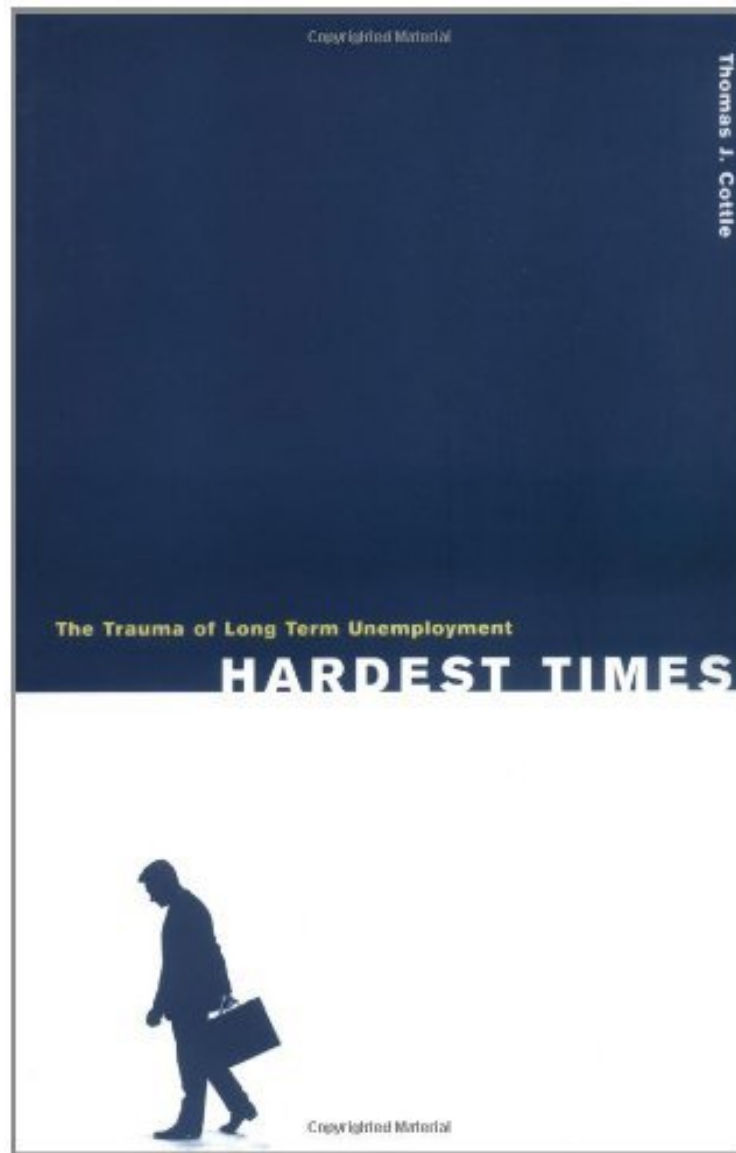


(Read free) Hardest Times: The Trauma of Long Term Unemployment

# Hardest Times: The Trauma of Long Term Unemployment

*Thomas J. Cottle*

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**Thomas J. Cottle : Hardest Times: The Trauma of Long Term Unemployment** before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Hardest Times: The Trauma of Long Term Unemployment:

7 of 7 people found the following review helpful. Vividly describes the pain of long term unemployment in adult males. Somewhat outdated with a sexist bend ending depressingly. By Cynthia Danute Cekauskas, LCSWI must say this is not the best choice one could make on how to cope with the impact of long term unemployment particularly if you are a woman. Frankly, it's rather depressing ending with the words "And although the plant and the man continue

to stand, everyone recognizes they are moribund. At last there is nothing to do but raze the plant and bury the man."The book was published in 2001 when unemployment was nowhere near as high as it is today and, therefore, statistics cited are obviously long outdated. The author does not explain until Chapter 9 The Shame of Unemployment that "The purpose of the book has been to make the reader aware of the stories of long-term unemployed men living at a time when the U.S. economy is seen to be flourishing."In the Preface of this book the author carefully explains "I have focused attention in this volume on stories of men out of work. This focus should not be interpreted, however, as a disinterest in the stories of long-term unemployed women and the profound meanings unemployment has for them as well. If work is a central feature in the development of a man's identity and sense of personal satisfaction, a theme explored later on, then it is for woman as well, but this exploration is reserved for another volume." Oh, really? It has been ten (10) years since this book came out and I for one know of no such subsequent book addressing the heavy impact unemployment has on women. In a way a distinction seems irrelevant. The author speaks many times about men being head of households, main breadwinners, the financial mainstay of the family. These days however many households are headed by single mother breadwinners who shoulder just as heavy (if not heavier) financial burdens as the men the author writes about. This book is outstanding, however, in depicting how very painful long term unemployment can be "when society rebuffs the very people who have led their lives decently and anonymously, and want only to work in order to earn their living, in all meanings of the word." The author continues in the Epilogue that "The accounts depict what happens to people who forever remain loyal to laws and moral order, and who, when they knew steady employment, complained little about things having to do with life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness."I particularly liked Chapter 10 The Trauma of Unemployment when the author made a possible connection to the Elisabeth Kubler-Ross classical research on death and dying. In this model the "Kubler-Ross stages of coping mechanisms exhibited by people with terminal illnesses become particularly interesting to review when considering the lives of the long-term unemployed, who, not so incidentally, are labeled terminally unemployed....In the Kubler-Ross' fifth and final coping stage, the terminally ill patient allegedly achieves some form of acceptance. At this juncture, anger and depression recede, if not vanish completely, and one begins to accept one's fate. Acceptance of this sort, and with it the release of anger and depression, hardly guarantees happiness or serenity. In fact, Kubler-Ross was quick to assert that acceptance may be experienced as an absence of feeling."Although I did not find this book helpful in coping with my own long term unemployment I think it does very accurately describe how painful this state can be. I was looking, however, for a book that would teach me how to cope with such pain. In this I find the book falls short. 0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Two Stars By Richard Stapleton It was not what I thought 15 of 15 people found the following review helpful. Hardest Times: The Trauma of Long-Term Unemployment By L. Major I purchased this title as part of an effort to understand what happened to my family when my father was fired and was subsequently unable to replace his job. The book was almost unbearably sad to read, but it rang absolutely true to the way I remember this crisis and its effect on my father and our family, especially the overwhelming sense of shame we all lived with. Mr. Cottle lists his research and statistics in the first chapter, and then he simply tells stories of trauma experienced by the various men he interviewed. The stories haunt you long after you've put the book back on the shelf. They make you wonder how to really help these men and their families. And you're also left with a more compassionate view of the long-term unemployed. They aren't lazy, useless folks to be disposed of, but human beings with souls who have experienced what amounts to a life tragedy. They need our compassion, not our judgment.

Against the backdrop of a robust economy, hundreds of thousands of people in this country remain out of work for long periods of time, causing economic and psychological hardships for entire families. Hardest Times examines in depth what happens to men, and to their families, when they remain out of work for longer than six months, a period the government designates as long term unemployment. Cottle examines long term unemployment as a traumatic event, which creates in those who experience it conditions resembling symptoms of loss and post-trauma. Through the words of men who have experienced long term unemployment, he demonstrates that work is crucial to the formation of a man's identity, and that without work, many men often find no purpose for living. The in-depth studies that Cottle undertook reveal here why some men abandon their families or, in some instances, are driven to commit murder or suicide in the face of lingering unemployment. These often heart wrenching stories encourage readers to consider the implications of long term unemployment for the men who experience it, the families who endure it, and the society that tolerates it. Cottle's approach demonstrates that unemployment cannot be examined strictly in statistical terms, but that ultimately it must be explored in human terms, for it affects both the unemployed worker and his family. Instead of treating long term unemployment as simply another social problem, Cottle argues that it must be treated as a serious, often life-threatening, disorder, whose cure is clearly discernible. By reading the words of these men, the reader will understand how, even in this time of shifting gender roles, men in large measure still define themselves by the work they do, rather than the relationships that they cultivate. This unique approach to the problem of long term unemployment gives a human face to the problem and encourages readers to rethink the nature of working and not

working and its special importance to men.