position eliminated	6	4/2009	9/22/09	1/22/10	n/a	n/a
John Brownrigg	54	Senior Manager	Laid off	7	8/2008	9/10/09	3/2/10	16 mo.	Not provided
Geoff Hibner	59	CFO	Position lost after acquisition	12	8/2007	12/2/08	11/9/09	28 mo.	Financial Consultant
Christopher Janc	41	Senior Vice President	Laid off	6	1/2009	8/24/09	11/9/09	10 mo.	Not provided
Kenneth Jones	43	Services Product Line Manager	Laid off	3	3/2009	8/6/09	10/5/09	7 mo.	Product Manager
Michael Crehan	54	Senior Vice President	Laid off	11	3/2008	12/3/08	10/7/09	17 mo.	Career Development
Brian Murphy	35	Investment Banking Associate	Firm collapsed	5	6/2008	12/10/08	3/25/09	8 mo.	Investment Banking Associate
Kevin Hudson	52	IT Finance Director	Company relocated	16	11/2007	12/9/08	10/15/09	19 mo.	Not provided