

THE IMPACT OF OUTPLACEMENT ON SPEED AND QUALITY
OF REEMPLOYMENT

by

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(Under the Direction of Lillian T. Eby)

ABSTRACT

This study examined the impact of participation in outplacement services on 3 reemployment outcomes: speed of reemployment, new job satisfaction, compensation replacement and global life satisfaction among a group of recently downsized white-collar workers. Environmental and self awareness were examined as possible mediating processes by which outplacement influences these outcomes. Finally, the individual difference variable, proactive personality, was examined as a possible moderator of the relationships between both self and environmental awareness with each of the 3 reemployment outcomes. While results provide no support for these hypotheses, the relationship between environmental awareness and job satisfaction was significant ($\beta = .214$, $p < .05$) and self awareness was related to both job satisfaction ($\beta = .185$, $p < .05$) and life satisfaction ($\beta = .330$, $p < .01$).

INDEX WORDS: Job loss, Job search, Reemployment, Outplacement, Speed of reemployment, Quality of reemployment, Job satisfaction, Compensation replacement, Life satisfaction, Self awareness, Environmental awareness, Proactive personality

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DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to my parents and siblings whose support and encouragement have given me the strength to complete this project. Thank you for believing in me and for helping me to keep my eye on what matters most to me.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Much of the research on the consequences of organizational layoffs has focused on individual-level responses to involuntary unemployment including perceptual, emotional, and physiological reactions (e.g. Leana and Feldman, 1988; Warr, Jackson & Banks, 1988), personality, demographic and situational moderators of these reactions (e.g. Hepworth, 1980; Whelan, 1992), and individual style coping strategies (e.g. Leana & Feldman, 1988; Latack, Kinicki & Prussia, 1995; Wanberg, 1997). As more and more workers are faced with multiple job changes throughout their career, the focus has shifted from understanding unemployment to understanding and identifying predictors of successful reemployment (Wanberg, Kanfer, & Rotundo, 1999). For instance, research on reemployment success has identified many of the psychological and situational antecedents of job-search behavior, including job-search motivation, general and job-search self-efficacy and job-search intensity (e.g. Caplan, Vinokur, Price & van Ryn, 1989; Eden & Aviram, 1993; Vinokur, van Ryn, Gramlich & Price, 1991; Vinokur & Caplan, 1987; Wanberg, Watt, & Rumsey, 1996; Wanberg, Kanfer and Rotundo, 1999).

While such research is important, we know little about the impact of organized interventions like outplacement services and other job-search training programs on the speed and quality of reemployment of displaced workers, particularly for those in white-collar jobs. As these interventions become increasingly popular for white-collar corporate layoffs, it is important to understand their impact and the processes by which they help individuals to obtain

reemployment. From January 1999 through December 2001, a total of 9.9 million American workers were displaced from their jobs and approximately 4 million of these workers lost jobs that they had held for at least 3 years (Bureau of Labor Statistics). While practitioners tout the benefits of outplacement as a job-loss intervention, evidence for the efficacy of these programs is largely anecdotal (Kirk, 1994). Few studies have provided the empirical evidence needed to assess the outcomes of such a program for the individuals and employers involved. This is surprising, given the large sums of money that organizations spend on these services each year (Meyer & Shadle, 1994; Ross, Donahue and Patton, 1998).

The purpose of this study is to determine the effectiveness of outplacement services on the speed and quality of reemployment among a group of recently downsized, white-collar individuals. Although a few other studies have assessed the impact of job-search training programs on mental health and motivation to seek reemployment (e.g. Caplan, Vinokur & Price, 1989; Vinokur & Caplan, 1987; Caplan, Vinokur, Price & van Ryn, 1989; Vinokur, van Ryn, Gramlich & Price, 1991), the present study expands upon earlier research in several ways. First, the present research assesses the impact of a job-loss intervention geared primarily towards white-collar workers. Second, the current study examines the impact of this intervention on the speed and quality of reemployment, using both individuals who have and have not used outplacement. Third, self awareness and environmental awareness are examined in an effort to understand how and why outplacement may influence these outcomes. Finally, an individual difference variable, proactive personality, is examined as a possible moderator of the relationship between the two dimensions of awareness and individual reemployment outcomes.

The Problem of Job Loss

Recent changes in business trends, technological advances, global competition, and greater demands for higher quality products and services have come to characterize work in the past decade and will no doubt shape the one to come. As a result, employees will face new and different challenges and more job changes. The expectation that one's work-life will be a series of careers or occupations, rather than a single career or occupation is becoming more common. This *new careerism*, sometimes termed the *protean* or *boundaryless* career (Meyer & Shadle, 1994; Callanan & Greenhaus, 1994) is the result of a much more fast-paced and constantly changing work environment, the effects of which are felt by millions of employees who become laid-off each year due to organizational downsizing and restructuring.

For most individuals, the impact of job loss is negative. Job loss has been associated with a myriad of adverse psychological, physiological and financial consequences. Among the most common are increased stress, anger, depression, decreased self-esteem, financial strain, stress on family and marital relationships, and even alcohol and drug abuse (Kozlowski, Chao, Smith, & Hedlund, 1993; Leana & Feldman, 1988; Leana & Feldman, 1994; Liem & Liem, 1986). The loss of time structure (the degree to which individuals perceive their use of time as structured and useful) and the sudden lack of social interaction associated with the loss of one's job may work to compound these effects (Jahoda, 1982; Wanberg, Griffiths & Gavin, 1997).

While these reactions to job loss have been of concern to researchers in the past, more recent research has focused on the issues facing unemployed individuals as they seek and obtain reemployment. Several reemployment outcomes are of particular importance in evaluating how people fare following a job loss. This study examines the outcomes of speed of reemployment, quality of reemployment and life satisfaction.

Speed of reemployment. While the processes of coping with and overcoming the symptoms of job loss can be difficult, research shows that individuals who remain unemployed for long periods of time are more likely to experience a decline in financial resources, motivation, and job-search self-efficacy (Wanberg, Kanfer & Rotundo, 1990; Kozlowski et al., 1993). These individuals are also likely to become apathetic, cynical and hopeless following unsuccessful attempts at reemployment (Leana & Feldman, 1992; Warr, Jackson & Banks, 1988). Thus, the length of time an individual remains unemployed seems critical to determining the impact that the experience will ultimately have on them.

Reemployment quality. In addition to the threats posed by continued unemployment, a concern for many individuals who seek reemployment is that of underemployment. After losing their jobs, many people may accept employment for which they are not well-suited, or are underpaid, or for which they are generally dissatisfied (Burris, 1983; Clogg, Sullivan, & Mutchler, 1986; Kaufman, 1988; Newman, 1988; Zvonkovic, 1988).

Several studies have addressed the prevalence of underemployment and the issues surrounding an individual's acceptance of less than satisfactory reemployment after a layoff. For instance, in a study of job satisfaction among reemployed older workers, Mallinckrodt (1990) found employees to be less satisfied with pay and benefits at their new jobs. In addition, Burke (1986) found that 62% of recently reemployed individuals took a cut in pay, and that 43% of new employees rated their new job as less desirable than their previous one.

While this premise seems valid, the tendency for individuals to find new jobs that are less than satisfactory has been challenged by one recent study. Wanberg (1995) findings did not support the expectation that employees would find less quality reemployment after unemployment. However, this study has been criticized for having neglected to distinguish

participants who were unemployed for reasons other than a layoff. Approximately 44% of Wanberg's sample was unemployed because they were forced to resign or because they were fired, and only 33% of this sample had been laid off. So, despite this single-study to the contrary, the overall impression supported by the literature is the tendency for people to accept reemployment that is less satisfying than their previous job.

Liem (1992) suggests that accepting a job for which one is overqualified may have a detrimental effect on an individual, and in some cases, it may be worse than remaining unemployed. Several studies emphasize this potential harm of underemployment by showing its effects on employee mental health (O'Brien & Feather, 1990; Winefield, Tiggemann & Goldney, 1988). In two different studies, when compared with a group of satisfactorily reemployed individuals, dissatisfactorily reemployed and unemployed individuals did not differ. Both groups experienced increases in depression, anxiety and negative moods (Leana & Feldman 1995, Winefield, Winefield, Tiggemann & Goldney, 1991).

Besides the apparent effects on mental health, underemployment may also affect the work productivity, motivation and organizational commitment of the individuals in under-qualified positions. When an individual accepts a job that offers inferior pay or benefits, or that underutilizes their skills or education, they are likely to spend less time and energy in their current jobs because they are still looking for reemployment elsewhere (Leana & Feldman, 1994). Thus, individuals who accept less than satisfactory reemployment are likely to be unhappy, discouraged in their career and less likely to contribute to the success of the new organization.

Life satisfaction. Job loss has been directly related to decreases in life satisfaction (Burke, 1984; Leana & Feldman, 1994). In fact, it has been ranked as one of the top 10

traumatic life experiences (Spera, Buhrfeind, & Pennebaker, 1994). For many individuals, job loss is accompanied by financial stress, depression and a negative impact on family life, which may also lead to a decline in overall life satisfaction (Latack and Dozier, 1986). Consequently, methods for improving an individual's overall life satisfaction during or after a period of job loss should be of interest to researchers of unemployment.

Outplacement as a Job Loss Intervention

Among the literature on suggested job-loss interventions, outplacement is listed as a best practice for organizations undergoing layoffs (Feldman & Leana, 1994). Outplacement is designed to assist the unemployed in finding high quality reemployment quickly. Although little empirical work has been done to assess the systematic impact of these services, outplacement has received some attention in the counseling and practitioner literature where researchers have begun to outline and operationalize the types of services offered by outplacement providers.

Several models of outplacement delivery exist to describe the functions and processes by which outplacement works (Aquilanti, 1999). Perhaps the most conceptually comprehensive and easily understood of these models is Kirk's (1994) Holistic Outplacement model. This model of outplacement delivery suggests 3 functions by which outplacement acts to intervene during a job loss. First, outplacement helps individuals to regain equilibrium or to cope with the shock and trauma associated with job loss. Second, outplacement helps individuals to assess what to do next with their career. Finally, outplacement assists individuals in their job-search. A description of each of these functions follows.

Coping with the job loss. Coping has been defined as the cognitive and behavioral efforts individuals use to contend with a stressful life event (Beehr & Newman, 1978; Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). There has been a great deal of research on the topic of coping and from this

literature emerge two broad categories of coping strategies; active, or problem-focused coping and palliative, or symptom-focused coping (Leana & Feldman, 1994). Problem-focused coping includes engaging in behaviors that are meant to eliminate the undesired state of being unemployed such as answering job-ads, seeking retraining or education in a new occupation, or relocating to find reemployment. Symptom-focused coping strategies, on the other hand, are behaviors aimed at decreasing the negative symptoms, such as depression and stress, associated with job loss. Symptom-focused behaviors might include joining a social support group, getting involved in non-work activities, or at worst, avoiding, minimizing, or distancing oneself from the situation.

Early theoretical research suggested that individuals who take an active, problem-focused approach to coping with job loss would be more likely to obtain reemployment and regain psychological health than would individuals who take a more symptom-focused approach because problem-focused strategies are aimed at eliminating unemployment altogether (Leana & Feldman, 1994). However, as findings from Leana and Feldman (1992) suggest, problem-focused behaviors like job-hunting may actually serve to decrease psychological health and even life-satisfaction when they are followed by failure, rejection, or frustration. Thus, it may be beneficial for individuals to engage in some symptom-reducing strategies before or while they seek reemployment.

Although outplacement is typically categorized as an active coping strategy (Leana & Feldman, 1988, 1995), it is arguable that outplacement also provides opportunities to engage in many of the symptom focused strategies noted above. For example, individuals in outplacement programs are likely to experience some level of social and emotional support from counselors and fellow job loss victims. This support may serve to reduce the symptoms of job-loss in

several ways. First, outplacement services may help individuals relinquish feelings of self-blame as they learn that others are experiencing the same loss and confusion (Caplan et al., 1989).

Second, outplacement participants who engage in career counseling or career management workshops are likely to improve their outlook when they come to recognize job loss as a relatively common event in light of the dynamic nature of today's careers. According to Latack and Dozier (1986), individuals who learn to perceive job loss as a career transition rather than a career setback are more likely to remain motivated and subsequently, to make future career decisions that benefit them. Finally, research shows that social support received from job-search training programs can help to inoculate job-seekers against any set-backs they may face as they pursue reemployment (Caplan et al., 1989).

At last, since outplacement is, indeed, an active coping strategy, individuals participating in outplacement are likely to experience an increase in the degree to which their time is structured and useful. For instance, participants who fill their time by engaging in activities such as resume writing, networking, or attending meetings and workshops, may be using their time more wisely than if they were conducting their job search from home. There is some support for the notion that time structure is related to mental health among the unemployed (Wanberg, Griffiths, & Gavin, 1997).

Career development. Besides helping people to cope with the trauma of job loss, outplacement helps individuals to refocus their energies on reemployment. For many laid-off workers, a job-loss can also mean a career-shift. Outplacement can help individuals facing this challenge by helping them to collect information that will guide and direct their career development. For instance, individuals going through outplacement typically engage in individual career counseling and other activities designed to foster self-assessment, career

exploration, goal setting, decision-making, and action planning. Each of these services can aid in career choice, career planning, and career preparation (Kirk, 1994). In particular, career exploration has been linked with positive career outcomes such as an increased number of career options, more satisfaction with career options and more satisfaction with their career choices (Stumpf et al, 1983).

Job-search assistance. A third function of outplacement is that it assists the unemployed in their search for a new job. Outplacement service providers typically provide clients with clerical support services in the form of a workstation or office space, access to computers, copiers and fax machines, long-distance telephone calling, automated voice-mail messaging service, and stationary.

Beyond this type of clerical support, individuals going through outplacement may engage in classes or workshops that teach skills in networking, resume building, job-hunting, interviewing, or salary negotiation. Many outplacement firms also provide access to resources such as job-banks and search firms or recruiters. Among these resources, networking, in particular, is shown to predict probability of reemployment and speed of reemployment (Wanberg, Kanfer & Banas, 2000).

In summary, outplacement is both a symptom- and problem-focused intervention designed to provide the social and emotional support needed during a job loss, as well as the personal career counseling, job-search skills, career development and networking opportunities which have been linked with successful reemployment outcomes and increased mental health. Like other job-search training programs, outplacement may also improve generalized self-esteem and job-search self-efficacy through modeling, teaching skills in small steps to maximize success, and providing a safe avenue for attempting new behaviors in a positive environment

(Leana & Feldman, 1995). For these reasons, participation in outplacement should predict the length of time that employees remain unemployed.

H1: Participation in outplacement services will be positively related to speed of reemployment, such that individuals who report greater participation in the services will report shorter periods of unemployment.

It is also expected that participation in outplacement will increase the *quality* of reemployment that an individual obtains. Two indicators of quality reemployment are 1) the ability of job-seekers to find a job that offers compensation that is comparable to that which they earned from their former job (compensation replacement) and 2) an individuals' satisfaction with their new job (Leana & Feldman, 1992, Gowan, Riordan & Gatewood, 1999).

Several studies of blue-collar workers suggest that participation in job-search programs is related to quality of reemployment. In a randomized field experiment, Caplan et al. (1989) tested an intervention that included job-search training, positive social reinforcement, and a problem-solving process that emphasized inoculation against setbacks. Researchers found that participants in the treatment condition yielded higher quality reemployment in terms of earnings and job satisfaction. They also found that higher levels of engagement (participation) in the intervention lead participants to find permanent, rather than temporary reemployment.

Other research suggests that participants of outplacement are likely to experience a greater number of prospects for reemployment (Leana & Feldman, 1992). Having a greater number of reemployment options may prevent financially stressed individuals from acting out of desperation or accepting the first job that becomes available to them (Leana & Feldman, 1994).

Finally, several studies show participation in job-search programs to be related to an increase in job-search self-efficacy (Caplan et al, 1989; Vinokur & Price, 1991). According to

Leana and Feldman (1995), as individuals gain confidence in their job-search abilities and their future job prospects, they also become less likely to accept unsatisfactory reemployment.

Consequently, it is expected that participation in outplacement will be associated with higher quality reemployment with respect to compensation and job satisfaction.

H2: Participation in outplacement services will be positively related to compensation replacement such that the difference between old and new job salaries will be more positive for individuals who report greater participation in outplacement services than for those who report less participation.

H3: Participation in outplacement services will be positively related to new job satisfaction such that individuals who report greater participation in the services will report greater satisfaction with their new jobs.

Although many studies have shown unemployment to be associated with a decrease in life satisfaction, few studies have reported the effects of job loss interventions on increasing life satisfaction. The rationale for proposing such an effect is based on the notion that outplacement programs promote participant engagement in various problem focused and symptom focused coping strategies. Problem focused coping strategies include activities such as resume writing and job-search workshops aimed at alleviating the problem of unemployment altogether. Symptom focused strategies include things like social and emotional support, participation in personal counseling and an increase in the degree to which participants perceive their time to be structured and useful. Since problem- and symptom-focused coping should reduce the stress associated with unemployment, it is proposed that participation in outplacement services will be positively related to overall life satisfaction.

H4: Participation in outplacement services will be positively related to life satisfaction such that individuals who report greater participation in the services will report higher life satisfaction.

Awareness as a Mediator

While it is important to determine the impact of outplacement participation on reemployment outcomes like the speed and quality of reemployment, in order to fully understand the processes by which outplacement operates to influence these outcomes, a mediated model of outplacement is needed. According to Kirk's (1994) model of outplacement delivery, outplacement consists of 3 functional elements: coping, career development, and job-search assistance. There is a substantial amount of literature addressing the effects of both coping and job-search assistance on reemployment outcomes (e.g. Leana & Feldman 1992; Caplan et al., 1989). The present study focuses, instead, on a relatively unexplored aspect of career development, career *awareness*, which may be a critical mechanism by which outplacement influences reemployment outcomes. Specifically, two components of career awareness, *self and environmental awareness*, are each proposed to mediate the relationship between outplacement participation and two different reemployment outcomes, the speed with which individuals are able to find reemployment and the quality of reemployment that they obtain.

Career development in outplacement. For some individuals, the prospect of a career transition may be exciting, presenting an opportunity for increased autonomy, entrepreneurship, or an increasing number of occupational alternatives. For other individuals, it may create some anxiety, forcing them to make decisions before they feel prepared or equipped to do so. Outplacement is designed to help individuals face career transitions with increased certainty about their careers. As noted earlier, outplacement may provide participants with more career options as well as the tools to determine those jobs for which they would be best matched in terms of skills, education and personal qualities. One of the primary ways outplacement does

this is by engaging participants in planned career development via the practice of career exploration (Kirk, 1994).

Career exploration refers to the purposive behavior and cognitions that afford an individual access to career-related information that was not previously a part of the individual's knowledge scheme (Stumpf, Colarelle & Hartman, 1983). In particular, career exploration is the active process of gathering career-related information in order to make well-informed career decisions. Individuals may gather career information from a variety of sources, but two sources have been widely identified as being the most important: the environment and oneself (Stumpf et al, 1983).

Environmental exploration involves gathering information about various occupations, jobs and organizations. This type of exploration might include an assessment of the market for a particular job or field, an investigation of the duties and responsibilities involved in a particular job or occupation, the different career options available to a person with a particular degree or skill set or information about salary and benefit options at different organizations. In the outplacement setting, individuals may engage in environmental exploration by attending job-search workshops, using online job-banks and research tools, networking with other outplacement participants, or meeting with a personal career counselor.

Self-exploration, or self-assessment, is the process by which individuals gather information and examine their own personal qualities, values, attitudes, and interests that are relevant to career decision-making. Outplacement participants are usually granted access to a variety of career-related assessments, including personality, vocational-interests, and values inventories. They may also engage in self-reflective thought or writing exercises during workshops or meetings with their personal career counselor.

Exploration has been studied extensively among high school and college students who are embarking on new careers. Research shows that high school and college students who engage in exploration are likely to have more career options, be more satisfied with their career options and be more satisfied with their career choices (Stumpf et al, 1983). Far less research has addressed the exploration behaviors of adults facing career transitions.

Career theory suggests that adults facing career transitions can gain just as much from exploration as do younger populations. However, as noted in Greenhaus & Callanan (1994), career exploration is not always easy and it is not guaranteed to provide profound or useful information. For example, individuals who engage in only a limited amount of exploration or who do not obtain information from reliable sources may base their career decisions on information that is stereotyped, biased or distorted. Thus, the accuracy of information gained during exploration is key to making effective career decisions.

Self and environmental awareness. Awareness is defined as the relatively complete and accurate perception of one's own personal qualities and of the characteristics of one's relevant environment. According to Callanan & Greenhaus (1991), if conducted properly, self and environmental exploration should enable an individual to become more fully aware of themselves and their environment. Thus, effective environmental exploration should lead individuals toward a state of environmental awareness, or knowledge regarding which work settings they are most likely to be comfortable and happy working and from which occupations or organizations their career needs will be met. Likewise, effective self-exploration should lead individuals toward a state of self-awareness, allowing individuals to answer questions about their own career-related strengths, weaknesses, interests and values, including their preferences on extrinsic and intrinsic job factors and the balance between their work-and non-work lives.

In addition to being a by-product of effective career exploration behavior, awareness has also been linked with several positive career planning outcomes. For instance, individuals who report extensive awareness are likely to have obtained accurate information regarding possible occupational and career options as well as an awareness of their personal career identity (Callanan & Greenhaus, 1991). They are also more likely to have achieved clarity in their career goals, to have established valid and realistic career goals and to be more satisfied with their goals than those who were relatively unaware of self and of career fields (Greenhaus & Callanan, 1994; Hawkins & Brenner, 1983). Career awareness, then, may be the underlying process by which individuals move from exploration behaviors during outplacement to making successful career decisions.

Environmental awareness as a mediator. It is expected that since outplacement provides resources and professionally guided activities for environmental exploration, participation in outplacement would be linked with environmental awareness. Environmental awareness or knowledge of one's environment should also lead to more career options, more satisfaction with those options, and ultimately more satisfaction with career choices (Greenhaus & Callanan, 1994). Thus, it is proposed that environmental awareness will partially mediate the relationship between outplacement participation and the reemployment outcomes, speed of reemployment and quality of reemployment as measured by compensation replacement and job satisfaction.

H5: Environmental awareness will partially mediate the relationship between outplacement participation and speed of reemployment.

H6: Environmental awareness will partially mediate the relationship between outplacement participation and compensation replacement.

H7: Environmental awareness will partially mediate the relationship between outplacement participation and job satisfaction.

Self awareness as a mediator. Since self awareness allows individuals to evaluate their career choices as they relate to their own strengths, weaknesses, interests and values, and since it has been shown to decrease career indecision (Callanan & Greenhaus, 1991), it is expected that self awareness will be related to the speed with which individuals are able to obtain reemployment. It is also expected that individuals who exhibit self awareness will chose jobs for which they are well-suited in terms of skills, interests, values and personality. Thus, it is proposed that self awareness will partially mediate the relationship between outplacement participation and speed of reemployment, job satisfaction and life satisfaction.

H8: Self awareness will partially mediate the relationship between outplacement participation and speed of reemployment.

H9: Self awareness will partially mediate the relationship between outplacement participation and job satisfaction.

H10: Self awareness will partially mediate the relationship between outplacement participation and life satisfaction.

Proactive Personality as a Moderator

A variety of individual difference variables have been examined in relation to career success. Among these variables are demographic, self-monitoring, personality and motivation related variables (Judge & Bretz, 1994; Wayne, Liden, Kraimer, & Graf, 1999; Seibert, Crant, & Kraimer, 1999). Despite the notion that individual differences may influence both objective and subjective indicators of career success, relatively little research has been done to identify the specific personality factors that might contribute to successful reemployment outcomes following a layoff. This study examines the role of proactive personality, or an individual's disposition toward proactive behavior (Bateman & Crant, 1993), on reemployment outcomes following a layoff.

Several studies have already identified a positive link between proactive personality and general career success. For instance, proactive individuals are more likely to identify and act on opportunities, to show initiative, and to persevere until they bring about a meaningful change in their environment (Crant & Kraimer, 1999). More specifically, people who are proactive are likely to seek out job and organizational information, obtain career support, conduct career planning, and persist in the face of career obstacles (Ashford & Black, 1996; Frese, Fay, Hilburger, Leng, & Tag, 1997; Morrison, 1993). Proactive individuals are also more likely to experience higher salary, a greater number of promotions and higher career satisfaction (Seibert, Crant & Kraimer, 1999). In the case of job loss, it follows that proactive individuals should be more likely to persist in the face of setbacks, and to seek or create more opportunities and career options for themselves than will less proactive individuals.

In this study, proactive personality is expected to moderate the relationship between both environmental and self awareness with speed of reemployment. Specifically, it is expected that while both self and environmental awareness will be related to speed of reemployment, proactive individuals will be more likely to act on their awareness, and thus will experience shorter periods of unemployment than individuals who are less proactive.

H11: Proactive personality will moderate the relationship between environmental awareness and length of unemployment, such that the positive relationship between environmental awareness and speed of reemployment will be weaker for individuals who are less proactive than for individuals who are more proactive.

H12: Proactive personality will moderate the relationship between self awareness and speed of reemployment such that the positive relationship between self awareness and speed of reemployment will be weaker for individuals who are less proactive than for individuals who are more proactive.

Since proactive individuals seek out more career options, it is likely that they will also experience a greater number of job offers and a greater sense of flexibility in deciding which jobs

to accept. For this reason, individuals high in proactive personality should be more likely to obtain jobs that offer higher compensation and jobs for which they will be more satisfied. In this study, it is expected that while self and environmental awareness will be related to compensation replacement and job satisfaction, proactive individuals will be more likely to act on this awareness. As such, proactive individuals should experience higher levels of compensation replacement and job satisfaction than individuals who are less proactive.

H13: Proactive personality will moderate the relationship between environmental awareness and compensation replacement such that positive relationship between environmental awareness and compensation replacement will be weaker for individuals who are less proactive than for individuals who are more proactive.

H14: Proactive personality will moderate the relationship between environmental awareness and new job satisfaction such that the positive relationship between environmental awareness and job satisfaction will be weaker for individuals who are less proactive than for individuals who are more proactive.

H15: Proactive personality will moderate the relationship between self awareness and new job satisfaction such that the positive relationship between self awareness and new job satisfaction will be weaker for individuals who are less proactive than for individuals who are more proactive.

CHAPTER 2

METHODS

Participants and Procedure

Data for this study was collected via mail-out survey from 146 white-collar workers who were laid off between 6 months and 1 year prior to the time of survey and who were eligible for outplacement services as part of their termination package.

Initially, six-hundred-twenty former employees from 20 different locations of a large U.S. financial services firm were selected to participate in the study. The three-step total design method suggested by Dillman (1991) was used to collect the data. First, a postcard was sent to participants informing them that they would be sent a survey within a week. Second, the survey, along with a cover letter (see Appendix A) explaining the purpose of the study and informing participants of their rights to confidentiality and informed consent, as well as a raffle ticket for a chance to win a Palm Pilot™ (see Appendix B) and a self-addressed, postage-paid envelope was sent to participants. Finally, a reminder postcard was sent out which thanked participants who had completed and returned surveys, and reminded others to please complete and return the survey as quickly as possible. Completed questionnaires were sent directly to the researchers at The University of Georgia Department of Psychology.

From this mailing, 154 individuals returned surveys. Of those who returned surveys, 94 individuals had found reemployment, 57 were still seeking reemployment and 3 were retired or not seeking reemployment for some other reason (i.e. recently had children and wanted to take

time off). In addition, 32 surveys were returned as undeliverable. Taking this information into account, the overall response rate from this group was 26%.

Because the hypotheses for this study involve outcomes related to reemployment (i.e. speed of reemployment and quality of reemployment), only those respondents who were reemployed at the time of the study were included. A power analysis was conducted using techniques suggested by Cohen (1988) for multiple regression analyses. The power analysis indicated that approximately 143 reemployed participants were needed to adequately test the study hypotheses (see Appendix C for calculations). Thus, additional data collection was targeted at a random sample of outplacement participants who were known to be reemployed.

Procedures used in the second mailing were identical to those used in the first mailing. Two hundred forty-four individuals from a cross section of industries and employers in a large city in the Southeast were selected to participate. From this mailing, fifty-two individuals returned surveys and fifteen surveys were returned as undeliverable, yielding a 23% response rate for this group.

Taken together, the two mailings yielded an overall sample size of 146 re-employed individuals. Fifty-eight percent of the sample ($n=84$) were male and 42% ($n= 62$) were female. Participants' positions within their former companies ranged from administrative to executive, and the majority of participants were individual contributors (38%) or managers (40%). Salaries ranged from approximately \$25,000 to \$225,000, with a mean salary of \$78,845 ($SD=\$37,622$).

Measures

All participants filled out a 6-page questionnaire regarding their reemployment experiences after being laid off as well as some of the personal factors believed to affect reemployment outcomes. Questions included inquiries regarding individual's participation in

outplacement services, the speed with which they were able to find reemployment, the quality of their reemployment (as measured by compensation replacement and new job satisfaction); life satisfaction, self and environmental awareness, and finally, proactive personality.

Participation in outplacement services. Participation in outplacement services was measured as a continuous variable, with level of participation as the unit of examination. Specifically, participants were asked to indicate how often (*0=never, 1=infrequently, 2=frequently, 3=very frequently*) they participated in the following seven services offered by the outplacement firm: 1) individual counseling, 2) self assessment tools 3) classes and workshops offered at the outplacement center, 4) classes and workshops offered online 5) office and logistical support 6) access to a job banks and 7) online job research tools. Participation in outplacement was determined by summing the frequency responses across these 7 major services. Thus, level of participation could range from 0 (never participated in any of the services) to 21 (very frequent participation in all 7 services), depending on individual responses.

Because this measure was developed specifically for this study, an exploratory factor analysis was conducted using Principal Components extraction and oblique rotation to determine the number of factors that might emerge from the 7-item scale. The sample size for these analyses was N=107. Means, standard deviations and the input correlation matrix of items in this scale can be found in Table 1. Eigenvalues and percent variance explained by each extracted factor from the seven-item scale can be found in Table 2.

Several criteria were examined in order to determine the number of factors to be retained (Ford, MacCallum, Tait, 1986). First, the Kaiser (1970) criterion of retaining only those factors with eigenvalues greater than 1.0 would suggest that only one factor should be retained for this measure. The first factor yielded an eigenvalue of 3.31 and factor 2, an eigenvalue of .94.

Second, a scree test revealed a significant break in the continuity of the pattern of eigenvalues after the first factor, also indicating that only one factor should be retained. Third, there was a substantial decrease in the incremental variance accounted for by the addition of each successive factor after the first factor. Specifically, the addition of a second factor did not contribute to the explanation of total common variance any more than a single factor from a 7-item scale would be expected to contribute by chance (Kachigan, 1982). Finally, a parallel factor analysis of randomly generated data confirms that the emergence of more than one factor is more likely in a randomly generated group of 7 items than in this group of seven items. Overall, results from these analyses suggest that use of outplacement services should be measured as a single factor. Factor loadings for the 7-item measure are shown in Table 2. The Cronbach alpha reliability coefficient for this measure was .81.

Speed of reemployment. Consistent with previous research (Leana & Feldman, 1995), speed of reemployment was measured using the question “For how long, *in months*, were you unemployed before finding reemployment?” Average length of unemployment for this sample was 4.38 months ($SD=3.62$).

Quality of reemployment. Quality of reemployment was assessed by measuring the level of compensation replacement and job satisfaction that individuals experienced after reemployment. To assess compensation replacement (the degree to which participant’s new salary matches their salary before being laid off) participants were asked to indicate the dollar value of their salary, at their former job and at their new job. The difference between these two values (new salary minus former salary) was computed and the new value was used to represent compensation replacement. Thus, a positive value for compensation replacement would infer a positive change in salary and a negative value for compensation replacement infers a negative

change in salary. In this sample, the average compensation replacement was -\$10,800. Thus, on average, employees from this sample made \$10,800 less than they did in their former jobs.

To assess new job satisfaction, the 10-item Job Satisfaction Scale developed by Warr, Cook & Wall (1979) was used. Questions from this measure include items regarding both extrinsic satisfaction (e.g. satisfaction with pay, supervisors, physical working conditions) and intrinsic satisfaction (e.g. satisfaction with recognition, chances for promotion, and opportunities to use their abilities). Responses on this scale range from 1=*strongly dissatisfied* to 5= *strongly satisfied*. Warr, Cook and Wall report an alpha coefficient of .88 for this 10-item scale. The current study reveals a coefficient alpha of .92. Items from this measure can be found in Appendix D.

Self and environmental awareness. Two subscales of Callanan and Greenhaus' (1991) Career Indecision Scale were used to measure participants' levels of self awareness and environmental awareness. The Knowledge of Self subscale, which was used to measure self-awareness, includes 9 items related to how well participants understand their skills, interests and values as they relate to work; "I know very well the kind of work tasks or projects I find boring" and "I know what would be a nice balance between my career, my family life and my personal life." Callanan and Greenhaus reported an alpha coefficient of .80. In this study, the alpha coefficient for this scale was .85. Items from this scale can be found in Appendix E1.

Four questions from the Knowledge of External Work Environment subscale were used to assess participants' level of environmental awareness. These items include "I have a good grasp on what career opportunities might exist for me with different employers" and "I know little about whether there are other occupations that might be more appropriate for me than my current line of work (reverse scored)." Responses on this scale were indicated using a five-point

likert scale ($1 = \text{strongly disagree}$ to $5 = \text{strongly agree}$). Callanan and Greenhaus (1991) reported an alpha coefficient of .58 for this subscale. The current study yields an alpha coefficient of .66. Items from this scale can be found in Appendix E2.

Life satisfaction. The five-item Diener, et al. (1985) Satisfaction With Life Scale (SWLS) was used to assess life satisfaction. Questions like “In most ways my life is close to my ideal” and “I am satisfied with my life,” were answered according to a 5-point likert scale from $1 = \text{strongly disagree}$ to $5 = \text{strongly agree}$. Diener, et al. report an alpha coefficient of .87 for this scale. The current study yields an alpha coefficient of .84. Items from this scale are listed in Appendix F.

Proactive personality. Finally, participants responded to the 17-item Bateman and Crant (1993) Proactive Personality Scale. Questions include “When I have a problem, I tackle it head-on,” “I am great at turning problems into opportunities,” and “I enjoy facing and overcoming obstacles to my ideas.” Responses were indicated on a 5-point scale ($1 = \text{strongly disagree}$, $5 = \text{strongly agree}$). Bateman and Crant report an alpha coefficient of .89 for this measure. In the current study, coefficient alpha was .91. Items from this measure are listed in Appendix G.

Control Variables

Sample. Sixty-two percent of the overall sample ($n=94$) were former employees of the same large financial services company and 38% ($n=52$) were randomly chosen from the database of a local participating outplacement firm. No differences existed between these groups on any of the dependent measures. However, these two groups did differ on the independent variable, frequency of use of outplacement services, ($t(136)=-2.426$, $p<.05$ $M_{\text{sample1}}=5.77$, $M_{\text{sample2}}=7.98$), so a dummy variable representing the sample was used as a control variable in all analyses involving outplacement participation.

Problem and symptom focused coping. In order to control for the effects of coping on individual reemployment outcomes, items from two subscales of Kinicki and Latack's (1990) Coping with Involuntary Job Loss scale were used to measure problem focused and emotion focused (symptom focused) coping. The three items used to measure problem focused coping were derived from the six-item Nonwork Organization (NWO) subscale, and included the items "worked on ways to save money," "watch the budget and conserve money" and "keep busy or very active." These three items were chosen because they showed the highest loadings on the NWO factor in the Kinicki & Latack study. The four items used to measure symptom focused coping were derived from the Distancing from Loss (DFL) subscale and included items like "try not to think about what happened," "tell myself that time usually takes care of situations like this," and "remind myself that this isn't the end of the world."

Items from the NWO problem focused subscale yielded a low reliability as a three-item measure, so the item "keep busy or very active" was dropped to increase the alpha coefficient from .56 to .84. The DFL symptom focused subscale yielded an alpha coefficient of .73 and was not modified.

In order to assess the effects of outplacement participation, above and beyond the effects of coping, both problem focused coping and symptom focused coping were used as controls for analyses involving outplacement participation. However, results from a covariate analysis indicate that symptom focused coping was also positively related to job satisfaction, life satisfaction, self and environmental awareness and proactive personality. Thus, symptom-focused coping was used as a control in analyses involving these variables as well.

Program length. The length of outplacement programs offered to employees ranged from 1 month for administrative employees to 12 months for executives. Since program length

was related to length of unemployment, job satisfaction and life satisfaction, it was used as a control variable in data analyses involving these variables.

Demographic variables. Demographic information, including participants' position within their former company, age, gender, race and level of education were examined as possible control variables for the study. In this study, position was related to proactive personality. Thus, position was used as a control variable for all analyses involving proactive personality.

CHAPTER 3

RESULTS

Means, standard deviations and correlations among variables included in the study can be found in Table 3. Multiple regression analyses were used to test all hypotheses, using sample, problem focused coping, symptom focused coping and program length as control variables.

Tests of Main Effects

Effects on reemployment outcomes. Hypotheses 1-3 predicted that greater participation in outplacement would lead to better reemployment outcomes. Multiple regression analyses were conducted to determine whether participation in outplacement was significantly and positively related to 3 dependent variables: *speed of reemployment*, *compensation replacement*, and *new job satisfaction*.

Results for Hypothesis 1 reveal that participation in outplacement services was not a significant predictor of length of unemployment ($\beta=.171$, *n.s.*) when control variables were included in the analyses. Results from this analysis can be found in Table 4.

Likewise, results for Hypothesis 2 and 3 regarding quality of reemployment, reveal that greater participation in outplacement services was not a significant predictor of compensation replacement ($\beta=-.151$, *n.s.*) or job satisfaction ($\beta=-.121$, *n.s.*). Results from these analyses can be found in Table 5 and Table 6, respectively.

Effects on life satisfaction. Hypothesis 4 predicted that greater participation in outplacement services would be significantly and positively related to life satisfaction. A multiple regression was conducted, using all control variables along with outplacement

participation to determine the significance of participation in outplacement services on life satisfaction. Results from this analysis did not support this hypothesis ($\beta=.028$, *n.s.*). Results from this analysis are displayed in Table 7.

Tests for Partial Mediation

Several conditions are necessary to test for partial mediation. These include: a) the illustration that predictor variable(s) are significantly related to both the proposed mediating variable(s) and to the outcome variable(s), b) the mediating variable(s) are significantly related to the outcome variable(s) and c) the addition of the mediator variable to the regression equation with only the predictor variable(s) significantly improves the explanation of variance in the outcome variable(s) (James and Brett, 1984).

Environmental awareness as a mediator. Hypotheses 5-7 predicted that environmental awareness would mediate the relationship between outplacement participation and 3 reemployment outcomes: *speed of reemployment*, *compensation replacement* and *job satisfaction*. Since the predictor variable, participation in outplacement services, was not related to any of the three outcome variables, the conditions needed to test for partial mediation were not met. However, analyses testing the relationship between outplacement participation and environmental awareness, as well as the relationships between environmental awareness and each of the three outcome variables were conducted. Results from these analyses indicate that participation in outplacement was not significantly related to environmental awareness ($\beta = .030$, *n.s.*) and that environmental awareness was not significantly related to length of unemployment ($\beta = -.040$, *n.s.*) or compensation replacement ($\beta = -.152$, *n.s.*). However, environmental awareness was significantly related to job satisfaction ($\beta = .214$, $p < .05$). These results are provided in Tables 8 and 9.

Self awareness as a mediator. Hypotheses 8 -10 predicted that self awareness would mediate the relationship between outplacement participation and three dependent variables: speed of reemployment, new job satisfaction and global life satisfaction. Again, since participation in outplacement was not significantly related to any of these three dependent variables, conditions needed to test for the partial mediation of self awareness on these relationships were not met. Instead, the relationship between outplacement participation and self awareness as well as the relationships between self awareness and each of these three dependent measures were tested. Using control variables in the analyses, outplacement was not significantly related to self awareness ($\beta=.107, n.s$) (See Table 10). Likewise, self awareness was not significantly related to length of unemployment ($\beta = .122, n.s.$). However, self awareness was significantly related to both job satisfaction ($\beta =.185, p<.05$) and global life satisfaction ($\beta =.330, p<.01$). Results from these analyses are displayed in Table 11.

Tests for Moderation

Hypotheses 11 – 15 posited that proactive personality would moderate the relationships between self or environmental awareness with one of three reemployment outcomes. Each of these hypotheses was tested using hierarchical regression techniques. In accordance with the criteria outlined by James and Brett (1984), moderation effects occur when the inclusion of the cross product term between the moderator and the independent variable results in a significant increment in variance accounted for in the dependent variable above and beyond the variance accounted for by the main effect of the independent variable.

To test Hypotheses 11, 13, and 14, hierarchical regressions were conducted. In the first step, only control variables were entered into the equation. In the second step, control variables plus the simple terms (environmental awareness and proactive personality) were used to predict

reemployment outcomes. Finally, in step 3, control variables, simple terms and the cross product term (environmental awareness x proactive personality) were used to predict speed of reemployment, compensation replacement and job satisfaction. Moderation was tested by examining the increment in variance explained from step 2 to step 3. None of these three hypotheses were supported. Specifically, significant effects were not found for the cross product term for length of unemployment ($\Delta R^2 = .001$, *n.s.*), compensation replacement ($\Delta R^2 = .009$ *n.s.*), or job satisfaction ($\Delta R^2 = .002$, *n.s.*). Results from these analyses can be found in Tables 12, 13 and 14.

To test Hypotheses 12 and 15, hierarchical regressions were conducted using both the simple terms, self awareness and proactive personality as well as their interaction term (self awareness x proactive personality) as predictors. Control variables were entered alone in step 1. In step 2, control variables and the simple terms were entered into the equation. Finally, control variables, simple terms and the cross product term were entered in step 3. Moderation was tested by examining the increment in variance explained from step 2 to step 3. Results from these analyses did not support these hypotheses. Specifically, significant effects were not found for the cross product term for length of unemployment ($\Delta R^2 = .000$, *n.s.*) or job satisfaction ($\Delta R^2 = .004$, *n.s.*). Results from these analyses can be found in Tables 15 and 16.

CHAPTER 4

DISCUSSION

The purpose of this study was to examine the impact of outplacement services on the speed and quality of reemployment and life satisfaction among a group of recently downsized employees. Every year, millions of American workers face involuntary unemployment and millions of corporate dollars are spent on outplacement services for displaced employees (Meyer & Shadle, 1994). The impact of job loss to an individual is often negative and traumatic (Kozlowski et. al, 1993; Spera, Buhrfeind, & Pennebaker, 1994) and corporate decisions made regarding how to handle layoffs may affect company culture, consumer perceptions and surviving workers' motivation and productivity. Thus, results from this study have important implications for both individuals and organizations.

Other studies have assessed the impact of job search assistance programs on individuals' speed and quality of reemployment (e.g. Caplan, Vinokur & Price, 1989; Vinokur & Caplan, 1987; Caplan, Vinokur, Price & van Ryn, 1989; Vinokur, van Ryn, Gramlich & Price, 1991) but this is the first study to assess the outcomes of participation in an outplacement program, a typically white-collar benefit. Implications for both research and practice are considered.

Outplacement Participation and Reemployment Outcomes

Contrary to expectation, results from this study did not support that participation in outplacement would lead to better reemployment outcomes. Specifically, greater participation in outplacement services was not related to speed of reemployment, compensation replacement or new job satisfaction. Given the large sums of money spent on outplacement services and

anecdotal evidence that supports positive outcomes from these services (Kirk, 1994), these results seem puzzling. However, in light of the extensive research on job search assistance and the likelihood that such an intervention should have positive effects for individual participants; these results are probably best interpreted as inconclusive. Accordingly, I explore some of the reasons why these results might have been found for this sample.

One possible reason for these results is that while outplacement may provide substantial benefits to displaced employees (e.g. social and emotional support, logistical support, and job search guidance) participation in these services alone is not sufficient to impact reemployment outcomes. For example, reemployment outcomes may be equally or more dependent on individuals' personal attributes, skills, or job-related qualifications that are not related to participation in outplacement.

Another possibility is that the relationships between outplacement services and reemployment outcomes were attenuated due to a restriction of range. In this study, mean participation in outplacement was only 6.59, ($SD=5.3$) with the response scale ranging from 0-21. More than half of the sample had a total participation level of 6 or lower. In addition, mean participation in any of the single services ranged from only .77 to 1.66 (on a response scale ranging from 0=never to 3 = very frequent participation) with standard deviations ranging from .82 to 1.02. This suggests that participation in outplacement services for this group was relatively low. The seemingly low participation level among this group of individuals may be the result of several things, including, a) many individuals in this sample were notified of their layoff as much as 6 months prior to their layoff date and were therefore prepared to find reemployment without the help of outplacement, b) individuals from this sample may not have been made aware of the benefits that outplacement services could offer them or c) individuals

from this sample may have been less willing to seek help from outside sources because they felt that they could find work on their own. Of those participants who did not use any of the services offered by outplacement ($n=20$), 40% indicated that they already had another job lined up before their release date, 10% indicated that they received little or no information about the services and 75% indicated that they felt confident in their ability to find a new job on their own. It is unknown whether low participation rates are characteristic of other outplacement programs, but future research might explore the reasons for low participation including the propensity for white-collar workers to accept or reject help during the job search process.

Yet another possibility for null results is that assessing the effects of outplacement as single, large-scale intervention is not an appropriate level of analysis. In this study, outplacement participation was measured as the sum of an individual's participation across seven different services offered by the outplacement firm. While this level of analysis was chosen to provide a broad assessment of the impact of an outplacement program, low participation rates and several characteristics of the services present potential problems for finding effects due to treatment. Several of these problems are outlined here.

First, it is unclear whether participation in these seven different services should be *summed* to get an overall measure of outplacement participation. In order to have an additive effect, each of these services should make a relatively distinct contribution to overall program participation. Anecdotal evidence suggests that while each service has unique benefits, many of the services may also have overlapping or compensatory effects, such that information and benefits derived from one service may also be derived from another. One example of this is that participants may receive much of the same information about job search strategies from the outplacement workshops and the online job search tools. Thus participation in both of these

services would not have a distinctively additive impact on reemployment outcomes. Similarly, under the current measurement framework, frequent participation in one of these seven services could yield the same overall participation score as infrequent participation in three of the services. As a result, higher outplacement participation scores may not necessarily reflect the acquisition of greater amounts of information and benefits from the program.

A second reason that simply summing participation across the seven services might not be appropriate is that outplacement programs may offer substantial benefits above and beyond those accounted for by participation in the seven services outlined here. For instance, the social support, networking opportunities and time structure provided from informal introductions and gatherings at the outplacement firm may have substantial impact on reemployment outcomes, but they are not necessarily accounted for by an individual's participation in any of the specific services. Thus, the current measure may not capture the full range of benefits offered by the program.

Third, it is likely that each of the services offered during outplacement may have differential effects on reemployment outcomes. For instance, office and logistical support, access to job banks, and access to job research tools are each likely designed with the intent of helping participants find speedy reemployment. On the other hand, self assessment tools and individual counseling are more likely geared toward increasing participants' level of self awareness and new job satisfaction. Consequently, summing participation across all of these services ignores the possibility of finding effects due to any one service or combination of services.

Finally, an important variable to consider related to reemployment outcomes may be the economic conditions in which these participants were searching for reemployment. In a period

of economic downturn when jobs are hard to find, job security may play a more important role in individuals' career choices than do job satisfaction or salary. In particular, these individuals, who were searching for reemployment during a period of recession, may have been more likely to accept a job regardless of salary or satisfaction because they perceived there to be fewer options available to them.

Outplacement Participation and Life Satisfaction

There was no support for hypotheses relating participation in outplacement to global life satisfaction. Besides the potential measurement issues noted above, one possible explanation for this finding is that many variables may affect life satisfaction after a layoff. We proposed that the social and emotional support, as well as the increased time structure provided by outplacement would help increase life satisfaction among participants. However, it is possible that regardless of participation, these individuals could have sought support and structure outside of outplacement (e.g., from friends, family, community or church).

Outplacement Participation and Awareness

Self and environmental awareness, variables thought to contribute to career success, were proposed as the processes by which participating in outplacement would lead to better reemployment outcomes. While participation in outplacement was not related to self or environmental awareness, both of these two variables were related to reemployment outcomes. Specifically, environmental awareness was positively related to new job satisfaction, and self awareness was positively related to both new job satisfaction and global life satisfaction. These results are not surprising given that people who are more aware of their career and job options should be more likely to pick jobs in which they will be happy (Callanan & Greenhaus, 1991). Likewise, people who know more about their own interests, skills and values should be more

likely to choose jobs for which they will be well suited and satisfied and to make life decisions that will be advantageous and satisfying to them (Meyer & Shadle, 1994).

Proactive Personality, Awareness and Reemployment Outcomes

Proactive personality did not moderate relationships between awareness and reemployment outcomes as expected. Specifically, individuals who were more proactive were no more likely to change reemployment outcomes by acting on their awareness than were those who were less proactive. This suggests that when awareness is held constant, reemployment outcomes may be more dependent on individual skills, abilities and job qualifications than on one's propensity to act on their awareness.

Limitations and Directions for Future Research

A unique aspect of outplacement programs is that many individuals do not actually participate in all the services offered through the program, but that they can pick and choose to participate in only those services that they feel will help them. This is often seen as a real benefit of the outplacement experience, but it presents a practical problem for assessing the systematic effects of the program. Since every participant is allowed to pick and choose a unique combination of services in which to participate, it may not be proper to assess the effects of outplacement as a single large-scale intervention. To correct for this, the unit of analysis could be made more specific with the intent to relate each of the services or combinations of services with the outcomes that they are designed to impact. However, in this study, a post hoc examination of the correlations between specific service use and reemployment outcomes suggests that none of the services, when considered in isolation, is significantly and positively related to reemployment outcomes (see Table 17 for correlations). Thus, future studies should

concentrate on how different combinations or permutations of these services might predict different reemployment outcomes.

Another limitation to this study was that it focused solely on those individuals who were reemployed at the time of the survey and neglected to make comparisons with those who were still unemployed at the time of survey. Perhaps a stronger case for outplacement could be made if we were to examine differences between the reemployed group and the unemployed group on outplacement participation.

A third limitation to this study was that we failed to ask about information regarding individuals' job search constraints (e.g., the U.S. region and industry in which they were seeking reemployment). Ideally the entire sample would have faced the same general market constraints due to region and industry during their job search. While we know that 60% of this sample came from the financial services industry and that 40% came from a variety of different industries, we failed to ask either group about the regions in which they were trying to find reemployment and we did not ask the latter group about the industries in which they sought reemployment. Having this information would have allowed us to control for any differences on these variables. Future research should attempt to identify and control for these and other factors that may impede the job search process.

Finally, a potential limitation to this study is the reliance on self-report measures to capture individuals' self awareness. Self awareness is a difficult construct to measure because it can only be estimated by the individual who experiences it. In reality, it is likely that we captured *perceptions of self awareness*, rather than *actual* self awareness. It is also possible that individuals' perceptions of self awareness were inflated. Evidence for this is exhibited in that the mean level of self awareness in this study was relatively high and the standard deviation

relatively low ($M=4.14$, $SD=.47$). Future studies should consider results from this study in light of this information.

Implications for Theory

The present study attempted to examine the impact of a large-scale intervention on reemployment outcomes. Unlike results from similar studies based on job loss interventions for blue-collar workers, these results showed little support for outplacement as a single, large-scale intervention. In addition, results suggest that no single service is related to reemployment outcomes. In light of these findings, future research on outplacement could move in one of two directions. We could abandon the idea that outplacement can be measured as a large-scale intervention and instead focus on the effects of particular combinations of services. This idea would seem in line with the recommendations mentioned above. However, considering the lack of previous research on outplacement programs and other white-collar interventions, perhaps more should be done to properly operationalize the construct. For instance, it is likely that the most successful reemployment strategies for white-collar workers are not necessarily those that are formally advertised by the firm (e.g. classes and workshops, access to online research tools), but instead, those that are informally offered by the outplacement experience (e.g. networking, social support, and time structure). Consistent with this theory, research suggests that, 80% of all jobs are not ever advertised and that networking is one of the most successful strategies for job seekers. Social support and time structure are also related to reemployment outcomes (Kozlowski et. al, 1993). Simply measuring the effects of each service or combination of services offered by the outplacement firm would fail to tap these extraneous, but potentially important benefits of participating in an outplacement program. A more comprehensive taxonomy of outplacement benefits should be developed, perhaps by asking outplacement

participants and practitioners about which aspects of the outplacement experience are most beneficial to their job search.

While results indicated no support for outplacement as a predictor of reemployment outcomes, the impact of self and environmental awareness on reemployment outcomes cannot be ignored. This is the first study to empirically assess the impact of self and environmental awareness on reemployment outcomes. These results should provide researchers with empirical evidence for their assumptions and a new avenue for exploration. Specifically, self and environmental awareness should be further examined, along with other individual difference variables, in relation to reemployment outcomes and career success. Future researchers might also focus on determining best methods for increasing both self and environmental awareness among job seekers (e.g. guided self assessment inventories, job banks and research tools and networking).

Implications for Practice

This study has several important implications for practice. In this sample, participation in outplacement services was low and somewhat sporadic. If low participation rates are characteristic of outplacement services as a whole, we cannot be sure that individuals are receiving adequate levels the intended treatment. Thus, if the goal of offering outplacement is to impact individual reemployment outcomes, perhaps individuals should be encouraged to participate to a greater extent and in a greater variety of services. Outplacement providers should also practice linking participation with tangible reemployment outcomes by following up with participants about which services contributed most to their reemployment success and by making changes to services based on these results. Alternatively, if outplacement services are not

contributing to better reemployment outcomes, perhaps we should reassess the costs and benefits of providing these services.

Conclusion

This study should be considered as a starting place for those interested in the effects of large-scale job loss interventions for white-collar workers. Results should be interpreted with the understanding that the current measurement method may not have been ideal, and future research on outplacement should give adequate attention to the methodological considerations outlined here. Overall, the impact of outplacement as a single service intervention does not appear to have effects on reemployment outcomes, but future research might focus on re-operationalizing the measurement of outplacement or on determining the potential impact of different combinations of services on reemployment outcomes. This study offers a new avenue for both research and practice with the finding that self and environmental awareness positively influence reemployment outcomes. Both researchers and practitioners should concentrate on ways to improve individual awareness in order to positively impact reemployment outcomes. Overall, this study is an important step toward understanding how interventions like outplacement might contribute to successful reemployment outcomes.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A

Cover Letter

Dear [Participant Name],

I am writing to ask for your help in a study of individuals' unemployment experiences. This study, titled "*Understanding the Unemployment Process: Best Practices for Employees Facing Career Transitions*," is part of an effort by Tracy Lambert, a doctoral student in the Department of Industrial-Organizational Psychology at the University of Georgia (706) 542-2174 to learn how different individuals' experiences during unemployment affect their future careers and well-being. Results from this study will be used to help researchers make recommendations to employers regarding the career transition of departing employees.

You have been selected to participate in this study because you have recently experienced a career transition and outplacement services are offered by your employer. By understanding the factors that are important to finding quality reemployment, we can make better recommendations for services and programs that will benefit people like you in the future.

We are asking that you take 15 minutes to complete the enclosed survey. No discomfort or risks are foreseen from participating in this study. Your answers are completely confidential and data from this study will be reported in summary form so no individual responses will be identified. Your participation in this survey is completely voluntary, so by completing this survey, you are indicating your informed consent to participate in this research. You may skip any questions that you feel uncomfortable answering. If you chose not to participate, you may simply discard this survey and all information pertaining to it.

To encourage your participation, we are raffling off two palm pilots. If you'll simply fill out the card and drop the enclosed "raffle" ticket into your survey packet before mailing, we'll be sure to include you! This raffle ticket will be separated from your survey upon receipt of mailed package thus ensuring confidentiality.

Please complete and return this survey and your raffle ticket within 2 weeks in order to ensure that your response is included in this study!

Thank you in advance for your help with this very important study! Without your cooperation this study would not be possible.

Sincerely,

Lillian Eby, PhD.
Associate Professor of Psychology and Project Director
The University of Georgia

If you have any questions or comments about this study, now or in the future, feel free to call the project director, Dr. Lillian Eby, at 706-542-2174 or leby@arches.uga.edu. For questions or problems about your rights as a research participant, please call or write: Chris A. Joseph, PhD., Human Subjects Office, University of Georgia, 606A Boyd Graduate Research Center, Athens, GA 30602-7411. Telephone (706) 542-6514; e-mail address IRB@uga.edu.

Appendix B

Raffle Ticket

Raffle Ticket	<p>YES! I want to be included in the raffle for one of two PalmPilots™!</p> <p>My <i>first</i> name: _____</p> <p>A telephone number <i>or</i> e-mail where I can be reached if I win: _____</p> <p>We will contact the winners using the contact information provided in the blank above. Please remember that this card will be separated from your</p>
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Appendix C

Power Analysis

Calculating desired sample size from the desired effect size and the population correlation coefficient using Cohen's (1988) Power Analysis for Multiple Regression

Power analysis formula to determine sample size:

$$N = \lambda / f^2, \quad (\text{formula 9.4.3})$$

where N is the sample size needed to test the study hypotheses. λ is the tabled noncentrality parameter of the F distribution ($\alpha = .05$) based on a lower-bound noncentrality parameter (v) of 120.

$$v = \lambda / (f^2 - u - 1),$$

where u is the maximum number of independent variables in each regression equation. f^2 is the effect size for multiple regression that relates to r^2 as follows:

$$f^2 = r^2 / (1 - r^2),$$

where r^2 is the squared multiple correlation between reemployment success and participation in job search initiatives ($r = .29$). Substituting the appropriate values into formula 9.4.3, we have:

$$\begin{aligned} N &= 12.8 / .0918 \\ &= 139 \text{ subjects needed} \\ &\quad \text{to appropriately test the study hypotheses} \end{aligned}$$

To calculate a more accurate sample size based on the approximated result of v we must use the interpolated value of λ for the given v :

$$\lambda = \lambda_L - [(1/v_L - 1/v) / (1/v_L - 1/v_U)] * (\lambda_L - \lambda_U), \quad (\text{formula 9.4.2})$$

where U is the upperbound estimate and L is the lowerbound estimate. Substituting the appropriate values into formula 9.4.2, we get:

$$\begin{aligned} \lambda &= 12.8 - [(1/60 - 1/139) / (1/60 - 1/120)] * (12.8 - 11.9) \\ &= 13.19 \end{aligned}$$

Substituting the appropriate values into formula 9.4.3, we get:

$$\begin{aligned} N &= 13.19 / .0918 \\ &= 143 \text{ subjects needed to} \\ &\quad \text{appropriately test the study hypotheses} \end{aligned}$$

Appendix D

Items Measuring Job Satisfaction

Job Satisfaction

Using the scale below, please indicate the extent to which you are satisfied or dissatisfied with the following aspects of your job:

- | | |
|-----------------------------|--------------------------|
| 1 = extremely dissatisfied | 5 = moderately satisfied |
| 2 = very dissatisfied | 6 = very satisfied |
| 3 = moderately dissatisfied | 7 = extremely satisfied |
| 4 = I'm not sure | |

The physical work conditions

The freedom to choose you own method of working

Your fellow worker

The recognition you get for good work

Your immediate boss

The amount of responsibility you are given

Your rate of pay

Your opportunities to use your abilities

Industrial relations between management and workers at your company

Your chances of promotion

Appendix E

Items Measuring Career Awareness

E1. Self Awareness

Please answer the following questions using the scale:

1 = strongly disagree 4 = agree
2 = disagree 5 = strongly agree
3 = neither disagree or agree

I have a good understanding of what my special strengths are.

I know very well the kind of work tasks or projects I find boring.

I know what would be a nice balance between my career, my family life and my personal life.

I am quite clear on my shortcomings and limitations

I know exactly what I want most from a job (e.g. a lot of money, a great deal of responsibility, travel).

I know which of my abilities are really important for me to express in my work.

I know exactly what kinds of tasks or projects I find interesting.

I know little about what is really important to me in a job. (R)

I know what jobs are compatible and incompatible with the kind of life I want to live.

(R indicates reverse scored item)

E2. Environmental Awareness

Please answer the following questions using the scale:

1 = strongly disagree 4 = agree
2 = disagree 5 = strongly agree
3 = neither disagree or agree

I have a good grasp of what career opportunities might exist for me with different employers.

I know how different employers stacks up against each other as places to work.

I have many different career options, each with its own advantages and disadvantages.

I know little about whether there are other occupations that might be more appropriate for me than my current line of work. (R)

(R indicates reverse scored item)

Appendix F

Items Measuring Life Satisfaction

Satisfaction with Life Scale

Please answer the following questions using the scale:

1 = strongly disagree	4 = agree
2 = disagree	5 = strongly agree
3 = neither disagree or agree	

In most ways my life is close to my ideal.

The conditions of my life are excellent.

I am satisfied with my life.

So far I have gotten the important things I want in life.

If I could live my life over, I would change almost nothing.

Appendix G

Items Measuring Proactive Personality

Proactive Personality

Please answer the following questions using the scale:

1 = strongly disagree	4 = agree
2 = disagree	5 = strongly agree
3 = neither disagree or agree	

I am constantly on the lookout for new ways to improve my life.

I feel driven to make a difference in my community, and maybe the world.

I tend to let others take the initiative to start new projects. (R)

Wherever I have been, I have been a powerful force for constructive change.

I enjoy facing and overcoming obstacles to my ideas.

Nothing is more exciting than seeing my ideas turn into reality.

If I see something I don't like, I fix it.

No matter what the odds, if I believe in something I will make it happen.

I love being a champion for my ideas, even against others' opposition.

I excel at identifying opportunities.

I am always looking for better ways to do things.

If I believe in an idea, no obstacle will prevent me from making it happen.

I love to challenge the status quo.

When I have a problem, I tackle it head-on.

I am great at turning problems into opportunities.

I can spot a good opportunity long before others can.

If I see someone in trouble, I help out in any way I can.

(R indicates reverse scored item)

Table 1

Means, Standard Deviations and Input Data Correlation Matrix for Use of Outplacement Services using Principal Components Extraction

Variable	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1. Counseling	1.34	.82	1.0						
2. Learning Center Classes	1.66	.93	.25**	1.0					
3. Job Bank	1.08	1.02	.28**	.39**	1.0				
4. Research Tools	1.05	.94	.41**	.28**	.68**	1.0			
5. Self Assessment Tools	1.62	.89	.36**	.50**	.44**	.36**	1.0		
6. E-learning Online Classes	.77	.93	.34**	.31**	.49**	.45**	.40**	1.0	
7. Office and Logistical Support	.93	.96	.31**	.29**	.44**	.46**	.20*	.35**	1.0

Note. N= 108. * $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$.

Table 2

Factor Loadings for Participation in Specific Outplacement Services Using Principal Components Extraction

Factor	Factor Loadings	% of Total Variance Accounted for		Eigenvalues
	Use of Outplacement Services	Incremental	Cumulative	Incremental
Counseling	.59	47.3	47.3	3.31*
Learning Center Classes	.61	13.5	60.8	.94*
Job Bank	.80	11.0	71.8	.77*
Research Tools	.78	9.6	81.5	.68*
Self Assessment Tools	.67	8.3	85.7	.58*
E-learning Classes	.70	6.3	95.9	.44*
Office and Logistical Support	.63	4.0	100	.28

Note. N=107. *Eigenvalues above .40.

Table 3

Means, Standard Deviations, and Correlations Among Study Variables

Variable	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
1. Participation in outplacement	6.59	5.26	1.0									
2. Problem focused coping	3.87	.82	-.08	1.0								
3. Symptom focused coping	3.32	.87	.00	.04	1.0							
4. Speed of reemployment	4.38	3.62	-.18*	-.11	.00	1.0						
5. Compensation replacement	-10.8	25.9	-.04	-.10	.06	.37**	1.0					
6. Job satisfaction	3.66	.76	-.12	-.02	.18*	.11	.11	1.0				
7. Life satisfaction	3.47	.72	.01	-.08	.15*	-.02	.04	.39**	1.0			
8. Self awareness	4.15	.47	.08	.03	.27**	-.17*	-.20*	.22**	.37**	1.0		
9. Environmental awareness	3.35	.70	.02	-.07	.22**	-.03	-.18*	.26**	.41**	.62**	1.0	
10. Proactive personality	3.66	.52	.09	.04	.27**	-.10	-.30**	.07	.23**	.46**	.54**	1.0

Note. N=152. * $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. Participation in Outplacement was determined by summing participants' frequency of use (0=never used, 3=used very frequently) across seven outplacement service options. Speed of Reemployment was measured in months. Compensation replacement represents *thousands of dollars* replaced by new job salary and was determined by subtracting previous job salary from new job salary to obtain a difference in salary score. A negative value for compensation replacement represents lower levels of compensation in the new job than in the old.

Table 4

Participation in Outplacement and Length of Unemployment

Independent Variable	Standardized Regression Weights
	<i>Length of Unemployment</i>
Control Variables	
Sample	-.303**
Problem Focused Coping	.130
Symptom Focused Coping	.016
Program Length	.311**
Outplacement Participation	.171

Note. * $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$.

Table 5

Participation in Outplacement and Compensation Replacement

Independent Variable	Standardized Regression Weights
	Compensation Replacement
Control Variables	
Sample	.191
Problem Focused Coping	-.181
Symptom Focused Coping	-.028
Program Length	-.200
Outplacement Participation	-.151

Note. * $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$.

Table 6

Participation in Outplacement and Job Satisfaction

Independent Variable	Standardized Regression Weights
	Job Satisfaction
Control Variables	
Sample	.102
Problem Focused Coping	.039
Symptom Focused Coping	.174
Program Length	.091
Outplacement Participation	-.121

Note. * $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$.

Table 7

Participation in Outplacement and Life Satisfaction

Independent Variable	Standardized Regression Weights
	Life Satisfaction
Control Variables	
Sample	.076
Problem Focused Coping	-.042
Symptom Focused Coping	.099
Program Length	.252*
Outplacement Participation	.028

Note. * $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$.

Table 8

Outplacement Participation and Environmental Awareness

Independent Variable	Standardized Regression Weights
	Environmental Awareness
Control Variables	
Sample	-.094
Problem Focused Coping	-.063
Symptom Focused Coping	.231**
Outplacement Participation	.030

Note. * $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$.

Table 9

Environmental Awareness and Reemployment Outcomes

Independent Variable	Dependent Variables		
	Length of Unemployment	Compensation Replacement	Job Satisfaction
Control Variables			
Symptom Focused Coping	-.019	.078	.122
Program Length	.254**	-.154	.138
Environmental Awareness	-.040	-.152	.214*

Note. * $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$.

Table 10

Outplacement Participation and Self Awareness

Independent Variable	Standardized Regression Weight Self Awareness
Control Variables	
Sample	-.121
Problem Focused Coping	.057
Symptom Focused Coping	.222**
Outplacement Participation	.107

Note. * $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$.

Table 11

Self Awareness and Reemployment Outcomes

Independent Variable	Dependent Variables		
	Length of Unemployment	Job Satisfaction	Life Satisfaction
Control Variables			
Symptom Focused Coping	.029	.110	.023
Program Length	.244*	.159	.256**
Self Awareness	.122	.185*	.330**

Note. * $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$.

Table 12

Proactive Personality, Environmental Awareness and Length of Unemployment

Independent Variables	Dependent Variable		
	Length of Unemployment		
	Step 1	Step 2	Step 3
Control Variables			
Symptom Focused Coping	.008	-.012	-.014
Program Length	.236*	.261*	.263*
Position	.022	-.014	-.015
Environmental Awareness		-.123	.047
Proactive Personality		.173	.296
EA x Proactive Personality			-.257
R ² at each step	.062	.083	.084
ΔR^2		.010	.001
F	2.38*	1.92	1.60

Note. * p <.05. ** p <.01. EA is an abbreviation for Environmental Awareness. N=112.

Table 13

Proactive Personality, Environmental Awareness and Compensation Replacement

Independent Variables	Dependent Variable		
	Compensation Replacement		
	Step 1	Step 2	Step 3
Control Variables			
Symptom Focused Coping	-.007	.104	.099
Program Length	-.169	-.222	-.214
Position	-.049	.072	.065
Environmental Awareness		.063	.667
Proactive Personality		-.385**	.056
EA x Proactive Personality			-.927
R ² at each step	.040	.144	.153
ΔR^2		.104**	.009
F	1.38	3.31**	2.92*

Note. * p <.05. ** p <.01. EA is an abbreviation for Environmental Awareness. N=104.

Table 14

Proactive Personality, Environmental Awareness and Job Satisfaction

Independent Variables	Dependent Variable		
	Job Satisfaction		
	Step 1	Step 2	Step 3
Control Variables			
Symptom Focused Coping	.184*	.151	.154
Program Length	.123	.101	.100
Position	.095	.084	.085
Environmental Awareness		.245*	-.054
Proactive Personality		-.098	-.315
EA x Proactive Personality			.455
R ² at each step	.079	.121	.123
ΔR^2		.042*	.002
F	3.16*	2.97*	2.50*

Note. * p <.05. ** p <.01. EA is an abbreviation for Environmental Awareness. N=114.

Table 15

Proactive Personality, Self Awareness and Length of Unemployment

Independent Variables	Dependent Variable		
	Length of Unemployment		
	Step 1	Step 2	Step 3
Control Variables			
Symptom Focused Coping	.008	-.044	-.044
Program Length	.236*	.242*	.241*
Position	.022	-.007	-.005
Self Awareness		.091	.050
Proactive Personality		.073	.018
SA x Proactive Personality			.083
R ² at each step	.062	.079	.079
ΔR^2		.017	.000
F	2.38	1.81	1.49

Note. * p <.05. ** p <.01. SA is an abbreviation for Self Awareness. N=112.

Table 16

Proactive Personality, Self Awareness and Job Satisfaction

Independent Variables	Dependent Variable		
	Job Satisfaction		
	Step 1	Step 2	Step 3
Control Variables			
Symptom Focused Coping	.184	.133	.135
Program Length	.123	.116	.108
Position	.095	.103	.118
Self Awareness		.205	-.154
Proactive Personality		-.071	-.554
SA x Proactive Personality			.730
R ² at each step	.079	.109	.113
ΔR^2		.030	.004
F	3.16*	2.65*	2.26*

Note. * p <.05. ** p <.01. SA is an abbreviation for Self Awareness. N=114.

Table 17

Correlations Between Specific Services and Study Variables

<i>Specific Service</i>	<i>Study Variables</i>					
	Length of Unemployment	Compensation Replacement	Job Satisfaction	Life Satisfaction	Self Awareness	Environmental Awareness
Counseling	.10	-.10	-.04	.05	.04	-.02
Learning Center Classes	-.02	.03	-.04	-.12	.07	-.06
Job Bank	.17	-.07	-.16	.09	.03	.03
Online Job Research Tools	.14	-.08	-.02	.06	-.09	.00
Self Assessment	.06	-.12	-.04	-.10	.06	-.03
E-learning	.08	-.22*	-.07	.10	-.03	-.02
Office and Logistical Support	-.06	-.05	-.06	.07	.00	.05

Note. * $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. Participants were asked to indicate how frequently (0=never to 3= very frequently) they participated in each of the following specific services offered by the outplacement firm: *Individual Counseling* (i.e. met with Career Consultant), *Learning Center Classes* (i.e. on-site workshops/classes), *Job Bank* (i.e. database of search firms, job openings, etc.), *Research Tools* (i.e. database of industry trends, salaries & wages, company performance, etc.), *Self-Assessment Tools* (i.e. assessments of personality, values, interests, leadership style, etc.), *E-learning* (i.e. online workshops/classes), *Office and Logistical Support* (i.e. workspace, computer, telephone, voicemail, fax, copiers, stationary, mailing).

Figure Caption

Figure 1. Hypothesized model of outplacement outcomes

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