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The Impact of Education and Family Attributes on Attitudes and Responses to Unemployment among Men and Women

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The study deals with differences between jobless Israeli women (n = 361) and men (n = 253) in relation to the following aspects of unemployment: Reasons for rejecting potential jobs, job search intensity, and responses to unemployment. The women mentioned more reasons for rejecting potential jobs, and their health-related responses to unemployment were more extreme than those of the men. However, the men tended to seek employment more intensively than did the women.

Married respondents of both sexes showed the greatest tendency to reject potential employment due to conflict with family responsibilities. Married women were also more likely than their male counterparts to reject potential jobs due to adverse working conditions or masculine-typed employment. Moreover, for both men and women the number of dependent children was related to the tendency to reject potential employment due to conflict with family responsibilities. The divorced-widowed respondents expressed more negative responses to unemployment compared with respondents the other family status groups. Education level affected responses to unemployment and rejection of jobs, although it did not have a differential impact on men and women.

Key words: Responses to unemployment, reasons for rejecting jobs, job search intensity.

Unemployment has become a major economic, social and political issue in Western industrial countries. It has also become a fact of life for a growing number of people. In this context, the current study assumed that the experience of unemployment varies substantially for different individuals. Given this reality,

investigation of the mediating factors which explain these differences is particularly relevant. Based on a sample of unemployed Israelis, the current study examined whether the impact of education and family attributes differs for men and women with respect to three sets of variables: (1) reasons for rejecting potential employment; (2) job search intensity; and 3) responses to unemployment (psychological stress, decline in health and financial strain resulting from unemployment). In addition, the study examined whether the impact of education level and family attributes (family status, and number of dependent children) was differential for men and women with respect to the above-mentioned variables.

A review of the existing literature on unemployment indicates that research has focused primarily on men. On the rare occasions that women have been substantially represented in a sample, they appear in the role of wives to unemployed men. (Dew, Bromet & Schulberg, 1987; Liem & Liem, 1988). The few studies that included jobless women examined a limited range of issues related to unemployment (Leana & Feldman, 1991).

The paucity of comprehensive research on women's unemployment can be ascribed in part to the relatively late entry of women into the labor force, both in terms of their overall proportion in places of work and in terms of their representation in high-level careers. The lack of academic attention to women's unemployment may also be attributed to the prevailing assumption that work is less central for them (Kaufman & Fetters, 1980), and that they are not as traumatized by joblessness as men, who are usually perceived as primary wage earners. (Kasl & Cobb, 1979; Tary, 1983).

It should be noted, however, that in light of recent social developments these assumptions may have lost some of their relevance, at least for educated women. For example, research indicates that in many Western countries women have changed their orientation toward work and family, especially at higher levels of education. Similarly, an integrative summary of research findings from the United States, Australia, and Portugal (Sverko & Super, 1995) indicates that compared with their male counterparts, young educated women express high commitment to both work and home. In addition, cross-cultural research suggests that

new earning patterns have emerged, in which the wife contributes equally to the family income or is even the main provider (Izraeli, 1994a).

With respect to Israeli society, recent data indicates that the level of women's education now exceeds that of men (Israel Central Bureau of Statistics, 1997). Concomitantly, and possibly as a result of this trend, representation of women in the Israeli labor force has increased to about 45% (Israel Central Bureau of Statistics, 1997), a relatively large proportion compared with the past two decades. There have also been changes in patterns of women's employment. For example, many women do not take a long break after childbirth. Concomitantly, it is becoming more common for women to delay retirement (Israel Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs, 1991). Moreover, women with higher education have begun to enter prestigious careers previously dominated by men (Goh, 1991; Izraeli, 1994b; Jacobson, 1994). In fact, at higher levels of education the representation of women in the labor force does not differ significantly from that of men (Israel Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs, 1991). All of these developments provided the basis for the main research assumption that gender differences in the variables examined (reasons for rejecting potential, job search intensity, and to unemployment) would be less salient at higher levels of education than at lower levels.

REASONS FOR REJECTING JOB OPPORTUNITIES

The range of potential reasons for rejecting employment includes various types of adverse working conditions (distance from home, work hours, organizational climate), as well as low wages and unsatisfactory job content, such as monotonous work. In fact, these reasons for rejecting job offers reflect areas of dissatisfaction with work rewards. In this connection, previous research has found gender differences in perceived salience of work rewards, where women emphasize job content and social characteristics of employment (Blustein, 1988; Farmer, 1985; Maxwell & Cumming, 1988), while men emphasize instrumental aspects such as financial rewards and various material benefits (Deci & Ryan, 1985). In a similar vein, a recent study conducted in Japan

revealed that men prefer monetary rewards, whereas women emphasize opportunities for personal development (Nakamishi & Mikawa, 1995). Moreover, it was found that women place more emphasis than men on comfortable working conditions (Erez, Borochoy, Mannheim, 1989; Lunneborg, 1990). It was therefore hypothesized that men will show a greater tendency than women to reject employment due to financial rewards, whereas women will be more likely to reject employment due to unsatisfactory content. At the same time, since men and women with academic education exhibit similar degrees of work commitment (Mannheim, 1990), it was hypothesized that at higher levels of education, gender differences in reasons for rejecting potential employment would be less salient.

In addition, the study examined the impact of family attributes (family status and number of dependent children) on reasons for rejecting potential employment. Regarding family status, it was hypothesized that never-married women would be less likely than others to reject employment due to conflict with family obligations. Moreover, it was hypothesized that married women would be more likely than their male counterparts to reject potential employment due to adverse working conditions and conflict with family obligations.

Regarding number of dependent children, it was hypothesized that the more dependents in the family, the greater the tendency to reject employment due to adverse working conditions and conflict with family obligations. This tendency was expected to be particularly prevalent among married women, who usually assume primary responsibility for household chores. Similarly, it was hypothesized that since women are subject to more family constraints, they would mention more reasons than men for rejecting potential employment. Here, too, it was assumed that gender differences would be less salient among respondents with academic degrees.

With respect to level of education, it was hypothesized that regardless of gender, respondents with academic degrees would be the most likely to reject employment due to unsatisfactory job content and adverse working conditions.

JOB SEARCH INTENSITY

Existing research evidence indicates that intensive search for a job is one strategy for coping with unemployment. In this vein, Leana & Feldman (1991) suggested that men may be more likely than women to cope with job loss through problem-focused activities, i.e., through behavior aimed directly at eliminating the source of stress (in this case unemployment) such as active job search, retraining, and relocation (Malen & Stroh, 1998). In contrast, Harris, Heller, & Braddock (1988) suggested that women may be more likely to rely on social support from friends or family to help them cope with job loss. In the same vein, it has been argued that women are more likely to cope with unemployment through symptom-focused activities such as maintaining a sense of optimism and self-esteem (Goldsmith, Veum, & Darity, 1997).

Based on these findings, and since the husband is still typically considered the main providers (Lewis et al., 1992), it was hypothesized that job search intensity would be greater for men than for women. These differences were expected to be particularly salient among married respondents with dependent children.

With respect to education, assuming that both men and women with academic degrees show relatively high levels of work commitment, it was hypothesized that gender differences in job search intensity would diminish as education increases.

RESPONSES TO UNEMPLOYMENT—NEGATIVE EFFECTS

The negative effects of unemployment are manifested in various areas, such as psychological stress, decline in health, and financial strain (Broman et al., 1995; Darity & Goldsmith, 1993; Goldsmith, Veum, & Darity, 1996a; Goldsmith, Veum, & Darity, 1996b; Lai & Wong, 1998; Leana & Feldman, 1991).

Previous studies on gender differences in responses to unemployment have revealed that women's responses are at least as complex as those of men and probably even more so, due to mediating factors such as family status, alternative income, and changing social expectations (e.g., of educated women) (Bartell & Bartell, 1985). In this vein, previous research has assumed that married women are less susceptible to the negative effects of

unemployment because of their spouse's income (Kasl & Cobb, 1979) or because they have other concerns related to their role as mothers and wives (Warr & Perry, 1982). In contrast, a subsequent study by Leana and Feldman (1991) found that married men and women expressed similar negative responses to unemployment. Considering these ambiguous findings, the current study attempted to shed further light on the issue of gender differences in unemployment.

Moreover, existing research has not given sufficient attention to divorcees and widows as a distinctive population characterized by lack of social support. Recognizing that unemployment is a stressful situation by nature, it was hypothesized that all three types of negative responses would be greater among divorcees and widows than among married respondents, who enjoy spousal support.

METHOD

Sample

The sample consisted of 594 unemployed respondents (233 men and 361 women) who had registered at employment service bureaus in three regions of Israel - north, central, and south. From each of these regions, several bureaus were randomly sampled, such that the research population was drawn from 18 sampling points. The mean age of the respondents was 39 (range 20–60, S.D. = 10.2). Distribution of unemployed subjects by place of birth was as follows: About 73% were Israeli-born, 6% European born, 6% Asian-born, 8% African born, 6% born in the Former Soviet Union, and 1% in the United States. Regarding family status, 40% of the subjects had never been married; 49% were married, and 11% were divorced or widowed. Regarding level of education: 9.1% had elementary school education; 35.4% had partial high school education; 25.9% had full high school education; 16.5% had post-secondary education (BA degree or equivalent); and 13.1% had graduate education (MA+). Overall, the sampling distribution represented the overall distribution of unemployed persons in Israel with respect to background characteristics (Israel Central Bureau of Statistics, 1997).

Duration of unemployment ranged from one to 12 months. It should be noted that no significant differences were found between the sexes in the background variables described above.

Instruments

The research instrument included several questionnaires.

1. Reasons for rejecting potential jobs

The measure consisted of 15 items examining reasons why an unemployed person would turn down a job offer. Factor analysis using Varimax rotation revealed eight significant factors, each reflecting a different reason for rejecting potential jobs: (1) Adverse job conditions (distance of the workplace from home; shift work; unclean work); (2) Unsatisfactory job content (monotonous; unchallenging; not diverse or interesting enough); (3) low wages; (4) family considerations (conflict with family responsibilities); (5) health reasons (the job is harmful to one's health or requires considerable physical effort); (6) religious reasons (the job interferes with religious practice); (7) the job is masculine-typed; (8) the job is feminine-typed.

For each of the items, respondents were asked to indicate the extent to which it constitutes a consideration for turning down a job offer, on a scale ranging from 1 ("not at all") to 5 ("to a very great extent"). One score was derived by computing the mean of these items for each factor, such that the higher the score, the greater the tendency to reject a job for that specific reason.

2. Job Search Intensity

This variable was assessed by two measures:

- (a) *Intensity of job-seeking strategies* was measured on the basis of Daniel's (1987) questionnaire. The instrument consisted of 9 items examining the frequency of different job-seeking activities (e.g., looking at newspaper ads, going to employment agencies, asking friends, writing directly to potential employers). Subjects were asked to indicate on a scale from 1 ("never") to 5 ("almost every day") how often they had used each of the strategies over the past month (henceforth "job seeking strategies"). The Cronbach's reliability

coefficient of the questionnaires was .82. One score was derived by calculating the mean of the nine items, so that the higher the score the greater the intensity of using job-seeking strategies.

- (b) *Time spent searching for a job over the past week* was examined by one question about the amount of time spent searching for a job over the past week (henceforth, "time spent").

3. Responses to Unemployment

Responses to unemployment were examined from several perspectives:

- (a) *Psychological responses*: Perceived stress during the period of unemployment was examined on the basis of the Perceived Stress Scale (PSS) (Cohen, Kamarck, & Mermelstein, 1983), which was adjusted and translated into Hebrew by Drori (1989). The questionnaire examined perceived stress in the present, and has been used in various studies dealing with stressful life events. The questionnaire included 14 items which measured the subject's emotional state over the past month. Items included questions such as: During the past month, to what extent did you successfully handle matters that bothered you? The scale of responses ranged from 1 ("to a very limited extent") to 5 ("to a very great extent"). Cronbach's reliability coefficient was .83. One score was derived by computing the mean for all 14 items. The higher the score, the higher the level of perceived stress.
- (b) *Decline in health*: This variable was examined by one item: How do you evaluate your current state of health compared with your health prior to unemployment? The scale of responses ranged from 1 ("much worse") to 5 ("much better").
- (c) *Financial situation*: This variable was examined by two items: (1) How do you evaluate your current financial situation compared with your situation prior to unemployment? The scale of responses ranged from 1 ("much worse") to 5 ("much better") (henceforth "Decline in Economic Status"). (2) How do you evaluate your current financial situation? The scale of responses ranged from 1 ("very bad") to 5 ("very good") (henceforth "Economic situation"). Even though this is not a direct response to

unemployment, it provides an indication of the unemployed respondent's perceived financial strain which may be related to unemployment.

Data Collection Procedures

Data were collected in Summer and Fall 1997 using structured questionnaires. Four research assistants visited each of the bureaus several days a week and distributed the questionnaires individually to all of the applicants waiting to see counselors. The time allotted for completion of the questionnaires was 40 to 60 minutes.*

All of the applicants were approached and almost all of the questionnaires were completed.

Data Analysis

In order to identify gender differences in the research variables and examine whether level of education has a differential impact on men and women, two-way MANOVA (2 x 5, gender x level of education) was carried out for each of the research variables (for details on the education categories, see the description of the sample in the Method section). In addition, in order to examine whether family status has a differential impact on men and women, another two-way MANOVA (2 x 3, gender x family status) was carried for each of the research variables. Widowed and divorced respondents were combined into one category since they comprised a relatively small proportion of the sample (reflecting their proportion of the Israeli population). Pearson correlations were carried out in order to examine the correlation between number of dependent children and each of the research variables.

RESULTS

Reasons for rejecting potential employment

Gender and Level of Education:

The measure included eight factors, reflecting reasons for rejecting potential employment (see Instruments section). Two-way MANOVA (2x5, gender x education) revealed a significant

* The full research questionnaires were more extensive. The current paper presents only part of the research findings derived from the question.

effect for gender across all eight factors ($F(8, 507) = 17.42, p < .001$). However, separate analysis of variance for each factor revealed significant gender differences for four out of the eight reasons for turning down jobs. Table 1 presents the means and standard deviations used in this analysis.

The table indicates that women are more likely than men to turn down potential employment due to adverse working conditions, conflict with family responsibilities, or gender-atypical job characteristics. As expected, men were more likely than women to reject feminine-typed jobs. However, comparison of F-values shows that on the whole, gender-atypical employment was an especially significant consideration for women, who showed an overwhelming tendency to reject male-typed jobs (see Table 1). In general, the women showed a greater tendency to reject potential employment than did the men. It should also be noted that no gender differences were found with respect to rejection of jobs due to health considerations, religious practice and low wages. Table 1 presents reasons for rejecting job offers in descending order (from most to least prevalent) according to the men's responses. For both men and women, the most common considerations were unsatisfactory job content, low wages, and adverse working conditions, whereas religious practice was least prevalent. Regarding level of education, the same MANOVA revealed a significant impact across the eight factors of the variable ($F(24, 1527) = 4.08, p < .01$). However, separate analysis of variance for each factor revealed significant differences only for job content, and marginally significant differences for working conditions (see Table 1).

Scheffe tests indicated that respondents in the MA + group were more likely to reject jobs due to unsatisfactory content than were respondents at the lowest education levels. A similar trend was found with regard to rejection of employment due to adverse working conditions. However, no interaction was found here between education level and gender, such that education did not have a differential effect on men and women with respect to this variable.

Gender and Family Status:

Two-way MANOVA (2×3 , gender \times family status) revealed a significant effect for family status across the four factors of the variable ($F(16, 1016) = 4.46, p < .01$). However, separate analysis

Table 1
Differences in Reasons for Rejecting Potential Employment, by Gender and Level of Education Means, Standard Deviations (in Parentheses) and F Values

	Gender		Level of Education				F Values		
	Men	Women	Elementary	Partial Secondary	Full Secondary	B.A.	M.A.	Gender	Education
Unsatisfactory job content	3.58 (1.02)	3.48 (1.42)	3.36 (1.09)	3.31 (1.09)	3.60 (.98)	3.75 (.93)	3.78 (.95)	1.43	4.06*
Low Wages	3.41 (1.44)	3.38 (1.97)	3.35 (1.49)	3.34 (1.49)	3.52 (1.48)	3.31 (1.42)	3.19 (.29)	.92	2.42*
Adverse working conditions	2.89 (.93)	3.62 (.94)	3.30 (1.00)	3.31 (.99)	3.27 (.96)	3.43 (1.04)	3.53 (.75)	33.90**	2.92*
Health reasons	2.84 (1.17)	2.88 (1.18)	2.85 (1.34)	2.80 (1.19)	2.89 (1.09)	2.58 (.91)	2.63 (.07)	1.50	.72
Feminine-typed jobs	2.78 (1.34)	2.17 (1.34)	2.44 (1.59)	2.50 (1.52)	2.27 (1.34)	2.31 (1.43)	2.30 (1.19)	23.39**	.47
Family considerations	2.05 (1.44)	2.81 (1.97)	2.35 (1.45)	2.34 (1.49)	2.52 (1.48)	2.31 (1.42)	2.19 (.29)	5.32*	.07
Religious reasons	2.35 (1.45)	2.23 (1.45)	2.43 (1.53)	2.34 (1.50)	2.27 (1.47)	2.16 (.45)	2.05 (.22)	7.60	.59
Masculine-typed jobs	2.05 (1.29)	3.24 (1.55)	2.71 (1.70)	2.89 (1.57)	2.88 (1.51)	2.54 (.40)	2.48 (.31)	56.62**	1.12

* p < .01

** p < .001

of variance for each factor revealed family status differences for two out of the eight factors, i.e., adverse working conditions, and conflict between work and family demands (see Table 2).

Scheffe tests revealed that married respondents (regardless of gender) were more likely than their never-married counterparts to reject employment due to adverse working conditions. Moreover, married respondents showed a greater tendency to reject employment for family reasons than did both groups of unmarried respondents.

In addition, an interaction was found between gender and family status for two factors of this variable, i.e., working conditions and masculine-typed jobs (see Table 2). A simple main effect test showed that with regard to working conditions, the interaction could be attributed to the finding that there were greater differences between married women and other family status groups, while family status differences were not as great for men. Regarding masculine-typed jobs, the interaction could be traced to the same source. Thus, compared with other family status groups, married women showed a particularly significant tendency to reject masculine-typed jobs or jobs characterized by adverse working conditions.

Job Search Intensity

Job search intensity was examined on the basis two variables: Frequency of job seeking strategies and time spent searching for a job. Two way MANOVA (2×5 , gender \times level of education) revealed a significant impact for gender across both of the variables ($F(2, 498) = 8.10, p < .001$). However, separate analysis of variance for each of the variables revealed a significant gender difference only with regard to time spent searching for jobs (see Table 3). The men reported spending more hours searching for jobs per week than women. For both variables (job seeking strategies and time spent searching for a job), no differences were found between respondents with different levels of education ($F(12,1350) = 1.76, p = n.s.$). Nor was there an interaction between education level and gender ($F(12,1350) = 1.10, p = n.s.$). It can thus be concluded that the level of education does not have a differential impact on men and women with respect to this variable.

Table 2
 Differences in Reasons for Rejecting Potential Employment, by Gender and Family Status—Means, Standard Deviations (in Parentheses) and F Values

Reasons for rejecting potential employment	Never Married		Married		Widowed-Divorced		F Values Family	F Values—Interaction Gender × Family Status
	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women		
Unsatisfactory job content	3.41 (1.07)	3.38 (.97)	3.72 (1.01)	3.48 (1.07)	4.28 (.69)	3.46 (1.15)	2.03	2.95
Low wages	3.46 (1.40)	3.38 (1.52)	3.40 (1.38)	3.28 (1.47)	3.00 (1.91)	3.40 (1.38)	.31	.32
Adverse working conditions	2.93 (.97)	3.27 (.98)	2.92 (.94)	3.76 (.91)	2.61 (.72)	3.31 (.80)	4.22*	6.27**
Health reasons	2.65 (1.14)	2.66 (1.15)	2.71 (1.07)	2.94 (1.09)	2.39 (1.06)	2.81 (1.29)	1.55	.73
Feminine-typed jobs	2.44 (1.47)	2.06 (1.17)	2.91 (1.96)	2.16 (1.33)	2.42 (1.61)	2.34 (1.41)	2.51	1.16
Family considerations	2.12 (1.15)	2.23 (1.14)	2.66 (.99)	3.19 (1.06)	2.28 (.34)	2.42 (1.02)	27.33**	2.26
Religious reasons	2.38 (1.57)	1.98 (1.23)	2.31 (1.43)	2.26 (1.46)	2.64 (1.34)	1.86 (1.25)	.65	.84
Masculine-typed jobs	2.10 (1.37)	2.88 (1.51)	1.97 (1.04)	3.35 (1.50)	2.05 (1.77)	2.86 (1.54)	1.21	4.34*

* p < .01

** p < .001

Table 3
Differences in Negative Responses and Job Search Intensity, by Level of Education and Gender—Means, Standard Deviations (in Parentheses), and F-Values

	Level of Education					Gender		F Values	
	Elementary	Partial Secondary	Full Secondary	Post-Secondary (BA+)	M.A.+	Men	Women	Gender	Education
Psychological Stress	2.95 (.56)	2.87 (.59)	2.71 (.66)	2.75 (.64)	2.57 (.56)	2.80 (.62)	2.76 (.66)	1.17	3.76*
Decline in Health	3.22 (1.01)	3.58 (.87)	3.81 (.91)	3.72 (.92)	3.86 (.85)	3.74 (1.01)	3.56 (.98)	6.52**	3.43*
Economic Situation	2.57 (1.19)	2.44 (.92)	2.80 (.96)	2.86 (.91)	2.80 (.87)	2.29 (1.02)	2.20 (1.04)	1.10	3.58*
Decline in Economic Status	2.22 (1.23)	2.13 (.98)	2.35 (.98)	2.19 (.95)	2.20 (.95)	2.29 (.96)	2.14 (.98)	0.30	0.35
Job Search Intensity	2.26 (.93)	2.65 (.77)	2.58 (.84)	2.87 (.70)	2.66 (.75)	2.69 (.88)	2.74 (.83)	1.02	2.00
Frequency and Time Spent	8.22 (6.56)	8.21 (6.42)	6.88 (5.31)	7.82 (6.22)	7.15 (6.21)	8.53 (6.61)	7.23 (6.00)	3.15*	1.09

* P < .01

** P < .001

Two-way MANOVA (2 x 3, gender x family status) was conducted in order to ascertain whether family status affects job search intensity, and whether this impact differs for men and women. The analysis revealed an interaction between gender and family status with regard to time spent searching for employment ($F(2,455) = 4.87, p < .008$). A simple main effect test revealed that among the men, the difference between married respondents and the other groups was more significant than among the women. Specifically, married men searched for jobs more intensively than did the never-married and divorced-widowed respondents ($M = 10.33, S.D. = 7.81$, and $M = 7.71, S.D. = 5.91$ versus $M = 8.71, S.D. = 5.91$, respectively), whereas the differences between family status groups were not as great for women.

Negative responses to unemployment

Negative responses to unemployment fell into three categories: perceived stress, decline in health, and financial strain. Separate analysis of variance for each variable revealed significant differences between the sexes only with respect to decline in health, i.e., women were more likely to report a decline in their state of health as a result of unemployment. It should also be noted that no significant gender differences were found for perceived stress or financial strain. In addition, a significant effect was found for education level ($F(24, 2768) = 2.11, p < .001$) across all types of responses to unemployment. Separate analysis of variance for each type of response revealed significant differences between the different education levels in the areas of perceived stress, decline in health and actual economic situation (see Table 3). Scheffe tests indicated that at the lowest (elementary) level of education, respondents reported higher levels of stress and greater decline in economic status than those with graduate degrees (Master's and above). Moreover, level of education was found to be related to economic status: Respondents with lower levels of education (elementary and partial high school) reported worse economic situations than did those with the highest levels education (full secondary and above).

In an attempt to ascertain whether family status (never married, married, divorced-widowed) affects responses to unemployment, and whether unemployment has a differential impact

on men and women, two-way MANOVA (2 x 3, gender x family status) was conducted. The analysis revealed a significant effect for family status across all four types of responses to unemployment ($F(12, 1054) = 3.71, p < .001$). However, separate analysis of variance for each of the factors revealed significant differences for only three types of responses: decline in health ($F(1, 531) = 8.20, p < .001$); actual economic situation ($F(1, 531) = 4.52, p < .01$) and decline in Economic Status $F(4.53)=3.20 p < .01$ (see table 4).

Regarding decline in health, Scheffe tests revealed that the never-married respondents reported less of a decline than did the married respondents, while the widowed and divorced respondents reported poorer health than either of those groups. With regard to actual financial situation, the never-married and married respondents provided better assessments than did the widowed and divorced respondents. However, regarding decline in income, the married respondents reported a sharper decline than did the never-married respondents. On the whole, the widowed and divorced respondents provided worse assessments of their financial and health situations than did the members of the other groups. It should be emphasized that no significant

Table 4

Differences in Stress Reactions, by Family Status Means, Standard Deviations (in Parenthesis) and F-Values.

<i>Family Status</i>	<i>Never Married</i>	<i>Married</i>	<i>Widowed and Divorced</i>	<i>F Values</i>
<i>Responses to Unemployment</i>				
Psychological Stress	2.79 (.63)	2.75 (.61)	2.87 (.62)	1.38
Decline in Health	3.86 (.872)	3.13 (.90)	3.03 (.99)	8.20**
Economic Situation	2.68 (.97)	2.71 (.95)	2.25 (.94)	4.52*
Decline in Economic Status	2.30 (1.03)	2.15 (.95)	2.24 (1.20)	3.20*

* $p < .01$

** $p < .0001$

interaction between gender and family status was found in any of the responses examined. Thus, family status did not have a differential impact on responses to unemployment among men and women.

Correlation between Number of Dependent Children and Research Variables

In order to ascertain whether number of dependent children is related to reasons for rejecting potential employment, job search intensity, and negative responses to unemployment, Pearson correlation tests were conducted separately for men and women. Table 5 reveals only the significant correlations between number of dependent children and the research variables. In general, there were few such correlations, and those revealed were low. Out of the eight reasons for rejecting jobs, number of dependent children correlated only with family constraints, irrespective of the respondent's gender. However, number of dependent children correlated with adverse working conditions only among women. At the same time, number of children correlated with job search intensity only for men. Finally, number of dependent children correlated negatively with perceived financial strain following unemployment, regardless of the respondent's gender.

DISCUSSION

Over the past two decades, there have been far-reaching changes in women's attitudes toward work and career orienta-

Table 5

Significant Correlations Between the Research Variables and Number of Dependent Children, by Gender

	<i>Men</i>	<i>Women</i>
Family reasons	.14*	.17*
Working conditions	—	.15*
Job search intensity	.20**	—
Financial situation	-.21**	-.20*

* $p < .01$

** $p < .001$

tions, especially among those with higher education. In light of this trend, the article examined the following research questions: Have men and women become more similar in their behavior, attitudes, and responses toward unemployment? Do education level and family attributes (family status and number of children) have a differential impact on the responses of unemployed men and women toward the research variables?

On the whole, the research findings indicate that there are still appreciable gender differences in attitudes toward unemployment and related responses. Nevertheless, education level did not have a differential impact on the attitudes and responses of unemployed men and women with respect to the variables examined, i.e., gender differences persisted at high education levels. However, regarding the impact of family status, no differences were found between men and women for the variables examined. These results can be attributed to the persistence of differences in gender role domains, as well as to the familistic orientation of Israeli society (Peres & Katz, 1981).

The familistic character of Israeli society is expressed by several findings related to reasons for rejecting potential employment. For example, married respondents, irrespective of gender, were more likely than never-married respondents to reject potential employment due to conflict with family responsibilities or adverse working conditions (which may interfere with family life). Moreover, the larger the number of dependent children, the greater the tendency to reject employment for family reasons, irrespective of gender. Finally, women still perceived themselves as responsible for the household, and men as responsible for supporting the family. Along these lines, married women showed a particularly strong tendency to reject employment due to conflict with family and household responsibilities. At the same time, never-married women also indicated that they would reject job offers for family reasons. This may reflect anticipatory socialization for the role of wife and mother, which begins at an early age in societies such as Israel's which have a familistic orientation.

Moreover, the current findings contradicted statistical data indicating that in general, women are more likely than men to cross gender lines and enter masculine-typed fields (Israel Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs, 1991). Specifically, the married women

participating in the study tended to reject masculine-typed jobs, whereas the men did not show as great a tendency to reject feminine-typed jobs. In fact, the unemployed men were generally less selective and less inclined to reject potential employment, probably because of their commitment to provide for the family.

Notwithstanding these gender-based differences in reasons for rejecting employment, similarities between men and women should also be noted. There were no gender-related differences in responses to unemployment, except for rejection of employment due to health reasons. Specifically, women showed a greater tendency to mention decline in health, as reflected in research indicating that women report more health-related symptoms than men (Hilton, Osborn, & Serjeant, 1997).

Contrary to expectations, married women did not respond less severely to unemployment than their male counterparts in the same family status categories. In fact, stress responses to unemployment are affected more by family status than by gender. The respondents in the widowed-divorced group were most seriously harmed by unemployment, regardless of gender. For members of this group, the stress of unemployment apparently combined with other emotional and daily concerns inherent in their family status. The cumulative impact of these problems probably exacerbated negative responses to unemployment.

In addition, it should be noted that married respondents reported more financial strain as a result of unemployment than did any of the unmarried groups. It can thus be concluded that the married respondents, who require considerable financial resources to maintain the family, were more severely damaged by unemployment.

Finally, the impact of education on attitudes and behavior of unemployed persons should be noted. Psychological stress, financial strain, and decline in health were lower among respondents with academic degrees than among those with lower levels of education. This finding is consistent with the results of other studies, which indicate that education may buffer stress reactions accompanying unemployment. In fact, higher education may even generate positive reactions such as appreciating the opportunity to rest, or encouraging opportunities to change professions, at least during the initial stages of unemployment (Shamir, 1990).

The buffer effect of higher education on negative responses to unemployment may derive from relatively easy access to financial and social resources at that level of education. It should be noted that regardless of education level, unsatisfactory job content was ranked relatively high by both men and women as a reason for rejecting employment. This result reflects a continuing trend to seek meaning and satisfaction at work beyond monetary rewards.

Practical Recommendations

In addition to shedding light on the impact of gender and family status on responses to unemployment and related attitudes, the findings generate several practical recommendations for professional intervention.

Quick and Quick's (1984) approach for coping with stress on the level of individuals as well as on the social systems level can be used as a guiding model for intervention among unemployed populations. This model proposes three levels of intervention: primary intervention, which focuses on preventive programs in the community; secondary intervention, which is response-focused and aims at dealing directly with the stressful situation; and tertiary intervention which is symptom-focused and includes individual and group therapy.

On the primary intervention level, i.e., in the community, it is possible to provide arrangements for women in the community which would facilitate the job search process, e.g., opening employment bureaus at more flexible hours; providing efficient telephone referral services; increasing accessibility to information about jobs and training programs (possibly via telecommunications). In addition, an attempt can be made to address the conflict between work and family responsibilities, which is mentioned even by never-married women as a cardinal reason for rejecting potential employment. In this connection, workshops can be offered to provide these women with strategies to cope with the conflictual situation. Such activities may also address topics such as time management and negotiation with family members to assist with household tasks.

At the secondary intervention level, unemployed populations can be offered emotional and pragmatic support, e.g., training for vocations that are in demand. Since occupational sex-types

were mentioned as a dominant reason for rejecting potential employment, especially among married women, intervention can focus on encouraging vocational choices and training programs based on individual aptitudes, even if those fields do not conform with gender stereotypes.

At the tertiary level, which focuses on treating the symptoms of stress, individual and group counseling may aim at empowering unemployed persons, enhancing their self esteem, and encouraging independence. For this purpose, community centers can offer self-help groups, support groups, and activities such as enrichment classes. These types of programs would contribute preventing maladaptive behavior and improving the well-being of individuals in communities with high rates of unemployment.

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