A study of the relationship between self-esteem and unemployment among Black single female heads of household

Wanda Denise Taylor
Atlanta University

Follow this and additional works at: http://digitalcommons.auctr.edu/dissertations

Part of the Social Work Commons

Recommended Citation
A STUDY OF THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SELF-ESTEEM AND UNEMPLOYMENT AMONG BLACK SINGLE FEMALE HEADS OF HOUSEHOLD

A THESIS
SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF ATLANTA UNIVERSITY
IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR
THE DEGREE OF MASTERS OF SOCIAL WORK

BY
WANDA DENISE TAYLOR

SCHOOL OF SOCIAL WORK

ATLANTA, GEORGIA
JULY 1987
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The researcher wishes to thank the individuals who helped make this study a success. A special thanks to my thesis advisor, Dr. Mamie Darlington, for her personal time, patience and support in making this study a reality. Thanks to Edna Crewshaw, for allowing me to conduct my study at the Atlanta Urban League. Many thanks to the thirty women who participated in this study. A special thanks to Gail Ellis and Toni Davis for the superb job in typing my final manuscript.

This study is dedicated to my parents, Mr. and Mrs. William Taylor; my two sisters Patricia and Melinda; my three brothers McArthur, Michael, and James and to my dear aunt Corinne Thomas, and best friend Abbie Hinton, for their love, support and encouragement. Above all thank God...
TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS ii

TABLE OF CONTENTS iii

Chapter

I INTRODUCTION 1

Statement of the Problem
Definition of Terms

II REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE 7

III THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK 15

IV METHODOLOGY 19

V FINDINGS AND IMPLICATIONS FOR SOCIAL WORK PRACTICE 23

VI APPENDICIES 29

Appendix A - Index of Self-Esteem

VII BIBLIOGRAPHY 34
ABSTRACT

Taylor, Wanda Denise
Concentration: Clinical
Substantive Area: Child and Family Services

A STUDY OF THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SELF-ESTEEM AND UNEMPLOYMENT AMONG BLACK SINGLE FEMALE HEADS OF HOUSEHOLD

Advisor: Dr. Mamie Darlington

Purpose

The purpose of this study was to determine the relationship between self-esteem and unemployment among black single female heads of household who were enrolled in the Atlanta Urban League, Career Opportunities Project.

The finding of this study indicated that there were no significant differences in the level of self-esteem before entering the program and during the time one was enrolled in the training program.

Results

Thirty black female single heads of household, ages 16-40 years of age were administered a standard test Index of Self-Esteem. They were requested to respond on a pre-test and post-test format. The researcher recognized that a true pre-test condition did not exist, inasmuch as the participants were already in the training program at the time of the pre-test. They were asked to respond to the index for the pre-test based on how they felt prior to entering the program.
Chapter I
INTRODUCTION

Families maintained by black single females are one of the fastest growing economic units in America. Black single parent heads of household are not a homogenous group for they become single parents for a variety of reasons. These include: divorce, separation, widowhood, and motherhood without marriage. Whether by choice or by circumstances, the growing number of single black female heads of household, who support their families face economic and emotional instability for themselves and their children. Recent surveys list the following facts about economics and single parenting.

Female-headed families comprised 47 percent of all families in poverty.

Fifty five percent of all children living in single female-headed households are poor.

Today, women maintaining families alone support over 15 percent of America's families, up from 11 percent. (NASW, 1987).

Studies indicate that the following problems are faced by minority female heads of household; sex and race discrimination in education, training and employment, lack of adequate and affordable child care, inadequate child support enforcement, and a welfare system that fails to address the needs of the minority of its recipients, thus, single parent families may be poor basically for the same reasons that two parent families may be poor in our society.

As a result of the factors discussed above, it is not
surprising that many women who rely on earnings to support themselves and their children are poor. Women do have other resources; however, the largest factor in reducing their poverty rate is welfare programs. Families whose incomes fall below specified guidelines may qualify for Federal assistance programs. Public assistance can consist of cash payment, as under the aid to families with dependent children program, or noncash transfers, such as food stamps, medicaid, or subsidized housing.

Aid to families with dependent children (AFDC), sometimes simply called "welfare", is perhaps the best known income maintenance program for families with children under 18 years of age. Under this program, Federal funding is provided to the States on a formula basis for cash payments to families in need to cover costs for food, shelter, clothing, and other needed items. (Coe and Galinsky, 1981).

According to an age-old double standard, high self-esteem is an exclusive male prerogative. In men it is seen as a moral good, a man who likes and values himself, and lets the world know it, is considered normal, and is said to be demonstrating a healthy self interest. But a woman who likes and values herself and lets the world know it, is condemned for being vain, arrogant and conceited. (Sanford and Donovan, 1984).

There are many factors which have to be focused upon in determining whether a person has a positive or negative, high or low self-esteem. But what exactly do we mean when we use the term self-esteem? The term is often used interchangeably
with self-respect, self-love, a sense of self-worth, and with the term self-concept. Self-concept is defined as the set of beliefs and images we all have and hold to be true of ourselves. By contrast, our level of self-esteem or self-respect is the measure of how much we like and approve of our self-concept. (Sanford and Donovan, 1984).

There are actually two types of self-esteem, global and specific. Global self-esteem is the measure of how much we like and approve of our perceived self as a whole. Specific self-esteem is the measure of how much we like and approve of certain parts of ourselves. If a woman places a high value on a certain aspect of herself (physical appearance or intelligence); her global will be greatly affected by her specific self-esteem in that one area. But if a woman does not value a certain aspect of herself, such as, cooking skills; her specific self-esteem in that area will not have much impact on her overall or global self-esteem.

Employment plays a crucial part in everyone's life. Having a job determines not only the type of lifestyle a person will live, but to a large extent how a person is seen or defined by the outside world. Indeed, a job frequently determines how a person sees or defines him or herself.

Employment is particularly critical to the 16-24 year old age group. It is during this period that career patterns will be established, legitimate or illegitimate. This age group is experiencing the highest rates of unemployment, thus, when people are denied the chance to grow and prosper because of inadequate economic opportunities, they can be expected to
suffer, and therefore, react to the stress in a way that is abnormal and unacceptable in the general social framework. This in return, may breed a negative impact on their self-esteem. (Becnel, 1978).

The black, mauve, and grey economics, represent new or resurrected opportunities for work outside the job. They underline the dawning realization that there is more than one form of work. We can best describe the differences by thinking of three different forms of work: (1) job work, which is the paid job, including full time self employment, (2) marginal work, which covers the work we do 'on the side' for extra earnings, which should be, but sometimes are not, declared (you might call it 'pocket-money' work), and (3) gift work, which includes all the work we do for free in the grey economy and in voluntary work. The point of the threefold definition of work is to give us a more rounded picture of work in society. Jobs are important, but they are not the only way in which a man or a woman contributes to society, finds an identity, meets friends or makes money, which are usually given as the reasons for having a job. But what they seem to be saying was that work provided them with the opportunity to fulfill themselves, to grow, and to work with, and for others. That is another way of saying that work is essential to the full expression of our humanity.

We all need to feel that we matter, that we can contribute, that we are missed in our absence, that we are respected and liked. Through this type of satisfaction our self-esteem may be enhanced. (Handy, 1985).
The unemployed may believe themselves powerless to change the circumstances of their lives (external locus) but the fact that they are without work, whereas others are not and that they remain so, may lead them eventually to see themselves as responsible for their condition (internal attribution) with consequent self-blame and self-derogation. (Hill and Nixon, 1984). The "blaming the victim" perspective may be accepted, thus having a negative impact on the individual's self-esteem.

All of the preceding documentations clearly present the magnitude of black unemployment and particularly the impact of such a condition on the long neglected facet of black single female heads of households.

The purpose of this study is to examine the relationship between self-esteem and unemployment among black single female heads of household.
**Definition of Terms**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Term</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>PHYSICAL SELF</td>
<td>The individual is describing her perception of her body and physical appearance.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PERSONAL SELF</td>
<td>The individual is describing her relationship with others, her feeling of self worth; and personality.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SOCIAL SELF</td>
<td>Interaction of self with others, but in a more general sense.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SELF SATISFACTION</td>
<td>Obtaining the highest level of acceptance of oneself.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SELF BEHAVIOR</td>
<td>The way one reacts to any given situation or circumstance.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Chapter II
REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Introduction

In reviewing the literature, there was an extensive bibliography on single female heads of households, in general, however, a limited bibliography on Black single female heads of households, which presented problems for this study. Another problem encountered was that most of the literature on single female heads of households was prior to 1980, thus a limited number of references were since 1980. The researcher sought to examine the relationship between self-esteem and unemployment among black single female heads of households. The question that needed to be asked, for instance was, to what extent was work an important part of that group's life goals and self-identity? We must first look at what a job means in American society and the values attached to that job.

On the relationship between work and self in this society, Everett Cherrington Hughes in Men and Their Work (1958) stated that "a man's work is one of the things by which he is judged, and certainly one of the more significant things by which he judges himself...A man's work is one of the more important parts of his social identity, of his self".

According to Drucker (1950) in The New Society indicated the following:

Social effectiveness, citizenship, indeed even self-respect depend on access to a job. Without a job, man in industrial society cannot possibly be socially effective. He is deprived of citizenship, of social stand-
ing, of the respect of his fellow men if not of his family and finally, of self-respect.

Dr. Hannah Levin, Ph.D., professor of psychology at Richmond College conducted extensive studies into the psychological effects of unemployment. She found that a job has a major influence on our self-concept and sense of identity. Work gives the worker a constant contact with reality. Lack of work, puts him or her in psychological no-man's land.

Roger (1983) argued that individual levels of self-esteem are influenced by individual ability to perform different tasks and roles, and low self-esteem leads to distortion and construction of perceptions and concepts of which the self is a part. High self-esteem people will be able to differentiate among possible occupational roles more easily than low self-esteem people.

Robert B. Hill in The Strength of Black Families indicated that contrary to popular conception, a strong work orientation exists among Blacks just as it does among most Americans. Blacks do not have to be coerced to work as many think. A decent job at decent wages is the only work incentive needed. Hill further related that the Black poor are more likely to work than the white poor and that three-fifths of the Black poor work, compared to about half of the white poor.

According to Sanford and Donovan, (1984) unemployment may be particularly damaging to women's self-esteem because of women's tendency to blame themselves for misfortunes. If unemployment that is caused by poor economic conditions hurt
women's self-esteem, so does unemployment that is forced upon women because of age.

Poor women do participate in the labor force. Their work orientation and life goals are quite similar to those of other Americans. The problem is they are often unable to find work, most work part-time or the job does not pay a wage adequate to support a family.

Sixty-one (61%) percent of blacks, fifty-one (51%) percent of Hispanics and forty-five (45%) of white women in the labor force in 1980 were either unemployed or underemployed, compared to 35 percent of white men. Not all of these women were poor, but in 1979, 3.1 million women sought public assistance because they were unable to support their families. Inadequate earnings, dependence, and poverty over time were associated with loss of confidence and self-esteem, making efforts to improve their status more difficult.

Tiggeman, Marika, and Winefield, (1984) investigated some psychological effects of unemployment to self-esteem, using a longitudinal research design. Mood questions and the Rosenberg Self-esteem Scale were administered twice to 761 students; once while they were in high school, and again a year later. Students who were generally less well-adjusted than their employed counterparts. Specifically, they reported greater negative mood and had higher depression esteem. These differences, however, resulted largely from an improvement in outlook on the part of the employed rather than from the unemployed becoming more depressed and losing self-esteem. Both groups showed an increase in internality over time.
A similar study was investigated by Purushottam and Lechasseur (1984), who examined whether unemployed women had lower self-esteem and were more lonely than women who worked. Forty (40) women had been unemployed between one and twelve months and forty employed women completed the UCLA Loneliness Scale and the Social Self-Esteem Inventory. Students were between 18 and 49 years of age, and 13 of the unemployed and 22 of the employed students were married. No significant differences were found in self-esteem and loneliness between the two groups. A negative correlation (−.49) was obtained between loneliness and self-esteem for both groups.

Using a questionnaire developed from the ideas of the neo-psychoanalytical thinker, Erickson, Gurney (1980) looked at over 400 unemployed school leavers. It was hypothesized that having a job helps school leavers to clarify their perception of their identity, and not being able to get work leads to a confused perception of self or no development due to a moratorium. The hypothesis was confirmed for females but not males. Furthermore, the unemployed males showed a significant shift towards the mistrust pole of the first dimension of trust-mistrust, and the employed of both sexes shifted significantly...it seems reasonable to conclude that unemployment has the effect of inhibiting development in school leavers, rather than inflicting trauma as is sometimes popularly supposed. Gurney also found that over a four month period after leaving school, self-esteem increased only for those young people who obtained work.

Studies indicated that self-esteem theorists and re
searchers have established that, related to high self-esteem people, low self-esteem individuals are more likely to suffer from a variety of emotional and behavior problems, and are more likely to question their self worth. Psychologists have long been concerned with discovering effective methods of enhancing the self-evaluations of persons with low self-esteem. Unfortunately, this task has been quite difficult, since low self-esteem seem to be trapped in a vicious, self-defeating cycle of low self-esteem. For instance, studies have shown that persons with low self-esteem in achievement settings. Poor performances, in return, would seem to set the stage for continued self-criticism and low self-esteem.

According to Clark (1980) some attempts have been made to determine how the Black child's self-image affects his/her ability to function in society, achieve success and cope with the future. Most evidence is weighed heavily against the Black child, depicting him as an individual handicapped by a variety of problems: "identity foreclosure", "negative identity", lack of self-esteem, and cultural deprivation. Too many social scientists have been very quick to find sickness in the Black experience in America. Viewed as culturally deficient, rather than, as culturally different from whites, blacks have been studies as if they were a "hotbed" of chronic social diseases.

Summary

The purpose of this study was to determine the relation-
ship between self-esteem and unemployment among black single female heads of household.

From the review of literature, several studies revealed that "a man's work is one of the things by which he is judged, and certainly one of the more significant things by which he judges himself."

Dr. Levin, Ph.D., Professor of Psychology at Richmond College investigated the psychological effects of unemployment of the self-esteem and found that a job has major influence on one's self-concept and sense of identity. However, Roger (1983) argued that one's level of self-esteem depends heavily on one's ability to perform different tasks and roles, thus when one is unable to master a specific task or role, this results in a low self-esteem.

Robert Hill indicated that blacks do not have to be coerced to work as many people may believe, further findings by Robert Hill indicated that black poor are more likely to work than white poor, three-fifths of black poor work, compared to about half of the white poor.

A study conducted by Sanford and Donovan revealed that unemployment may be particularly damaging to women's self-esteem, in that women tend to blame themselves for misfortunes, although poor women do participate in the labor force. However, the problems that were reported is that women are often unable to find work, most work part time, or the job does not pay a wage adequate enough to support their family.

According to a previous study 61% percent of blacks, 51% percent of Hispanics and 45% percent of white women in the
labor force were either unemployed or underemployed in 1980. As a result of inadequate earnings, many lose self confidence and self-esteem, making efforts to improve their status difficult.

In using a longitudinal research design to measure some psychological effects of unemployment to self-esteem, it was found that the students whom the questionnaires were administered to were generally less well-adjusted than their employed counterparts. The study also indicated that greater negative mood and higher depression scores were among this group. However, females displayed lower self-esteem.

A similar study was conducted to examine whether unemployed women had lower self-esteem and were more lonely than women who worked between the ages of 14-18. No significant differences were found in self-esteem and loneliness among that group of students.

Gurney hypothesized that having a job helps school leavers to clarify their perception of their identity, the hypothesis was confirmed for females but not for males for those who participated in the study. Furthermore, the unemployed males showed a significant shift towards the mistrust pole of the first dimension of trust-mistrust, and the employed of both sexes shifted significantly. He concluded that unemployment has the effect of inhibiting development in school leavers, rather than inflicting trauma as is sometimes popularly supposed. Gurney also found that over a four month period after leaving school, self-esteem increased only for those young people who found work.
A study revealed that in comparison to high self-esteem people, low self-esteem individuals are more likely to suffer from a variety of emotional and behavioral problems, and are more likely to question their self worth. For instance, studies have shown that persons with low self-esteem do more poorly than persons with high self-esteem in achievement settings.

In conclusion some attempts have been made to determine how the Black child's self-image affects his/her ability to function in society, achieve success, and cope with the future. Although scientists have been quick to find sickness in the Black experience in America. Reflecting culturally deficient, rather than as culturally different from whites.
Many experts on the subject matter of unemployment and self-esteem indicate that attitudes toward work, play a major role in the labor force experiences of young people. The underlying premise is that positive work attitudes are associated with stable and successful employment patterns among youths, while negative attitudes have harmful effects on finding a job and adjustment to work. (Warr, 1982).

From the review of literature, several studies revealed that "despite the fact that black youths have increased their educational attainment at a faster rate than white youths, this increase has not netted higher employment rates. This fact runs counter to the human capital theory that black subgroups show lesser employment potential.

According to Secord and Beckman, it is convenient to think of a person's attitude toward oneself as having three aspects: the cognitive, the affective, and the behavioral. The crucial points are that different features of identity generally have some judgment of feelings of good and bad associated with them. In a word, all action somewhere is evaluated on dimensions which grossly display positive and negative ends. And since self-behavior is but a subset of behavior in general, this will also apply to the act of self-conception. To this end, each person places some kind of estimate upon oneself as an object of value. This evaluative, judgmental, or affective aspect of a person's self-conception
involves the process commonly referred to as self-esteem.

The Cognitive-Consistency Theory can be used in determining how one may view one's self. Cognitions are those things that each of us uses to make sense out of our everyday world. Cognitions include our perceptions of how we perceive and code events and experiences that occur around us, as well as the knowledge, opinions, and beliefs that we hold about ourselves, about our behavior, and about the environment. (Festinger, 1957). The question of how these interdependent cognitive elements are, in fact, organized together into larger wholes has been one of the primary concerns of the consistency theory.

The underlying assumption that has influenced the majority of the work in this area is that each individual attempts to establish and maintain some degree of consistency or balance among these cognitions that are related to each other.

The major sociological theory that attempts to explain sex-specific difference in work attitudes is role theory. It attempts to explain why women are suppose to have a lower attachment and commitment to employment and occupation, than men, as well as lower interest in advancement and promotion. First the commitment will be discussed and then interest in advancement.

Several variants of the role theory are usually proposed. One variant claims that modern women play two social roles, the dominant role, which at least historically, was the primary one and the employment role. The values and norms of these two roles, conflict with each other; hence, employed
women live in a state of constant tension; this tension keeps their attachment and commitment to the secondary role of employment and occupation weak. The second variant speaks not of a clash between values and norms, but of the double burden that the dual role tends to put on women, especially on mothers who work outside their household. This variant claims that this double burden precludes any high commitment to an occupational role for the employed mother. A third variant of the role theory claims that because of the socialization of men into the provider role, married women see no need (and or their husband do not want them) to earn as much as they earn.

Related to this theory is recognition of the importance of social reinforcers such as approval, acceptance, status, esteem, recognition, love, and the identification of social punishment, such as rejection and ridicule. These reinforcers represent ones' acceptance or rejection in the labor market. Thus these are secondary reinforcers that are learned, and therefore, display considerable variation is what social behavior in reinforcing to different people, but plays an important role in explaining social behavior. Social-exchange theory attempts to explain social behavior and thus at times utilizes mental processes to explain the behavior in question. The existence of a memory and the ability to recall it is inherent in the notion of a history of past reinforcement. Also, the individual's calculation of the profit level of potential exchanges implies mental processes because possible outcomes are predicted. The heavy reliance on the established principles of learning theory, modified by the inclusion of
limited mental processes, has made social-exchange theory very popular as an explanation of social behavior.
Chapter IV
METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this study was to examine the relationship between self-esteem and unemployment among black single female heads of household who were enrolled in a training program at the Atlanta Urban League, Career Opportunities Project, Inc. The research design used in the study was descriptive. A descriptive study describes the conditions or relationships that exist between variables. (Ray, Jacobs, and Razavieh, 1985).

The scale used in this study was The Index of Self-Esteem (ISE); which consisted of twenty-five (25) self descriptive statements. Some of the items were positively worded statements or descriptions and others were negatively worded, to partially control for biases. The Index of Self-Esteem was designed to measure the degree, severity, or magnitude of a problem the subject has with self-esteem, thus, the scale is scored to have a score range from 0 to 100, where a low score indicates the relative absence of the problem being measured, and higher scores indicate the presence of a more severe problem. In using the ISE scale, it is important to make a distinction between self-concept and self-esteem. Self-esteem, as conceptualized and measured with respect to the ISE, is the evaluative component of self-concept. The subject may have a very accurate self-concept and a severe problem with self-esteem. (Hudson, 1982).

In addition to the ISE, the researcher added ten addi-
tional statements that directly addressed the relationship of unemployment and self-esteem. These questions and the ISE included items related to ones physical self, personal self, social self, self satisfaction and self behavior.

Unit of Analysis

The population was a group of females involved in a training program at The Atlanta Urban League, Career Opportunities Project, Inc., Atlanta, Georgia. The group consisted of 30 black single female heads of household, age sixteen (16) to forty (40). The eligibility requirements were as follows:

(1) Each participant had to be sixteen or older.
(2) Must be a single parent head of household.
(3) Come to the program office, complete an application and have an initial interview with the program staff.
(4) The information that is provided on the application is put into the computer from there the selection is made as to who is or is not chosen.
(5) Random Selection - only a portion of the people become participants, based on the computer random selection.

The Sampling Procedure

The researcher used the simplest non-probability sampling procedure known as "accidental sampling". Accidental sam-
pling, which is regarded as the weakest of all sampling procedures, involves using available cases for a study thus, there is no way, except by repeating the study using probability sampling, of estimating the error introduced by the accidental sampling procedures. (Ray, Jacobs, and Razavieh, 1985).

The investigator obtained permission from the program director to use a portion of the participants in the training program. After permission was granted the sample was selected. The purpose of the questionnaire was explained in detail to the population and confidentiality of the information was obtained. A pre-test (upon entering the program) and a post-test (after entering the program) were administered to the subjects over a period of time. The design enabled the researcher to determine the degree to which the objectives were achieved as a result of the intervention (participation in the training program). The results would determine the degree to which the training program had affected their level of self-esteem. The respondents were asked by the researcher to complete a 35 item questionnaire. (Appendix A) The directions and statements were read out loud by the researcher allowing for any clarification of the proposed statements to insure accuracy. The respondents were asked to rate the statements based on their own perception of self. They were asked to indicate their responses as follows:

(1) Rarely or none of the time.
(2) A little of the time.
(3) Some of the time.
(4) A good part of the time.
(5) Most or all of the time.

The process took approximately 30 minutes to complete.

After the completion of both questionnaires, the researcher, with the permission of the director of the program had a party for those respondents who participated in the study, as a way of thanking them for their participation.
Chapter V

FINDINGS

The black single females who participated in this study were participants of The Atlanta Urban League, Career Opportunities Project, Inc., Atlanta, Georgia.

A total of thirty (30) women participated, their ages ranged from sixteen to forty (16-40) years. Of the total thirty (30) single black female heads of household, two (2) had been married, six (6) were separated, and six (6) were divorced. The number of children in each family ranged from one (1) to six (6). The children's ages ranged from seven (7) months to twenty-eight (28) years. The educational levels of those single black females ranged from seventh (7) to twelfth (12) grades. At the time of administration of the pre-test and post-test, twenty-six women were unemployed and four (4) were employed part-time. Twenty-six (26) of the women were receiving some form of welfare.

Index of Self-Esteem Scale (ISE)

The statistical interpretation was based on the following three items: (1) Total High Scores, which represented the presence of a severe problem with one's physical, behavioral, personal, and social functioning, (2) Total of Low Scores, which represented the absence of such problem being measured, and (3) Distributed Scores. The scale is scored to have a score range from 0 to 100. The distribution scores were used to determine the frequency of the responses in the five
Total High Scores

The study indicated that 80% of the sample population encountered a high self-esteem score, as it related to their level of esteem and work. These women lacked the motivation, self-confidence, and the courage needed, as a result of being unemployed. Their high scores ranged from sixty-five to ninety (65-90). Those scored reflected that they were doubtful about their self worth, felt undesirable, and often unhappy with themselves, as a result of being unemployed.

Total Low Scores

The study indicated that 20% of the sample population encountered a low self-esteem score, as it related to their level of self-esteem and work. These women tended to be satisfied with themselves; felt that they were persons of value and worth, and had a great deal of confidence in themselves. Their low scores ranged from twenty to forty (20-40). Those scores reflected that the probability of feeling depressed, anxious, or unhappy was absent, and that being unemployed did not significantly impact on their level of self-esteem.

Distribution Scores

These scores summarized the distribution of the answers that were given in relation to the five categories pertaining to self (physical self, personal self, self behavior, social
self, and self satisfaction). High scores in each category indicated that the subjects were not dealing with the scenario of unemployment in an objective way, while, low scores meant just the opposite. Both, pre-test and post-test scores ranged from thirty to eighty (30-80) in each category. Those persons with extremely high scores on this variable for the most part tended to reflect that they were emotionally disturbed.

Results

The Index of Self-Esteem Scale was used to measure the degree, severity, and magnitude of a distinct and separate problem in the five categories pertaining to self. Based on the overall scores of the pre-test and post-test, there were no significant differences in the level of self-esteem before entering the training program, and during the time of enrollment in the training program. The training period covered approximately six months to a year for each participant. The data collected supported the belief that there was a relationship between self-esteem and unemployment.

Implications for Social Work

As high rates of unemployment sweep the nation, it seems appropriate to address the role of the social work profession in promoting more responsible social policies, services, and practice innovation for jobless workers and their families.

Social workers have long witnessed the devastations of unemployment, and the psychological impact it has on self-esteem. The root of the profession was nurtured in part by
collective struggles to aid the unemployed and to question policies that perpetuate the hardships of unemployment. Such concerns were reactivated during the Great Depression by social workers who sensitized society to the problems of joblessness. More recently, the role of some social workers has been that of promoting employment-related legislation, such as H.R. 50, the Full Employment and Balanced Growth Act of 1978 (originally known as the Humphrey-Hawkins bill) and of plant-closure laws. Other social workers have participated in the design and implementation of employment and training services such as those under the Comprehensive Employment and Training Act (CETA).

It is ironic that, with few exceptions, the social work profession has remained reticent about, as insidious a condition as unemployment. As thousands of workers fill the ranks of the unemployed each month, their personal and family stress is manifested in an array of symptoms, many of which are brought to social service agencies. The often less-than-adequate response to these agencies to these clients indicates not only the need for new practice approaches, but a more visible role for social workers in the design and implementation of a continuum of employment and training programs. Examining the need for innovation in practice and promoting more appropriate services and therapeutic responses to unemployment clients should be paramount in the job responsibilities of social workers. Social workers therefore, must design and implement a more productive plan in assisting individuals from low-income and disadvantaged backgrounds in becoming self-
sufficient, and in meeting their psychological needs as well as to alleviate some of the stress the client encounters as a result of unemployment. Social workers should assist the client in promoting obtainable goals and available options to enhance their quality of life. This would consist of close monitoring from the initial stage of contact with the client, until the terminating stage of contact with the client would have accomplished the desired goal in the labor market, thus, creating a positive self-image.

Limitations

The study was limited by time and opportunities to more scientifically access each participant's individual problems and aspirations. The group was generally unmotivated, thus limiting a more valid study.

Recommendations

In designing and implementing programs to assist low-income families from disadvantaged backgrounds, it is important to include all of the persons who take part in the human development arena; especially social workers whose first priority is to enhance the quality of life for all clients. Based on the findings of this study, the researcher recommended the following:

(1) In addition to free training programs offered to unskilled workers, more programs should be offered to those who seek training in various areas a chance to earn while they learn how to become more effective in the world of work.
(2) More programs should be designed to motivate participants in becoming more self-sufficient. This in return may increase their level of self-confidence.

(3) More programs should be designed and structured in such a way that it provides the basic needs of those who are from a low income and disadvantaged background.
APPENDIX A

INDEX OF SELF-ESTEEM SCALE (ISE)
INDEX OF SELF-ESTEEM SCALE

Note: Please answer the following questions based on how you felt about yourself during the time when you were _______ employed or unemployed _______ (check the appropriate space).

Age: ____________

Marital Status:

   Single ________
   Married ________
   Divorced ________
   Separated ________

Educational Level:

   High School Grad. ________
   Grade Completed ________
   College Grad. ________
   Other ________

Length of employment: ________

Time in program: ________

Number of children: ________

Age(s): ________

Welfare Recipient: Yes ________  No ________

INDEX OF SELF ESTEEM (ISE)

THIS QUESTIONNAIRE IS DESIGNED TO MEASURE HOW YOU SEE YOURSELF. IT IS NOT A TEST, SO THERE ARE NO RIGHT OR WRONG ANSWERS. PLEASE ANSWER EACH ITEM AS CAREFULLY AND ACCURATELY AS YOU CAN BY PLACING A NUMBER BY EACH AS FOLLOWS:

1  RARELY OR NONE OF THE TIME
2  A LITTLE OF THE TIME
3  SOME OF THE TIME
4  A GOOD PART OF THE TIME
5  MOST OF THE TIME

PLEASE BEGIN

1. I feel that people would not like me if they really knew me well. ________

2. I feel that others get along better than I do. ________
3. I feel that I am a beautiful person. ______
4. When I am with other people, I feel they are glad I am with them. ______
5. I feel that people really like to be with me. ______
6. I feel that I am a very competent person. ______
7. I think I make a good impression on others. ______
8. I feel that I need more self-confidence. ______
9. When I am with strangers, I am very nervous. ______
10. I think I am a very dull person. ______
11. I feel ugly. ______
12. I feel that others have more fun than I do. ______
13. I feel that I bore people. ______
14. I think my friends find me interesting. ______
15. I think I have a good sense of humor. ______
16. I feel very self-conscious when I am with strangers. ______
17. I feel that if I could be more like other people I would have it made. ______
18. I feel that people have a good time when they are with me. ______
19. I feel I get pushed around more than others. ______
20. I think I am a rather nice person. ______
21. I feel that other people really like me very much. ______
22. I feel that I am a likeable person. ______
23. I am afraid I will appear foolish to others. ______
24. My friends think very highly of me. ______
25. I feel like a wallflower when I go out. ______
26. I feel that I am worthy of a good job. ______
27. Blacks are disadvantaged and unskilled. ______
28. I am a good and dependable worker. ______
29. I am a hard worker. _____

30. If given the opportunity, I could perform any task.
    _____

31. I deserve a job requiring a great deal of intelligence.
    _____

32. I feel that I have a good relationship with my co-workers.
    _____

33. I feel that I could never compete for a job with a man.
    _____

34. I feel like I am going to be a failure on the job.
    _____

35. My job does not offer potential for growth. _____
BIBLIOGRAPHY


Calame, B.C., and E. Morgenthaler, Crime Rates are Rising as Joblessness Spreads and Economics Recede, Wall Street Journal, February 25, 1975, p. 33..


Coe, Richard and Ellen Galinsky, "Dependency and Poverty in the Short and Long Run.


Hill, Robert and Regina Nixon, Youth Employment In American Industry, 1984, p. 5


