

MINORITY JOB SKILLS



SOUTHERN RURAL DEVELOPMENT CENTER GRANT PROJECT REPORT

*Black Adults 35 to 55 Years-of-Age and Youth 16 to 19 Years-of-Age in Texas and Arkansas
Develop Job Skills to Upgrade Employability
December 1990*

by

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PROJECT HIGHLIGHTS

Black adults 35 to 55 years-of-age and youth 16 to 19 years-of-age in East Texas and Western Arkansas are the most underemployed and unemployed population groups. Ability to develop their job skills to upgrade their employability can improve individual, family and community economic stability.

The Southern Rural Development Center at Mississippi State University granted \$15,000 to the Texas Agricultural Extension Service for an applied research project that would instill job skills in Black workers who were unemployed or underemployed.

The Minority Job Skills project was conducted by the Texas Agricultural Extension Service in cooperation with the 1890 Agricultural Program, University of Arkansas at Pine Bluff, from November 1988 to December 1990. A training manual, thirteen publications and four video vignettes were developed and tested with unemployed and underemployed older teens and middle-aged Black adults in East Texas and Western Arkansas as described in the following report.

This project represents an investment in the economic development of the Southern Region by the Southern Rural Development Center. Future use of the program will help individuals and employers better match skilled labor to jobs that will sustain the economy of the region.

PROBLEM STATEMENT

Texas' Job Situation

East Texas is primarily a rural, nonmetropolitan region that is dependent on timber, oil and coal for agricultural and manufacturing industries. In the past seven years, oil prices have declined, the lumber industry was hit by the construction industry slow-down, and non-agricultural employment fell by 4%.

Twenty-nine (29) East Texas Counties have Black populations ranging from 20-42% of the total population, compared to 12% for the State's average. In November 1990, Texas experienced the highest rate of unemployment since 1983, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics.

Arkansas' Job Situation

Arkansas, for years known almost exclusively for its agriculture, has become a state of many diverse characteristics. As a vital part of the "New South," Arkansas has experienced rapid growth in industrial production since the mid-1960's. Containing considerable natural beauty, Arkansas has seen its tourist appeal increase dramatically, as existing recreational facilities have been improved and new attractions added.

Arkansas consists of seventy-five counties with the capital at Little Rock. Four Metropolitan Statistical Areas (Fayetteville-Springdale, Fort Smith, Little Rock-North Little Rock, and Pine Bluff) are located in Arkansas. Cities in Arkansas which exceed 50,000 in population are Little Rock, Fort Smith, North Little Rock and Pine Bluff.

The Arkansas Employment Security Division has been notified by the U.S. Department of Labor that 58 counties in Arkansas and two areas below the county level have been designated as labor surplus areas because of high unemployment.

Quachita County, with an unemployment rate of 15.4 percent, continued to have the highest rate among Arkansas' 75 counties in October. Pike County (11.5 percent) had the next highest rate, followed by St. Francis County (11.2 percent). Other counties with jobless rates above 10.0 percent were: Randolph (10.8 percent), Nevada (10.3 percent), Phillips (10.3 percent), and Jackson (10.1 percent). The lowest county unemployment rate in October 1990 was 3.1 percent - recorded in both Benton and Washington Counties.

In the state's four metropolitan statistical areas (MSA's), unemployment rates ranged from the lowest - 3.1 percent in the Fayetteville-Springdale MSA - to the highest - 8.1 percent in Pine Bluff MSA. In between were the Little Rock-North Little Rock MSA (5.4 percent) and the Fort Smith MSA (7.9 percent).

Arkansas' unemployment rate was 6.1 percent in October 1990, down seven-tenths of a percentage point from September's rate of 6.8 percent, according to data made available through the National Current Population Survey of households, and released by the Bureau of Labor Statistics. The current October rate was the same as the October 1989 rate of 6.1 percent. The U.S. unemployment rate of 5.7 percent was unchanged from September's rate but was four-tenths of a percentage point higher than the October 1989 rate of 5.3 percent.

An analysis of the characteristics of unemployed claimants revealed that 57.3 percent of the claimants were male, 69.5 percent were white, and 95.0 percent were 22 years of age or older.

By industry attachment, 52.2 percent of the claimants last worked in goods-producing industries with the majority coming from the manufacturing industries. The durable goods industries accounted for 28.1 percent of the total while 12.3 percent were from durable-goods group. Claimants who last worked in construction industries accounted for 11.2 percent of the total. The service producing industries accounted for 46.5 percent of the total with the majority of the claimants last working in trade and service industries.

By major occupational group, 23.3 percent of the claimants last worked in benchwork

occupations; followed by 17.8 percent in miscellaneous occupations; 16.1 percent in clerical and sales occupations; 15.4 percent in structural work occupations; 7.8 percent in professional, technical and managerial occupations; 7.2 percent in machine trades occupations; and 6.7 percent in service occupations.

Unemployment Among Minorities

Current labor statistics show that minorities, especially minority youth, have the highest rate of unemployment in Texas. Similar situations prevail in the 15 states and territories in the Southern Region. Being better prepared to look for jobs, learning how to package their job skills for greater employability and attaining employment, as well as, job satisfaction are work-related skills needed by minority workers in Texas and throughout the South.

Today's market requires a wide variety of skills. It is not only essential that one know the requirements of a job, but must have adequate communication, problem-solving and goal-setting skills. A significant percentage of workers in rural areas of Texas and neighboring Arkansas are deficient in many of these skills, even when employment is available. The lack of adequate employability skills, as well as, current economic trends are contributing factors to the high percentage of unemployment. Having job skills has been demonstrated to improve employment opportunities.

A SOUTHERN REGION RESPONSE

The Texas Agricultural Extension Service (TAEX) proposed that the region respond to the situation by developing a Minority Job Skills informal education program to teach Black adults 35 to 55 years old and youth 16 to 199 years old in rural counties the skills which are essential for a successful job search. The program materials would be tested in 18 Texas counties having high concentrations of Black older youth and middle-age adults. Comparable groups would test the program in three Western Arkansas counties. The project was funded by the Southern Rural Development Center at Mississippi State University, November 1, 1988 - December 31, 1990.

OBJECTIVES

Many benefits from the job skills program were anticipated. However, the primary objectives were:

- Black employees 16 to 19 and 35 to 55 years-of-age develop job skills that will enable them to get the job they want.
- Black employees learn to keep a job by increasing their employability skills with positive attitudes, filling out forms correctly, being on time and dressing appropriately for the job.
- Black employees and their co-workers develop productive work relationships.
- Mature black employees evaluate their special skills and interests and determine work goals that could include changing jobs, retraining, entering another career field or improving their current work situation.
- Black youth learn about career choices, determine their interests and talents, and plan for reaching their goals.

METHODOLOGY

Principal investigators and cooperators included Dorothy Taylor, Extension Family Life Specialist, Tracey R. Jones, Extension Graduate Assistant, and Lynn white, Extension Project Supervisor for Family Sciences from the Texas A&M University System, and Irene K. Lee, Extension Family and Child Development Specialist, the 1890 Agricultural Programs at the University of Arkansas at Pine Bluff.

Twenty-three (23) 1862 County Extension Agents, two (2) specialists and fourteen (14) 1890 staff members and volunteers in eighteen (18) East Texas Counties and three (3) County Extension Agents and two (2) 1890 specialists in Western Arkansas received a six-hour training course on subject matter and project implementation techniques for conducting trainings of unemployed or underemployed workers at the county level. Maps on pages 4 and 5 reflect participating counties.

From 1988 to 1990 thirteen publications, a training manual, and one four-vignette video were developed.

The materials were used in training sessions conducted in Overton, Texas, Brenham, Texas, Prairie View, Texas and Pine Bluff, Arkansas.

Subject matter taught in the publications, video vignettes and agent training included:

- How to get a job: job options, proper dress, personal hygiene, filling out applications and

interviewing techniques.

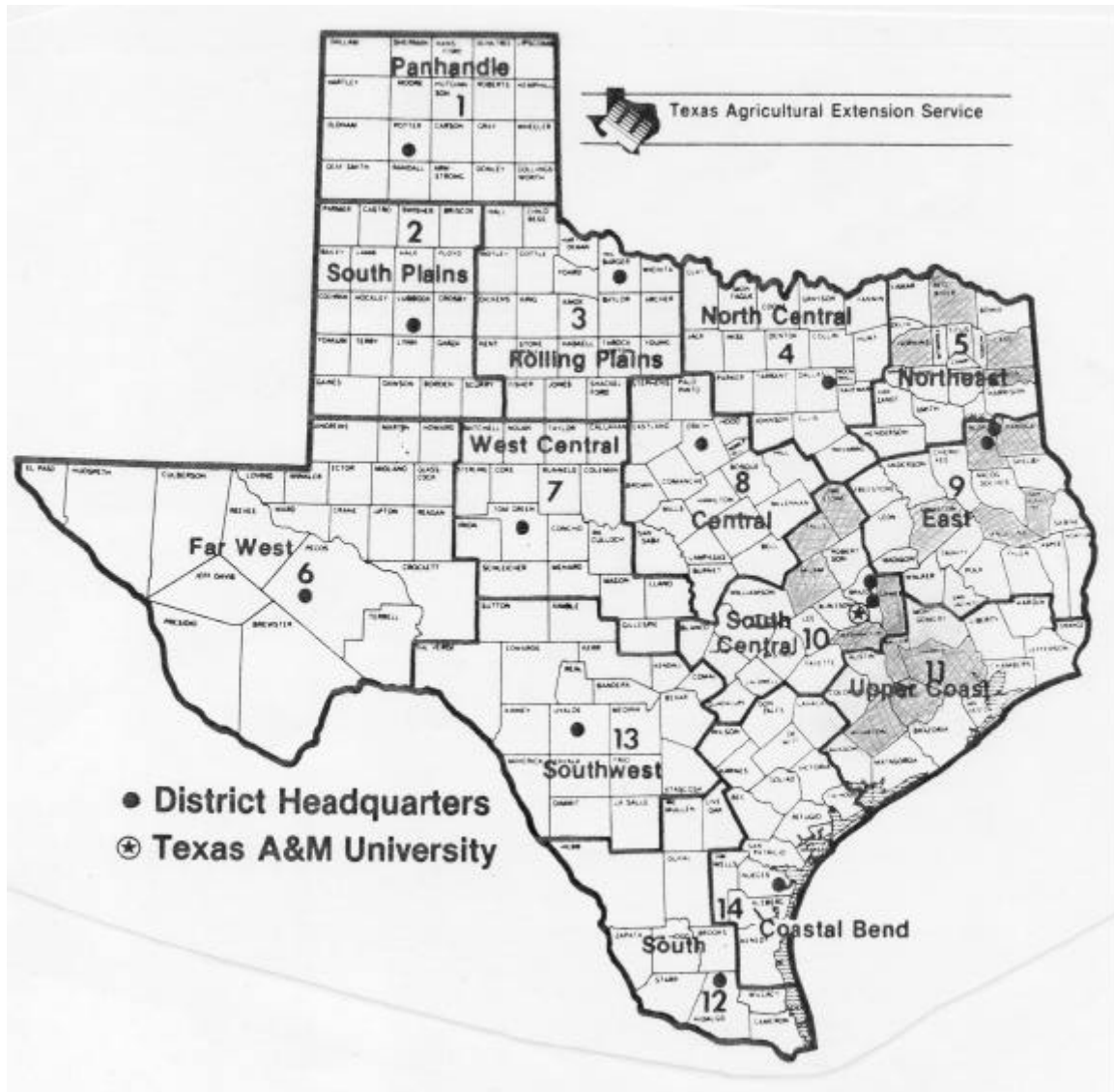
- How to keep a job: communicating with boss, co-workers and customers, balancing work and family responsibilities and relationships at work.
- Career planning or job change: goal-setting, decision-making, budget analysis, recognizing personal talents and changing jobs.

PARTICIPANTS

In eighteen (18) East Texas counties, 37 leaders (26 black, 11 white) conducted job skills trainings for 356 participants (115 adults, 241 youth). There were 236 black subjects, 59 black adults and 177 black youth enrolled. In addition, the 120 other participants included 45 Extension Homemakers (adults), 56 white adults, 15 white youth, 1 Hispanic, 1 Tahitian and 2 Asians.

In 3 Western Arkansas Counties, five (5) black leaders trained 88 subjects, 20 adults and 68 youth. All Arkansas subjects were black and received the same job skills curriculum as Texas subjects.

TEXAS COUNTIES INVOLVED IN MINORITY JOB SKILLS PROJECT



ARKANSAS COUNTIES INVOLVED IN MINORITY JOB SKILLS PROJECT



MATERIALS DEVELOPED

Publications

Thirteen publications were written on a third-to-fifth-grade reading level, edited, and printed between June 1989 and March 1990.

Seven publications addressed job skills related to procurement of a job, four publications identified skills needed to keep a job and two publications dealt with career development - one for youth on career development and one for adults on career change. The publications developed were:

- L-2263 “How Do I Look?”
Proper dress and attitude for the job search and while on the job.
- L-2364 “Being The Best You Can Be” *Personal hygiene, goal-setting and development of a positive self-image.*
- L-2359 “What Jobs Are Available?”
Detailed descriptions of different types of jobs.
- L-2360 “Changing Jobs?, Looking For A Job?”
Information on organizations, sources and individuals one can contact when looking for a job.
- L-2368 “Understanding Work Schedules”
Detailed descriptions and explanations of various types of work schedules.
- L-2366 “Filling Out An Application”
Techniques for filling out applications and a personal data sheet, including detailed explanations of abbreviations and forms.
- L-2365 “How To Have A Successful Interview”
How to prepare for the job interview, what to ask and what not to ask at a job interview.
- L-2367 “Getting Along With People On The Job”
Positive interactions with customers, co-workers and the boss.

- L-2381 “So You Got The Job, Now What?”
*Handling criticism, stress management
and job burnout are all addressed.*
- L-2378 “Meeting The Public”
*Effective methods of communication,
addressing and greeting people.*
- L-2382 “Work Relationships”
*Emotions, gossip and intimacy issues at
the workplace.*
- L-2380 “Career Development For Youth”
*How to choose a career, identify talents
and set goals for a career.*
- L-2383 “Making A Career Change”
*Budget interpretation, goal-setting and
planning when considering a job/
career change.*

To obtain a copy of the publications, contact the Texas Agricultural Extension Service, Distribution and Supply Center, Texas A&M University, College Station, Texas 77843-7101.

Video Production

Initially, 10-13 two-minute vignettes (one for each publication) were planned. Bids under these criteria (initiated on November 14, 1989) were twice the amount budgeted.

Subsequently, the re-bid required that the scripts be rewritten into four five-minute vignettes for a \$10,000 total bid. Rebidding was initiated December 19, 1989. FJH Productions, under the direction of Teddy Hallaron, was awarded the bid on January 4, 1990. Production services included the provision of talent, music, character generation as well as taping, editing and delivery of master copies in specified formats.

Between November 1989 and January 1990, the scripts for the four vignettes were written, revised and produced. The scripts concentrated on four major areas: job options; personal hygiene, dress for the job search, interview preparation; relationships with co-workers; and, career development.

The scripts portrayed a middle-aged Black couple and their teenage children. A Hispanic male interviewer was included in the interview scene. Each member of the family was going through a job-related transition and illustrated the steps required for a successful job search.

Scripts of the four vignettes can be found in the Training Manual.

Filming occurred January 29-30, 1990 in Houston, Texas. Once the videotapes were edited and

finalized, they were duplicated for distribution to 18 Texas and 3 Arkansas pilot counties, Texas Agricultural Extension Service administrators and the Southern Rural Development Center.

Evaluation

Pre- and post-tests were developed March-April 1990. Mary Marshall, Extension Program Development Specialist, provided consultation for the evaluation procedure. Questions for the pre- post- assessment instruments were generated from the content of the publications.

The pre-test was tested by individuals in the Bryan-College Station, Texas, area who met the same criteria as the subjects. The results obtained from these subjects were used in preparing final drafts of the pre- and post-tests.

The test format was written on a third-to-fifth-grade reading level. It was easy to read and comprehend, and data could be easily retrieve from the instrument.

The post-test was designed in the same manner. Although very similar to the pre-test, it was more in-depth to see if participants understood the concepts being taught.

Both tests were written in a “can do” tone so the participants would not fear failure on a test before they started the program.

A relatively high pre-test score was expected to build the confidence of participants. However, the items were intended to guide the instructor in determining areas of greatest need for instruction as well as assess learning resulting from the program.

Both instruments were included in the training manual and reproduced by the counties or provided by the Texas Agricultural Extension Service. Copies of the pre-test and post-test can be found in the Training Manual.

Employment Success Survey

A brief questionnaire was developed to determine the rate of job-search success after participants had completed their trainings. The questions were most appropriate for a telephone survey, but could be mailed as well.

The questions addressed issues such as job status before and after the training, former and current earning status. A copy of the follow-up questionnaire is in the Training Manual.

Training Manual

A training manual for instructors in the Minority Job Skills Training Program was developed between March and May of 1990. A lesson plan was developed for each major concept in the 13 publications.

Numbered lesson plans were supplemented with other materials which complemented or

emphasized certain concepts. These included poems, stories, pictures and examples of employment classified ads.

Overheads and handouts were produced for lessons when applicable. These materials were designed to complement the corresponding lesson and increase the worker's understanding of the concepts in the lesson.

A training manual was distributed to every agent or program aide involved in the four pilot trainings in Texas and Arkansas.

To obtain a copy of the training manual, contact the Southern Rural Development Center, Mississippi State University, or Dorthy Taylor, Extension Family Life Specialist, Room 205 Special Services Building, Texas A&M University, College Station, Texas 77843-2141.

Publicity Materials

A flier, news release and radio script were developed to assist participating leaders with the recruitment of subjects. The news release and radio script provided descriptions of the concepts that would be addressed during the training sessions.

Participating leaders were also advised to utilize other community contacts such as pastors, teachers, and their local Departments of Human Resources and the Texas Employment Commission.

Certificates

The Minority Job Skills Project certificates were produced in May 1990. The certificates were presented to subjects who completed the Job Skills Program in the pilot counties following completion of six hours of training. A copy of the certificate is included in the Training Manual.

PROCEDURE

Trainings - Texas and Arkansas Pilot Counties

Three trainings for pilot counties in Texas were conducted by Dorthy Taylor during May and June of 1990 and involved 37 agents, program aides and community volunteers.

Arkansas training was held in October 1990, and involved two 1890 specialists and three Extension agents.

Maps on pages 4 and 5 indicate the location of counties involved in the pilot project.

Tables 1 and 2 provide a summary of the dates and the individuals involved in the pilot trainings conducted in Texas (Table 1) and Arkansas (Table 2), respectively.

Table 1 - TEXAS PILOT COUNTIES**District & County Persons Trained by Location and Date of Training****Key: CEA = County Extension Agent**

Overton, TX - May 15, 1990*District-5*

April L. Feuebcher, Hopkins CEA

Ron Watson, Hopkins CEA

Peggy Bluitt, Marion Co. (volunteer)

Paulett cooper, Marion Co. 1890 Program Aide

Virginia Brock, Red River CEA (did not attend the training, but received and used the program materials)

District -9

Melia P. Hunter, Angelina CEA

Pamela Lincoln, Cass CEA

Willie M. Phillips, Houston CEA

Jeannette V. Milstead, Panola CEA

Paneltha Brown, Rusk CEA

Sherry Jeanes, San Augustine CEA

Brenham, TX - May 23, 1990*District-10*

Lear Holloway, Falls Co., 1890 Program Aide

Pearlie Love, Grimes Co. 1890 Program Aide

Alberta Minor, Grimes Co. 1890 Program Aide

Zola Taylor, Grimes Co. 1890 Program Aide

Doris Jones, Milam Co. 1890 Program Aide

Billie Blackshire, Washington Co. 1890 Program Aide

Bonita St. Julien, Washington Co. (intern)

Sharon A. Scales, Washington CEA

Linda Vogel, Washington CEA

Dorothy Wilburn, Washington Co. Program Aide

Note: Dr. Dorothy James, Family Life Specialist, and Dr. Kathleen Ladewig, Nutrition Specialist, observed the training.

Prairie View A&M University - June 8, 1990

1890 Extension Program Staff:

Cassie Stephens, Program Specialist-HEC

Elaine Ward, Program Specialist-HEC

Linda Willis, Assistant Administrator-HEC

Cassandra Baptiste, Fort Bend CEA-1890

Elaine Freeney, Harris CEA-1890

Jo Humphrey (volunteer)

Dorothy Johnson, Harris Co. 1890 Program Aide

Marie Rasmus, Harris Co. 1890 Program Aide-Health

Rebecca-Ann Taulton, Limestone Co. Program Aide

Helen Graves, Waller Co. Program Aide

Kenneth Singletary, Waller CEA-1890

Arie Walker, Waller Co. 1890 Program Aide

Sabrina Dillon, Wharton CEA

Ruthie Hill, Wharton Co. 1890 Program Aide

Table 2 - ARKANSAS PILOT COUNTIES

Person Trained by Location and Date of Training

Pine Bluff, AR October 8, 1990

University of Arkansas at Pine Bluff

Dr. Irene Lee, Family & Child Development Specialist

Lott Rolfe III, Community Resource Development Specialist

Joyce Davis, Jefferson

John Lee Turner, Miller CEA

Beverly Henderson, Phillips CEA

Materials distributed to individuals who attended the pilot trainings included:

- S a copy of the training manual, which contained 13 lesson plans;
- S a copy of the pre- and post-tests;
- S all necessary overheads and handouts;
- S the thirteen publications;
- S publicity materials including a promotional flier, news release and radio script; and
- S a participation certificate.

In addition, each county was provided thirty copies of each publication, a copy of the videotape and an agenda for the day's training.

The trainings included: an orientation to the program objectives; discussion of the project; and examination of each lesson plan and its corresponding overheads and handouts; and, viewing the four vignettes.

DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS

Instruments for participants who were Black and either 35 to 55 years-old or 16 to 19 years-old were sorted out by pilot county trainers.

Their pre-tests and post-tests were scored based on a maximum of (22) correct responses for a 100% score. Averages, ranges and percent change from pre-test to post-test were then calculated. A summary of these tabulations are shown in Tables 3 and 4.

Comparisons were applied by geographical area (county), sex, age and educational level. Number and percent employed and unemployed were then tabulated for both Texas and Arkansas counties for comparison.

Follow-up employment questionnaires were completed by only three Texas counties. Tabulation of the total number responding to each item are shown in Table 5. However, the sample size was too small for further analysis.

The brief time for project implementation made the follow-up questionnaire limited in usefulness for the pilot program; however, it has potential for documenting job changes and related changes in job satisfaction and/or economic impact when used three to four months after completion of the program.

FINDINGS

Pre/Post Test Scores

Pre-test scores ranged from a low of 5 (22% correct responses) to a high of 22 (100% correct responses). Average pre-test scores were 15 (68% correct responses) in Arkansas counties and 16 (72% correct responses) in Texas counties.

The pre-test scores indicate either considerable knowledge of the information presented in the program prior to participation or a reduction in the discriminating power of the questions resulting from an attempt to make the questions non-threatening to participants.

Post-test scores ranged from a low of 7 (31% correct responses) to 22 (100% correct responses). Average post-test scores were 18 (81% correct responses) in Arkansas counties and 19 (86% correct responses) in Texas counties.

The average pre/post test score change was 13 percent in both states. Achievement of similar improvement in post-test scores in both states suggests that the program enable a consistent pattern of learning.

**TABLE 3: MINORITY JOB SKILLS PROJECT
DATA COMPARISONS BY SEX, AGE AND EDUCATIONAL LEVEL**

TEXAS COUNTIES

DEMOGRAPHIC	TRAITS		Average Pre-test		Average Post-test		Average Change Pre/Post	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Total								
(all subjects)	(133)	100%	(16)	72%	(19)	86%	(3)	13%
SEX								
Male	(45)	33%	(15)	68%	(18)	81%	(3)	13%
Female	(99)	67%	(17)	77%	(20)	90%	(3)	13%
AGE								
< 16 years old	(20)	15%	(12)	54%	(16)	72%	(4)	18%
16-19 years old	(84)	63%	(17)	77%	(20)	90%	(3)	13%
20-25 years old	(11)	8%	(19)	86%	(20)	91%	(1)	5%
26-34 years old	(8)	6%	(16)	72%	(18)	81%	(2)	9%
35-55 years old	(7)	5%	(16)	72%	(16)	72%	(0)	0%
>55 years old	(4)	3%	(15)	68%	-----		-----	
EDUCATIONAL LEVEL								
<9th grade	(10)	7%	(13)	59%	(18)	81%	(5)	22%
9th, 10th grade	(43)	32%	(15)	68%	(19)	86%	(4)	18%
11th, 12th grade	(66)	50%	(17)	77%	(19)	86%	(2)	9%
College or more	(14)	11%	(17)	77%	(20)	90%	(3)	13%
EMPLOYMENT as of 10/90								
STATUS								
Employed	(90)	72%						
Unemployed	(37)	28%						

**TABLE 4: MINORITY JOB SKILLS PROJECT
DATA COMPARISONS BY SEX, AGE AND EDUCATIONAL LEVEL**

ARKANSAS COUNTIES

DEMOGRAPHIC	TRAITS		Average Pre-test		Average Post-test		Average Change Pre/Post	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Total (all subjects)	(57)	100%	(15)	68%	(18)	81%	(3)	13%
SEX								
Male	(41)	72%	(15)	68%	(18)	81%	(3)	13%
Female	(16)	28%	(16)	72%	(18)	81%	(2)	9%
AGE								
< 16 years old	(8)	14%	(16)	72%	(18)	81%	(2)	9%
16-19 years old	(49)	86%	(15)	68%	(18)	81%	(4)	18%
>20	(0)		-----		-----		-----	
EDUCATIONAL LEVEL								
< 9th grade	(0)		-----		-----		-----	
9th, 10th	(31)	54%	(16)	72%	(19)	86%	(3)	13%
11th, 12th grade	(26)	46%	(14)	63%	(17)	77%	(3)	13%
College or more	(0)		-----		-----		-----	
EMPLOYMENT STATUS 10/90								
Employed	(14)	25%						
Unemployed	(43)	75%						

**TABLE 5:
MINORITY JOB SKILLS PROJECT FOLLOW-UP DATA REPORT
FROM THREE TEXAS REPORTING COUNTIES**

Job Skills Workshop Participant's Success in Getting a Job:

Please fill out this card by marking the answer you choose with an X in the box, for example [X].

County			
Angelina	San Augustine	Red River	I am.....
0	7	1	male.
11	11	7	female.
1	18	1	16 to 19 years old.
7	0	1	20 to 34 years old.
3	0	3	35 to 55 years old.
0	0	3	over 55 years old.
My last job paid.....			
8	15	4	minimum wage (\$3.80 per hour, \$608 a month, \$7,300 per year)
2	0	0	\$10,000-\$15,000 per year.
0	0	3	\$16,000-\$20,000 per year.
0	0	0	more than \$25,000.
I.....			
4	6	4	am still looking for a job.
4	6	2	am employed now at the job I wanted.
3	6	0	am employed now, but not in the job I want.
0	0	0	have worked since the workshop, but I am unemployed now.
My current or present job pays.....			
5	14	1	minimum wage (\$3.80 per hour, \$608 a month, \$7,300 per year).
2	0	2	\$10,000-\$15,000 per year.
0	0	0	\$16,000-\$20,000 per year.
0	0	0	more than \$25,000.
I am earning.....			
5	2	0	less than I must have to get by on.
5	5	0	just enough to make ends meet.
1	8	0	enough to have a little left over.
3	4	4	I'm unemployed.

Twenty of the 87 Texas participants completing both a pre- and post-test instrument increased their post-test score 30 percentage points or more above their pre-test score.

Characteristics of Participants

One hundred thirty-two (132), 37% of the Texas participants, completed pre- and post-tests. They were mainly female (88) 67% and between 16 and 19 years-of-age (84) 63%. Half (50%) of the participants had received between an 11th and 12th grade education, which may explain the pattern of relatively high pre-test scores. Over two-thirds (96) 72% were employed by October 1990.

Eighty five (85) percent of Arkansas subjects (67) were youth, 15 to 19 years-of-age. The remaining 15% were adults (5 were 20 to 34 years, and 5 were 35 to 55 years-old).

The 76% majority (51 of 67) of the subjects were male. Teenage females made up the remaining 24% of the participants. There were no adult females among the Arkansas subjects.

Slightly over half of the Jefferson County and Phillips County subjects (54%) had a 9th or 10th grade education, while 46% had an 11th or 12th grade education. Educational attainment data was not available for the 10 adult males in Miller County.

More than three out of four (76%) of the subjects were unemployed at the time of participating in the Minority Job Skills Project.

Comparison by Sex

Female participants in Texas had higher scores on the average, but there were no differences between pre- and post-test average scores of male and female participants.

Arkansas females had slightly higher average pre-test scores, but there was no difference between average post-test scores. Males in Arkansas showed a greater change between pre-test and post-test scores than did female participants.

The average gain from pre- to post- scores of adult males in Arkansas ranged from 9% for Jefferson County to 18% for Phillips County and 29% for Miller County.

Comparison by Age

Texas participants who were between 20 and 25 years-of-age had the highest averages for both pre- and post-tests, while subjects less than 16 years-of-age had the lowest averages for both tests. As age increased above 25, averages began to decline for both tests.

Participants less than 16 years old showed the greatest change from pre- to post-tests, while subjects greater than 55 years of age showed no change from pre- to post-test.

The 16 to 19 years-old participants from Arkansas had slightly higher average pre-test scores when compared to subjects less than 16 years old or over twenty years of age.

The change from pre- to post-test scores was two times greater for Arkansas participants who were 16 to 19 years-of-age when compared to those less than 16 years-of-age.

Comparison by Educational Level

Both pre- and post-test scores appeared to increase as Texas subjects' level of education increased. Subjects with less than a 9th grade education had the greatest change from pre- to post-test scores, while subjects with a 11th or 12th grade education showed the smallest amount of change.

Arkansas participants who had completed 9 to 10 years of school had higher average scores for both tests than did participants who completed the 11th and 12th grade. However, there was no difference between changes in their pre- to post-test scores.

Educational attainment data was not available for Miller County, Arkansas participants.

The Future

Researchers who follow labor market trends predict that by the middle of 1991, one million more U.S. workers will be unemployed. Economic forecasters describe the first six months of 1991 as a period of "mild" recession.

A recession of any intensity is never good, but it is particularly difficult now:

- Federal and most state governments are already in major budget trouble and simply don't have the dollars to prop up either a faltering economy or the people who fall victim to it.
- More people work in service industries than ever before. They are less likely to have protection from loss of job and income that manufacturing workers traditionally have had.
- Young adults who poured into the labor market in the 1970's and early 1980's are older today, building families, trying to pay for homes, and often depending on two incomes to provide a satisfactory level of living. For these families, job loss portends disaster.

The number of poor families increased to become 13% of the population in the 1980's, slightly higher than the previous decade. One-third of black Americans have continued to live in poverty since the 1981-82 recession.

- Financial institutions are shaky and cautious; consumers and small businessmen tell surveyors they are pessimistic; oil prices are 50 percent higher than six months ago; and military situations could disrupt the economy in ways impossible to foresee.

The result of all these current trends could be a period of economic difficulty much harder and longer than Americans have been led to expect according to Isaac Shapiro, an unemployment specialist with the Washington Center on Budget and Policy Priorities. He further predicts a decline in white- and blue-collar jobs measured in job loss and income, falling home and stock values, diminished business prospects and the general psychological bruising that such times bring.

Other factors that the current job/labor situation impacts are the lack of unemployment subsidy, insufficient welfare money, limited poverty prevention and job training money, or reduced staff in most agencies administering any of these programs while the number of needy people begin to grow, according to Priorities Center Director Robert Greenstein.

Bureau of Labor researchers estimate that 7.4 million workers are unemployed today, yet only about 33 percent have been able to meet tightened eligibility requirements and receive benefits. If qualifying workers in some states are unemployed more than 26 weeks (not uncommon in a recession), they could lose benefits altogether.

Martha Simms, an economist with Washington's black-oriented Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies, says that in a recession, minorities are more affected than others in the economy. The reasons are well-documented: minority workers have lower job-skill levels than whites, and their jobs are more likely to be eliminated when an employer is cutting cost. She says this is especially true of young black men and sees virtually no hope for them in the next downturn. AFDC, job programs and teen pregnancy programs have a structure to protect them. But, according to Ron Mincy, a researcher at the Urban Institute, there is no structure for young, black men.

Education to empower minorities who are underemployed or unemployed to market their job skills is a viable alternative to reversing this trend.

Texas Agricultural Extension Plans for the future in Job Skills Education

As a result of the success of the Minority Job Skills Project funded by the Southern Rural Development Center at Mississippi State University, 1988-1990, the following educational programming efforts are planned to strengthen minority job skills.

1. District trainings for County Extension Agents - Home Economics in:
 - South Plains District 2 in Lubbock,
 - Northeast Texas District 5 in Canton,
 - South District 12 in Weslaco,
 - Coastal Bend District 14 in Corpus Christi, and the
 - Upper Coast District 11 in Houston

Sixty Extension agents and ten Expanded Nutrition Program agents, program assistants and program aides will be prepared to implement the program themselves or train volunteers to do so.

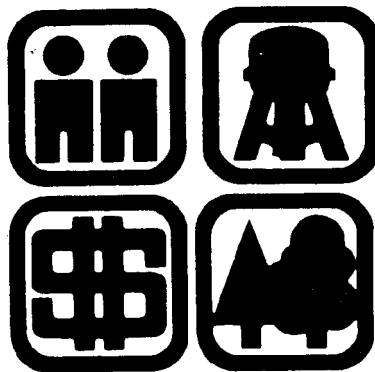
2. Search for grant funds to replicate the study for Hispanic workers and to convert the Job skills publications into Spanish for non-English-readers. An audience-specific video would be developed for Spanish-speaking unemployed or underemployed workers.
3. Prairie View cooperative Extension Program will conduct 11 Minority Job skills programs in Falls, McLennan, Waller, Wharton, Washington, Ft. Bend, Harris, Limestone, Milam, Marion and Grimes Counties. Elaine Ward, Program Specialist, will coordinate the training program effort.
4. Continued association with the Southern Rural Development Center to facilitate

implementation of the Minority Job skills Project across the Southern Region with other 1862 and 1890 institutions, as requested.

5. Counties involved in the pilot program will continue program implementation. For Example, in Cass County the agent conducted training for 25 low income AFDC (Aid to Dependent Family) mothers on job skills and readiness. Topics covered were “How to Get a Job,” “Keeping Job,” and “Career Changes.” Participants engaged in role playing on job interviewing and completing applications.

Opportunities will be explored for collaborative use of the program with other agencies and organizations teaching skills for employment. Many of these programs teach the job skill but have limited resources for teaching their program participants how to market their job skills. The opportunities are many. The key will be to build working relationships with potential participants through Extension and other educational networks.

The SRDC is one of four regional rural development centers in the nation. It coordinates cooperation between the Research (Experiment Station) and Extension (Cooperative Extension Service) staffs at land-grant institutions in the South to provide technical consultation, research, training, and evaluation services for rural development. This publication is one of several published by the Center on various needs, program thrusts, and research efforts in rural development. For more information about SRDC activities and publications, write to the Director.



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