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The Sociological Effects of Unemployment Upon the Family

James Walsh
Carroll College

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This thesis for the B. A. degree, by
James Leo Walsh
has been approved for the
Department of
Social Science
by

Date April 1, 1962
The Sociological Effects of Unemployment Upon the Family

by

James Leo Walsh

A thesis submitted to the Faculty of Carroll College in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree of Bachelor of Arts

Department of Social Science

March 1962
Acknowledgments

The purpose of this thesis is to point out the sociological effects of unemployment upon family life. It is my belief that the problem of unemployment plays an important part in much of the family discord that is rapidly becoming commonplace in this country. In this thesis I hope to point out, in a general view, some of the more prominent ramifications unemployment has upon the family life.

I take this opportunity to thank Mr. Ted Sivalon, State Field Supervisor, Public Assistance, State of Montana; Mrs. Queenie Lynch, Case Worker II, Silver Bow County, and Mrs. Florence Slavins, Field Supervisor of Child Welfare Services, State of Montana. All of these people helped me with my research in Butte. I would also like to thank Mr. Paul Carpino, Supervisor of Social Services, Montana State Prison, Deer Lodge, Montana; Mr. Vern Vatland, local office manager, Montana Unemployment Compensation Commission, Anaconda, Montana; Mr. Jack McCarthy, former local office manager, Montana Unemployment Compensation Commission, Anaconda; District Judge Sid Stewart, Anaconda; and Mr. Vivien Burr, Director of Public Assistance, State of Montana, Helena, for the
valuable assistance and sacrifices of time and materials they made in order to make the research for this thesis possible. My thanks are also due to Father James White and the staff of the Carroll College Library.

Particularly, I am indebted to the Reverend Dr. J. J. O'Connor, my advisor and chairman of the Division of Social Sciences, who first interested me in the field of sociology and without who's help I could not have completed this thesis. My thanks are also due to Miss Colleen McCarthy who typed this manuscript.

J. L. W.
Table of Contents

Acknowledgements iii
List of tables vi

Chapter

I. My Findings 1

II. The Psychological Impact of Unemployment upon the Family 21

III. The Effects of Unemployment and the Family From the Experts' Point of View 26

IV. The Experts' Viewpoints on the Psychological Impact of Unemployment Upon Family Life 33

V. Summary and Conclusions 37

Appendix 38

Bibliography 41
List of Tables

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Unemployment and Crime</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Unemployment and Alcoholism</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
CHAPTER I

MY FINDINGS

America has undergone a period of change in the past one hundred years. It has changed from a backward frontier settlement into a powerful industrial giant. American families have been victims of the changes that have affected this nation. Family life is no longer as stable as it was when this country was characterized by close-knit life of the farmer and the craftsman. This nation now places the emphasis on the forces of gigantic industry with large-scale production. These changes have brought about a new social order and this new social order has left a legacy of social problems as it demands mass employment in order that men may earn the money necessary to purchase food, clothing and adequate education for their families. When unemployment strikes, the results have far-reaching effects on family life.

It is my purpose in this thesis to examine some of the effects of unemployment on family life. I have studied this problem for the past year and one-half and have gathered information from three sources:

1. The writings of experts in the fields of sociology and economics.
2. I have interviewed officials in the fields of welfare, unemployment compensation and criminology in the State of Montana.
3. I have observed unemployed families at various times during this year and one-half.

From my research I have reached some conclusions. For the purpose of this thesis I shall divide them into fourteen points. I shall treat of:

1. Family stability (i.e. divorce and desertion)
2. Early marriages
3. Women and children working
4. Birth Control
5. Crime and delinquency
6. Poor health
7. School drop-outs
8. Moonlighting
9. Alcoholism
10. Suicide
11. Separation of family members
12. Psychological inability to work
13. Defeatist attitudes and radical thinking
14. Loss of status

In this first chapter, I shall discuss the first eleven of these effects of unemployment and deal with the psychological aspects of the problem in Chapter II.

1. UNEMPLOYMENT AND DIVORCE AND DESERTION

Divorce is a social evil that is not limited to any economic level. However, it does constitute a disrupting force in family life. I found that unemployment plays a role in divorce and desertion. My finding, however, shows that unemployment's role is only a minor one in the divorce problem in the areas I studied.

A District Court Judge, a former office manager of the Montana Unemployment Compensation Commission, three officials
of the Silver Bow County Welfare Office and the Director of Welfare Department's Helena office all said their work has indicated that unemployment is a factor in divorce cases. However, all but one of these persons qualified their statement by saying that unemployment had been a cause of divorce in only a few of the cases in their experience. They pointed out that their experience indicated that families with some religious background and those that were stable to any degree before the unemployment struck, usually remained together.

Mr. Vivien Burr of the Helena, Montana, Welfare Department said:

> Chronic unemployment in a family invariably results in disturbing the family unity and quite often leads to a break-up in it. Many of the broken families that come to us said their breakup came due to unemployment.

Mr. Burr added that desertion often springs from unemployment as the father will leave the area to seek work elsewhere. Then, when he is unable to find a job, the father frequently deserts his family.

Mrs. Queenie Lynch, Case Worker II with the Silver Bow County Welfare Department, said: "Families with much stress and strain cannot take the stress that ordinary families can."

2. Interview with Vivien Burr, Director of Public Assistance, Helena, Montana, February 27, 1962.
They do not seem to hold up as well.  

Several men at the Montana State Prison in Deer Lodge with whom I discussed the relationship between unemployment and divorce and desertion said unemployment was a definite factor in both.  

However, in some of the cases I studied, I found that unemployment cannot be blamed for the breakup of families through divorce and desertion. Most of my research was done in the Helena area, and the Butte-Anaconda areas where there are many Roman Catholics and devout Protestants. These families seem to resist the temptations of divorce or desertion better than do families with no religious beliefs. Mrs. Lynch pointed out that the religious background of a family strongly affects its solidarity.  

One man, Jack McCarthy, former local office manager of the Unemployment Compensation Commission in Anaconda, said his experience indicated that unemployment often seemed to pull families closer together.  

District Judge Sid Steward of Anaconda introduced me to a family consisting of a mother and father and teenaged daughter. The father had been without work for several

3. Interview with Mrs. Queenie Lynch, Case Worker II, Silver Bow County Welfare Department, Butte, Montana, January 30, 1962

4. Personal interview, January 29, 1962

years. The mother had been forced to take a job as a cook which resulted in a diminished family income. This family, Judge Stewart said, learned to live with its new situation and, in his opinion, seemed to develop a stronger sense of unity.  

Mr. Burr of the Helena Welfare Department said the tendency of unemployed persons to resort to divorce or separation depended on several factors. Among these, he said, were families such as those in Butte and Anaconda who were out of work through no fault of their own. This type of family seems to suffer less disruption. Closer to Helena, families out of work resort to divorce and separation more often and unemployment is a definite factor in family break-up, he said.

2. EARLY MARRIAGES

My research showed that in several cases unemployment affected the ages at which persons married. Mr. Ted Sivalon, State Field Supervisor of Public Assistance in Butte, said the experience of social workers in Butte and Silver Bow County indicates that many teenagers, especially girls, are married during the time their father is unemployed. Mr. Sivalon said the youngsters feel a need to improve themselves or to relieve the financial burdens of their families and

they solve their problem through a marriage during their teens.8

Mr. Burr said:

Children will escape the home environment when the home is hit by unemployment. The girls usually escape through marriage and the boys to the armed services. Many cases of girls getting married at the ages of 15 and 16 are traceable to unemployment in the family.9

I have observed six cases of young girls who have married before completing high school. In five cases their parents were not working. However, other factors may also have entered into the reasons for their early marriages.

3. WOMEN AND CHILDREN WORKING

The problem of the woman worker has been a familiar part of the unemployment situation since the turn of the century. In my investigation, I found that in some cases unemployment of the husband caused the wife to seek employment. This conclusion agreed with the findings of several officials in the state with whom I spoke concerning the problem.

In my research, however, the findings did not follow the national tendency. Much of my research, as has been pointed out, was conducted in the Butte-Anaconda area where a major unemployment problem has prevailed since 1956. Jobs are scarce in that area. Not only men, but also women have


difficulty finding employment.

Unemployment led to women entering the labor force more frequently in Central Montana. Unemployment is not a major problem in this more agricultural area which is currently experiencing an employment boom for the construction of Federal missile sites and it is easier for women to find work.

Unemployment of one man with whom I spoke led to his assuming the baby-sitting duties for the family’s two children while his wife worked as a beautician. This change of roles in the family is a frequent aftermath of unemployment. And, Mr. Burr pointed out, when the wife becomes the worker and the husband the homemaker, many unhealthy results ensue.10

A similar case was recorded in Butte, Montana. There, the father of a family of two children assumed the homemaking chores while his wife took a full-time dishwashing job. A caseworker said “...She was able-bodied and could be absent from the home as Mr. X’s health is now such that he could look after the children.”11

When unemployment is present in a family with children in the middle or late teens, there is a tendency for these young people to be placed in the labor market. Often, as the reader will see later, this employment involves dropping out of school or discontinuing plans for higher education.


I observed several cases of youngsters who complied with the minimum age level for attending school and then dropped out in order to seek work to supplement their family's income following a period of unemployment. Mr. Burr said these dropouts are often with parental approval as the parents feel the youngsters' income, small as it may be, will help the family through the period of unemployment.12

4. CRIME AND DELINQUENCY

In order to establish a relationship between unemployment and crime and delinquency, I studied the records of twenty-eight prisoners selected at random at the State Prison in Deer Lodge. In addition, I interviewed the social services director at the prison, a Montana juvenile delinquency expert, Judge Sid Stewart.

A. Crime: When a crime is committed family life is disrupted. In the research for this thesis, I found that unemployment plays a definite role in the commission of crime. The crime, in turn, affects family life. Montana law provides that conviction for a felony constitutes grounds for divorce. Officials at Montana State Prison point out that family disruption frequently results from incarceration.

Mr. Paul Carpine, supervisor of social services at the state prison, said many prisoners list unemployment as the main cause of their being in prison and for their ruptured

family life. However, he added, this is more often an excuse rather than a real cause.

Carpino said:

My impression is that the type of offense, length of sentence, age of the couples and the stability of the marriage prior to the commitment determines whether or not a marriage will end in divorce. He added that he knew of no studies that would verify his statements.

My studies into this problem pointed out that of the twenty-eight prisoners considered, fifteen were men whose homes had been disrupted by unemployment when they were children. This led to approximately ninety per cent of the prisoners entering the labor market as unskilled men holding jobs subject to frequent periods of unemployment, according to Mr. Carpino's estimates.

Sixteen of the twenty-eight convicts studied were unemployed at the time of their commitment. The majority of them had unstable work records and unstable family lives.

One prisoner, a thirty-nine year old father of five children, said he resorted to crime in order to provide for his family. The county attorney from his home town said:

The subject stated that he was unable to secure regular employment, that he was making only eight to ten dollars a week for part-time employment...that his wife is sick and is due to have a baby next month by Caeserian Section. There are four children in the family and the subject stated that up to now his family has been unable to secure welfare payments or A.D.C.

(Aid to Dependent Children) payments. He stated his real reason for committing the forgeries was to render his wife eligible for general assistance and A.D.C. He stated that he had made no attempt to conceal his identity as is born out by the fact that the checks are made out to his own name and he cashed the checks at places where he was known and that he further did not attempt to conceal himself at (his hometown). This case, Carpino said, represents an effect of unemployment that occurs "fairly often."

In addition to Carpino's testimony, Mr. Burr of the Helena Welfare Department and Mr. Sivalon and Mrs. Lynch of Butte all said their experiences indicated that unemployment often leads to crime. (See table I, page eleven)

B. Delinquency: Judge Sid Stewart, Anaconda, Montana, District Court Judge, said there is a relationship between unemployment and juvenile delinquency. He added, however:

I don't think unemployment can be looked upon as a cause of delinquency. Rather, I look upon it more or less as an excuse. It triggers conditions which existed in a passive situation before and actually puts them into motion. I would say that a good, healthy, honest family would become no less healthy, good and honest with temporary unemployment. If the father is eager to work but can't it is difficult but does not change the basic personality of family members.

Sometimes, usually in the case of girls, the economic conditions of the family cause them to seek a change in their scene due to shame, but here again the unemployment is merely an excuse, not a cause.

Mr. Burr, the Helena Welfare Department official, said his experience and that of his office in the Helena area

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14. County Attorney's statement as filed in the Social Service Department at Montana State Prison (Prisoner Number 20,065)

15. Personal Interview

# TABLE I

**UNEMPLOYMENT AND CRIME**—a study made of twenty-eight criminals

**TOTAL PRISONERS STUDIED**—twenty-eight

1. Employed at time of offense—12
   Unemployed at time of offense—16

2. Employment Stability
   a. poor—17
   b. fair—6
   c. good—5

3. Present Marital Status
   a. married—14
   b. divorced—9
   c. separated—5

4. Marital Stability
   a. poor—16
   b. good—12

5. Length of marriage
   a. shortest—1 week
   b. longest—21 years
   c. average—4.85 years (includes 4 marriages of unknown length)

6. Type of marriage
   a. civil—14
   b. religious—9
   c. forced—1
   d. unknown—4

7. Number of children
   a. largest number—9
   b. average number—2.7

8. Religion
   a. Protestants—14
   b. Catholics—12
   c. None—2

9. Race
   a. White—24
   b. Indian—4
10. Age  
   a. eldest--------47  
   b. youngest------20  
   c. average-------29.1

11. Education  
   a. eighth grade or less-------9  
   b. high school or less-------17  
   c. college--------------------2  
   d. average number of years----9.3

12. Crime  
   a. forgery----------17  
   b. grand larceny----9  
   c. embezzling-------1  
   d. manslaughter----1

13. Sentence  
   a. longest--------12 years  
   b. shortest-------18 months  
   c. average-------3.4 years

Data compiled from the records of twenty-eight prisoners selected at random from prisoners admitted to the State Prison at Deer Lodge, Montana, between September first and December thirty-first, 1961.
indicates that the children of families with long standing unemployment tend to strike back at society in some manner. The do this through delinquency and such things as promiscuous sexual relationships, Mr. Burr said.  

It is, of course, difficult to determine the exact cause or causes of delinquency; but, my observations indicate that youngsters of unemployed parents tend to become involved in trouble more frequently than do children of employed families. Children of unemployed parents lack the pocket money and clothing that their friends have. They seem to be more easily discouraged.

Again, it is difficult to compare my findings and those of nation-wide surveys made in more congested urban areas as the juvenile problem in Montana is not a serious one. nevertheless, unemployment can be seen as an influence even here. I also found cases where unemployment seemed, if anything, to strengthen the family life and the ties between the children and the parents. Judge Stewart said, in his opinion, unemployment has a tendency to solidify a family as the members recognize they must do without some of the comforts enjoyed by others.

5. UNEMPLOYMENT AND ILL HEALTH

One of the more obvious effects upon the family that I found in my research was the impact of unemployment upon

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17. Personal interview, February 27, 1962
18. Personal interview, January 29, 1962
the health of family members. This ill health, in turn, leads to strain in the family itself.

Mrs. Queenie Lynch said the health of unemployed persons seems to fade markedly. She said her experience indicates that: "People actually physically deteriorate. They seem to give up and many, especially the men, do not eat properly."19

Twelve unemployed men with whom I discussed this problem indicated that they were no longer able to work once they spent long periods unemployed. Many of these men complained of back injuries.20

Mr. Burr explained that his office has found that in many cases the unemployment seems to cause the jobless man to consider himself physically disabled even though this may not be so. "He (the unemployed person) magnifies his physical disability as a justification."21

In Silver Bow County, where the problem of ill health following unemployment was also common, only seven of sixty-two recipients of welfare aid who claimed disability were found to be physically unemployable following medical examination.22

Ill health was not limited to the unemployed breadwinner. It also affected other members of the family. A

19. Personal interview, January 30, 1962
21. Personal interview, February 27, 1962
possible reason for others being affected by ill health was
given by two men with whom I discussed this problem. They
said they did not purchase necessary drugs or call in
doctors to examine their family members when illness struck
because they felt they could not pay the bills. They said
they were already in debt and felt they could not afford
more bills.23

Be it a physiological or physiological illness, un-
employment did play a major role in the cases I investigated.

6. UNEMPLOYMENT AND SCHOOL DROP OUTS

The problem of young persons dropping out of school due
to financial strains in the family caused by unemployment
was another of the results of unemployment I found in my
studies.

Mrs. Florence Slavins, Field Supervisor of Child Welfare
Service for the State of Montana in Butte, said this is a
very real aspect of the impact of unemployment on the family.
She said it begins a vicious circle as the young people are
thrown into the labor market with little training. This soon
leads to them working on jobs prone to frequent unemployment
and lay-offs.24

Several students from the Butte-Anaconda area indicated
that unemployment in the family and the subsequent financial

24. Interview with Mrs. Florence Slavins, Field Supervisor
    of Child Welfare Service, State of Montana, Butte,
Mr. Jack McCarthy, a former local office manager for the Montana Unemployment Compensation Commission in Anaconda, said many youngsters from his community had dropped out of school due to unemployment in the family.25

7. MOONLIGHTING

Although moonlighting is more often associated with periods of full employment, I encountered numerous cases of men who had been unemployed for some length of time and who were later forced to hold as many jobs as possible to make up for the losses incurred during the period of unemployment.

Moonlighting, in two cases I observed more closely, involved the father holding a regular eight-hour job from 8 a.m. until 4:30 p.m. Then he worked at a part-time job until later in the evening and on weekends. Welcome as the added income seemed to the family, both of the men's wives expressed discontent and both families had children who began to associate with undesirable youngsters. It seemed to me that without the father at home in the evenings and on weekends, the mothers were forced to assume his role as disciplinarian—a role for which they were not fully qualified.

8. UNEMPLOYMENT AND ALCOHOLISM

The effects of excessive drinking of alcohol upon a man

or woman and the consequent threats, stresses and strains this causes in family life is an often-discussed question. It is a part of the unemployment-family relationship.

The causes of alcoholism are many and varied. Unemployment is one of the causes. I have observed several men during the past two years who have resorted to alcohol during periods of unemployment. I cannot definitely determine whether they can be classified as alcoholics or not; but at least two exhibited many of the exterior signs of the disease. In three cases I observed that the drinking was always heaviest when the man was without work. The effects upon their families, of course, were largely hidden to me as an observer but the drain on the family finances were obvious and the wife of one of the men threatened divorce on several occasions.

Mr. Sivalon said the experience of his staff in Butte shows that the force of unemployment plays a major role in alcoholism. A survey was made in Butte between June and July of 1962. In it 183 unemployed persons were interviewed and the case workers judged that 39, or about 21 per cent had extreme alcoholic problems. Many of these alcoholics lost their jobs due to their excessive drinking but in many cases, the Welfare Office officials said, the alcoholism came as a consequence of unemployment.

TABLE II
UNEMPLOYMENT AND ALCOHOLISM

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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alcohol not important</td>
<td>103</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alcohol a minor factor</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alcohol a moderate factor</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alcohol an extreme factor</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No information</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>253</td>
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*Includes 183 families studied in Silver Bow County by Welfare department caseworkers, 12 studied by myself in Helena, and Central Montana, and the records of 28 convicts at Montana State Prison.

9. UNEMPLOYMENT AND SUICIDE

The average person has some incompetencies as well as competencies, and when unemployment strikes the incompetencies that one has kept under control will assert themselves and one will become an inadequate, incompetent person.27

This was an observation made by Mr. Burr who said that unemployment does play a role in suicide. He and the officials with the public welfare service in Butte agreed that unemployment plays a role in suicide in Montana.

I observed two cases in which suicide followed a period of unemployment. In one of these cases, the unemployed father of three teen-aged girls committed suicide after he had been without work for a year. Another case, though less typical, indicates a relationship between unemployment and suicide. I discussed unemployment at some length with an elderly man whom I had picked up as a hitchhiker in August of 1961. He said he

27. Personal interview, February 27, 1962.
had been married and had had several children before he lost his job. His children, he said, were teenagers and old enough to find jobs as laborers; but, the financial strain made life difficult for his wife. She died in an automobile accident and the elderly man said he felt she simply drove her car into a bridge abutment to escape the disrupted family scene. Of course, there is no means of validating the above account, but it does indicate the far-reaching consequences that unemployment can have in a family.

10. UNEMPLOYMENT AND BIRTH CONTROL

I discussed this phase of the problems caused by unemployment with several men who admitted that unemployment led to the use of birth control practices in their marriages. Both of these men were working at the time I discussed the problem with them, but one said birth control practices practiced by him and his wife began during a period of unemployment.28

The Welfare department workers in Butte and Helena said that many of the unemployed who come to their offices seeking aid admit of birth control and say that it often begins during the period of unemployment.

11. UNEMPLOYMENT AND FAMILY MOBILITY

The final overt, family-disrupting consequence of unemployment that I shall discuss in this chapter is that of families

separated by the father seeking work in another community. I observed three families separated in this manner and three families forced to move to new communities in search of work.

When the father leaves the community in which his family dwells in order to find work, the family is left with only the mother to supervise the children until such time as the family decides to move or for the father to return home. Welfare officials say that such an arrangement is sometimes successful but that more often the unemployed person lacks the qualifications and contacts necessary to find a job in the other area. Often times he gradually disappears from the scene leaving his family to the mercy of welfare payments.

Many families refuse to move even when such a move would improve their job finding opportunities. In the Butte, Montana, area, hard-hit by mining shutdowns and cutbacks during the past several years, many entire families have left the city and many have refused to move. These families have roots in the community. Many do move as there were few who owned any real property.

In this chapter I have attempted to show some of the more obvious effects of unemployment upon the family life. I shall devote Chapter II to a discussion of the less easily seen psychological impact unemployment has on family life.
CHAPTER II

THE PSYCHOLOGICAL IMPACT OF UNEMPLOYMENT UPON THE FAMILY

In addition to the eleven more easily observed ramifications unemployment had upon family life, I encountered three forms of what I shall call the psychological effects of unemployment which in turn affect family life. These three impacts are:

1. The development of a psychological inability to work.
2. The development of defeatist attitudes and radical thinking.
3. A loss of status.

1. UNEMPLOYMENT AND A PSYCHOLOGICAL INABILITY TO WORK

This phase of the problem ties in closely with the discussion of unemployment and physical illness treated in Chapter I. I encountered men who, after a period of unemployment, were unfit for work in eleven instances. Many would work for a period of time and then revert back to unemployment compensation and welfare payments. This was especially true in the case of several families of "half breeds" in the Lewistown, Montana, area.

I talked with several men who blamed themselves for the economic difficulties their families suffered following periods of unemployment. Welfare officials in both Butte and Helena said this is a common psychological impact of unemployment and these men soon develop the idea that they cannot work in order to justify their unemployment to both themselves and their families. Mr. Burr said that very often the wife and children...
lose respect for the unemployed father.29

In Butte, however, where many realize that the unemployment has been due to the changes in the mining industry and not to any fault of the father, the family does not seem to lose respect for the unemployed father. In these families, Mr. Burr pointed out, one does not find the break-up, delinquency and disorganization that can be found in cases where the husband loses his job through poor performance or other disability. When unemployment is due to such a defect, Mr. Burr continued, the worker will often magnify any incapacity he has and convince himself that he is no longer able to work.

That unemployment does seem to make men unable to work is indicated by the apparent tendency of persons to revert back to public assistance once they have received it for any length of time. In Butte, welfare officials report a definite tendency to revert back to unemployment or welfare assistance whenever any economic difficulties arise in a family. These persons look upon welfare as a steady source of income and they need something steady to rely on.30

2. UNEMPLOYMENT AND DEFEATIST ATTITUDES AND RADICAL THINKING

Unemployment is a factor in the development of a frame of mind toward society that I shall call a "defeatist attitude." Persons who have been unemployed for long periods of time tend to blame the world for their difficulties and begin to

29. Personal interview, February 27, 1962
30. Personal interview, February 27, 1962
think that the world owes them a living.

My findings agreed with those of social workers in Helena and Butte. Mr. Burr in Helena said the unemployed, especially the chronically unemployed, need to blame someone and they soon develop defeatist attitudes.

Mrs. Lynch in Butte said many unemployed persons, "Just seem to give up."

It would be interesting to compare the membership of such extremist groups as the John Birch Society with the unemployed roles in order to determine a relationship between unemployment and such radical thinking. However, such a comparison is impossible. Nevertheless it is observable that men who have suffered unemployment for great lengths of time tend toward radical thinking.

In discussions with unemployed persons during the past year and one half I have heard many express opinions that have ranged from one man calling for the abolition of the federal government to one who thought even Communism or Socialism would be better in this country. Five of these men felt that their unemployment was the fault of the government and they would be willing to see any changes that would develop more stable employment for them. Mr. Burr in Helena summed up this type of thinking when he said the unemployed: "Cry out against society and then fight out against it by aligning themselves with extremist groups."

31. Personal interview, January 30, 1962
32. Personal interview, February 27, 1962.
Mr. Sivalen said men who had been without work for long periods of time in Butte were "open targets" for radical thinking.33

Of course, it is difficult to measure the impact this type of thinking has upon family life. Nevertheless, from the limited observation I have been able to make, unemployment and radical thinking do have an unhealthy influence on family life. It extends to the children who often mirror opinions expressed by their parents and if such thinking continues for any length of time, the children will often accept it completely.

During the past two years I have been in contact with five young men who have been unemployed for various lengths of time during this period. All of these men are high school graduates and four have had a year of college training. The impact unemployment has had upon their thinking and their families has been a major one.

They have all indicated that their viewpoints toward legal authority and the role of government has changed radically since they have been unemployed. They all have said they feel useless and two have left their hometown to find work elsewhere. Two others have decided to re-enter college even though they disliked it when they attended previously. The final youth is still living with his parents but rarely ventures out, makes little effort to find work. He told me; "I just don't feel like going out anymore."34

33. Personal interview, February 27, 1962
34. Personal interview, December, 1961
3. UNEMPLOYMENT AND LOSS OF STATUS

America's social stratification is partly economic and when unemployment strikes a family tight budgeting, withdrawal from social functions and other readjustments must be made. This results in a loss of status and if this continues for even a limited period of time an unhealthy impact is felt upon the family.

Teenaged girls seem to be the most prone to reactions against loss of status. In Anaconda, I discussed this problem with Judge Stewart. He said, these girls refuse to bring their friends to a poor home or express any pride in an unemployed family.

In this chapter I have presented evidence indicating a relationship between unemployment and the development of defeatist attitudes, radical thinking, and a psychological inability to work. The evidence presented was obtained through my research and was necessarily of a limited nature. In the following chapter I shall present evidence obtained by sociologists and economists which will substantiate what I have presented in Chapters I and II.
CHAPTER III

THE EFFECTS OF UNEMPLOYMENT AND THE FAMILY

FROM THE EXPERTS' POINT OF VIEW

Due to the complexity of this subject and the limited area in which I was able to conduct my research and the limited number of cases studied, I shall now present briefly the finding of authorities in order to compose the conclusions that I reached in Chapters I and II.

Economic factors play a major role in the success or failure of marriages:

The economic order works out many of its effects in married life. For instance, it has some control over the number of people who marry and the age at which they marry. It is also the argument brought forward by many in support of the practices of birth control... It affects the health of children as well as the territorial distribution of families. In brief, economics plays a major role in marriage.35

Unemployment is a phase of economic life and its ramifications have serious consequences in family life.

Unemployment is a cause not only of poverty but also of crime, intemperance, vice and gambling. It leads to divorce, fosters child labor, forces women into industry and lowers wages.36

UNEMPLOYMENT AND BREAKUP IN THE HOME

On the national level there is a correlation between

unemployment and the problem of family disruption.

A definite connection between unemployment and the breakup of the home was shown by the increase of 134% between 1928 and 1931 in the number of men arraigned for deserting their wife and children.37

Unemployment has increased during the past half century and with its increase, national statistics point out, the United States' divorce rate has also rapidly increased. The number of divorces in this country have increased from one in every eighteen marriages in 1890 to the present rate of approximately one divorce for every three marriages.38

The causes for divorce are too numerous to list. But, worry over finances is a cause of friction39 which may lead to divorce or, in the case of families who cannot afford the cost of securing legal divorce, desertion may be the end result.40

UNEMPLOYMENT AND WOMEN WORKING

The proportion of women in the United States' labor force has increased from 14.7 per cent in 1890... to 33.3 per cent in December of 1958.41


Most experts on the subject agree that the effect of married women working outside of the home is a definite obstacle to family life and also presents the problems of wages, and working conditions.\textsuperscript{42}

Wherever else the social force of women is felt, the home and the family still remain her natural sphere of activity. It is in the home that she inculcates the ideals that shape the destiny of a generation, and when she neglects her home obligations the breakdown of the home is inevitable...\textsuperscript{43}

Unemployment has been one of the key causes of women working outside the home and this unemployment has left its results in the tragic cases of children wandering in the streets and in such things as birth control, neglect of domestic duties; and women at work seem to have an effect upon the mortality of infants with more stillbirths reported among women workers than non workers.\textsuperscript{45}

Unemployment, therefore, is an influence in pushing women to work and her employment often causes family life to suffer.

UNEMPLOYMENT AND CRIME AND DELINQUENCY

Crime is often caused or influenced by unemployment. A man's job constitutes the foundation for most of his other social relations and when he loses his job his entire way of

\textsuperscript{43} Zemnö, Sister Mary Isidore. Sociology and Social Problems In Nursing (St. Louis: C. V. Mosby Co., 1951), p. 100.
\textsuperscript{44} Healy, op. cit., p. 98.
\textsuperscript{45} Sait, op. cit., p. 367.
life is shattered. This often results in the commission of crime.46

In the case of juveniles committing crimes, most authorities agree that the home is the root cause of most of their problems. However, employment and the effects it can have on home life often gives delinquency an added impetus.

Economic pressures often deprived these families not only of physical necessities, but also of educational opportunities and social associations. Such deprivations not infrequently led to frustration and rebellion, expressing itself in neglect of obligations on the part of parents and delinquency in children.47

Unemployment seems to demoralize many families and "a cause of juvenile delinquency springs from family demoralization."48

UNEMPLOYMENT AND ILL HEALTH

Experts in the field of sociology have studied the relation between unemployment and health and one study indicated that unemployed families seem to suffer forty-eight per cent more illness than did employed families in the same area.49

Food is one of the first items to be cut down, and health standards are lowered dangerously. Recreational opportunities are curtailed, leading to an indulgence in unwholesome amusements and contacts. Debts accumulate... Many problems come to the family society long after unemployment ceases to be conspicuous in the community which can be traced to their beginnings in the period of unemployment.50

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47. Zennon, op. cit., p. 89.
UNEMPLOYMENT AND SCHOOL DROP OUTS

Early in March of 1962 America had over 1,000,000 jobless young people between the ages of 16 and 25. Most of them were school drop outs.\(^{51}\) There is a nation-wide drive to improve the situation of young persons forced out of school by unemployment and then facing the same problem faced by their parents.\(^{52}\)

This is one phase of the problem of unemployment that has been the subject of extensive treatment by experts in recent years. The conclusion of most is that unemployment has been conducive to school drop outs among the elder children of unemployed workers.

UNEMPLOYMENT AND ALCOHOLISM

"Excessive drinking and the factors in personality leading to excessive drinking tend to preclude or debar marriage."\(^{53}\) Unemployment plays a role in alcoholism and the family-disrupting ramifications of it.

The primary cause of alcoholism is not positively known in the present knowledge of the problem. Nor do we believe that the cause in most instances is singular, but usually a combination of causes.\(^{54}\)

\(^{51}\) Look Magazine (February 27, 1962), pp 31-33.

\(^{52}\) Ibid.


Many authorities, however, list as one of the three chief causes of alcoholism "individuals suffering from strain, disappointment, or financial failure (unemployment)." 55

UNEMPLOYMENT AND SUICIDE

Out of work two years, Charles Wayne, aged 57, father of eleven children, stood on the Spring Common Bridge this morning, watching hundreds of other persons moving by on their way to work. Then he took off his coat, folded it carefully, and jumped into the swirling Mahoning River. 56

Suicide is seen as a correlate of depression and unemployment. It is not caused by unemployment per se as readily as it is from long-standing or slowly maturing forms of social disorganization. Nevertheless, there is a correlation between unemployment and suicide. 57

UNEMPLOYMENT AND BIRTH CONTROL

Unemployment and its relationship to the practice of birth control in family life has been an often-discussed phase of the problem. Most point out that unemployment is a definite factor entering into the decision to use birth control practices. 58

It is a temptation for many to yield to the Neo-Malthusian argument of high birth rates causing poverty and resorting to birth control, especially

55. Zemon, op. cit., p. 293.
57. Phelps, op. cit., p. 140.
when economic difficulties are pressing in a particular instance. 59

UNEMPLOYMENT AND FAMILY MOBILITY

When the necessity of obtaining a job forces a family to move from its home and seek work elsewhere, problems within the family often arise.

...Both young and old workers have roots in the community and don't want to move for that reason. Many own their homes and would suffer heavy losses if forced to sell at this time. 60

The unemployed hate to leave. Their families and friends and the familiarity of their surroundings exert pressure...to remain where they are even if they are jobless. 61


CHAPTER IV
THE EXPERTS' VIEWPOINTS ON THE PSYCHOLOGICAL IMPACT
OF UNEMPLOYMENT UPON FAMILY LIFE

Unsteady employment attacks the worker's efficiency in so many ways that probably no one could enumerate them all. It undermines his physique, deadens his mind, weakens his ambition, destroys his capacity for continuous, sustained endeavor; induces a liking for idleness and self-indulgence, impairs technical skill; weakens nerve and will power; creates a tendency to blame others for his failure; saps his courage; prevents thrift and hope of family advancement; destroys a workman's feeling that he is taking care of his family; sends him to work worried and underfed; plunges him in debt.62

It is difficult to determine the psychological impact of unemployment upon family members and the family itself. But, when economic troubles of this nature arise, men have to swallow their pride and accept outside aid—something that is a definite psychological strain on the unemployed man and his family. This strain can precipitate more serious family disorganization.63

Even when the unemployment is not the fault of the worker:

...this fact does not protect the former worker from varying degrees of personality disintegration. Some are able to stand the shock of the new status without being unduly upset, but the great majority of the unemployed carry the scars of this experience with them for years.64

Psychologically, every man needs something to give him a

64. Murray and Flynn, op. cit., p. 460.
feeling of importance and the job a man holds is quite often the source of this feeling of importance. From this new personality disruption brought on by unemployment, experts point out that other evils can carry over to the family environment. Friction develops among the parents as the wife loses confidence in her husband. The father himself often loses confidence in himself.\textsuperscript{65}

Unemployment is an undermining and destructive influence in the family which it attacks. It diminishes the worker’s efficiency and lowers the morale of himself and his family in so many ways that no one can enumerate but a few... Loss of confidence, misunderstandings and bitterness coming in a time of worry, fatigue and discouragement are very apt to result in domestic difficulty problems which may end in the complete disintegration of the home.\textsuperscript{66}

Unemployment, then, has a disastrous psychological impact on family life.

At all times, whether widespread or not, unemployment is disastrous to family welfare... Those who are in touch with the daily lives of the unemployed stress the psychological aspect of the situation. ...After desperately trying to make ends meet, many families are broken up.\textsuperscript{67}

When things go wrong, psychologists tell us the human being has a tendency to blame someone or something. When times are trying, the father of a family may blame himself for the family’s economic crisis and his wife may do the same.

\textsuperscript{65} Murray and Flynn, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 460.


\textsuperscript{67} Sait, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 362.
If this unhealthy atmosphere is maintained, there can be marked personality damage and family disorganization.\footnote{68. Murray and Flynn, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 461.}

After a man has been unemployed for a long period of time, he slowly develops a lack of confidence in himself. This often leads to thinking that is alien to that found in the majority of stably employed people.

Out of the many psychological ramifications of unemployment a philosophy of bitterness and rebellion often develops, which can easily lead to crimes of violence as well as to communism...\footnote{69. Murray and Flynn, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 461.}

When difficulties strike, men often develop twisted attitudes towards politics and the nation in which they live. They are willing to accept almost anything that holds promise of improving their lot. History attests to this as both communism and fascism used the dissatisfaction of unemployed persons to their advantage.\footnote{70. Cronin, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 50.}

Nothing is more demoralizing to an individual than idleness and an idle nation, like an idle man, inevitable drifts toward degradation.\footnote{71. Towne, Ezra Thayer. \textit{Social Problems} (New York: Macmillan Co., 1924), p. 142.}

Another of the psychological ramifications of unemployment is loss of status. America's social stratification is partly economic and when changes in the income in a family cause the family to decrease its spending and accept a lower position in the status ladder of a community, family problems often arise.

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\footnote{68. Murray and Flynn, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 461.}
\footnote{69. Murray and Flynn, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 461.}
\footnote{70. Cronin, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 50.}
With the loss of position went also the priceless thing called social status without which it is extremely difficult, it not impossible, to retain self respect. For many it means physical and nervous deterioration. 72

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CHAPTER V

Summary and Conclusions

In this thesis I have attempted to illustrate the impact of unemployment upon the family. In order to develop this idea I have presented evidence obtained through personal observation, interviews and the reading of authorities in the fields of sociology and economics. I have presented the findings of this research in this thesis.

From my research I have concluded that unemployment has far-reaching effects in family life. It serves either as a cause or as a contributing factor in family disruption through divorce and separation, early marriages, women and young persons working, crime and delinquency, ill health, school drop outs, moonlighting, alcoholism, suicide, separation of family members and the psychological problems of inability to work, defeatist attitudes and radical thinking, and loss of status.

No thesis of such a limited nature can adequately cover a social problem with the magnitude of unemployment and all of its ramifications. However, I believe that such a thesis is able to point out the problems caused by unemployment and some of the unhealthy influences it exercises on family life. It can also indicate the need for further studies in the field.

Someday I hope to devote further study to this problem and present a more detailed, more exhaustive study. If and when that day comes, I hope to complete what I have begun in this thesis.
APPENDIX

In order to point out the degree and extent of unemployment in the areas studied for this thesis, I will describe the employment picture as it looked between 1957 and 1962 in Southwestern Montana. The copper industry, the main employment source in the area, had a severe setback beginning in 1957 and thirty-eight per cent of the persons employed by the Anaconda Copper Mining Company lost their jobs between December of 1956 and December of 1957. This was a reduction from 6,153 to 3,810 workers. By June of 1960 there were only 3,167 persons employed by the ACM for an over-all reduction of almost fifty per cent of the working force.73

It was estimated that from two to two and one half persons are employed in supporting or servicing types of work for each person employed in the main industry in any locality.74 This estimate, then, indicates the extent of the reduction of jobs in the area studied for this thesis. This reduction and the subsequent cases that arose wherein families had to make adjustments to a new economic life served as a research area for both myself and social workers who researched the area. This thesis has presented many of the findings of research carried out in this area.

75. Ibid., p. 2.
Unemployment ranged from a minimum of 732 in June of 1957 to a high of 4,500 in December of 1959 in Silver Bow County. At the time of this writing more than 1,000 were unemployed.\textsuperscript{75}

The majority of the persons studied for this thesis were between the ages of 40 and 60. In Butte 134 out of 183 fell between these ages.\textsuperscript{76} In the cases studied in Central Montana, most were between 37 and 60.

The families studied ranged in size from a husband and wife with no children to six with seven members, two with eight, one with nine and five with ten or more members. Assuming that four or more children constitutes a large family, only eight per cent fell within this group.

The majority of the persons studied had an eighth grade education or less. Some had limited high school training and seven had attended college. Only one had received a degree. George Haney, city superintendent of public schools in Butte, Montana, said the average educational level of the population in Silver Bow County is estimated at slightly over ten years. In the Central Montana area this average is the same so the unemployed families studied can be seen to be somewhat below the normal educational level.

The reasons given for the unemployment ranged from the obvious answer that there was no work available to such

\textsuperscript{75} Konecny, \textit{op. cit.} p. 2.
\textsuperscript{76} General Assistance Report, Part I, page 6.
responses as being physically unable to work, inability to earn enough to support the family, lack of skill or education, not actively seeking work, language barriers, age limits and poor work records. This list was composed by case workers in Butte and Helena and I found that persons I interviewed expressed similar reasons.
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