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AUTHOR Harrison, Don K.; Brown, Dorothy R.
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ABSTRACT

The hard-to-employ, both urban and rural, share common characteristics of inadequate income, slum housing, inferior education, no medical attention, and lack of real job opportunities. The deficiencies dovetail, and families are often afflicted with all. The picture may seem bleak, but there is optimism in reclamation of the so-called disadvantaged for both social and economic reasons. This group does present an unrealized manpower source that may reach fruition through special training and development programs that offer job and personal support. (DB)

PERSONNEL SERVICES
REVIEW

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SERIES 2

Perspectives on Training the Disadvantaged —

The Hard - to - Employ

THE HARD-TO-EMPLOY —

WHO ARE THEY?

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PERSONNEL SERVICES REVIEW

Series 2

Perspectives on Training the Disadvantaged —
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The Hard-to-Employ — Who Are They?

Don K. Harrison
Dorothy R. Brown

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ERIC Counseling and Personnel Services Information Center
The University of Michigan
611 Church Street
Ann Arbor, Michigan

FORWARD

The Personnel Services Review is an ongoing publication series which has been developed by CAPS to inform personnel workers about new developments in a number of personnel services areas. There will be several different series of the Personnel Services Review. Each series will focus on a broad area of personnel work practice. Within each series there will be a number of specific issues (varying from five to ten depending on the series). Each of these issues will concentrate on a specific practice, procedure or method. The goal of these publications is to enable the reader to: (1) become aware of a practice, procedure or method; (2) learn about the ways in which this practice has been applied by others; (3) understand the underlying theory behind the practice; (4) consider possible applications of the practice in a variety of settings; and (5) consider ways that the practice might be implemented in his own personnel work program.

This particular Personnel Services Review series is entitled, "Perspectives on Training the Disadvantaged--The 'Hard-to-Employ'". Each issue will focus on an activity which has direct relevance for hiring, training, and retaining new workers from a disadvantaged background. The series is intended for use by personnel specialists and training staff in industry and business who wish to learn more about the development of their industrial work force. This series may also be of interest to vocational educators, employment counselors and specialists in the field of vocational education.

THE HARD-TO-EMPLOY --WHO ARE THEY?

ARE YOU AWARE:

- that a substantial body of unused, undeveloped, or underdeveloped manpower supply exists?
- that this body of potential labor can be developed by business and industry?
- that mutual benefits may be derived through productive employment of these individuals? These individuals experience higher self esteem and industry obtains benefits through additional assistance in achievement of its goals?

DEFINITION OF HARD-TO-EMPLOY

It is difficult to describe the hard-to-employ person in a single definition. Individuals classified as "hard core unemployed" share a wide variety of characteristics. It is possible, however, to identify the hard-to-employ by their sources, and to specify the criteria for definition which were developed by a federal agency.

Several common characteristics are shared by the hard-to-employ Ethnically, he is most commonly Negro, Mexican-American, Appalachian white, American Indian or Puerto Rican. The hard-to-employ person, probably did not finish high school, or oftentimes even grade school. His abilities may never have been developed. His income is often less than \$4,000 per year. He may be in need of medical attention. He may feel and actually be physically and psychologically segregated in a city or rural slum. The common characteristic is that he is unemployed or underemployed.

The U.S. Department of Labor describes members of the "hard-to-employ" group as having one or more of the following characteristics:

1. Educationally deficient.
2. Physically or mentally handicapped.
3. Member of a minority group.
4. Prison releasee or military rejectee.
5. Underemployed (defined below):
 - a. Those who are working below their skill capacity.
 - b. Those who are or have received notice that they will be working less than full-time in their industries or occupations.
 - c. Those who have received notices that their skills are becoming obsolete.
6. Unemployed youth between the ages of 16 and 21.

FACTS OF LIFE FOR THE HARD-TO-EMPLOY

What are the Statistics?

Obtaining accurate data has been an elusive job. However, it is estimated that 15 percent of whites and 25 percent of non-whites, not in school, between the ages of 16 and 21 are not employed. Some persons estimate the number of hard core unemployed youth, living mainly in the center city, at five hundred thousand. It should be noted that the ranks of the hard core unemployed are filled with older persons too, not just youth. Approximate statistics for the total population show 2 million unemployed, 10 million underemployed and 6.5 million employed full time, but with a yearly wage under \$4,000.

Educational Handicap

The hard core unemployed may have a low level of reading ability (not enough to read a newspaper) and little language fluency (not enough to feel secure with a job interviewer). For example, at present, whites have completed a median of 12 years of schooling; non-whites have completed 9.8 years. The world of red tape--of application blanks, of basic processes (such as voting), of ability to compare prices and quality of consumer goods--may be a mystery to some of the disadvantaged. He may fume at the employment screening process because the testing procedures turn him off. There is a tendency to test for what he doesn't know rather than for what he can do in a real work situation.

However, the educational deficits which show up on the tests are due primarily to a lack of opportunity to acquire certain skills. When given the chance to develop language and job skills, individuals who have lived under disadvantageous circumstances have shown significant improvement.

Health Problems

Business rejects many of the hard-to-employ because of poor health. On an income of \$4,000 or less per year, the diet is likely to be inadequate (too much starch, not any meat). Dietary deficiencies may pave the way to chronic ill-health, constant listlessness, or obesity. Minor disabilities--from lack of proper eyeglasses to chronic toothache--reduce the individual's ability to work. Medical attention may be non-existent unless the community provides free clinics or hospitals. In some instances, drug addiction, emotional illness, alcoholism may be a problem.

Although there may be a number of minor health problems, these can often be corrected at minimal costs to enable the individual to meet physical standards of employment. Several programs, utilizing funds from governmental or foundation sources, direct attention to the reduction or elimination of such minor disabilities.

Family and Home

One-and-a-half million poor families are without one parent. For example, it is reported that half of the children of Harlem live with but one parent. Some families of the hard-to-employ develop into an extended family of aunts, uncles, grandparents, etc.--all living in one house. Although this set-up may not be bad for the child, the results of overcrowding do produce an element of instability. Many children, legitimate and illegitimate, three or four to a bed contribute to the tragedy of the poverty stricken family.

The disadvantaged, or hard-to-employ, tend to live in shacks or urban slum housing. Some may pay rent to an absentee owner and share their bed and food with cockroaches and rats. Urban renewal may force them to give up a home. Gain or loss of a family member may mean the loss of a certain type of housing. Living in disadvantageous circumstances, the poor may find they are constantly moving.

GENERALIZATIONS

1. Individuals referred to as the hard-to-employ represent a sizeable pool of manpower which has not been fully utilized.
2. Although a substantial part of untapped manpower is available to business, industry, and government, additional training and development of these individuals may sometimes be necessary to more fully prepare them for employment.
3. Some of the deficiencies which the hard-to-employ may need to correct before they enter the world of work include: basic education; minor corrective medical attention; basic job skills; and specific technical skills.
4. The hard-to-employ lack certain skills because of disadvantageous circumstances. These circumstances which have led to difficulties in employment can be removed or reduced with appropriate training and supportive services.
5. Because of certain educational hardships, methods other than standard aptitude tests should be used for assessing the work potential of the hard-to-employ,

since tests are not likely to reveal his strengths. Since an application may only serve to disclose problems in reading and writing, a better picture of job capability may be obtained through interviews and other means.

ACTION POSSIBILITIES

Despite the problems mentioned above, there is a basis for optimism about the development of this pool of potential labor supply. Some action possibilities are seen as a result of the efforts being made by the public and private sectors.

1. Job Opportunities in the Business Sector (JOBS) is representative of a national effort on the part of business and industry (under the National Alliance for Businessmen [NAB]) to hire, train, and retain the hard-to-employ.
2. The U.S. Department of Labor has special training funds available on a contract basis under the NAB program for companies who are interested in hiring new employees.
3. Several private companies are considering the hard-to-employ as manpower and are studying how it might be utilized. Financial and business magazines have reported the experiences of various companies that have developed their own training programs independently and those who

have worked with community organizations. For example, some businesses have been impressed with Opportunities Industrialization Center (OIC) approach to development of trainees. Before taking skill courses, trainees go through a 'feeder' situation where they are taught basic education, language skills and personal grooming. More knowledge and understanding of the hard-to-employ will be necessary to keep this group in the work force. A detailed plan will be needed.

CAPS has developed a series of papers that will give you an introduction to hiring and keeping the hard-to-employ. Some of the issues of this series will be:

RECRUITMENT OF THE HARD-TO-EMPLOY .

Running newspaper ads will not do it.

SELECTION AND HIRING OF THE HARD-TO-EMPLOY .

Instead of tests, would a lengthy interview be better? Do I have anyone who is skilled at interviewing and will be able to relate to a seventeen-year-old Negro ghetto youth?

DESIGNING A PREVOCATIONAL TRAINING PROGRAM FOR THE HARD-TO-EMPLOY.

The training program described in his paper could be in-plant or off-site.

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