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# JOURNAL OF SOCIOLOGY AND SOCIAL WELFARE

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## Editorial

This has been an eventful year for *JSSW*. Several large changes have occurred; some were planned, some were a bit of a shock. We began the academic year with a return to a two-campus operation. I moved to Louisiana State University but most of the journal stayed home in Western Michigan. For many of the years that I served as Editor at WMU the journal was published by Norm Goroff at the University of Connecticut, so the prospect of working from two locations didn't upset us. We have continued to route manuscripts through WMU to avoid disrupting submissions; and, thanks to the wonders of electronic mail, we have remained in daily contact at no additional expense.

A much greater threat to our operation and future came in January with the resignation of Associate Editors Danny H. Thompson and Edward J. Pawlak. Danny and Ed first became involved with *JSSW* as Editors during the 1983–84 academic year when I was out of the country. When Norm Goroff decided he could no longer handle the publishing of the journal, they urged me to move that part of the operation to WMU as well. They argued that this was an opportunity to change the appearance of the journal by moving from camera-ready copy prepared by each author to a copy-edited, type-set format. Together, we went to the University with a proposal for a temporary capital infusion to allow us to make the transformation and try to boost circulation to the point where we could afford the higher operation costs. They also persuaded me to calculate the cost of the time I had been donating and ask for a small stipend for myself. The University agreed and the transformation was completed to rave reviews.

It is fair to say that none of these things would have happened without Ed and Danny. Ed dealt with the typesetters and printers, did all the copy-editing, and served as reviewer/trouble-shooter for difficult editorial decisions. His high standards may have aggravated a few authors, but his imagination and erudition undoubtedly improved many a paper. Danny computerized and managed all our business operations, prepared our budgets, kept on top of circulation, master-minded

our marketing, trained and supervised our graduate assistants, and got me out of exile in an office two floors away from the School of Social Work. In four years, he brought us to the point where we no longer needed a University subsidy to maintain our operation. These skills are not always recognized in the university, but without them a lot of important ideas would never see print and more than a few worthy scholars wouldn't get tenure.

All of this work was done as overload because we were never able to get released time for them. As WMU went through further cutbacks and institutional strain, a time came when the overload was too great. I could not ask them to go further, but I shuddered at the implications of their departure.

We were kept going by two fortunate developments. Gary Mathews, a scholar with degrees in both sociology and social work, agreed to take over as Associate Editor. And, the University found a way to give him some released time. Thus, though he is filling the shoes of two different people, he'll have some protection against burn-out.

Steven R. Rose of LSU has also joined us as Associate Editor. He will help with the increasingly difficult editorial decisions we must face as we continue to get more good manuscripts than we know what to do with.

Yet another change has occurred on the masthead. Schimon Gottschalk has resigned as Book Review Editor in order to meet his own domestic workload challenges. Our new Book Review Editor is James Midgley, also of LSU. Jim is planning to group reviews by theme so that they can help our readers keep up with new developments in particular fields.

I'm hoping that most of this upheaval went unnoticed by most of you. The journal has continued to come out on time. We've produced two superb Special Issues this academic year in addition to the usual mix of stimulating articles. Old and new authors continue to send us good work; more, alas, than we have room for. The Editorial Board continues to devote countless, often unrecognized, hours to evaluating manuscripts. Subscriptions climb slowly and people still tell us at conferences that we are publishing things that are interesting and useful to them. As we settle into new operating relationships,



the outward manifestation of *JSSW* remains pretty much the same. This is because Ed, Danny, Schimon, Gary, Steve, and Jim worked hard to make the transition invisible.

There are two changes that we hope you *did* notice. Your copy of *JSSW* now arrives in a protective plastic wrap in hopes that it will never again look like the neighbor's dog read it first. We are also acknowledging the receipt of manuscripts so that authors can now blame us rather than the mail carrier if they don't get a timely decision.

The *Journal of Sociology and Social Welfare* is a web of institutional relationships and popular support that will probably always be precarious. It keeps going because it is an act of faith and a labor of love that transcends that institutional and financial. It would be wonderful if we all got paid for the time and energy we put into it and/or got some credit toward promotion or tenure as a result of it. More often than not, we don't; but we do it anyway. And when we can't do it anymore, other people come forward to take over. Ok, enough. I'm beginning to sound like *The Grapes of Wrath*.

We appreciate your continued support.

Bob Leighninger



# Black Pink Collar Workers: Arduous Journey from Field and Kitchen to Office

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## *Acknowledgement*

*The author thanks Dr. Jerry Cates, Howard University School of Social Work, for his encouragement, guidance, and editorial comments.*

*The black female workers' journey from field to office was a long and arduous one. This paper examines the transition of black women from agricultural laborers to pink collar workers during the period 1900 to 1980. More black women than white women have had to work in paid employment in order to maintain their families economically. Discrimination against black pink collar workers in career advancement and the better-paying positions, is especially critical because so many black families are female-headed households in need of all the economic resources that the mother-breadwinner can obtain.*

The sources for this paper may be found in Washington, D.C. in the Washingtoniana and Black Studies collections of the Martin Luther King, Jr. Memorial Library; the Library of Congress; the Moorland-Spingarn Research Center; and the United States Department of Labor Library.

This paper examines the transition of black women from agricultural laborers and personal and domestic service workers to pink collar office workers during the period 1900 to 1980.

The term pink collar worker describes a broad category of clerical or office worker occupations: "stenographers, typists and secretaries, shipping and receiving clerks; clerical and kindred workers; . . . office machine operators . . . bookkeepers, accountants, cashiers, and telephone operators . . . sales workers; salesperson, sales demonstrators and real estate salesperson" (Wandersee, 1981, p. 87). (Howe (1977) also includes beauticians, waitresses and homemakers.) The black female



workers' journey from field and kitchen to office was a long and arduous one. Racial discrimination in all of its guises obstructed her way. In the beginning, inadequate education was a major obstacle. Even when black women had the necessary education, pink collar employment, especially those jobs which put them in the public eye, were denied them because their physical appearance and voices did not meet the standard of beauty established by the majority culture. A few were hired by blacks, some others were hired in positions where the public did not see or hear them, and a few others obtained work by "passing" as whites. The tide did not turn until the real obstacle—racial discrimination—was outlawed in Title VII of the 1964 Civil Rights Law. Only when equal opportunity became law did parity occur in hiring for pink collar occupations.

Benjamin Ringer's (1983) conceptualization of America as a "dual society" provides a paradigm with which to study and interpret the black pink collar workers' arduous journey from field to office.

Ringer (1983) contended that U.S. society has consisted of two societies: the People's Domain on one side and the Plural Society on the other. The People's Domain has the guiding ideal of the American creed which included the ideals of the dignity of each individual, the equality of all men, and the unalienable rights of all people to justice, freedom and the pursuit of fair opportunity. Only whites could be in the People's Domain; they were the chiefs and officials and the norms in the People's Domain were democratic and the values were universalistic, egalitarian, and achievement-oriented. On the other side, the Plural Society, where nonwhite minorities dwelled, the normative value was the racial creed: nonwhites should live separately from whites; nonwhites are not equal to whites. While nonwhites could not enter the People's Domain, whites went back and forth from the People's Domain to the Plural Society. They were in control on both sides. For Ringer, the history of the U.S. is one of a continuous struggle on the part of the members of the excluded, Plural Domain, to expand access to the People's Domain.

The "dual society" concept provides a cogent frame of reference from which to analyze and better understand the way in

which race increases the tension between democracy and equality in America; the existing social, ethnic and religious stratification; and the time and regional variations in the form of arrangements of race and ethnic relations in America. In addition, the dual society framework compels those who were unaware to see that, historically and now, nonwhites in America have received the treatment that they have as a result of efforts to maintain the "People's Domain"—a society under white dominance.

### In the Beginning (Post Civil War to 1900)

Two hundred and fifty years of slavery ended with the surrender of the Confederate Army in 1865. The early Reconstruction Period (1865–1870) saw universal enfranchisement (for males) and free public education but not economic independence or security; most blacks worked for their former slave masters. Between 1870 and 1900, blacks throughout the South experienced universal disenfranchisement through state constitutional amendments enacting poll taxes, grandfather clauses, literacy tests, etc. In addition, secret terrorist groups such as the Camellias and the Ku Klux Klan engaged in activities to support the political actions of the larger society to control blacks, remove them from political power, and bring about "White Supremacy" through the enactment of racial segregation laws—"Jim Crow" laws. Jim Crow laws forbade intermarriage; and established the separation of the races in all walks of life from sitting together in trains and depots to learning and worshipping together in schools and churches. "Negroes could be certain of an improved status only in the field of education. . . there seemed to be a greater willingness to tolerate the growing educational institutions than any of the other agencies of Negroes to improve themselves" (Franklin & Moss, 1988, p. 239).

Prior to the Civil War, black women were restricted to two fields—agriculture and domestic service (Foner and Lewis, 1989). Most black women over the age of ten were slaves working on southern farms and plantations, and whether at work in the field or the slave quarters "hard labor . . . was the defining characteristic of black womanhood in the south" (Ryan, 1979, p. 112).

Five years after the Civil War many black women withdrew from the labor force and then reentered at a dramatic rate between 1879 and 1880.

In 1888, 73.3 percent of black single women and 35.4 percent of black married women in seven southern cities reported paid jobs. Among white women only 23.8 percent of the single and 7.3 percent of the married reported paid employment. Even when family income, husband's employment, and demographic factors are held constant, black women were still far more likely to work than white women (Kessler-Harris, 1983, p. 123).

Most black women worked then for the same reasons that they work now—not because they wanted to but because they had to due to the low earnings of their black men when compared to the earnings of white men. Then as now, fewer black families than white had a choice about women working outside the home.

In 1870, there were fewer than 100,000 office workers in America and most of these were white men. The 1880 Census recorded 7,019 women office workers (Erickson, 1934); we do not know if any of them were black because occupational information by sex and color was not delineated until the 1890 Census (Women's Bureau, 1934).

### Enlarged Opportunities (1900 to 1950)

There was a great deal of turbulence in the dual society from 1900 to 1950. Race relations were tense. "White supremacy" reigned in the South, that is, whites were favored by almost every institution but especially the law, the courts and the schools. During the first two decades, lynchings and race riots were frequent occurrences throughout the nation, but especially in the former Confederacy. For example, between 1900 and 1914, there were 1,100 lynchings, an average of 78 per year. By 1917, the number had declined to 38 but increased to 58 in 1918. There was a steady increase of race riots with the peak year being 1919 when there were 25 from June to December (Franklin & Moss, 1988). Herculean efforts by the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) to rouse Congress, state legislatures, and the general public regarding the horror



of lynching, with the goal of having anti-lynching legislation passed by Congress, escalated in 1919 but despite the fact that bills were introduced in 1922 and 1934, Congress never passed an anti-lynching bill (Weiss, 1983).

During World War I (1914 to 1919), thousands of blacks migrated out of the South. The push from the South was both economic and social: severe labor depression, boll weevil infestation of cotton, floods, injustice, inequality, disenfranchisement, segregation, lynchings and burnings. The pull to the North was a demand for labor caused by the decline of foreign immigrants (from 1 million in 1914 to 300,000 in 1915) (Franklin & Moss, 1988).

While social conditions were better in the North, blacks were excluded from Labor unions in the North for most of the first three decades of the 20th century (Franklin & Moss, 1988).

The Great Depression affected blacks earlier with extensive unemployment beginning during the recession of the mid-1920s. When the New Deal relief programs emerged in the 1930s, racial discrimination insured that in many communities black families received smaller relief grants than white families and were excluded from many of the employment programs, not hired in equitable numbers, or paid lower wages than whites for the same work (Franklin & Moss, 1988).

High points during this period included the formation of the NAACP, the National Urban League, the Negro Industrial League, the Joint Committee on National Resources, and other civil rights groups; labor unions (such as A. Philip Randolph's Pullman Car Porters and Maids Union), which sought to improve the sociopolitical status of blacks; the Harlem Renaissance in the 1920s and 1930s which produced black artists whose prose, poetry, plays, and paintings about black life in America influenced and inspired their generation and generations to come; and the relatively pro-black Franklin Delano Roosevelt White House. Roosevelt established a "Black Cabinet" (black advisers in various governmental departments), and New Deal programs which benefitted blacks as well as whites, especially in the areas of education and housing. In addition, from 1930 to 1950, there was broader enrollment in labor unions, especially the CIO; a steady increase of black school enrollment (although

there was disparity in the amount spent per capita on white students and black students, for example, in 1930 in the South, \$7 for whites and \$2 for blacks); more than one hundred black colleges by 1950 (from one in 1854); the initiation of the integration of the armed forces under President Harry Truman in 1948 and 1949; Truman's Executive Order requiring fair employment in the federal service; and the 1948 Supreme Court decision outlawing restrictive covenants in the real estate industry (Franklin & Moss, 1988).

Executive Order 8802 outlawing discrimination in defense industries by President Roosevelt in 1941, resulting from political pressure by activists such as A. Philip Randolph, caused thousands of blacks to be employed in the defense industries (aircraft, shipbuilding, welding, automotive mechanics, electricity, etc.). Many of these industries had never employed blacks. The New Deal job training programs, especially those in the NYA and the WPA, were significant in establishing the perception that blacks were ready for this new employment. Additionally, during this period black participation in labor unions such as the United Automobile Workers, United Steel Workers, National Maritime Union, United Rubber Workers and the national councils of the CIO, increased significantly (Weiss, 1983; Franklin & Moss, 1988).

By 1900, most white women in the labor force were employed as "domestics, farm laborers, unskilled factory operatives, seamstresses and teachers" (Wandersee, 1981, p. 84). Factory work was closed to the majority of black women who, because of their slavery past, were considered unfit for the factory or skilled work. Only the cigar and cigarette industry employed large numbers of black women prior to World War I (Women's bureau, 1939). Nationally, 95% of all black women workers labored in farm work and domestic and personal service and 11.9% worked as dressmakers and seamstresses (usually in their own homes). In Chicago in 1900 .7% of black workers were doing clerical work and 1.9% were professionals (lawyers, doctors, clergy, teachers, actors, and musicians (Spears, 1967). The percentage of clerical workers and professionals who were women was not reported.

Between 1900 and 1910 new work opportunities became available to American white women. The economic growth of

this period created new jobs in the service and clerical occupations (Wandersee, 1981). Doing business became more complex involving more letter writing, more sophisticated book-keeping methods, different marketing, more research, increased record keeping as well as the expansion of auxiliary commercial services. Services such as banking, investment managing, insurance, advertising, and publishing increased the demand for more clerks (Erickson, 1934). In 1910 clerical workers were the fourth largest category of white women workers and by 1940 they were the largest category (Wandersee, 1981).

By 1910, 84.7% of black women workers remained in agriculture, domestic, and personal services and 15.3% were in non-agricultural occupations. Most nonagricultural positions were those of barbers, laundresses, manicurists, untrained nurses and midwives, seamstresses, and a few teachers (Greene and Woodson, 1930).

Among Chicago's black women workers in 1910, 63% remained in domestic and personal service, particularly as laundresses (Spears, 1967). Spears (1967) does not show what percentage of the .4% of black clerical and 1.5% of black professional workers were women. However, he does observe that "Negro women were particularly limited in the search for desirable positions. Clerical work was practically closed to them and only a few could qualify as school teachers" (Spears, 1987, p. 34).

In 1910, sales also began to open as an occupational area for white women. At that time, 2% of them were working as real estate salespersons and by 1940, 20% of real estate persons were women (Wandersee, 1981). Among white women workers in 1910, approximately 9.2% were professionals and these were concentrated in the areas of teaching, nursing, social work, library science and religious work (Wandersee, 1981).

Addie Hunter (1911) writing in *Crisis* about a study done by the Chicago School of Civics and Philanthropy on the employment of black women in Chicago, found that the 15 to 20 black teachers in the public school system did not feel discriminated against and felt they had the same chance of promotion as their white colleagues. The researchers found:

The real barriers are met by the women who have had only an average education—girls who have finished high school, or perhaps only the 8th grade. These girls, if they were white, would find

employment at clerical and office work in Chicago's department stores, mail order houses and wholesale stores. But these positions are absolutely closed to the Negro girl. She has no choice but housework (Hunter, 1911, p. 24).

Ms. Hunter (1911) avowed that the principal occupations open to Chicago's black women were domestic service and teaching and that this left most of them relegated to domestic service since their education did not qualify them for teaching. Some black women who were able to conceal their racial identity were able to acquire pink collar jobs in the early part of the 20th century. "Many of the Negroes are so nearly white that they can be mistaken for white girls, in which case they are able to secure very good positions and keep them as long as their color is not known" (p. 25). She described one woman's experience:

One girl who has only a trace of colored blood was able to secure a position as salesgirl in a store. After she had been there a long time she asked for an increase in wages, such as allowed the white girls, but the request was refused and she was told that she ought to be thankful they kept her at all (Hunter, 1911, p. 24).

Hunter (1911) advised that since there was no discrimination against black seamstresses, more black women should take up sewing and added that a "lack of industrial training" (pp. 25) prevented many black and white women (but especially black women) from acquiring employment.

During World War I (1914 to 1918) there was a shortage of labor which provided larger numbers of black women the opportunity to enter industrial occupations that white women were leaving. Additionally, small numbers of black women entered the professions, office work and sales (Women's Bureau, 1939). In 1920, 87% of black women workers remained in agricultural and domestic and personal service. Of the 12.9% who did not remain in such jobs, most were laborers, manicurists and hairdressers, some were seamstresses, and untrained nurses and midwives, and a few were teachers (Greene and Woodson, 1930).

Among Chicago's black women workers in 1920, clerical occupations were still almost closed to Negroes. . . . Women with high

school—and even college— education still had no real alternatives to domestic service. The two large mail order houses, Sears Roebuck and Montgomery Ward, hired Negro women as temporary help, but the downtown stores and the Chicago Telephone Company— major employers of female labor—refused to even experiment with Negro help (Spears, 1967, p. 155).

Ms. Mary Louise Williams (writing in 1923) described how upon graduating from high school in a small city in New York, she applied to several offices for employment and was told that there was no need of “colored help”. After doing some odd jobs and housework she eventually landed a job as a “forelady and stock clerk” in the perfume department of a “manufactory”. After working there for one year, her salary doubled. One evening, as she and a coworker were walking home, she saw her mother and introduced her to the coworker. The next day she was fired. Her boss explained: “There is no fault with your work, but the girls will not work with a Negro. We would gladly keep you if we could, but it is better to lose one girl than to lose twenty” (Foner & Lewis, 1989, p. 390). Until she introduced her coworker to her mother, it was not known that she was black.

Ms. Williams related another incident in which she answered an ad placed by a department store for a colored girl with a high school education. She expected a sales position but learned that the opening was for a bootblack in the ladies bathroom. She was told that she was too light-skinned for the job and learned that a darker woman with two years of teacher’s training had been hired. The objective of hiring an educated black woman was to have customers avoid contact with “objectionable Negroes” (Foner & Lewis, 1989, p. 390).

Ms. Williams eventually went to work in a sewing shop where she was paid less than the white workers. She moved to Cleveland where she found more job opportunities for black women because of the large number of black professionals and black owned “clubs, hotels, rooming houses, ice cream parlors, drugstores and restaurants” (Foner & Lewis, 1989, p. 391).

At the time of World War I, Ms. Williams worked in a white hotel washing glasses and silver for \$40.00 per month. When the assistant steward was drafted, she talked herself into his

job even though it was "man's work". Her monetary fortunes soared until he returned from the war and took back his job (Foner & Lewis, 1989). She wrote of this experience: "This position afforded me so many luxuries of life that it showed me what a joy work would be to the Negro woman if given a position and a salary instead of a job and wages" (Foner & Lewis, 1989, p. 391).

A news article on the front page of the January 26, 1924 New York Age headlined: "Colored Woman Now Private Secretary to Harlem Banker" proclaimed that a Mrs. Florence Richardson "an expert stenographer and social worker . . . [was] probably the only colored woman in New York holding a position of this kind" ("Colored Woman", 1924, p. 1).

Lorenzo J. Greene and Carter G. Woodson (1930) asserted in the 1920s that "only under rare instances, can Negroes secure employment in white business houses" (p. 312). They explained that black, white and pink collar workers, were employed by black businesses—especially black insurance companies and there were not enough black businesses to employ many blacks.

By 1930 there were approximately 4 million office workers and women constituted 51.5% of the total (Erickson, 1934). From 1920 to 1930 the number of black women in clerical work increased by about three-tenths of one percent (Women's Bureau, 1934), yet in 1930, less than 5% of clerical workers were black women (Women's Bureau, 1939).

Fifty-six percent of all gainfully employed native-born white women workers labored in white or pink collar occupations: transportation and communications, sales, public service, professional service and clerical (Brown, 1938). Five percent of black women were in sales, clerical work, transportation and communication and the professions (three-fourths were teachers; one-tenth trained nurses; and approximately 1,000 were employed as actresses, college presidents and professors; musicians and music teachers) (Brown, 1938). Five percent were employed in pink and white collar occupations despite the fact that between 1920 and 1930, black women's participation in professional occupations (especially teaching) had increased by approximately 60% (Women's Bureau, 1934). Five percent of black women

worked in tobacco, clothing, food and textile industries and the remaining 90% remained in agricultural work and domestic and personal services. Half of those in domestic service and personal service worked in private homes and the others were "home laundresses or laundry workers, waitresses, charwomen, cleaners, untrained nurses and midwives, beauty operators, elevator tenders and so on" (Women's Bureau, 1939, pp. 60–61).

Jones (1985) argued that blacks were excluded from pink collar jobs by the racism which proclaimed the "native-born white American standard of female beauty" as the standard for the "sexy saleslady". By this period in American capitalism

business had discovered the link between spending money and ego gratification; the most effective medium between public and product, according to advertising experts, was an attractive, well-spoken and pliant young woman who invested whatever she was selling with her own charms . . . [including] a pleasing physical appearance (or voice) (p. 179).

Majority culture standards of beauty ruled. This consideration influenced the hiring of any women dealing directly with the public—sales clerks, receptionists, secretaries and telephone operators. Case in point: Montgomery Ward was the largest employer of black clerical workers (1,050 in 1920) and they were all mail-order personnel who had no direct contact with the public. When local restaurants complained that blacks eating in their establishments would drive away their white customers. Wards built its own cafeteria to conceal its black employees from the public view (Jones, 1985).

In 1932, the Women's Bureau surveyed women office workers in seven cities—New York, Hartford, Philadelphia, Atlanta, Chicago, Des Moines, and St. Louis. They interviewed 43,000 women in 314 offices. They looked at the employment of black women in only two of the surveyed cities—Chicago and Atlanta. In Chicago, there were six offices employing 101 black women and in Atlanta there were two offices employing 57 black women (Erickson, 1934). The Bureau found

the two races were not employed together in any office visited, but 5 insurance companies and 1 publisher in Chicago and 2 insurance offices in Atlanta *all controlled and managed* by Negro ownership



were found employing Negroes. In both cities several banks and other types of offices employing Negroes were contacted, but they had only from 1 to 3 women . . . too few to form a representative group (Erickson, 1934, p. 92).

The Bureau found that the black women insurance workers had a median income of \$80 per month as compared to \$94 per month for white women insurance workers, and in Atlanta for black women it was \$55 per month to white women's \$94 per month. Most of the black women were stenographers, the rest were general clerks (Erickson, 1934). The Bureau stated that for these black women

the amount of general schooling and the attendance at business schools *were higher than for the study as a whole*. In Chicago 50 of 100 . . . completed high school, and 34 more had some advanced training. In Atlanta 16 of 56 were high school graduates, 23 more had advanced training (Erickson, 1934, p. 92).

Brown (1938) cited several reasons for the small number of black office workers: (a) blacks had a relatively short span of time (apparently since emancipation) in which to demonstrate an ability to do skilled work; (b) inadequate educational facilities; and (c) not enough black businesses and professional institutions. As was the case with most of the writers of her time, she did not mention racial discrimination directly. She assumed that blacks would be hired by blacks and that in a depression black businesses would fail and without the safety net of other black businesses for employment, black office workers would have to find other work—at lower occupational levels.

Brown (1938) felt that there were several sound reasons to enact social policy to alleviate the problems of black working women.

The public must pay heavily for the substandard working and living conditions of many thousands of Negro women workers . . . in 1935 . . . one in every four Negro women workers [was on the relief rolls] . . . two-fifths of these . . . [were] the economic heads of families . . . a situation that is of grave impact . . . (p. 13).

She advocated social and labor legislation which would provide all workers with a minimum wage, improvement in

educational and training facilities, and trade-union organization (Brown, 1938).

In 1929 and 1930 in the North, West and in Washington, D.C., many white businesses were forced to employ blacks as clerks, salespersons, bookkeepers and stenographers as a result of pressure from organized boycotts of their businesses by the black community (Green & Woodson, 1930). Most of these businesses, while white-owned, were located in black neighborhoods. It was customary in the North, West and in Washington, D.C. for white businesses to hire blacks to conduct their business with black consumers. Many boycotts were organized by "Housewives Leagues" who spearheaded "Don't Buy Where You Can't Work" campaigns in Chicago, Baltimore, Washington, D.C., Detroit, Harlem and Cleveland. These campaigns produced "an estimated 75,000 new jobs for blacks during the depression decade . . . an economic impact comparable to that of the CIO in organizing efforts, and second only to government jobs as a new source of openings" (Jones, 1985, p. 215).

In a survey of women working in five and ten cent stores and budget chain department stores in nine states (Alabama, Arkansas, Georgia, Kansas, Kentucky, Mississippi, Missouri, Ohio, and Oklahoma), there were only nineteen black workers in the total of 2,946 (Pidgeon, 1930). Nine of the 19 were in Alabama, three each in Kentucky and Ohio and two each in Arkansas and Missouri. This is the only mention made by Ms. Pidgeon of black women workers.

Black women federal government typists in Washington, D.C. in 1939 were routinely placed in separate work rooms and separate stenographic pools where they were "assigned to the least exacting work" (Green, 1967).

In 1940, 2% of black women had clerical and sales jobs (Women's Bureau, 1952); 33% of white women had clerical jobs. Sixty percent of black women lingered in domestic and personal service (Jones, 1985). Between 1940 and 1944 the percentage of black female clerical workers doubled, but blacks still represented less than 2% of clerical workers and "most of them remained invisible to white business customers and concentrated in government jobs around Washington, D.C." (Jones, 1985, p. 253).

The “government girls’, as they were called, were recruited both from D.C. and other areas. Norma Madden (Hall, 1988) recalled that in 1945 when she was 18 years old and a high school senior in Wilkes-Barre, Pennsylvania, a government recruiter gave a secretarial skills test at her school. She passed the test and was assigned to the Navy Department in Arlington, Virginia as a stenographer. She remembered that in those days most blacks were file clerks. Many of the women recruited during the War years stayed in Slowe Hall, now a Howard University coed dormitory, and then a federally-owned residence for black women from 1942 to 1955, built specifically for black women working in D.C. in the defense effort. Washington was a segregated city at that time and housing for black women would probably have been a problem if the government had not maintained its own residence facility.

By the end of World War II the position of black women workers had improved. They never got some of the best paying jobs—in steel mills as welders, ship fitters, and riveters. But the number involved in low-paid and low-status domestic work dropped by 15% while the number of factory specialties more than doubled, and clerical, sales and professional workers substantially increased. Ninety percent of the black women in the labor force after the war had been in the labor force in 1940. Their movement into better jobs reflects not changed attitudes but their ability to take timely advantage of enlarged opportunities (Kessler-Harris, 1982, p. 279).

### The Genesis of Parity (1950 to 1980)

During the second half of the 20th century, because of domestic and foreign pressures, there was a push from the executive office and the courts (especially the federal courts) to close the gap within the dual society, to end the breach between the American Creed and the actual practice of democracy. The NAACP and other civil rights groups accelerated their efforts to obtain full equality for blacks. Their work resulted in the Supreme Court outlawing segregation in the public schools in 1954, and the passage in 1957, under President Eisenhower, of the first Civil Rights Bill since 1875, as well as the creation

of the United States Commission on Civil Rights (Franklin & Moss, 1988).

Blacks retained jobs in the industries which first hired them during World War II and new jobs as clerks, bookkeepers and buyers became available in the retail industry. Membership and assumption of leadership roles in labor unions, especially the AFL-CIO continued to increase. Organized religion focused more than ever on eliminating discrimination and improving intergroup relations, and some churches integrated. By the mid-1950s, the Interstate Commerce Commission and the Supreme Court had outlawed segregation on railways and buses (Franklin & Moss, 1988).

The continuous migration of blacks out of the South led to their concentration in industrial communities, such as Chicago, Detroit, and Cleveland, enabling them to have significant political power in those cities (Weiss, 1983). The number of registered black voters increased, even in the South, and the number of elected Black local, state, and national legislators increased, especially in the North and West. In 1956, there were 40 blacks in the state legislatures and three in Congress. By 1966, there were 97 in the state legislatures and six in Congress; and by 1979, there were more than 200 in state legislatures, 16 in the Congress, and hundreds of black mayors, more than 600 city councilpersons and over 1,000 other elected officials (judges, alderpersons, marshals, school board members, etc.). In addition, several were appointed to high posts in the national government (Franklin & Moss, 1988).

The boycott, under the leadership of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and other civil rights leaders and groups in the mid-1950s; and marches, student sit-ins, and freedom rides in the 1960s became powerful tools in the elimination of disenfranchisement, unfair employment opportunities, segregation of public facilities, and de facto segregation in housing and education— even as white resistance frequently manifested itself in violence (murders, bombings, beatings) or in “white backlash”. “White backlash” manifested itself in the North

in the actions of whites who discovered their prejudices for the first time or who resented direct action protest to eliminate discrimination in their own communities. . . in the South [it] was

merely the normal determination with which some segregationists went about the task of preserving the old order (Franklin & Moss, p. 449).

While public housing became increasingly desegregated beginning in 1950, even with the passage of the 1968 Fair Housing Act, blacks still had unequal access to housing, frequently being met with violence if they moved to an all-white neighborhood. Many whites, and the jobs which supported city dwellers, moved to the suburbs, out of the reach of blacks, making structural unemployment a significant issue. Inadequate housing, underemployment and unemployment influenced the deterioration of the black family. Prior to the 1960s, 75% of black families were dual parent households but by 1983, 48% of families with children were single parent families (Franklin & Moss, 1988).

In the latter half of the 20th century, the number of non-white women in domestic service (private households) declined from 59% in 1940 to 42% in 1950 and those in "other service" no longer called "personal service", i.e, practical nurses, beauty operators, waitresses, elevator operators, hospital attendants, etc., rose from 10% in 1940 to 18% in 1950 (see Figure 1). The number of nonwhite professionals (97% of whom were black) increased from 4% in 1940 to 6% in 1950 (including 257 black women physicians and surgeons and 83 lawyers and judges). The proportion of black women who worked in clerical and sales occupations rose from 2% in 1948 to 6% in 1950 (Women's Bureau, 1952) compared to 40% of white women clerical workers in 1950 (Jones, 1985) (See Figure 2).

The proportion of black women workers in clerical and sales work almost doubled by 1960—an increase from 6% in 1950 to 11% in 1960 (See Figure 1). By 1960 42% of black women of working age were in the labor force; the migration from farms to industrial and metropolitan centers, and out of the South had occurred to the extent that just over half of black women lived in the South; 23% of black women were high school graduates, compared to only 14% in 1950; and their median income had increased by 29%—from \$703 in 1949 to \$905 in 1959 (still amounting to only 60% of white women's median income) (Women's Bureau, 1960).

Figure 1. Black women in domestic service, personal services, and office and sales work.

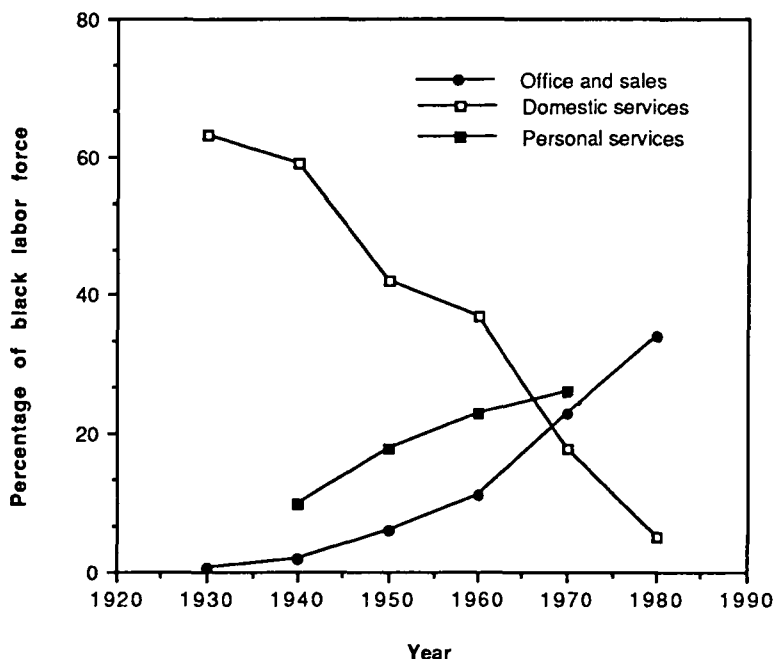


Figure 1. Black women in domestic service, personal services, and office and sales work

In 1964, a political development occurred which had a extraordinary impact on black women workers—Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 outlawed discrimination in hiring on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, or national origin and established the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) to implement the law.

Between 1960 and 1970 . . . the percentage of black women in the clerical and sales sector increased from 3 to 11% in the South and from 17 to 33% in the North. By 1980, 34% of all gainfully employed black women were in the areas of technical, sales and administrative support, . . . [in 1970] northern black women's median earnings were about 95% of white women's (up from 75–80%) . . . [in 1960] . . . southern black women's relative earnings were more scattered (up from 45 to 55% in Mississippi and Louisiana) (Jones, 1985, p. 302).

Figure 2. Black and white women in office sales work.

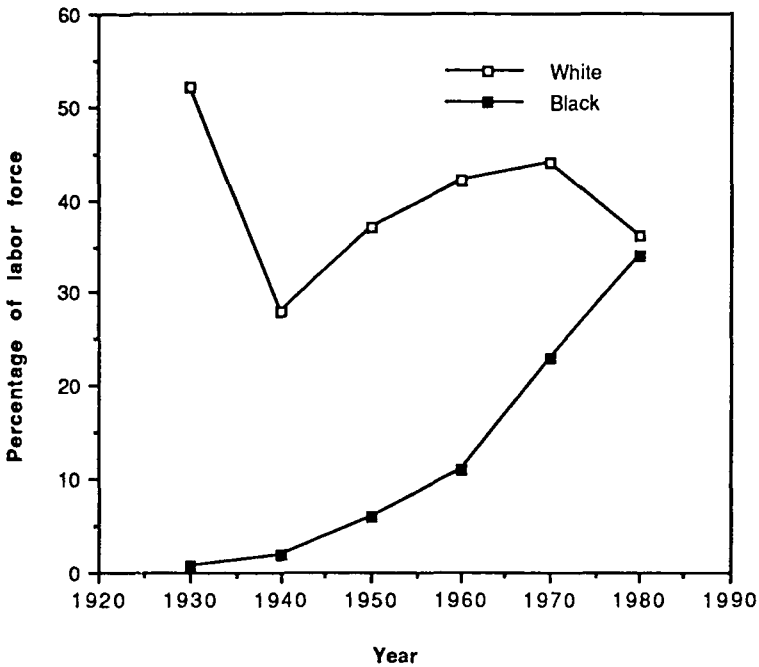


Figure 2. Black and white women in office and sales work.

In 1970, 43.1% of black females were service workers—down from 60% in 1960. Of these, 17.5% were private household workers as compared to 37.4% in 1960 and 25.6% were “other service workers” as compared to 22.7% in 1960. The number of black female professionals increased to 10.8% from 6.8% in 1960 (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 1960, 1970).

### Conclusion

Throughout the black female worker's history in America, more married and single black women than white women have had to work outside of the home in order to maintain the family economically. The black woman, doing the same work as the white woman, has been paid less for her labor. The black female worker has moved up the occupational ladder traditionally after

the white woman has moved out of a particular job category to a higher one. The black female worker has been unable to presume equitable treatment when applying for a job even if she is *more* qualified than the white applicant; and when given the opportunity, the black female worker has consistently prepared herself for the higher status jobs. Even now, the standards of beauty of the majority culture interfere with the black pink collar worker's ascent up the occupational ladder. Recent reports of discrimination by New York City employment agencies reveal that these agencies send only "all-american types" (code name for blue eyed blondes) to Fortune 500 companies for executive secretary and even receptionist positions. Criminal action is now being taken against many of these agencies by the state of New York. The extent of this practice is unknown.

The present scandal appears anachronistic in the context of the multiethnic society portrayed in the media by way of its reporting, advertising and staffing. What predisposes Fortune 500 executives to feel that their clientele would be offended by the presence of a black, hispanic or oriental secretary or receptionist? Ringer's (1983) view of the U.S. as a "dual society" argues that racism is not an aberration in American society but an essential component of the reaction to nonwhites and to their domination. It argues that America is still a racially divided country, and that this division increases the tension between democracy and equality—the tension between the American Creed and the racial creed.

Discrimination against black pink collar workers, as it relates to career advancement and the better-paying positions, is especially critical because so many black families are female-headed households in need of all the economic resources that the mother-breadwinner can obtain. In 1985, 50% of all black families with children were headed by single females who had only 25% of total black family income (compared to two-parent families with 70% of black family income). While 42% of white children will probably live in single parent households for some portion of their childhoods, 86% of black children will live in a single-parent family, and in 1986, 67% of those children were living in poverty (Jaynes & Williams, 1989).



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# Intimate Femicide: An Ecological Analysis

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*This research identifies the killing of women by male partners as a multidimensional problem and, through empirical analysis, identifies relationships between intimate femicide and individual, family, community services, state status of women, and violence against women factors. The conceptual base follows an ecological framework. Individual demographic and situational factors are presented. The findings of the study indicate that factors within each of the ecological settings are associated with intimate femicide. An implication of this exploratory study is that intimate femicide is related to a number of state factors, including factors associated with gender inequality in a state.*

## Introduction

Drawing upon an ecological framework and upon a broad range of social work, psychological, criminological, sociological, and feminist scholarship on violence against women, this study examines factors within ecological settings which may be associated with the killing of women by male intimate partners. The study focuses on two units of analysis: the individual and the state environment. The individual unit of analysis examines micro ecological setting factors such as age, race, and victim/offender relationship. The state-level unit of analysis focuses on examining factors within the family (exo), community (meso), and societal (macro) ecological settings such as possible associations between child homicides and intimate femicides; services addressing violence against women; the level of gender equality of women in a state and intimate femicide; and the presence of other forms of violence against women and intimate femicides in a state.

Identifying factors which may contribute to the killing of women by male intimates is an attempt to unearth and expose

the deeply rooted practices which contribute to the ongoing prevalence and severity of violence against women. This research focuses on two major problems: the oppression of women and intimate femicide. This exploratory study posed a series of exploratory questions in order to begin focused investigation into the many factors which may be associated with the killing of women by male intimate partners in this country.

### Conceptual Framework

Reviewing the literature on homicide and on violence against women, it is suggested that there is no single cause of homicide, violence against women, or intimate femicide. Yllo (1983) reviewed factors related to family violence and notes, "A complicated web of factors are at work. Some of these factors are embedded in the social structure and culture; others grow out of socialization experiences or day-to-day stresses" (p. 82). Smith and Parker (1979) challenge the assumption that homicide is a unidimensional phenomenon. These authors suggest the importance of looking at (1) primary homicide, which is described as killings among family or acquaintances, and (2) non-primary homicide, where the homicide occurs along with the commission of another crime and among people unknown to each other. Breines and Gordon (1983) call for gender to become a category of analysis for every social issue.

These scholars recognize the limits in current research on homicide and/or family violence. The recognition of gender as a factor, homicide as a multidimensional problem, and family violence as a complicated set of structural and individual factors creates a need for a conceptual framework which can encompass a review of multiple factors which may be related to intimate femicide.

An ecological conceptual framework provides an opportunity to study this web of factors which may be associated with crime in the family—specifically, femicide by male intimate partners. Furthermore, an ecological framework allows the opportunity to merge feminist world views with more traditional models on homicide and other forms of violence to maximize one's ability to understand the many facets which contribute to violence against women in today's complex society. Germain

and Gitterman (1979) suggest, "In the ecological perspective, people and their environments are viewed as interdependent, complementary parts of a whole in which each is constantly changing and each is reciprocally shaping the other" (p. 370).

Carlson (1984), in reference to an ecological conceptual framework, notes, "The model can be used to explain or understand individual instances of spouse abuse as well as domestic violence as a social problem in contemporary America. . . ." (p. 570). Bronfenbrenner (1977) defines four ecological settings: (1) the microsystem, (2) the mesosystem (3) the exosystem, and (4) the macrosystem.

The microsystem is defined by Bronfenbrenner (1977) as "the complex of relations between the developing person and environment in an immediate setting containing that person. . . ." (p. 514). For the purposes of this research, demographic variables such as age, race, relationship of the victim to offender, and other descriptive variables will be the micro level variables under review. These variables serve the purpose of describing the intimate femicide population in the United States.

The mesosystem can be conceptualized as the family system (Carlson, 1984). Numerous scholars have conceptualized intimate violence against women as one component of the larger problem named "family violence." This research explored the relationship between other forms of family violence for possible associations with intimate femicide. Specifically, this research posed two questions, "Is the abuse of children in a state associated with the killing of women by a male partner in a state?" and "Are the number of child homicides in a state associated with the number of women killed by male partners in a state?"

The exosystem addresses formal influences on people in our society. Bronfenbrenner (1977) suggests components of the exosystem to be: major institutions, mass media, the paid employment sphere, neighborhoods, government agencies, transportation services, and informal social networks. Carlson (1984), focusing on battered women, suggests that important variables in this system include: unemployment of perpetrators, services for victims and perpetrators of abuse, and community attitudes. This research posed the following question for exploratory analysis: "Controlling for the state population, do states which have

more (1) shelters for battered women, (2) treatment services for men who batter, and (3) rape crisis centers have a lower rate of intimate femicide?"

The macrosystem refers to "the overarching institutional patterns of the culture or subculture, such as economic, social, educational, legal, and political systems, of which micro-, meso-, and exosystems are the concrete manifestations" (Bronfenbrenner, 1977, p. 515). Bronfenbrenner suggests that laws, regulations, and rules are variables to be considered as part of an ecological analysis of the macrosystem. This research focused on examining gender inequality—legal, political, and economic—as factors of the macro ecological setting. This area of inquiry relied heavily upon the scholarship of Yllo (1983) and Sugarman and Straus (1986). These authors have constructed indexes to measure the status of women and gender equality, respectively. Yllo (1983) provided the first empirical evidence regarding the status of women and the level of wife beating in a state. The second macro focus was on examining the relationship of other crimes against women and the number of women killed by male intimates in a state. Three of the research questions in this section are: "Is the rape rate in a state associated with the state rate of intimate femicide?", "Is the rate of pornographic magazine sales associated with the state rate of intimate femicide?", and "Is the rate of sex discrimination in a state associated with the rate of intimate femicide in a state." Scholars have suggested that the many forms of violence against women are related to a woman's status in a society as well as to other forms of violence against women (Stanko, 1985; Russell, 1984).

The selection of variables, generation of research questions, and analysis of data focused on these four systems. A broad, inclusive examination of factors which may be associated with intimate femicide is important to establish the context of violence against women. Stark-Adamec and Adamec (1982) remind scholars that, "Concentration on eliminating only one contributor to the problem [of men's aggression against women]—like any univariate research on a multivariate phenomenon—is likely to yield unintended, undesirable, or misleading results" (p. 18).

### Methodology, Data Collection, and Analysis

This research is an exploratory study relying heavily upon secondary data. Kerlinger (1973) notes three general purposes of the exploratory study. The first is to identify variables in a field situation. The second is to identify relationships between variables. The third is the building of a foundation upon which future studies can draw for more rigorous and systemic testing of hypotheses. Current theory on lethal violence against women is not developed sufficiently for prediction or hypothesis testing. This study provides a foundation for future research on the relationship between ecological factors and intimate femicide.

This research focuses on females, age 16 and over, who are killed by male intimate partners, defined as husbands, common-law husbands, ex-husbands, friends, and boyfriends, age 16 and over. This study examines femicide wherein a female is presently or formerly involved in a relationship with a male by choice, with varying degrees of friendship and/or where a past or present intimate relationship is involved. The focus of the study is on each of the 50 U.S. states.

The data collection was dependent upon numerous archival records and statistics (see Appendix A). Whenever possible, data were collected for the years 1980, 1981, and 1982 and then were averaged. When data were not available for all three years, the data available during the time frame studied were utilized, e.g., if data for 1982 were the only data available, those were used as representing the time period of 1980–1982. The data collection represents the “best” source of data available (within the limits of the researcher’s knowledge) and none are without limitations despite the best intentions of the administrative source responsible for the collection of the data. Each type of data obtained had to be available for each of the 50 states for the time period under review. For details on the strengths and limitations of the data used in this study, complete information is available from Stout (1987). The independent variables were classified into four ecological systems: the microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem, and macrosystem.

The dependent variable of “average rate of women killed by male intimate partners” is derived from the *Uniform Crime Reports, 1980–1982: Supplemental Homicide Reports*<sup>1</sup> for the time



period from January 1980 through December 1982. All females, age 16 and over, whose deaths were classified as "murder or non-negligent manslaughter" and who were killed by male intimate partners are included in the data set. While *Uniform Crime Report* data have been criticized for both reliability and validity problems, O'Brien (1985) found that homicides are well reported.

Several means of data analysis were employed, dependent upon the question asked and the variable's level of measurement. Descriptive statistics, Student T-Tests and Pearson's Product Moment Correlation Coefficient were the major forms of statistical analysis employed.

#### Micro Ecological Setting Results—Descriptive Data

From January 1, 1980, through December 31, 1982, 4189 females, 16 and over, were known to have been killed by male intimate partners (Stout, 1987). Married women comprised the majority of women killed by intimate partners with 57.7% of intimate femicide victims as wives of offenders. Girlfriends have the next highest frequency of lethal victimization comprising 24.9 percent of intimate femicide victims. Wives and girlfriends as victims of intimate femicide were followed by the killing of common-law wives (7.9 percent), ex-wives (4.9 percent), and friends (4.7 percent).

The age of victims ranged from 16 to 91. The modal age was 26. The age group of 25–29 was the modal grouped age category. The number of lethal killings by male intimate partners declines with each subsequent age category. The age group of 30–34 was the modal group age for the male offenders.

White women (includes Hispanics) comprise the majority of intimate femicide victims. While white women comprise the majority of victims (60.44%), black women are disproportionately represented, comprising 37.12 percent of intimate femicide victims. The majority of victims and offenders were of non-Hispanic origin. The data also support that most killings of intimate partners are intraracial and intraethnic.

The situation which surrounds the incident of intimate femicide is described as the number of offenders and the victims

involved in the killing. Virtually all (96.7%) of the intimate femicide killings were comprised of a single offender and a single victim. The second most frequent situational category is that of multiple victims with a single offender.

Sixty-eight percent of intimate femicide victims were killed by a firearm, 14.4% by a knife, and eight percent by the use of personal weapons (beatings with hands, feet).

The circumstances in which the killings took place were also examined. The *UCR* classifies circumstances according to felonies or nonfelonies. The majority of intimate femicide cases fell into the nonfelony category. The broad description of "other arguments" is the category in which most of the nonfelony intimate femicide cases fell. This would be consistent with the lay and police terminology of "domestic quarrel." These 2426 "domestic quarrels" ended in the death of the female partner. The second most frequent category was that of "lover's triangle." This is the category often described in lay and academic literature as "crimes of passion." Ninety deaths were attributed to alcohol or drug use on the part of the offender.

### Meso, Exo, and Macro Ecological Analysis Results

These variables were drawn from the meso ecological setting reviewing violence against children; the exo ecological setting reviewing services which address violence against women; the macro ecological setting which reviews indicators of gender equality and indicators of violence against women in a state.

Table 1 presents the correlation of these selected violence against children factors and selected services which address violence against women factors with intimate femicide.

This analysis suggests three factors as statistically significant in their association with intimate femicide. First, the rate of child homicides in a state was positively correlated with the rate of intimate femicide in a state at the .0001 alpha level. Second, the rate of shelters for battered women in a state was negatively correlated with the rate of intimate femicide in a state at the .0001 alpha level. Third, the rate of rape crisis centers in a state was negatively correlated with intimate femicide at the .005 alpha level.

Table 1

*The Correlation between Selected Violence Against Children Factors, Services Which Address Violence Against Women Factors, and Intimate Femicide*

Factor	r	P
Meso Ecological Factors		
Child Abuse Rate, Per Thousand	.207	.150
Child Homicide Rate, Per Million	.544	.0001
Exo Ecological Factors		
Number of Shelters, Per Million	-.517	.0001
Number of Rape Crisis Centers, Per Million	-.403	.0046
Number of Programs for Men Who Batter, Per Million	.116	.4426

Table 2.0 presents results on a macro ecological variable. This analysis focused on the relationship between economic and political factors with the rate of intimate femicide in a state.

Four of the selected economic and political factors were statistically significant in their correlation with intimate femicide. The first factor, as indicated in Table 2.0, is the percent of women employed in managerial and administrative positions, as relative to the percent of men in management and administrative positions. This is a positive correlation at the .02 probability level. The second correlated factor was the percent of unemployed women, relative to the percent of unemployed men, in a state. This factor is positively correlated with the rate of intimate femicide at the .02 probability level. The third factor correlated with intimate femicide at a statistically significant level is the percent of state house members who are women. This factor was negatively correlated with the rate of intimate femicide in a state at the .05 probability level. The fourth factor is a combined measure of members of a state house and members of a state senate who are female. This factor was negatively correlated with the rate of intimate femicide in a state at the .03 probability level.

The next section presents the results of the analysis on the relationship between the legal status of women in a state and intimate femicide. Fifteen of the measures used to assess women's

Table 2

*The Correlation between Selected Economic and Political Factors and Intimate Femicide*

Factor*	r	P
Macro Ecological Factors		
Women in the Civilian Labor Force, Percent	.080	.580
Women in Professional and Technical Occupations, Percent	.020	.892
Women in Managerial and Administrative Positions, Percent	.324	.022
Women's Unemployment, Percent	.326	.021
Women's Median Income, Percent	.226	.115
Judges, Percent Women	-.028	.846
State House Representatives, Percent Women	-.285	.045
State Senators, Percent Women	-.267	.064
Combined State House and Senate Representation, Percent Women	-.315	.026
Mayors and Councillors, Percent Women	.166	.249
United State Congress Representatives, Percent Women	-.164	.256

\* Each factor in Table 2.0 is calculated by the formula:

$$\text{Index} = \frac{\text{Females with Characteristic}}{\text{Males with Characteristic}} \times 100$$

legal status in the 50 U.S. states were compiled from a composite index developed by Sugarman & Straus (1985) to assess women's legal status in the 50 U.S. states.<sup>2</sup> In addition to the measures developed by Sugarman & Straus (1985), three additional legal status factors were analyzed in the current research. These factors include:

(1) Whether or not a state passed the federal Equal Rights Amendment.

(2) Whether or not a state passed state equal rights legislation.

(3) Whether or not a state had a marital rape exemption in its statutes.

Each of the Sugarman & Straus (1985) measures and each of the additional legal status variables were tested for significance with the Student T-Test which compared the average number of intimate femicides with states which did have the law and states which did not have the law. Due to space limitations, only variables which were tested as statistically significant will be reviewed.

*Legal 1: State passed a fair employment practices act*

Forty states had passed a fair employment practices act by 1982 while 10 states had not passed such legislation. The mean number of intimate femicide cases in states which did not have a fair employment practices act was 11.71. The mean number of intimate femicide cases in states which did have such legislation was 7.22. The differences of means in states which had this legislation and states which did not have this legislation was statistically significant at the .0005 probability level.

*Legal 2: State Passed Equal Pay Laws*

Forty-three states had passed an equal pay law by 1982 while seven states had not passed such legislation. The mean number of intimate femicide cases in states which did not have equal pay legislation was 13.37. The mean number of intimate femicide cases in states which did have such legislation was 7.27. The differences in means for states which had this legislation and states which did not have this legislation was statistically significant at the .0001 probability level.

*Legal 3: Sex Discrimination Law in the Area of Public Accommodations*

Twenty-nine states had passed legislation prohibiting sex discrimination in the area of public accommodations by 1982 while 21 states had not passed such legislation. The mean number of intimate femicide cases in states which did not have sex discrimination prohibitions in the area of public accommodations was 10.0. The mean number of intimate femicide cases in states which did have such legislation was 6.76. The differences in means for states which had this legislation and states which

did not have this legislation was statistically significant at the .002 probability level.

*Legal 4: Sex Discrimination Law in the Area of Housing*

By 1982, 29 states had passed legislation prohibiting sex discrimination in housing while 21 states had not passed such legislation. The mean number of intimate femicide cases in states which did not have sex discrimination prohibitions in housing was 9.59. The mean number of intimate femicide cases in states which did have such legislation was 7.06. The differences in means for states which had this legislation and states which did not have this legislation was statistically significant at the .019 probability level.

*Legal 5: Statutes Providing for Civil Injunction Relief for Victims of Abuse*

By 1982, 33 states had passed legislation providing for civil injunction relief for victims of abuse while 17 states had not passed such legislation. The mean number of intimate femicide cases in states which did not have civil injunction relief for abuse victims was 9.59. The mean number of intimate femicide cases in states which did have such legislation was 7.36. The differences in means for states which had this legislation and states which did not have this legislation was statistically significant at the .048 probability level.

*Additional Legal Variable 1: Passage of the Federal Equal Rights Amendment*

Thirty-five states had passed the federal equal rights amendment by 1982 while 15 states had not passed the constitutional amendment. The mean number of intimate femicide cases in states which did not pass the federal equal rights amendment was 11.45. The mean number of intimate femicide cases in states which did pass this constitutional amendment was 6.69. The differences in means for states which had this legislation and states which did not have this legislation was statistically significant at the .0001 probability level.

The final section of the analysis to be presented includes factors which represent varying degrees of violence against women. These factors are: rate of sex discrimination charges filed in a state, monthly circulation rate for five pornographic magazines (*Penthouse*, *Playboy*, *Genesis*, *Gallery*, and *Club*), rape rate, rate of women killed by nonintimate partners. These measures were analyzed for their relationship with intimate femicide. Table 3 presents the results of this analysis.

Table 3

*The Correlation between Selected Violence Against Women Factors and Intimate Femicide*

Violence Against Women Factor	r	P
Macro Ecological Factors		
Women Killed by Nonintimate Partners, Per Million	.822	.0001
Sex Discrimination Charges, Per Ten Thousand	.140	.331
Rape Rate, Per Ten Thousand	.604	.0001
Pornographic Magazine Sales Rate, Per Thousand	.166	.248

As indicated in Table 3, two of the four factors used to measure violence against women in a state were statistically significant. The rape rate in a state was positively correlated with the intimate femicide rate at the .0001 probability level. The rate of women (16 and over) killed by nonintimate partners was also statistically significant at the .0001 probability level. This relationship has a positive correlation.

### Discussion

This research focused on exploring associations between intimate femicide and factors representing ecological settings which could influence the killing of women by male intimate partners. This analysis is an initial step toward delineating factors which are associated with the rate of intimate femicide in

this country. This research departed from traditional homicide research through the focus on gender and relationship, by the variables chosen for review, and by the definition of the problem. This research focused on several sets of factors and research questions which have often been presented as having possible associations with violence against women. The gender equality measures have not been tested in prior research for their relationship with intimate femicide and were only recently tested on battering (Yllo, 1983) and rape (Baron & Straus, 1986).

The analysis of micro factors described the prevalence of intimate femicide as well as presented information on the nature of the event and the nature of victim/offender relationships. While women 25–29 appear to be at highest risk for lethal victimization by male partners, it is important to note that women of all ages fall prey to this type of violence. It also seems important to note that most intimate femicides are the end result of an argument. This implies the need for education and clinical intervention strategies which advocate and teach nonviolent communication.

Examination of the meso ecological factors of violence against children indicates that child abuse rates were not statistically significant in their relationship with intimate femicide while the rate of child homicides by relatives is indeed positively correlated with intimate femicide. This finding suggests that more intense investigation and development of theory needs to occur to begin to better delineate lethality predictors for all types of family violence.

The results of the exo ecological setting alerted us to the negative correlation between the rate of shelters in a state and rape crisis centers in a state with the state intimate femicide rate. While correlational data cannot be interpreted as causal, i.e., that fewer women are killed in states because there are more shelters, reviewing shelter services and rape crisis center services is a factor which is (1) newly introduced to studies on homicide and (2) may warrant further investigation as to the antecedent variables which affect the number of shelter or rape crisis centers in a state. A question which emerges is, "Does a feminist presence in a state affect the rate of women killed in a state by male intimate partners?"



Two economic factors were statistically significant—the percent of women in management and administration and the percent of unemployed women in a state. The positive correlation with the percent of unemployed women fits theoretically with assumptions that the lower the gender equality in a state, the higher the rates of femicide will be in a state. Where women are unemployed in disproportionate numbers to men, economic gender inequality is a result. On the other hand, the positive correlation between women in management and administrative positions with intimate femicide, suggests that as women's status in a state rises, violence against women may be higher in those states. This finding is consistent with 1983 research by Yllo related to the status of women in a state and battering. Yllo found that when the status of women was low in a state, more women were battered; when the status of women was moderate, the battering declined; and when the status of women was highest, the rate of battering again increased. While Yllo's research was based on the use of indexes, instead of isolating individual factors, one explanation of Yllo's may be relevant in understanding the positive correlation on the variable of percent of women in management and administrative positions,

In states where the general status of women is relatively high, husbands may feel threatened by the rapid social change and the breakdown of traditional husband-wife roles. Increased domestic conflict may be a consequence of women's move toward equality. (pp. 82–83)

Several political variables were also presented in the results as correlates of intimate femicide. The measure of percent of state house representatives who were women and the measure of percent of women in the state house and senate was negatively correlated with intimate femicide. Again, this finding is consistent with the idea of gender equality, noting that there will be less violence against women in states which have attained a greater degree of equality in different spheres—in this case in the political arena.

The finding that states which had statutes promoting "equality"—Fair Employment Practices Act, Equal Pay Laws, Sex

Discrimination Law in the areas of housing and public accommodations, and the passage of the federal Equal Rights Amendment—were the states with a lower mean number of intimate femicide cases is worth pursuing in future research. These legal findings appear to affirm the concept of social justice and should be encouraging to all who have advocated the necessity of legislative change to promote social justice for women.

States that had legislation allowing for civil injunction relief had fewer intimate femicide cases than states without this legislation. Obtaining civil injunction relief or a protective order is often psychologically easier for victims of abuse to obtain than going through the criminal courts for “Protection.” This difference may suggest that social workers and others involved with victims of violence need to continue to strive to be client oriented, seeking immediate and uncomplicated bureaucratic relief for our clients.

The final analysis focused on the relationship between intimate femicide and other forms of violence against women. Only the rape rate and femicide by nonintimate partners was statistically significant with the rate of intimate femicide in a state. Sex discrimination and pornography rates were statistically significant in their relationship with rape rates but not with intimate femicide. Further evaluation is needed in this area to assess whether or not there is a continuum of violence against women and to assess which variables have the most impact on the manifestation of different forms of violence against women.

This exploratory research on intimate femicide can provide a foundation upon which future studies on femicide can build. It will be important that future research focus on developing predictive models. It also must be emphasized that smaller scale qualitative studies are needed in this area focusing more directly on the the micro factors of the individual and meso family factors. This could be possible within a single state with cooperation of law enforcement in order to gain access to records, perpetrators, and family members of the victim.

The first step in any research or practice endeavor is to identify the problem. This study has clearly named and identified intimate femicide as a social problem meriting attention and action. The social science professions have an obligation to strive

to understand factors which may contribute to the final act of woman abuse—the killing of women by male intimate partners.

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### Notes

- 1 The data used to analyze the 1980–1982 incidence of intimate femicide by male intimate partners were made available by the Inter-University Consortium for Political and Social Research. The data for the *Uniform Crime Reports, 1980–1982: Supplemental Homicide Report* were originally collected by the Federal Bureau of Investigation. Neither the collector of the original data nor the consortium bear any responsibility for the analysis and interpretations presented in this paper.
- 2 Most of the indicators used for the economic and political gender equality measures were developed and presented in a mimeographed paper by Sugarman & Straus (1985). These authors used indexes to measure each of the gender equality spheres. The present research, while relying heavily on the work of Sugarman & Straus (1985), differs in that the present research reviews each factor within the index for a possible association with intimate femicide.

## Appendix A.

*Summary Table of Independent Variables by Ecological System*

<i>Variable</i>	<i>Operationalization</i>	<i>Data Set</i>
<i>Microsystem</i>		
1. AGE	Chronological age by year	UCR:1980–1982 Supplemental Homicide Report
2. RACE	Categorization by race: White (includes Hispanics), Black, American Indian or Alaskan Native, Asian or Pacific Islander	UCR
3. ETHNICITY	Categorization by Ethnic background: Hispanic Origin, Non-Hispanic Origin, Unknown	UCR
4. RELATIONSHIP	Relationship of victim to offender	UCR
5. CIRCUMSTANCE	Events surrounding the homicide: Felony murders, Nonfelony murders, Manslaughter by negligence, Suspected Felony types, Justifiable homicides	UCR
6. SITUATION	Number of victims and offenders involved in the homicide event	UCR
7. WEAPON	Weapon used to carry out homicide	UCR
<i>Mesosystem</i>		
1. STATE RATE OF CHILD HOMICIDE BY RELATIVES	Number of children killed by relatives: mother, father, sister, brother, stepfather, stepmother, other family	UCR

2. STATE RATE OF CHILD ABUSE	Substantiated and nonsubstantiated reports of families reported for child abuse	<i>American Humane Association</i>
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*Exosystem*

1. NUMBER OF SHELTERS IN A STATE	Services which provide housing for battered women in a state	<i>Battered Women's Directory, 1982</i>
2. NUMBER OF TREATMENT SERVICES FOR MEN WHO BATTER	Therapeutic services for men who batter, excluding jail or prison services	<i>Response, 1980 &amp; Norberg</i>
3. NUMBER OF RAPE CRISIS CENTERS IN A STATE	24-hour crisis and advocacy services for adult victims of rape	<i>Pennsylvania Coalition Against Rape</i>

*Macrosystem*

## 1. GENDER EQUALITY INDICATORS

## ECONOMIC INDICATORS

a. % women in the labor force	Department of Labor
b. % women as professional and technical workers	Department of Labor
c. % women as managers and administrators	Department of Labor
d. Median Income	Department of Commerce

## POLITICAL INDICATORS

a. Members of U.S. Congress—Percent Female	National Women's Political Caucus
b. Members of the state senate—Percent Female	National Women's Political Caucus

c. Member of state house— Percent Female	National Women's Political Caucus
d. Judges in State Courts— Percent Female	National Center for State Courts
e. Mayors and Muni- cipal/Township Councillors— Percent Female	Center for the American Woman and Politics

#### LEGAL INDICATORS

a. Fair Employment Practices Act	Ross & Barcher (ed.)
b. Lawsuit under Fair Employment Practices Act	Ross & Barcher (ed.)
c. Equal Pay Law	Ross & Barcher (ed.)
d. Lawsuit under Equal Pay Law	Ross & Barcher (ed.)
e. Sex Discrimination Law— Public Accommodations	Ross & Barcher (ed.)
f. Sex Discrimination Law— Housing	Ross & Barcher (ed.)
g. Sex Discrimination Law— Loan Laws	Ross & Barcher (ed.)
h. Sex Discrimination Law— Education	Ross & Barcher (ed.)
i. Name Change at Marriage	Ross & Barcher (ed.)
j. Civil Injunction Relief— abuse	Ross & Barcher (ed.)
k. Temporary injunctions during divorce/separation	Ross & Barcher (ed.)
l. Physical abuse defined as crime	Ross & Barcher (ed.)



	m. Warrantless arrest in domestic violence cases	Ross & Barcher (ed.)
	n. Required reports of domestic violence cases	Ross & Barcher (ed.)
	o. Funds/standards for shelters	Ross & Barcher (ed.)
	p. Federal Equal Rights Amendment	Hoff-Wilson (ed.)
	q. State Equal Rights Amendment	National Organization for Women
	r. No marital rape exemption	National Center on Women and Family Law
2. NONINTIMATE FEMICIDE	Rate of women killed other than intimate victims	UCR
3. SEX DISCRIMINATION CHARGES	Rate of sex charges filed with the EEOC	EEOC
4. RAPES AND ATTEMPTED RAPES	Rate of rapes reported and filed with the FBI	UCR: 1980–1982: <i>Offenses Known and Persons Arrested</i>
5. PORNOGRAPHIC MAGAZINE SALES	Rate of monthly magazine circulation: <i>Club, Gallery, Genesis, Penthouse, Playboy</i>	Audit Bureau of Circulation (Pink Sheets)

# Housing Affordability, Stress And Single Mothers: Pathway To Homelessness

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*Examining the research literature in housing, planning, and the social sciences, this paper argues that the housing crisis of the 1980s spawned a new environmental stress, housing affordability, which has had devastating consequences for economically vulnerable single mothers and their children. A conceptual framework is developed that depicts how the housing affordability dilemma generates a pathway to homelessness beset by four pinchpoints: a resource squeeze that precipitates loss of permanent housing; residential mobility that destabilizes families; discrimination in the housing market that constrains housing choices; and multiple stressors that demoralize a fragile family system. Implications of these findings are discussed, including attention to housing problems of single mothers in both social policy and direct practice arenas.*

A shelter-poverty crisis diminished the life choices of millions of American families during the 1980s. The contours of the crisis were shaped by (a) federal, state, and local housing policies, (b) a decrease in affordable housing in the private market, and (c) profound changes in American family life, which left in its wake a generation of families headed by single mothers in poverty—the new poor. These mothers and their children bear the burden of the shelter-poverty crisis. They emerged in the 1980s as the most problem-ridden group among those living in substandard housing in the United States (Birch, 1985). Moreover, these family groups continue to swell the ranks of the homeless population, as their incomes decline and their housing options are increasingly restricted.

The housing crisis of the 1980s spawned a new stressor called housing affordability, which threatens the well-being of single-parent families by exhausting their resources, and makes them vulnerable to other stressful events within a short time.

The outcome is adjustment overload and evolution of serious health, housing, and family problems. In effect, a housing slide is created wherein families slip down the pathways to homelessness. To contend with the housing problems of families headed by single mothers, social workers need to understand the causes of homelessness, the final outcome of the shelter-poverty crisis, and the new short-term emergency service demands homelessness creates. Long-term preventive policies also need to be formulated.

To understand the nature of the housing crisis of the 1980s, its impacts on the new poor, and the implications for social welfare policy and practice, this paper links research on housing, planning, and the social sciences. Most research on single mothers falls into categories of depression and stress, social supports and networks, the workplace, gender roles, and parenting (Mednick, 1987). This research identifies poverty as a potent stressor wherein low income creates high risk for mental health problems, poor physical health, low educational attainment, and family violence (Hill, 1983; Belle, 1982).

Stress, a process in which an individual experiences threats to well-being, may temporarily exhaust resources and lead to negative outcomes (Belle, 1982). Most research on stress focuses on the individual and considers (a) sources of stress, or stressors; (b) moderators of stress, including resources used to master stressors; and (c) manifestations of stress such as physical or mental ill health or family problems.

Many disciplines study the intertwined aspects of housing and poverty and the direct and indirect effects of housing programs on the poor. Yet these findings are not widely disseminated for interdisciplinary use. What is not well understood is the impact of housing affordability—an environmental stressor—on economically vulnerable single mothers.

The paper begins by discussing 25 years of changes and trends in American family life that have led to the economic vulnerability of households headed by single mothers. It identifies four pinchpoint turns on the pathway to homelessness: (a) a resource squeeze created by the housing affordability problem that precipitates the loss of permanent housing; (b) residential mobility that destabilizes families; (c) discrimination in the housing market that constrains housing choices; and d) multi-

ple stressors that demoralize a fragile family system. The paper concludes with a discussion of the implications for social welfare policy and practice.

### Changes In American Family Life

Shifting demographics over 15 years resulted in a major increase in the number of poor, single-parent families, particularly female-headed families. Between 1974 and 1988, single heads of household, less than 34 years old and who had children, increased from 10 to 15% of all households (Apgar, 1990). This pattern is primarily due to marital dissolution and secondarily due to an increase in families headed by never-married mothers. Trends in changing marital status point to marital breakup as the main cause of single-parent families among both whites and blacks. Eighty-five percent of all white single mothers were once married but are now separated, divorced, or, to a lesser extent, widowed. Blacks, on the other hand, show a sharp decline in marriage and separation, an increase in divorce, and, to a lesser degree, an increase in births to unmarried women (Bureau of the Census, 1986).

Single-parent families have increasingly become economically disadvantaged households. Census data indicate that in 1988, the median income of families headed by single mothers aged 25–34 was \$11,161, compared with two-parent family median income of \$31,358. That gap widened over 15 years, with real income of single-parent households declining by 9% and that of married heads of household with children declining by 6% (Bureau of the Census, 1986). Marital dissolution has a profound impact on decreasing the income levels of single-parent families. Previous studies have documented the dramatic decline in household incomes that persists for as long as the single-parent family is maintained by a female (Sands & Nuccio, 1989; Amott, 1988; Weiss, 1984; Bane & Ellwood, 1984).

The median income of single-parent families has also declined due to unemployment, underemployment, and the declining value of child support and welfare benefits.

Consider these facts:

- In 1985, only half of all single mothers awarded for child support received the full amount; one-fourth received partial payment, and one-fourth received nothing. The average

payment per family was \$2,220 per year. When adjusted for inflation, this amount represents a 16% drop in purchasing power as compared to the average payment received in 1978.

- Social welfare policy decisions made in the 1980s reduced the real value of welfare benefits received by single-parent families. Between 1975 and 1985, a combination of 1981 federal budget cuts in welfare benefits and a reduction in the real value of benefits due to inflation reduced total real benefits by approximately one-fourth (Garfinkel & McClanahan, 1986).

### Resource Squeeze

As the economic plight of single women and their children has worsened, a major new housing crisis has emerged: the intertwined issues of affordability and availability, which together create the first step on the pathway to homelessness. Housing costs have increased for everyone, with rising homeowner and rental costs outpacing the increases in other commodities (Reamer, 1989). These costs have also outstripped the growth in real incomes, even during a time of economic recovery and growth. Thus, the proportion of income spent on shelter has increased for homeowners and renters, even for units of comparable quality and characteristics. For example, the median housing cost/family income ratio rose from 17% in 1974 to 20% in 1983 (Hartman, 1987). Median gross rent burden for units of constant quality increased from 25% in 1977 to 29.5% in 1987. To the extent that renters moved to units of lesser quality to reduce their housing costs, these data may underestimate the growth in rent burden (Apgar, 1988).

The rent burden has fallen disproportionately on the poorest households, especially on single women and their children. Between 1974 and 1987, as median incomes for single-parents declined, gross rents for these households rose, from \$319 to \$354. Median rent burden (percentage of gross income spent on gross rent) for these households therefore rose dramatically, from 34.9% to 58.4%. This figure means that in 1987 half of such households were spending more than 58% of their incomes for shelter (Apgar, 1988). This level of housing cost is staggering for any family (Feins & Lane, 1982).

*Mismatch of Demand and Supply*

How has this situation developed? How could such a dramatic shift occur so quickly? One reason for the increase in rents is the growth in the number of households competing for a declining supply of affordable units. "From 1983 to 1987, the number of poverty-level rental households increased by 300,000 to 7.5 million" (Apgar, 1988). "Yet during that same period . . . even adjusting for inflation, the number of units renting for less than \$300 declined by nearly one million" (Apgar, 1988). Estimates are that by 1993 the demand for rental housing for poor households will far outstrip supply (Clay, 1987).

Pressure on rents has been enhanced by decisions of potential home buyers that home ownership was too expensive. By staying in the rental market, they continue to compete with lower-income households for available units, thus further pushing up prices (Apgar, 1988).

Affordable units have been lost to disrepair and abandonment. Other units, especially in "hot" real estate markets, were renovated for higher-rent tenants or converted into condominiums (Dolbeare, 1987; Clay & Wallace, 1988). Still other units developed under public housing subsidies have been lost through aging and disrepair. Because the availability of funds for maintenance and capital repair is declining, these units have been removed from occupancy by local public housing authorities. When major rehabilitation and reconstruction of public housing do take place, the trend has been to reduce density to enhance the livability of major urban projects.

The loss of affordable units is likely to accelerate if housing developed under Section 8, Section 221 (d)3 and Section 236 in the 1960s is lost for low-income occupancy. Under Section 8, housing developers receive contract guarantees of subsidized leases for 15 years, with the possibility of renewal for two five-year terms. The other two programs provide below-market interest rates to developers with the requirement that they lease the units to low-income and moderate-income tenants for 20 years. After that period, the developers may pay the mortgage balance and use the properties as they wish. "Currently, it is estimated that by 1995 as many as 900,000 of the 1.5 million privately owned but federally assisted housing units

could be refinanced conventionally and escape federal use restrictions, with the potential for further losses through the year 2025" (Reamer, 1989, quoting Clay, 1987).

At the same time, production of new housing suitable for poor households has declined as well, so that the loss of units has not been offset by additions to the stock. Since 1981, "the number of new federally assisted housing units has dropped from more than 200,000 to approximately 25,000." (Reamer, 1989). This pattern reflects a trend on the part of the federal government to withdraw from the housing arena. During the Reagan years, the budget of the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, a major source of past support for the development of new subsidized housing, was slashed by 76% (Reamer, 1989). In addition, changes in the tax code have removed incentives for developers to build new low-income housing. The Tax Reform Act of 1986 made changes in depreciation and capital gains rates and reduced tax credits associated with the development of low-income housing.

Communities can also use legal zoning regulations to prevent the development of affordable housing. Minimum lot sizes, maximum density rules, large "setback" requirements, parking restrictions, and prohibition of multifamily developments have combined to reinforce the NIMBY (not in my back yard) positions of neighborhoods. Even if communities do have linkage requirements (e.g., 10% of the units in any development must be "affordable"), they may allow developers to convert the requirement into cash payments or promise to develop the units at a future time and at an unspecified site.

During the same decade in which housing affordability created a resource squeeze on individual family units, such moderators of stress as federal and state social services and benefits programs were systematically reduced or eliminated. For example, the Omnibus Budget Reconciliation Act (OBRA) of 1981 made deep cuts in social programs. As the Reagan era progressed, major changes in Social Security, Medicare, and Medicaid were made on cost containment grounds. These changes reduced access to medical care for family members of all ages. At the same time, changes in job training programs made education, job training and day-care subsidies impossible for many low-income women (Nathan & Doolittle, 1984; Jansson, 1988).

### Residential Mobility: The Family Destabilizer

The reduction in social and economic supports has forced single mothers to reduce the cost of housing itself. Housing costs are fixed. Decisions to make ends meet by cutting back or postponing monthly rent or utility payments lead to service eviction and termination. Family relocation to a different area and/or changes in household composition by moving in with another household is then required.

In the late 1970s, more than three-quarters of single mothers had moved at least once by the third year after marital dissolution, and their primary reason was to reduce housing cost (Rein, Bane, Frieden, Rainwater, Coleman, Anderson-Khlief, Clay, Pitkin, & Bartlett, 1980). Efforts to change residence create special stresses. Residential mobility has been shown to have major negative impacts on the mental and physical health and well-being of at-risk populations (Stokols & Shumaker, 1982). Moving is also expensive. Sources of stress increase as each move is accompanied by (a) changes in household composition, (b) demoralization associated with living in substandard housing, unsafe neighborhoods, and overcrowded conditions, and (c) demoralization from eviction, court appearances, nonpayment of rent, or homelessness (Hartman, 1987). These life events, and those of divorce and job loss that are intertwined with single parenthood, represent some of the most stressful experiences possible in American life (Linsky & Straus, 1986).

### Discrimination: Constraints on Housing Choice

Although the task of residential mobility is highly stressful for anyone, the experiences of single mothers and their children with discrimination in the housing market are especially difficult. Federal law does not treat families with children as a protected class, nor do most states or localities. Even when laws do offer protection, the process of filing and proving discrimination claims is lengthy, time-consuming, expensive, and discouraging. Turning away prospective tenants in a tight market or steering undesirable people to appropriate neighborhoods is a relatively easy matter, and discrimination is often difficult to prove (Wallace, Holshouser, Lane, & Williams, 1985).



Single mothers and their children live primarily in metropolitan areas, and within such areas, in central cities. Yet empirical studies show that single mothers are not attracted to central city living. They prefer to raise their children in the suburbs, and their most important preference is to find affordable suburban housing (Mulroy, 1988; Anderson-Khlief, 1983; Bartlett, 1980; Rein, 1980). Single mothers and their children who live in substandard housing and in impoverished urban neighborhoods have aspirations for a better life but face overwhelming obstacles to achieving it.

Most single mothers in all socioeconomic classes want their children in good schools and away from noisy, crime-filled streets. They seek the highest status neighborhood they can afford. When single mothers' needs conflict with children's needs (e.g., relocating some distance away versus relocating in the child's same school district), single mothers overwhelmingly favor the housing environment that is best for their children. When they seek better housing environments, however, they face hostility from landlords who serve as gatekeepers of private housing, keeping out low-income single mothers who are perceived as deviant, often immoral, and unrepresentative of the family ethic (Abramovitz, 1988).

Social support in indigenous neighborhoods has been considered a moderator of stress, a positive network of helpful systems. However, the cumulative impacts of economic deprivation on individuals and groups constrain social networks that buffer stress. Instead, social networks become negative networks, wherein residential location in blighted central city neighborhoods is prescribed, and defending the boundaries of one's own neighborhood from outside interference is impossible. Drug dealing, for example, spawns crime that victimizes residents. Blighted neighborhoods fail to provide a supportive context in which to live and raise children. Living with negative networks and the knowledge that escape is unlikely, is highly stressful to poor families with children (Belle, 1982).

The federal government has attempted to aid low-income households to rent units in the private rental market through its Section 8 certificate program.<sup>1</sup> The program, however, has faced difficulties in implementation when certificate holders

(low income families who qualify) cannot locate suitable units within the allotted time. A national study of the certificate program recently found that an average of one-third of all certificates were returned unused by prospective participants. In some localities, especially urban areas with low vacancy rates and aging housing stock, 40% or more of certificates were returned. These failure rates were as high as 68% in New York City and 57% in Boston (Kennedy & Finkel, 1987). A number of researchers have pointed out that women with children have the most difficulty successfully utilizing the certificates. They have problems locating units that meet the rent requirements, and have an adequate number of bedrooms, and are of acceptable quality (Mulroy, 1988).

In the late 1980s, HUD introduced the housing voucher program, designed to improve housing choice. In this program, a recipient receives a subsidy based on the difference between 30% of adjusted gross income and the fair market rent. The tenant may choose to lease a unit of *any* rent level as long as it meets housing standards. Thus, a person who "shops" well can spend less than 30% of his or her income, and someone who wishes to pay more for rent can do so. The analysis of data from a national voucher demonstration, however, indicated that success rates were no better for voucher holders than for those with certificates, and that median rent burdens were higher for voucher recipients than for certificate holders. Rent burden was highest for households comprised of a single adult with children (Kennedy & Finkel, 1987).

### Multiple Stress Burdens

Housing affordability can be an environmental demand that burdens a low-income single mother with multiple and excessive role requirements. She must be provider, shelterer, and care giver on a severely limited income that renders her resource-poor, house-poor, and time-poor. The need for frequent residential mobility to reduce housing costs adds transition points, which, in turn, bring more stress to an increasingly fragile family system. Reduced social supports and discriminatory barriers to locational decisionmaking concentrate low-income single

mothers in urban neighborhoods that have high rates of stressful events.

### *Increase in Homelessness*

A distressing and not surprising trend associated with these patterns of housing crisis is the increase in homelessness over the past 15 years. National figures vary, because a census is so difficult to complete. Nevertheless, the Department of Health and Human Services estimated that 3 million were homeless in 1987, a figure accepted by the Coalition for the Homeless (Kozol, 1988). Increasingly, the homeless population includes families with young children (Mills & Ota, 1989), although the proportion of families among the homeless population varies considerably from one city to another (Keyes, 1988).

Keyes classifies the homeless population into three major categories, which can be thought of as a continuum from "needing housing only" to "needing housing and major services." The first category is comprised of the economic homeless, or those who have nowhere to live because they cannot afford a suitable unit and have no one else to live with. People in the second category of households, the situational homeless, may have affordability problems but are also faced with additional difficulties such as domestic violence and depression. These issues may be intertwined with affordability, but services in addition to money are needed for successful intervention. The third category, the chronic homeless, includes the chronic mentally ill and long-term substance abusers, the group most often associated with policies of federal and state deinstitutionalization over the past decade. In all categories, the numbers of mothers and their children are increasing.

The impact of homelessness involves not only the loss of permanent shelter but other significant losses as well, not the least of which is the loss of personal relationships and sometimes one's children (Brown & Ziefert, 1990).

### **Conclusion: Implications for Social Welfare Policy**

Recent social work attention to housing needs has concentrated on services for the homeless, especially the chronic homeless. This direction is necessary and indeed current, but the big

picture must not be missed. All low-income families, especially those headed by single-parent mothers, may be on a housing slide to homelessness unless long-term preventive housing policies that confront and solve the affordability dilemma are enacted. Innovative direct services for homeless women are important to address manifestations of multiple stressors, including alienation, demoralization, and helplessness (Brown & Ziefert, 1990). However, a direct service plan of self-actualization may have little meaning to a young single mother struggling to find an affordable apartment in a hostile social environment when she can only afford \$200 a month for housing. Social welfare policy therefore must encompass policies and programs that directly impact the housing affordability dilemma. Needed social and economic supports will moderate sources of individual and social stress. The following specific issues should be addressed immediately.

(a) Federal and state policies and funding for low-income housing need to be tackled by social workers who are policy practitioners. Massive support is required for the development of new assisted housing and the maintenance and retention of the public housing stock. Below market interest loans should be offered. Section 8 certificate and housing voucher programs need to be expanded, with attention focused on raising the fair market rents where they are inadequate. In addition, adequate administrative fees are needed so that housing authorities can help those households who are trying to locate adequate units, negotiate with landlords about Section 8 participation, and confront discrimination in their local markets.

(b) At the local level, zoning regulations and public attitudes could be addressed so that a wider array of communities permit the development of mixed-income, multi-family developments.

(c) Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) benefit levels must be increased. Comparable pay legislation would aid female heads of families to afford market rents.

(d) During interviews with clients, social workers should explore the nature of their client's housing circumstances, including stresses associated with high housing cost burden, overcrowding, inadequate housing quality, and the like. Social

workers should be versed in available local housing services, as well as the basic legal rights and responsibilities of tenants.

(e) Services related to homelessness should focus on prevention and diversification to cover the needs of different types of homeless individuals and families. These issues can be addressed by provision of emergency back rent and utility grants, services to mediate landlord-tenant dispute and domestic disputes, and long-term plans to help families locate better jobs and adequate day care. Supportive services are critical for helping those with chronic mental health or substance abuse problems maintain independent lives in adequate housing.

(f) Once families and individuals are homeless, emergency shelter must be combined with services and subsidies that will assist them in reentering the housing market and successfully staying there. Funds are needed to provide security deposits for landlords and utility companies, and income is required to maintain rental payments. Case management and group services are needed to assist people in coordinating jobs, income support, day care, and transportation, and to help them gain self-confidence. Achieving control over all those factors will allow them to avoid future homelessness. For the chronic homeless, the solutions are more complex and protective, including the need for halfway houses and ongoing supportive services (Keyes, 1988).

Such attention to housing policy changes and direct services for housing-related problems is required so that poor single mothers and their children can avert the devastating housing slide to homelessness.

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## Note

- 1 The certificate program provides a family with a rental subsidy, based on the difference between 30 percent of adjusted household income and the rent of a unit which meets housing quality standards and does not exceed a rent ceiling for a unit of that bedroom size (fair market rent).

# Asset-Based Social Welfare Policy: Homeownership for the Poor

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*Asset-based social welfare policy is an emerging theme in public policy that focuses on accumulation of wealth rather than on levels of household consumption. In this paper, housing policy is used to illustrate asset-based policy for the poor. Rather than increasing income-based rent subsidies, asset-based housing policy would promote homeownership. Homeownership has played a critical role in the upward mobility of immigrant groups (Bauman, 1987) and the exiting of families from public housing (Fuerst & Williams, 1983). U.S. public policy promotes homeownership for the nonpoor, and we spend quite a lot of money on it. But for the poor, we mostly promote rental subsidies rather than homeownership. The authors view current policy as fundamentally misguided, and they make recommendations for extending homeownership to the working poor and welfare poor populations. Several previous federal programs, as well as the current HOPE housing initiatives, provide a foundation upon which effective policies of homeownership for the poor can be built.*

"Social welfare" is typically defined solely on the basis of household income. Income is assumed to be directly related to the level of consumption and it is seldom questioned whether the level of household income and consumption is an adequate

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definition of the welfare of households. The major welfare debate is over who provides (or does not provide) the income and how much it should be. Discussions generally center on what income is, how much income is required to live above the poverty level, how to distribute or redistribute income, and whether and to what extent income transfers affect work behavior. Regardless of the category of social welfare—health care, housing, direct financial assistance, education, nutrition, or any other—the overriding emphasis has been on levels of income provided and consumed, either through cash transfers or direct provision of goods and services. The underlying assumption of this policy is that poverty and hardship are defined by insufficient consumption, and the solution, one way or another, is to make the consumption more sufficient.

In our view, this exclusively income-based definition of welfare is misguided. The welfare of households is determined not only by income, but also by the accumulation of assets. For the non-poor, wealth accumulation occurs within institutional structures with special subsidies designed particularly for this purpose. These subsidies operate primarily through the tax system. In two categories alone, home mortgage tax deductions and tax-deferments for retirement pensions, the U.S. government foregoes more than \$100 billion in revenue each year. This money contributes directly to asset accumulations in home equity and retirement accounts of the nonpoor. The poor have little access to these asset-building tax benefits because they are less likely to be homeowners, less likely to have jobs that offer retirement accounts, and their incomes are too low to obtain much benefit from tax deductions.

Moreover, for impoverished welfare recipients, asset accumulation is not encouraged—and in most cases it is not even permitted. Welfare transfer programs such as Aid to Families With Dependent Children (AFDC) and Food Stamps have asset tests, which prohibit accumulation of more than minimal financial assets. This is asset-based welfare policy, but it is going in exactly the wrong direction. Sherraden (1991) argues that income-based, consumption-oriented policies alone are inadequate. Conceptualizations of the welfare of households must also include the accumulation of assets.

The policy position in this paper is that the asset-based transfers available for nonpoor households should be extended to working poor and even welfare poor households. Housing policy is used to illustrate a practical application of this approach. Currently, American housing policy follows a two-tiered system. Income-based rent subsidies benefit a small portion of the poor, and asset-based mortgage interest tax deductions benefit most of the nonpoor. The various tax benefits for homeownership contribute to home equity by subsidizing borrowing costs and contributing to rising housing values. In addition, the exclusion of capital gains on the sale of a home for persons over the age of 55 is another major asset-based subsidy to the nonpoor.

#### Asset-Based Social Welfare Policy

From an asset-based perspective, social welfare policy for the poor would be guided in part by the concepts of saving, investment, and asset accumulation, rather than entirely by the concepts of income, spending, and consumption that guide current policy.

The reason for this proposed policy shift is that assets provide important welfare effects *in addition to deferred consumption* (this viewpoint takes explicit exception to consumption-oriented neoclassical economic theory). Some of the most important of these effects are as follows: Assets stabilize households by serving as a cushion against income shocks; assets stimulate development of other assets, including human capital; assets enable specialization and risk taking; assets increase personal efficacy and social influence; assets increase political participation and community involvement; and assets enhance the welfare of offspring. Perhaps most important, assets create a cognitive and emotional stake in the future for those who hold them. Simply put, people think and behave differently when they are accumulating assets. While incomes support consumption, assets change psychological outlook, behavioral effort, and social interaction (Sherraden, 1990, 1991).

Today, income transfer policies such as AFDC severely restrict asset accumulation. If assets have important welfare effects beyond deferred consumption, then AFDC policy should

encourage asset accumulation. In order to accomplish this, special categories of assets would be established. For example, there might be long-term accounts that accumulate assets in the name of each child. Other possible applications include saving for eventual homeownership rather than perpetual reliance on rental subsidies, and educational savings accounts rather than reliance on educational loans. The key policy instrument would be long-term accounts that accumulate savings for particular purposes and life goals. These accounts might be called Individual Development Accounts (Sherraden, 1988, 1991), or some other name. Such policy would be designed explicitly to improve life chances and alter psychological and social functioning. It would combine the concepts of economic development and social welfare.

### Current Housing Policy

Financial assistance in American social welfare policy comes in two major forms — direct expenditures and tax expenditures (leaving aside, for the moment, discussions of social insurance vs. income transfers, or other ways to categorize social welfare expenditures). In either form — direct expenditures or tax expenditures — the effect on individual households and the federal budget is the same. Although long ignored or considered secondary in welfare policy discussions, policy analysts are beginning to view tax expenditures in the correct light, i.e., as no different from direct expenditures (Gilbert & Gilbert, 1989).

American housing policy clearly illustrates this two-tiered system. For the poor, means-tested and income-based rental assistance programs provide rent supplements paid to landlords or public housing authorities. For the nonpoor, as mentioned above, mortgage tax deductions provide individual homeowners with direct benefits and asset accumulation (Ryan, 1981).

#### *Means-Tested Rental Assistance*

Unlike most safety net programs which serve poor households, housing assistance is not an entitlement. Rather, the number of eligible households that receive benefits is determined by

the amount of money appropriated by Congress for these programs (Leonard, Dolbeare, & Lazare, 1989). Although very little is known about how means-tested welfare payments such as AFDC and SSI interact with housing assistance programs, the housing affordability costs of poor persons who receive both benefits is about 33% below the average costs of those receiving welfare alone (Newman & Schnare, 1989; U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, 1981). Due to the rise in the numbers of all poor households, poor renter households, and poor households who have grown poorer (Apgar, 1989), the demand for assisted housing has been great since 1978. For example, requests for assisted housing in 26 cities have increased an average of 25%. The average wait for subsidized housing is nearly two years. With only one-third of eligible low income households receiving federally assisted housing, most cities have closed their waiting lists (U.S. Conference of Mayors, 1987).

The demand for assisted housing is also fueled by a decrease in federal rental subsidies. Between 1978 and 1988, federal subsidized housing outlays through the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) were cut more than 80%, adjusted for inflation. During this same period, rental assistance appropriations from the Farmers Home Administration (FMHA) of the U.S. Department of Agriculture decreased nearly 70% (Leonard et al., 1989; Congressional Budget Office, 1988).

In addition to the shortage of assisted housing subsidies, low-cost housing availability has been further hindered by a 19% decline in the number of low income rental units since 1970 (Leonard et al., 1989), a loss attributed to the demolition of Single Room Occupancy (SROS) hotels (Kasinitz, 1984); gentrification (Adams, 1986); condominium conversion; government eminent domain actions and redevelopment (Johnson, 1992); fire, arson, and abandonment; and inadequate construction levels (Hartman, 1983). Apgar (1989, p. 61) concludes that "since 1974, rapid inflation in housing costs, combined with the inability of renter income to keep up with inflation . . . have exacerbated the problems of affordability and inadequate housing for low income renters."

*Homeownership Entitlement Benefits*

At the other end of the housing spectrum, homeownership entitlement benefits are standard policy for the nonpoor. Homeownership subsidies are the most extensive form of federal housing support, accounting for billions of dollars in benefits yearly through government payment of FHA-VA insurance costs for homeowners, income tax deductions for mortgage interest and property taxes, and deferment and exclusion of capital gains. These tax deductions, going mainly to the middle and upper classes, altogether represent a large, asset-based, federal housing subsidy, amounting to an estimated \$47.2 billion in 1990. In contrast, an estimated \$17.6 billion was spent for targeted housing assistance during the same period (Sheraden, 1991).

Moreover, in the means-tested rental assistance programs, lending institutions, the construction industry, and real estate agents profit from financing, construction, and management subsidies. In contrast, homeownership subsidies go fully and directly to homeowners (Silver, McDonald, & Ortiz, 1985).

Increasing costs of rental housing have been matched by equally large increases in the cost of homeownership. Since 1981, the rate of homeownership, which had steadily increased to an all time high of 65.6% in 1980, declined for the first time since World War II to 63.9% in 1985 (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1970–1980, 1980–1985). By 1982, higher home prices, interest rates, and utility costs brought the total cost of owning a home to nearly 40% of median income. These costs were especially high in certain regions of the country, such as Los Angeles, San Francisco, Boston, and New York (Brown, Case, & Baker, 1983). Those particularly hard hit were first time home buyers whose incomes could not keep up with the increasing cash costs of homeownership (Baker & Brown, 1985). Yet despite decreasing affordability, homeownership remains by far the preferred form of housing tenure in America (Tremblay & Dillman, 1983).

Not being able to become a homeowner has long-term negative financial effects. Today's elderly poor are more likely than the non-elderly poor to own their own homes, and thus spend a smaller proportion of their income on housing. These smaller cost burdens result from ownership free of mortgage payments

among the elderly poor (Leonard et al., 1989). Thus, a straightforward, long-term effect of homeownership is a lower housing cost burden for those living on minimal retirement incomes. In addition, the home asset can, if necessary, be spent down in later years through home equity loans or reverse mortgages.

### Homeownership for the Poor

One straightforward extension of asset-based policy would be to extend homeownership policy to working poor and welfare poor households. This should be done because of the positive welfare effects of ownership, mentioned above, as well as for reasons of equity and preference. Fortunately, several policy precedents exist and, as examples for developing asset-based housing policy for the poor, reviewing these precedents may be instructive.

#### *An Issue of Equity*

When income-based rental subsidies and asset-based tax deductions are compared, an issue of equity arises. The nation's most affluent citizens, those with incomes over \$30,000, receive the largest federal housing subsidy. According to housing policy expert Cushing Dolbeare:

Benefits from federal housing programs are so skewed that *the total of all the assisted housing payments ever made under all HUD programs, from the inception of public housing in 1937 through 1980, was less than the cost to the federal government of housing-related tax expenditures in 1980 alone* (quoted in Bratt, 1985, p. 170).

More recently, the total amount of asset-based tax expenditures for 1987 and 1988 alone almost equalled the total amount spent for subsidized housing during the entire 1980s (Leonard et al., 1989). Thus, it seems, at least in the interest of fairness, income-based subsidies should be expanded, or alternatively, as we suggest, asset-based subsidies should be extended to working poor and welfare poor populations.

#### *Preference for Homeownership*

A second reason for extending homeownership to the poor is the strong personal preference for homeownership over rental

tenancy in America. The positive "mystique" of homeownership is well-accepted — aside from the real difference it makes legally and economically to own a home (Marcuse, 1980, p. 41). As an indicator of socioeconomic status, a mark of accomplishment, and the "embodiment of the American dream" (Hoffman & Heisler, 1988, p. 159), homeownership is often credited with bringing about an increased stake in the local community and, at the same time, offsetting disparities related to occupation and income (Janowitz, 1976; Perrin, 1977; Sternlieb & Hughes, 1982).

According to Marcuse (1972, p. 134), homeownership is "more than merely shelter, but a whole complex of results — outputs — of housing . . . which include comfort, social satisfaction, economic well-being, creativity, security, and perhaps, political stability." In addition to its tax benefit, the tenancy of homeownership generally provides more control for the occupant, including location (where one wants to live), actions (what one can do in and to the unit), and access (keeping others out or in more easily). Although not a panacea for all social problems, homeownership is, nonetheless, an important step in the right direction (Marcuse, 1975, 1980).

Van Vliet (1988, pp. 329 and 331) succinctly summarizes the material and psychological meaning of American homeownership:

Not only does it provide shelter that is relatively more secure than that afforded by rental dwellings; it is also seen as a symbol of *success and accomplishment*, expressed in its interior, exterior, and locational characteristics. A private homeowner is viewed as someone who "has made it," in contrast to renters who are typically viewed as transients, still on their way to make it or, when in public housing, stigmatized as an underclass. Private homeownership also confers significant *financial advantages* on owners in terms of tax breaks, helps to provide *security during retirement*, and has been found to *benefit the housing situation of the next generation* (italics added).

These results are consistent with the welfare effects of assets suggested by Sherraden (1991). Moreover, homeowner equity is an historically proven method of exiting poverty for immigrant groups (Bauman, 1987), which suggests asset-accumulation as a strategy for combatting persistent poverty.

*Historical Precedents*

Prior to 1965, federal low income housing programs did not include the idea of owner/occupancy. And after more than fifty years of extensive experimentation in subsidy strategies, the bulk of directly-assisted housing consists of income-based rental subsidy. This includes a wide variety of programs such as Public Housing, Section 8 New Construction, Moderate Rehabilitation, Substantial Rehabilitation, Section 202 housing for the elderly and handicapped, Section 221(d)(3) below-market interest rates, Section 515 FMHA rental assistance, and other rent supplements (Hayes, 1988).

Only three relatively small programs — Turnkey III, Section 235, and part of Section 236 — have attempted to address the problem of housing the poor through an asset-based approach, i.e., by extending homeownership downward. Historically, a relatively small number of impoverished households have been assisted to buy homes (Silver et al., 1985).

The original effort to make homeowners of the poor began under the provisions of Section 221, but was extended significantly under Section 235 and the public housing Turnkey III program. Grigsby and Rosenberg (1975, pp. 106–107) observe that these program innovations were based on all the traditional rationales for homeownership for the middle class, but added one more point:

To the extent that black and poor families are denied opportunities to own their homes, they are also denied the most viable hedge against inflation that is open to white and middle income households, and are precluded from participating in an important method of capital accumulation. . . in a society where homeownership is such an integral part of the dominant culture, [the] inability to own one's residence constitutes a basic deprivation in and of itself.

Although the advocates of homeownership for the poor saw it as an instrumental goal which would enable low income homeowners to reach other valued objectives, opponents argued that homeownership would burden poor families with responsibilities that they either did not want, or were not prepared to assume. Furthermore, it was argued that the generally poor



quality of housing available for sale to the poor was expensive to maintain and capital appreciation was not likely to occur. There was also controversy about whether poor households had the same preference for homeownership as higher income households (Grigsby & Rosenberg, 1975). Despite these objections, three federal homeownership programs for very poor households eventually were developed.

*Turnkey III.* The purpose of Turnkey III was to make homeowners out of very low income people who were eligible for public housing. Marcuse (1980, p. 42) explains:

Under the Turnkey III program, the housing authority . . . said to the tenant: "You maintain your unit yourself, and we, the housing authority, will take the amount that we would otherwise allocate to maintenance and put it into a homeowners' reserve. When that homeowners' reserve exceeds \$2000, you are considered a home buyer (not a homeowner yet, but a homebuyer)." In the meantime, the housing authority is continuing to use its subsidy to pay off the construction cost. . . [When] the amount that the housing authority still owes on the bonds equals the amount of the homeowners' reserve . . . the individual becomes a homeowner.

The design of the Turnkey III program illustrates that homeownership also requires responsibility and resources for the ongoing maintenance and repair of the structure. The Turnkey program also provides a model which enables low income persons to obtain and practice "housing" skills over time; this is consistent with Turner's (1976) view that housing is an "action" as well as a means of shelter. Following the Turnkey III example, future programs to facilitate homeownership for poor households might allow federal subsidy to cover mortgage repayment, while requiring the future owners to invest their time, labor, and resources directly into maintenance and repair as part of the asset accumulation process. Should a "buyer" choose not to retain tenancy in a certain unit, the accumulated reserves could be returned to the "buyer" for an alternative investment.

Such policies would also help with what Hoffman and Heisler (1988) have termed the second component of homeownership, namely "keeping" the home. since financing a home commonly means taking on a 15 or 30 year mortgage, homeownership is actually a two-part process — buying and keeping:

Policies and programs that aim at supporting the first do not necessarily support the second. The first involves insuring buying affordability, that is, encouraging people to buy by making houses and money available and by providing financial incentives for homeowners. Keeping a home involves policies that permit households to make monthly mortgage payments even though their income and general revenues may suffer temporary setbacks. The continued viability of homeownership is dependent upon both processes, buying and keeping (Hoffman & Heisler, 1988, pp. 149-150).

*Section 235.* Section 235 was designed to be a mortgage interest support program for low and moderate income families (80% or less of median income) to own a home. The government paid all but 1% of the interest and the homeowner paid up to 20% of his adjusted monthly income on the mortgage. The program obtained 30 year mortgages for both new construction and existing housing. It created about a half a million units, and generally served low income clients well (Hayes, 1988).

In some cities, however, the major flaw in the Section 235 program was not with the welfare participants and public housing tenants who purchased homes, but with the program and the way it was administered. Unethical real estate agents and speculators fraudulently manipulated low income buyers. Unsophisticated buyers were sold homes in terrible condition, with holes in the roof, termites, and non-working water heaters and furnaces. In Chicago, for example, new homes with four-inch outside walls and no insulation were built over a dumpground and underground springs (Fuerst & Williams, 1983).

How did this happen? Boyer's (1973) investigation of the Section 235 program in Detroit uncovered extensive corruption at the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) and the Federal Housing Administration (FHA) which eventually led to more than 16,000 vacant structures and 4000 vacant lots. While HUD pushed the rehabilitation of existing structures (Chandler, 1988), "economic soundness" criteria in HUD policy procedures was lacking. Both the buyer and the home could be approved if certified as a "reasonably accepted risk" (Boyer, 1973, p. 22). In practice, the FHA appraiser frequently "windshielded" the house, i.e., made the appraisal from

the car. Phony credit and job reports were often submitted to "ghost buyers." Speculators would purchase a house in an unstable neighborhood for \$3000, have it fraudulently appraised by FHA for \$12,000, and sign the purchase order themselves. Thus, excessive and fraudulent profits were made on these cosmetically improved, overappraised structures.

This was a set-up for failure. With mortgage insurance approved on a great number of houses with major defects, "homeowners with marginal incomes — faced with major repairs and little equity — frequently abandoned their homes" (Chandler, 1988, p. 77). In other cases, because mortgage rates increased as the owner's income went up, this additional income was not available for necessary repairs. In the end, the real winners were the mortgage companies who charged interest to these first time homeowners as high as 24% (Boyer, 1973). One official described the situation:

The mortgage and credit companies did not investigate the job and credit information: none of the mortgage companies did in Detroit because the FHA never required them to. The FHA never investigated the information either, because it assumed the mortgage companies checked them out as they do for conventional mortgages. But the mortgage firms felt checking was unnecessary because even if the house foreclosed they got paid by the FHA (Boyer, 1973, p. 145).

This is one more example of hogs in the financial world feeding at the trough of federally-backed loan guarantees. In this case, it was the poor who suffered the most through loss of their homes and discrediting of a potentially successful homeownership program.

Although the program failed in Detroit (Chandler, 1988) and had difficulties elsewhere (McCloughry, 1975), an investigation in Philadelphia, Little Rock, St. Louis, and Denver found that minority families had been helped "to obtain decent housing and to enjoy the benefits, both material and psychological, of is homeownership" (States Commission on Civil Rights, 1971). Nationally, a high rate of families also outgrew the need for subsidy — 37% by the end of fiscal year 1976 (Brownstein, 1977) and an estimated 50% by 1980 (Schussheim, Vanhorenbeck, &

Milgram, 1980). In Chicago, with no inspection, no credit check, and no social service or assistance for these first time homeowners, 80% of Section 235 loans were successful. The Chicago program also provided upward mobility for many large families exiting from public housing:

It may well be that the single most important aspect of this homeownership program is the fact that it was able to provide in such large measure for these families in a way that is so difficult to achieve in public housing (Fuerst & Williams, 1983, p. 58).

Overall, the primary lesson of Section 235 concerns the unregulated implementation of asset-based, public policy for the poor. Revitalizing Section 235 with strict regulations prohibiting the sale of substandard structures and providing capital funds for moderate rehabilitation could make the program workable. Since young single-parent families are most shut out of the homeownership market in America (Apgar & Brown, 1988), a well-run program along the lines of Section 235 program could be a very positive antipoverty strategy for these families.

*Section 236.* Although Section 236 was mainly a family rent program run by non-profit groups, a small portion of Section 236 subsidized the construction and operation of housing by cooperatives. In this model, the occupants of public housing had a dual relationship to the dwelling unit, one as a shareholder in the corporation which owned the building, and one as a tenant of the corporation. However, in order to prevent the "inequities of public payment for private ownership," the FHA prevented tenants from selling their share of ownership in the corporation at a profit — a policy contrary to the basic notion of property rights and the commonly-accepted meaning of homeownership (Marcuse, 1980, p. 44).

### *Current Homeownership Policies for the Poor*

In response to the withdrawal of federal housing policy during the 1980s, a wide variety of small, nongovernmental housing experiments have begun in which homeownership and asset accumulation by poor persons has been subsidized (Community Service Society, 1984; Fuller & Scott, 1986; Weiksner, 1988). In housing, as in many other areas of social welfare, community-

based non-profit organizations are attempting to carry out functions previously performed by the public sector. In the case of homeownership programs, many of the non-profit experiments are highly creative and successful, and it would be very desirable for public policy to support such experiments with at least modest funding.

Concerning more direct federal policy, with the passage of the Cranston-Gonzalez National Affordable Housing Act (PL 101-625) in 1990, the Bush administration became the first since Lyndon Johnson's to aggressively pursue homeownership-centered low-income housing policy (Stegman, Quercia, McCarthy, Foster, & Rohe, 1991). A strong voice arguing for asset development and homeownership has been that of HUD Secretary Jack Kemp. Kemp has used his position to emphasize asset accumulation by the poor as a broad theme in domestic policy, hosting asset briefing sessions with top HUD officials and taking the idea to the White House with asset-based proposals in cabinet meetings.

Indeed, proposals for asset development for the poor have begun to appear across the political spectrum. During 1991, Rep. Mike Espy (D, Mississippi) highlighted asset development in a legislative forum of the Congressional Black Caucus and a meeting of the Mississippi Delta Caucus. The Democratic Leadership Council officially endorsed Individual Development Accounts, with matching deposits for the poor, to save for home purchase and other purposes. Bills to establish Individual Development Account demonstrations were introduced in both houses of Congress — in the House by Rep. Tony Hall (D, Ohio) and Rep. Bill Emerson (R, Missouri), and in the Senate by Senator Bill Bradley (D, New Jersey). Hearings on this concept were held in the House Select Committee on Hunger, with other meetings and discussions in such diverse settings as the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities and the White House Domestic Policy Council.

Secretary Kemp's housing initiative, Homeownership and Opportunity for People Everywhere (HOPE), includes a commitment of \$3.1 billion dollars over two years (U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, 1991). According to David Caprara, a deputy assistant secretary, HOPE programs "link

homeownership with job training, economic development, and supportive social services in an attempt to assist low-income people not only in acquiring homes but also in retaining and maintaining them" (National Neighborhood Coalition, 1990, p. 5).

One HOPE initiative promotes ownership of public housing units. However, like the Section 236 program, mentioned above, it is not clear that this would mean full property rights. This proposal would facilitate the sale of public housing to tenant management groups, an idea supported by the successes of a several tenant groups which manage public housing, notably Kenilworth-Parkside in Washington, D.C. and Cochran Gardens in St. Louis, Missouri (Fuerst, 1989). Under these proposals, HUD would sell the property to the tenant management corporation, which in turn would sell individual units to low income households.

This process of selling public housing units to low-income individuals consists of a step-by-step process: (1) making the community secure and drug-free, (2) establishing resident management, (3) setting up job creation and supportive services, and (4) developing a homeownership program design and implementation plan (U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, undated). Most observers would agree that the transition of public housing to homeownership is a challenge that will require intensive social support and development (e.g., Stegman, 1991). In St. Louis, for example, negotiations are underway to sell Carr Square Village to tenants. Under this proposal, HUD would provide the money for extensive rehabilitation, and as a condition of the sale, HUD would agree to rehabilitate or build new low income housing units to replace a portion of those that were lost.

Opponents charge that the plan is symptomatic of Bush administration intentions to divest the government of ownership, maintenance costs, and overall responsibility for public housing. From this perspective, the sale of public housing to tenant managed groups is another part of the "fire sale" of federally subsidized properties already being carried out through a variety of mechanisms, including program abandonment, foreclosure, debt collection, transfers of physical assets, and mortgage

prepayment (Bratt, 1985; Achtenberg, 1989). Because it is not clear that individuals ever will be able to own their units with freedom to sell at market rates, this is not homeownership in the sense that most Americans understand it. In order to benefit from the material and psychological effects of homeownership, asset-based policy is perhaps better built upon Turnkey III or Section 235 type programs wherein full property rights are promoted.

### Conclusion

As this paper indicates, we believe that social welfare or well-being should be thought of as more than a certain level of income. Social policy has been too much focused on income and not enough on assets. In our view, the welfare states of Western Europe and North America have not sufficiently recognized this distinction. This may be particularly true for the United States, a nation that has traditionally upheld the ideal of small property ownership as the basis of a participatory democracy.

During the remainder of the 1990s and beyond, public policy should incorporate asset-based conceptions of social welfare policy for the poor. In many cases, asset-based policy could be combined with income-based policy. The two types of policies would serve complementary, rather than conflicting, purposes.

As this paper suggests, one possibility for extending asset-based policy to poverty households is the rejuvenation of federal homeownership programs, not only the current HOPE initiatives which target public housing residents, but also a variety of homeownership possibilities for working poor and welfare poor populations who currently do not receive public housing assistance. In particular, Turnkey III and Section 235 programs, with revised and improved regulations and administration, could provide opportunities for homeownership to assist more poor households in escaping poverty.

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# Correlates of the Elderly's Participation and Nonparticipation in the Supplemental Security Income (SSI) Program: A New Evaluation

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*This paper analyzes the economic and sociodemographic factors associated with the elderly's participation and nonparticipation in the Supplemental Security Income (SSI) program. Unlike the previous findings based on the early phase of the program, this analysis found that the amount of benefit is no longer a significant predictor of participation for couples and individuals receiving support and maintenance. Level of education and housing status are now found to be consistently significantly associated with participation of all or most filing units. The paper concludes with a discussion of policy recommendations for more aggressive outreach efforts.*

## Introduction

Since its inception in 1972, the Supplemental Security Income (SSI) program has been viewed as the most comprehensive public assistance program for the poor elderly, disabled, and blind. The federally administered program, with its nationally uniform eligibility standards and base cash grant, was regarded as a major advance over the state-administered Old Age Assistance (OAA), Aid to the Permanently and Totally Disabled (APTD), and Aid to the Blind (AB) programs (Ozawa, 1974; Schulz, 1984; Warlick, 1984). Despite the stringency in its establishment of eligibility and the federal guarantee level which was lower than the OAA levels in some states, federal financing of the program and its administration by the Social Security Administration (SSA) have most certainly assured its stability as a safety net for those without, or with insufficient, Social Security benefits.

The efficiency of SSI as a safety net, however, has been much weaker than expected, primarily because of the consistently low participation rate, approximately 50%, especially among the eligible elderly. In December 1987, approximately one third of all recipients were elderly (1.48 million out of 4.45 million total). However, their number had gradually decreased from 2.29 million in December 1974 to 1.48 million in December 1987, while the number of disabled participants—including the blind—had increased from 1.71 million to 2.97 million in the same period (Social Security Administration, 1989).

Low rates of utilization of such public assistance programs as Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) (44%) and Food Stamps (50%) have also been a constant concern (Butler, 1986; Coe 1985a; Reischauer, 1989). But because SSI is the only program currently available for improving the economic standard of the aged poor, who have little means of self-support and little prospect of gaining employment, their low participation rate has been considered a more serious problem. In this context, this paper attempts to analyze sociodemographic and economic factors associated with the elderly's participation and nonparticipation in SSI based on the 1987 March Current Population Survey (CPS) data. Specifically, this study intends to shed light on how the significance of these factors changed in 1986 as compared to the early phase of the SSI program as illustrated by previous studies. A simulation of the SSI-eligible elderly sample is carried out in accordance with the federal-state combined income and asset test and types of living arrangement; this simulation is followed by a bivariate analysis of sociodemographic and economic status and a multivariate estimation of a maximum likelihood logit probability model of participation.

### Earlier Studies

In the late seventies various analyses were undertaken to identify factors associated with participation or nonparticipation in SSI by the eligible elderly, based on data from the early phase of the program. The findings of these studies generally indicated that nonparticipants were more likely to be in the 65-74 age group; thus they were younger than participants. They were also more likely to be male. The findings showed that

elderly poor may forgo their potential benefits because of such barriers as lack of information (they knew little about the program, and the information they had was often inaccurate); a sense that they would be stigmatized if they participated; and the perception that the benefits were so small that they would not be worth going through the hassle of applying.

The study of Menefee, Edwards, and Schieber (1981), based on the Survey of Low Income Aged and Disabled during 1973 and 1974, found that only 7.4% of elderly nonparticipants knew about SSI and that nonparticipants were consistently more likely than participants to report that they would never receive welfare. Coe's study (1985b), based on data six years later, found the situation, though much improved, still unsettling: 36.2% of eligible nonparticipants were unaware of the program or knew nothing about eligibility rules, 37.4% of them knew the program existed but thought they were ineligible, and 26.4% thought they were eligible but did not participate.

Another barrier that kept many eligible elderly from applying for SSI was the attitude that they did not need the benefits. This attitude, as in the case of food stamp nonparticipants, was often found (Coe, 1985a) among those who "have been accustomed to low—but survivable—standards of living" (p. 65). Such an attitude is more likely to be deeply ingrained especially in elderly poor who have survived long-term poverty.

Nonetheless, economic urgency appears to have been the primary reason for participants to apply for and receive SSI benefits, as indicated by their pre-SSI economic standard that was lower than that of nonparticipants, appears to have been the primary reason. Menefee et al. (1981) reported that compared to participants, nonparticipants were relatively better off financially, "although the actual dollar amounts are small" (p. 13). Using data from the 1975 March CPS, Warlick (1980) also found that regardless of the type of filing unit (individuals, individuals with ineligible spouses, and couples), the annual dollar amount of SSI benefits available to the filing units was consistently associated positively with the probability of participation. This indicates that without SSI, participants would have been apparently worse off than nonparticipants and that they have thus received larger benefits than nonparticipants would. Coe's study

(1985b), based on data from the Panel Studies of Income Dynamics, also confirms that benefit level (\$10 or more monthly) was a significant predictor of participation in 1979.

Although these findings are quite informative, the decreasing elderly caseload, notwithstanding some major relaxation in eligibility criteria since the early phase, make necessary a new look at the issue of participation versus nonparticipation. The rising standard of living, the expanded coverage and increased benefits of Social Security, and the almost unrestrained increase in Medicare expenditures have no doubt contributed to the remarkable decline in the proportion of elderly who were poor in the early 1970s and mid-1980s. But because of the increasing size of the elderly population, the absolute number of elderly persons living below the poverty line has increased. Coupled with the increasing number of the poor, the following changes in the eligibility criteria and benefit level are most likely to have contributed to the increase in the number of elderly persons eligible for SSI:

First, there was a substantial reduction in mandatory state supplementation, but a substantial increase in the number of states providing optional supplementation as well as in the breadth of optional supplementation (Hawkins, 1980, 1983). Hawkins's studies show that death of OAA recipients and the continuous increase in Social Security benefits resulted in a drastic decline by the late 1970s in the number of those receiving mandatory state supplementation. On the other hand, some states experienced as much as a 10% gain in the participants roll following the introduction of broad state supplementation in the late 1970s.

Second, in 1976 the value of applicants' homes was entirely excluded from consideration in determining their resources, so that previously ineligible elderly homeowners might become eligible. The initially enjoined food stamp receipt by SSI recipients was also relaxed. As a result, some states included the value of food stamps in their state supplementation, while other states adopted varied provisions regarding food stamp eligibility of SSI recipients.

Despite these favorable circumstances, the decreasing number of participants and possibly the decreasing participation rate

despite these favorable circumstances is most likely to be associated with the changes over time in the sociodemographic and economic characteristics of participants vis-a-vis nonparticipants.

The difference between the previous studies and this current study also lies in the fact that as of 1986, SSI had been in existence for more than a decade. Although there is no systematic research on this aspect, it might safely be assumed that informational barriers are still an important issue, given largely anecdotal but convincing case stories of poor elderly people. Considering that the subjects in Coe's study were better informed than were those in Menefee et al's study, however, it is possible that this sample is comparatively better informed than were previous samples. With the decline in importance of informational barriers, it is most likely that the elderly's decision to participate in SSI is more dependent than before on their self-perception of economic urgency and, possibly, their sense of stigma. Although the current study is limited in that it uses a data set that does not contain variables measuring self-perception or attitudes directly, it intends to examine possible differences in these aspects between the early phase and the mid-1980s through the analysis of sociodemographic and economic variables.

### Methodology

The federal eligibility rule for SSI benefits differentiates between individuals and couples as well as between those who live in their own households and those who live in others' households and receive support and maintenance. The federal benefit level is reduced by one third for an individual or couple living in another person's household and receiving both support and maintenance (SSA, 1986). Therefore, in our analysis here, the CPS noninstitutionalized elderly sample aged 65 or over in 1986 is divided into the following five filing units: unrelated individuals; family members without support and maintenance; family members with support and maintenance; individuals with ineligible spouses; and couples.

The category *unrelated individuals* includes those who live alone in their own households as well as those who live with



other unrelated individuals. Of all unrelated individuals, 98% are not married. *Family members* refers to unmarried individuals who live with other family members or relatives. Family members are assumed to receive support and maintenance only if their total family income, excluding any form of public assistance, is above the official poverty threshold. (This assumption is adopted in accordance with the advice of the staff of the Supplemental Security Income Branch, Social Security Administration.) An *individual with ineligible spouse* is a currently married individual aged 65 or over living with a spouse who is under 65. On the other hand, a *couple* is a husband-wife team, both of whom are 65 or over.

Eligibility for SSI among these filing units is identified in accordance with a microsimulation model based on state of residence, on total annual personal and family income, on asset income, and on following these three steps:

1. The maximum combined federal-state guarantee level for each filing unit is calculated in each state and the District of Columbia for those both with and without earnings. The maximum combined federal-state guarantee level is the result of the 1986 federal maximum guarantee plus \$20 monthly federal unearned-income disregard and additional, if any, state unearned-income disregard, plus any optional state supplementation for the independent-living or shared-living category. For those with earnings, \$65 monthly of earnings plus one half of any earnings over \$65 are also disregarded.

2. For the income test, unrelated individuals and family members with pre-SSI *personal* income—personal income inclusive of all earned and unearned income minus SSI benefits, if any—less than the maximum guarantee levels are deemed eligible. In the cases of individuals with ineligible spouses and of couples, those with total pre-SSI *family* income—family income inclusive all earned and unearned income minus SSI benefits, if any—less than the guarantee levels are deemed eligible. The choice of family income is needed because almost 90% of our sample couples (including individuals with ineligible spouses) consist of husband-wife-only families, in which case the wife's (husband's) income is included at the time of eligibility decision by SSA. Even for the rest of the sample couples who live with

children, young or old, and with their elderly parents, the selection of total family income is considered a reasonable choice, as the entire family is most likely to share the cost of living.

3. For the asset test, an often-used assumption that the combined value of interest, rents, dividends, and royalties represents a 6% return on the asset portfolio of individuals and couples is also adopted. Thus, only individuals and couples (including individuals with ineligible spouses) who had asset income—inclusive of interest, dividends, royalties, and rents—less than \$105 ( $= \$1,750 \times .06$ ) and \$153 ( $= \$2,550 \times .06$ ), respectively, are deemed eligible for SSI (\$1,750 and \$2,550 represent the 1986 federal resource limit for SSI receipt for individuals and couples, respectively).

Throughout the analysis, *elderly participants* are identified as individuals and couples who were 65 or older in 1986, who were deemed eligible based on the simulation, and who actually received \$1 or more from the SSI program in that year. *Elderly nonparticipants* are individuals and couples who were 65 or older in 1986, who were deemed eligible based on the simulation, but who did not receive benefits from the SSI program in that year. Likewise, SSI benefits for the participants are self-reported amounts, as recorded in the CPS, while SSI benefits for the nonparticipants are simulated amounts. Also, because the CPS is basically a household survey, this analysis and its findings apply to the noninstitutionalized elderly residing in community.

Given that the CPS elderly sample is known for their underreporting of unearned income, the asset test based on asset income as reported in the survey may not fully reflect the value of their assets. This in turn may result in the overestimation of the eligible and consequently underestimation of participation rates. On the other hand, because the asset and income tests in this analysis are based on the yearly total, the pool of the eligible is in general underestimated. That is, those who were eligible only part of the year but not the whole year—because of an upward or downward change in income or assets above or below the eligibility limit—are not considered eligible. Moreover, some types of assets that are excluded from countable resources—most notably, life insurance with face value of less

than \$1,500 (\$3,000 for a couple) and burial expenses of \$1,500 in separately identifiable funds— are not factored in the above asset test. The exclusion of the possible cash surrender value of these assets from the asset test may also result in the underestimation of the sample numbers of elderly eligibles. Considering that this study is an update of previous studies which used the same or similar income and asset tests, however, these constraints are not judged to be a serious obstacle to the comparison between this study and previous ones.

### Findings

*Bivariate Analysis.* The participation rates in this analysis are indeed lower than those found in previous studies. Among the eligibles, only 46% (434 out of 943) of unrelated individuals, 44% (97 out of 220) of family members without support and maintenance, 26% (135 out of 515) of family members with support and maintenance, 45% (24 out of 54) of individuals with ineligible spouses, and 36% (82 out of 230) of couples have received payments from SSI. Thus, the overall participation rate is only about 40%. During the period between previous studies and this study, not only has the number of elderly beneficiaries decreased, but the participation rate thus appears to have actually dropped.

As shown in Table 1, significant differences between participants and nonparticipants lie in the level of education and racial distribution. The participating groups have less education and have a higher proportion of nonwhites than do nonparticipating groups. Participating unrelated individuals, family members with support and maintenance, and individuals with ineligible spouses also show a significantly lower rate of homeownership than do nonparticipants in the same categories.

For unrelated individuals, family members without support and maintenance, and couples, there is also a significant difference in the region of residence: southerners appear to comprise a higher proportion of participants than do nonsoutherners. But residence in the metropolitan statistical area (MSA) turns out to be significant only for unrelated individuals. Our assumption was that the elderly living in small towns might be less likely to apply for and participate in SSI than those living in large

Table 1

*Comparison between SSI Participants and Nonparticipants: Sociodemography*

	Unrelated individuals		Family members without support		Family members with support		Individuals with ineligible spouses		Couples	
	P <sup>a</sup>	N <sup>b</sup>	P <sup>a</sup>	N <sup>b</sup>	P <sup>a</sup>	N <sup>b</sup>	P <sup>a</sup>	N <sup>b</sup>	P <sup>a</sup>	N <sup>b</sup>
Number	451	508	101	124	135	376	22	29	77	150
Participation rate (%)	46		44		26		45		36	
Age (yr)	75.4	75.2	75.7	76.3	77.1	77.5	70.7	68.9	76.6	75.9
Sex (%)										
Male	18.9	18.7	10.3	16.9	10.4	15.4	79.9	90.0	—	—
Female	81.1	81.3	89.7	83.1	89.6	84.6	20.1	10.0	—	—
Education (yr)	8.0	10.2***	7.5	8.6**	8.1	9.5***	7.5	9.9**	7.7	10.6***
Race (%)										
White	68.9	76.5**	45.3	65.3**	69.6	79.8**	50.0	70.0	64.6	77.2**
Nonwhite	31.1	23.5	54.7	34.7	30.4	20.2	50.0	30.0	35.4	22.8
Housing (%)										
Own	46.0	62.4***	60.8	62.1	73.8	84.8**	62.5	83.3*	70.7	79.7
Rent	54.0	37.6	39.2	37.9	26.7	15.2	37.5	16.7	29.3	20.8
Residence in MSA <sup>c</sup> (%)										
MSA	57.0	68.3***	59.8	65.3	83.0	80.6	75.0	76.7	54.9	65.1
Non-MSA	43.0	31.7	40.2	34.7	17.0	19.4	25.0	23.3	45.1	34.9
Region of Residence (%)										
South	57.9	43.1***	71.1	57.3**	47.4	45.8	33.3	53.3	54.9	27.5***
Non-South	42.1	56.9	28.9	42.7	52.6	54.2	66.7	46.7	45.1	72.5

<sup>a</sup>Participants (those who actually received SSI benefits in 1986).<sup>b</sup>Nonparticipants (those who were eligible for but did not receive SSI benefits in 1986).<sup>c</sup>Metropolitan statistical area

\*p&lt;.10; \*\*p&lt;.05; \*\*\*p&lt;.001.

Table 2

*Comparison between SSI Participants and Nonparticipants: Economic Status*

	Unrelated individuals		Family members without support		Family members with support		Individuals with ineligible spouses		Couples	
	P <sup>a</sup>	N <sup>b</sup>	P <sup>a</sup>	N <sup>b</sup>	P <sup>a</sup>	N <sup>b</sup>	P <sup>a</sup>	N <sup>b</sup>	P <sup>a</sup>	N <sup>b</sup>
Number	451	508	101	124	135	376	22	29	77	150
Pre-SSI total income										
% without	18.4	8.0***	36.1	8.9***	30.1	19.9**	13.0	13.3	9.6	7.4
Mean (\$)	2,382	3,092***	1,662	2,857***	2,021	2,895***	2,924	3,799	4,767	5,360
SSI										
Mean <sup>c</sup> (\$)	1,962	(1,389)***	2,595	(1,520)***	2,220	(2,086)	2,040	(2,338)	3,139	(2,992)
Post-SSI total income (\$)										
Personal Mean	4,343	3,092***	4,257	2,857***	4,241	2,895***				
Family Mean			9,159	5,942**	32,909	30,270	4,964	3,799	7,906	5,360***
Social Security										
% receiving	78.6	83.8**	60.8	85.4***	63.0	77.0*	61.9	56.9	80.7	79.2
Mean (\$)	2,263	2,710***	1,570	2,617***	1,813	2,495***	1,312	2,242	4,351	4,652
Public assistance <sup>d</sup>										
% receiving	6.9	5.7	5.1	8.1	6.3	4.5	33.0	1.0***	4.7	3.2
Mean (\$)	51	91	62	162	97	75	655	5**	78	122



towns because of a lower probability of access to relevant information in small places. This assumption appears to be valid only for unrelated individuals. Moreover, unlike previous studies, this analysis does not show any significant difference in age and sex distributions of participants versus nonparticipants.

As for economic status, the data in Table 2 indicate that in the absence of SSI benefits, unrelated individual and all family member participants would have significantly lower income than would nonparticipants. This economic disadvantage of participants appears to be due mostly to their significantly lower Social Security benefits. Their lower average Social Security benefits, in turn, stem primarily from two factors: (1) a lower proportion of them are Social Security recipients and (2) the Social Security recipients get lower benefits than do the nonparticipants.

Unlike these individuals, however, participating and nonparticipating couples—including individuals with ineligible spouses—would not have significantly different income even in the absence of SSI. (A caveat is required, however, in the case of individuals with ineligible spouses; the insignificance of pro-SSI income difference is quite likely due to the fact that SSI participants also received significantly higher public assistance benefits from other sources.) Consequently, potential benefits for nonparticipant couples are not significantly different from the current benefits of participant couples. In the case also of family members with support and maintenance, potential benefits for nonparticipants are not significantly different from the current benefits of participants. This might be due to the fact that benefits for those with support and maintenance are not very substantial anyway.

With SSI benefits, however, all participants, with the single exception of individuals with ineligible spouses, have significantly higher income than do nonparticipants. The contrast between nonparticipants and participants is even more striking when the percentage of those who are lifted above 75% of the official poverty line is compared. As shown in Table 3, without SSI benefits, 98.6-60.8% of all participant units, as compared with 74.3-39.0% of all nonparticipant units, would have been below 75% of the official poverty threshold. But the former, with SSI

Table 4

*Variables Associated with SSI Participation: Logistic Regression Results*

	Unrelated individuals	Family members without support	Family members with support	Individuals with ineligible spouses	Couples
Number	951	193	490	50	227
	Beta(SE)	Beta(SE)	Beta(SE)	Beta(SE)	Beta(SE)
Intercept	.713(.831)	2.282(1.838)	-.015(1.111)	-10.187(6.515)	1.321(2.077)
Age <sup>a</sup>	.001(.010)	-.022(.021)	-.001(.013)	.292(.115)**	-.005(.024)
Sex — Male	-.324(.189)*	-.304(.469)	-.403(.334)	-1.992(1.286)	
Education	-.121(.021)***	-.109(.048)**	-.085(.029)***	-.239(.119)**	-.113(.039)***
Race — White	-.141(.167)	-.507(.346)	-.345(.245)	-.472(.783)	-.523(.338)
Housing — Own <sup>b</sup>	-.903(.151)***	-.121(.354)	-.452(.264)*	-2.161(1.104)*	-.889(.369)**
Residence in MSA / Non-MSA					
MSA	-.558(.159)***	-.669(.381)*	-.024(.289)	-1.820(1.246)	-.119(.366)
Region of residence — South	.223(.225)	.157(.703)	.723(.398)*	-4.327(2.100)**	.841(.522)
State supplementation — Provided	-.281(.224)	-.482(.760)	.846(.409)**	-2.236(2.042)	-.130(.534)
Medicaid eligibility — Automatic	.811(.174)***	-.521(.445)	-.315(.273)	-.954(1.027)	.252(.419)
Benefit <sup>c</sup>	.037(.006)***	.062(.012)***	.002(.007)	-.018(.021)	.002(.006)
- 2 log likelihood ratio					
X <sup>2</sup>	186.71(p<.0005)	46.32(p<.0005)	26.59(p<.0030)	22.50(p<.0128)	34.07(p<.0005)
df	10	10	10	10	9

<sup>a</sup>Age of the older spouse in the case of individuals with ineligible spouses; age of the husband in the case of couples.<sup>b</sup>Inclusive of all housing units where cash rent does not have to be paid.<sup>c</sup>Unit: \$100.



benefits, are much better off : 57.3-12.8% of them are below 75% of the official poverty threshold.

*Multivariate Analysis.* To measure the multiplicative effects of the sociodemographic and economic variables (including state optional-supplementation and Medicaid eligibility-determination criteria) on the elderly's participation or nonparticipation in SSI, a maximum likelihood logit model was estimated. The dependent variable was set equal to 1 if the eligible filing unit actually received SSI benefits and 0 if it did not. As for state optional supplementation, states that provide, on top of the federal guarantee level, optional supplementation of \$10 or more monthly for the independently living who did not require personal care were set equal to 1 in contrast to those that do not. Those states which adopted the automatic Medicaid eligibility for SSI recipients were also set equal to 1 in contrast to the others which chose the Medicaid beneficiaries based on their own eligibility criteria. Because this is a nonlinear model, the effect of each explanatory variable varies, depending on where it is measured. But this analysis focuses on the level of significance and the sign of a coefficient rather than its size.

Apparently, each filing unit has its own characteristics related to participation or nonparticipation in SSI. But, as already shown in the bivariate analysis, the number of years of education is consistently negatively correlated with the probability of participation in SSI. Those with higher education are less likely to participate. Homeownership or residence in a rent-free housing unit is also a significant deterrent to participation in SSI for four out of five filing units. On the other hand, age, sex, and residence in the South and MSA's have significant effects on only one or two filing units, whereas race has no significant effect on any. Thus, the comparatively higher proportion of nonwhites among participants than among nonparticipants, as shown in the bivariate analysis, does not appear to indicate differential participation rate by race. Interestingly, southern residence in the case of individuals with ineligible spouses appears to be inversely associated with participation in SSI. But southern residence in the case of those with support and maintenance is positively associated with participation.

Table 3

*Comparison between SSI Participants and Nonparticipants: Poverty Status*

	Unrelated individuals		Family members without support		Family members with support		Individuals with ineligible spouses		Couples	
	p <sup>a</sup>	N <sup>b</sup>	p <sup>a</sup>	N <sup>b</sup>	p <sup>a</sup>	N <sup>b</sup>	p <sup>a</sup>	N <sup>b</sup>	p <sup>a</sup>	N <sup>b</sup>
Number	451	508	101	124	135	376	22	29	77	150
Pre-SSI income level (%)										
<50% of OPL <sup>c</sup>	49.7	28.8	68.1	34.9	59.1	33.3	60.9	40.1	29.4	25.7
50-75% OPL	39.5	38.4	30.5	39.4	28.5	30.2	26.5	36.6	31.4	13.3
75-100% OPL	10.5	29.9	1.4	24.8	11.5	32.4	12.6	8.7	17.3	29.7
>100% OPL	.3	2.9	0	.9	.9	4.1	0	14.6	21.9	30.4
Post-SSI income level (%)										
<50% of OPL	6.4	28.8	3.3	34.9	5.3	33.3	34.3	40.1	5.0	25.7
50-75% OPL	10.0	38.4	17.9	39.4	34.3	30.2	23.0	36.6	7.8	13.3
75-100% OPL	70.1	29.9	67.1	24.8	45.0	32.4	24.8	8.7	30.1	29.7
>100% OPL	13.5	2.9	11.7	.9	15.4	4.1	17.9	14.6	57.1	30.4

<sup>a</sup>Participants (those who actually received SSI benefits in 1986).<sup>b</sup>Nonparticipants (those who were eligible for but did not receive SSI benefits in 1986).<sup>c</sup>Official poverty line

*Note.* For unrelated individuals and for family members with or without support and maintenance, *personal* income of the elderly person was considered, while for individuals with ineligible spouses and for couples, *family* income adjusted for the size of the family was considered.

As for economic variables, the amount of benefit still appears to be a significant predictor of participation for unrelated individuals and for family members without support and maintenance. But, for family members with support and maintenance and for couples, it no longer is.

The state optional supplement of \$10 or more a month is a significant factor for participation only of family members with support and maintenance, whereas the automatic Medicaid eligibility is a significant factor for participation only of unrelated individuals. Our assumption was that the residents of states where state optional supplements are provided might be more likely to participate, because the supplements would increase their potential benefits. It is quite unrealistic to assume that the elderly are knowledgeable about the specific contents of the program and that they make rational choices. Nonetheless, states that provide optional supplements are usually more progressive and liberal than those that do not and they are thus also more likely to have information readily accessible to potential recipients. The same rationale underlies our assumption that there is an association between SSI participation and the Medicaid eligibility determination: SSI eligibles are more likely to come forward to claim benefits in states where Medicaid eligibility automatically accompanies SSI receipt through federal determination than they are in states where the states themselves determine Medicaid eligibility. But the multivariate analysis results show that the overall effect of state supplementation and automatic Medicaid eligibility on participation is quite limited. The fact is that the states providing state supplementation and automatic Medicaid eligibility are mostly in the West and the Northeast, where the total number of eligibles is often less than in the South alone.

### Discussion

As analyzed elsewhere (Warlick, 1984; Zediewski & Meyer, 1989), even the participation in SSI of all eligible elderly poor may not drastically help reduce the current poverty rate of the elderly (e.g., from 15.2 to 12.5% in 1978, according to Warlick's simulation results), but would certainly increase the income of those who could receive SSI benefits. The bivariate analysis of

economic status and poverty rates among participants and non-participants indicates that SSI, despite its many shortcomings, indeed contributes to improving the standard of living of many of the elderly poor. Nonetheless, many more eligible poor elderly are not being served by the program, thus effectively weakening the potential antipoverty function of SSI. Despite many positive changes in eligibility criteria since the early phase of the program, the analysis in this paper indicates that the utilization rate of SSI is actually much lower than the previously believed 50% level; this implies that the declining numbers of elderly participants may have been a result of a declining participation rate.

In addition to the lower participation rate, this analysis also found that the kinds and nature of sociodemographic and economic factors associated with participation in SSI have been much changed from those found by previous studies. Above all, although previous studies (Coe 1985b; Warlick 1980) had found that one of the most important predictors of participation was the amount of benefit, this analysis found that it mostly affects only single individuals. That is, this study provides further empirical support for the direct positive relationship between the level of income and the level of actual or perceived economic needs among the poor unrelated elderly. The financial disadvantage of participants as compared to nonparticipants, in the absence of SSI, could have been a major trigger for them to seek an additional source of income such as SSI. For couples and individuals with support and maintenance, however, the level of income per se, and therefore the amount of SSI benefits, is not a good predictor of their participation in SSI.

As also compared with the findings of previous studies, the significance of age, gender, and race as factors affecting SSI participation has diminished, while the importance of education and housing status has increased. In fact, the most important predictors of participate in SSI are now the level of education and housing status. Although previous studies did not fail to mention the importance of these variables, their consistent significance across all or most filing units now qualifies them for more serious consideration. For unrelated individuals, couples, and family members with support and maintenance, living in

rented units with the burden of monthly rent appears to contribute to the increased sense of economic urgency and need for more income. The level of education, while not significantly correlated with the amount of pre-SSI income or with the amount of SSI benefits, is consistently inversely correlated with participation in SSI. Thus housing status and the level of education should now be leading factors for identifying eligible nonparticipants and helping them participate.

As for gender, apparently because there are absolutely more women aged 65 or older than men and because those women are poorer than the men, the question of participation or nonparticipation in SSI is not a matter between but within genders, especially the female gender. As a consequence, the issue boils down to whether poor elderly women, who constitute the majority of the eligibles, participate in SSI or not, rather than whether men are more likely to participate than women or vice versa. Also, the age difference between participants and nonparticipants is no longer significant apparently because a majority of elderly eligibles are over 70. The problem is thus not that poor younger cohorts are less likely to participate in SSI than poor older cohorts or vice versa, but that both young and old cohorts, of all races, are equally unlikely to participate.

As mentioned earlier, the effects of variables related to attitude and informational barriers could not be directly estimated in this study. But, speculating from the negative association between educational level and participation in SSI and the insignificance of MSA division, the informational barriers may not be as serious as they used to be. The conventional wisdom is that the less educated are less likely to have adequate information. In reality, however, they are more likely to participate in SSI, thus indicating that there are other reasons for the nonparticipation of the better educated. It is possible that these better-educated eligible nonparticipants may also have a stronger sense of stigma, even though they are well aware of the program contents. In fact, the findings of this analysis suggest that there are indeed many poor elderly people who might have become conditioned to living with unmet needs and might have developed a less need-responsive attitude. Thus, although they are eligible, many elderly people have not come forward to

claim SSI benefits, not because they lack necessary information, but because they have been accustomed to a low standard of living and feel that they can manage without the benefits.

### Conclusion

The differences in sociodemographic and economic status between participants and nonparticipants in SSI were analyzed. Unlike previous studies, level of benefits was not found to be an all-encompassing predictor for participation, but level of education and housing status were.

The issues involving accessibility to relevant information and sense of stigma could not be directly dealt with because of lack of data. But what we have deduced is that accessibility of information may not be a major problem for a typical nonparticipant, but sense of stigma as well as the sense of survivable standard of living may be.

Based on these findings, it is recommended that, first, the outreach effort for SSI be carried out more vigorously in the face of declining numbers of elderly participants and possibly declining rates of participation. Second, the targets of such outreach effort needs to be both male and female eligible elderly of all ages and all races, but special emphasis should be placed on the unrelated/single female elderly of 70 or over simply because they constitute the majority of the eligibles. Third, there should also be specific strategies aimed at motivating participation of the upper cadre of the eligibles—homeowners, family members with support and maintenance, couples, and those with higher education—by emphasizing the additional economic comfort and such fringe benefits as state supplementation and Medicaid that SSI will bring to their current situation. Fourth, administrative and outreach efforts should also be made to prevent current recipients from leaving the program for reasons other than income ineligibility. Fifth, further research on the effects of informational barriers and the sense of stigma upon participation in SSI should be conducted to understand the full gamut of factors associated with participation and nonparticipation in SSI and to make the outreach effort more effective. In other words, data on *why* elderly people are not participating should be collected and analyzed in future studies.

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# A Continuum Theory for Social Work Knowledge

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*Relativist approaches, to knowledge, suggested by some social workers as alternative to the predominant scientific logical positivistic approaches to knowledge, suffer from serious flaws. Between the poles of objectivism and relativism exists a third and more useful approach to knowledge in social work. This approach is presented and developed based on recent sources from the philosophy of knowledge, the philosophy of science, and metatheoretical developments in the social sciences. A continuum theory of knowledge, between objectivism and relativism, is suggested for social work. The continuum theory narrows the gap between research and practice and between the scientific side and the artistic and value laden aspects of social work.*

The dichotomy between research and practice, and the scientific side and artistic and value laden side of social work, thought by some to have been caused by the introduction of positivistic science into social work, led some writers to adopt relativism as an alternative approach to knowledge. (See, for examples of relativism in social work, Boehm, 1961; Vigilante, et al, 1981, 1982; Brunswick Heineman, 1981; Goldstein, 1982, 1986; Haworth, 1984; Hofstein, 1964). This paper demonstrates that relativism is a weak and insufficient alternative to logical positivism and the objectivist tradition. A study of the criticism of logical positivism in the philosophy of knowledge, philosophy of science, and metatheoretical developments in the social sciences, suggests a third approach — between objectivism and relativism. This approach is presented and developed and its implications for social work are examined.



### The Limits of Relativism

The main idea of relativism was first expressed by Protagoras, the Greek philosopher, in the fourth century B.C.: man is the measure of all things. Just as what tastes good for one, Protagoras said, is not tasty to another, so what is true for one is not necessarily true for another. Protagoras limited the value of all affirmation to the one who makes it (Gallagher, 1982, p. 11).

The relativist sees the objectivist as mistaking what is at best historically or culturally stable for the eternal and permanent. Bernstein (1983, p. 8) says:

In its strongest form, relativism is the basic conviction that when we turn to the examination of those concepts that philosophers have taken to be the most fundamental, whether it is the concept of rationality, truth, reality, right, the good, or norms — we are forced to recognize that in the final analysis all such concepts must be understood as relative to a specific conceptual scheme, theoretical framework, paradigm, form of life, society or culture.

Today relativism is supported by conclusions drawn from research in the history of science. Some historians of science contend that the history of science does not demonstrate a cumulative character of theories. Major scientific theories have been replaced in the history of science and many abandoned theories left little of themselves behind. Kuhn (1970, pp. 121–149) sees, in the systems of Aristotle, Newton and Einstein, no coherent direction of ontological development. He sees major steps in scientific progress as involving paradigm shifts — replacement of the whole conceptual framework used by the former paradigm. To Kuhn, competing paradigms lack a basis of comparison. They reflect divergent conceptual orientations. Proponents of competing paradigms see the same types of phenomena in entirely different ways.

The idea that major concepts of today's scientific theories will be replaced by entirely different concepts presented in the scientific theory of tomorrow, challenges the ability of these concepts to refer consistently to reality. Concepts are seen by relativists as temporary tools, relative to a time and culture. The many concepts which have been used by science to describe the same phenomena may be said to represent many private relative experiences (Lauden, 1984, pp. 218–249).

Current relativist theory emphasizes private subjective experience as the source for rationality. Relativists say that what we call rational ideas fit our preferred, basic intuitions about reality (Lauden, 1977, p. 161). We may have the notion that these ideas are universal because they are accepted by most of the scientific community, but even if this is so, the ideas represent just another private experience — the consensus that was attainable by one group of scientists, members of one community in a certain time.

Social workers, such as Hofstein (1964, p. 46), influenced by this relativistic philosophy, have called upon us to abandon certainty "either in actuality or as a goal toward which to strive". Heineman-Pieper (1985, p. 4) suggested giving up certainty as a goal for knowledge in social work. She wrote that "the attempt to recognize and allow for bias is of much greater value than the attempt to eradicate it". Social workers who accept a relativistic barrier to knowledge focus on attempts to find situational knowledge rather than to pursue universal laws. Without the ability to achieve some certainty to lean on,

methods of data collection are to be chosen not by the application of judgmental criteria, but for their applicability to a particular problem or for their ability to provide a different slant on a given problem. (Heineman-Pieper, 1985, p. 8)

Heineman-Pieper's relativism leads to a focus on the private subjective experience. The unique becomes more important than the common.

From an objectivist point of view relativists might be seen as prisoners of their subjective experience, unable to communicate their knowledge and experience to people who have different subjective experiences. The relativist sees no problem here. From a relativistic perspective, knowledge is not something people possess somewhere in their heads, but rather, something people do together, a shared activity. The creation of language, according to the relativist, is a shared decision by a certain community to see things in a certain way. In this community, objects will be regarded as existing in the way it has been decided that people will refer to them. The attempt to know is seen as a *shared* act of creation (Gergen, 1985, p. 270; Gergen, 1986, p. 158). The

concepts that we use to describe human beings do not refer to existing entities but may actually create them:

Children are, or become, what they are taken to be by others, and what they come to take themselves to be, in the course of their social communication and interaction with others. In this sense, I take, "child" to be social and historical kind, and therefore also constructed kind rather than one given, so to speak, by nature in some fixed or essential form . . . such cultural constitution or construction and self-construction, is not simply a matter of reflection in thought, but also of the whole range of practices, interactions, and institutions that comprise the social and historical life-world. (Wartofsky, 1983, p. 190)

Relativists seem to achieve a sense of freedom by their position. They are allowed to listen to and respect their inner subjective voices. But an over emphasis on this ability seems to lead to an exaggerated sense of freedom, almost total freedom. Individuals, as relativists, become their own creators, and the only guidance they use in their new role is their intuition. Bernstein (1983, p. 18) described the tendency to extreme objectivism as a response to emphasis paid by the relativists on the private subjective experience. He called it the "Cartesian Anxiety": "*Either there is some support for our being, a fixed foundation for our knowledge, or we cannot escape the forces of darkness that envelop us with madness, with intellectual and moral chaos*".

Bernstein (1983, p. 9) pointed out that ever since Plato, objectivists have argued that relativism, whenever it is clearly stated, is self-referentially inconsistent and paradoxical:

For implicitly or explicitly, the relativist claims that his or her position is true, yet the relativist also insists that since truth is relative, what is taken as true may also be false. Consequently, relativism itself may be true *and* false.

Modern relativists do not seemed impressed by this ancient argument against their philosophy. They suspect that objectivism is actually motivated by and representative of a private subjective preference, similar to their own knowledge but without the relativist honesty to admit that. Objectivism is accused

of offering values and norms in the name of knowledge (See, for example, Haworth, 1984, pp. 343–357).

One can see how objectivism and relativism developed in response to each other. The objectivist is responding to the relativists' emphasis on their private subjective experiences by proposing fixed universal foundations. Relativists see theories with claims to universality as threats to their uniqueness:

Why have relativists been unconvinced when objectivists argue, as they almost invariably do, that relativism is self-referentially inconsistent, self defeating, and incoherent? Why have objectivists been unmoved when time and time again it is shown that they have failed to make the case for the objective foundation for philosophy, knowledge, or language, and that the history of attempts to reveal such foundations must be judged thus far to be a history of failures? (Bernstein, 1983, p. 15)

Bernstein (1983, pp. 1–3) thinks that the structuring of the contemporary debate on knowledge within the traditional extremes of objectivism and relativism is happening because of the seductive power of both of these extremes. Summarizing Gadamer, Bernstein (1983, p. 37) noted that relativism is not only the dialectical antithesis of objectivism, it is itself parasitic upon objectivism. Both may share the tendency to offer final solutions. Objectivism in its current manifestation in scientific empiricism offers a plan for knowledge and with it control over nature and ourselves. Relativism offers freedom by adherence to one's inner subjective voices, or by emphasizing one's ability to realize himself the way he chooses.

Richards (1987, pp. 217–224) sees in the philosophy of the natural and social sciences two dangerous tendencies — to believe in empirical science as a final authority about knowledge, or to reject it as relative. Currently, this struggle seems to be in progress and undecided. Bernstein (1983, p. 49) noted a third approach: "We are witnessing and participating in a movement beyond objectivism and relativism".

### The Third Approach: The Continuum Theory

In a recent book on methodology for the human sciences, Polkinghorne (1983, p. 13) wrote:

All of our knowledge is conditioned knowledge, constructed within our conceptual systems, and thus knowledge is a communal achievement and is relative to time and place. One need not retreat to a complete relativism, however, just because a perspectival or context-bound aspect of knowledge is recognized. Between the extremes of absolute certainty (with no relativity) and absolute uncertainty, statements of knowledge can be judged against each other, and some of them can be accepted and used as the base for action while others can be rejected.

Beyond objectivism and relativism exists a third approach. Its proponents accept the relativist rejection of the objectivist's claim to have a fixed foundation of truth, but, as we saw in the previous section, proponents of the third approach also accept the objectivist's criticism about the self-contradictory nature of relativism — relativism's inability to prove that objective knowledge is unattainable.

Current development in scientific realism, an approach emphasizing that scientific concepts have some referential ability to real entities, seems to belong to the third approach, beyond objectivism and relativism. McMullin (1984, p. 26) stated that "the long term success of a scientific theory gives reason to believe that something like the entities and structure postulated by the theory actually exists". Leplin, summarizing the basic theses shared by the new realists, wrote that "The history of at least the mature sciences shows progressive approximation to a true account of the physical world". He added to that, "The (approximate) truth of a scientific theory is the only possible explanation of its predictive success". Leplin (1984, p. 1) described Putnam as having inaugurated a new era of interest in realism with his declaration that realism is the only philosophy that does not make the success of science a miracle. One should note the difference between this version of realism and orthodox objectivism. The new realists do not claim that concepts in scientific theory represent things as they are, but that concepts in a successful theory seem to have the ability to refer to things as they are. What we have is not final truth but some contact with things as they are.

Modern relativism contends that scientific concepts and theories are just successful tools to manage some reality or to achieve a practical goal, but do not contain any referential ability

to true entities. Entirely different concepts may be used to refer to the same reality at different times. Concepts and what they refer to are not necessarily related. Levin (1984, pp. 124–139) refuted this distinction between the practical and the referential. He held that it is only because certain scientific concepts and theories have some referential connection to real entities, or an ability to relate, represent or express things as they are, that they can be used as practical tools. Their practicality is embedded in the extension of their truthfulness.

The new realistic approach to knowledge offers an alternative, beyond objectivism and relativism. McMullin (1984, p. 35) clarified the distinction between the new realist and the objectivist or the relativist: "The realist would not use the term 'true' to describe a good theory. He would suppose that the structure of the theory gives some insight into the structure of the world". The objectivist and the relativist differ from the new realist. The objectivist thinks that a good theory is true or represents things exactly as they are, while the relativist thinks that the structure of a theory has to do more with the knower and his culture than it has to do with the structure of the world.

Another perspective on the connection between a theory and what it describes which rejects the dichotomy between objectivism and relativism, is found through hermeneutics, the study of the methodological principles of interpretation. Bernstein (1983, p. 228) quoted Habermas as showing how deeply embedded the claim to communicate reasonable messages is in our everyday forms of social life and reproduction, "how it develops a stubbornly transcending power even when it is violated and silenced again and again". Objectivity from a hermeneutical perspective might be the goal we strive for, but are unable to achieve. We can sense the potential existence of knowledge of things as they are, and by this knowledge be motivated in an attempt to know, but final knowledge as the objectivist philosophy describes it is beyond our reach.

The notion that we can get in touch with things as they are is what motivates attempts to know, what explains our efforts, what transcends our differences, and what eventually can explain the successes of some of the theories we regard as 'knowledge'.

Meehl (1986, p. 322) summarizes the continuous tension between the objective world and our relative efforts to know it as it is:

So I begin with the presupposition that the external world is really there, there is a difference between the world and my view of it, and the business of science is to get my view in harmony with the way the world really is to the extent that it is possible.

Objective knowledge is the goal and what gives meaning to the efforts to know, the "extent that it is possible" hints that what we get is always somewhat less than an objective knowledge, a product of a subjective mind.

Acknowledgment of the inability to free ourselves completely from our subjective limitations combined with the goal to raise ourselves to some contact with the objective led hermeneutical writers to see our attempts to know as a dialogic process. They gave language a speculative character — dialogical attempt between human beings to refer, express, get in touch and agree upon the nature of some aspects of reality (Bernstein, expressing Gadamer's ideas, 1983, p. 224). This perspective sees knowledge as developing in a continuous process. What we 'know' is always one stage in this process. What we know may be objective for today.

A potential of utilizing subjective mental processes in order to know more intimately the essence of phenomena was noted in social work by the Adelphi Study Group which suggested adoption of phenomenological methods for the study of the meaning of subjective experiences (see Vigilante, et al., 1981, p. 40; for the definition of phenomenology, see Polkinghorne, 1983, p. 296, note No. 9). Phenomenology is a method to investigate the invariant structure which phenomena may take as contents of consciousness. Understanding the structure and meaning of a subjective experience becomes a way to know things as they are — the attention to the subjective leads to some objectivity.

Acknowledgment of our limitations to know taken together with our abilities to achieve some limited certainty are leading to a narrowing of the targets of inquiry. Popper suggested that good scientific work is not a search for the "true" theory

but a process of selection of "better" theories. The process requires creation of many theories and refutation or rejection of those that are clearly false. The accepted theory is one that was relatively less falsified than others and this theory itself will be rejected as soon as another theory is able to stand longer and holds in more aspects of the test of falsification. The falsification test requires a very narrow hypothesis. Richards (1987, p. 55) noted that Popper's philosophy of science, "By making only limited claims about the world it actually excludes most of what could possibly occur, and is itself excluded if what it excludes occurs". D'Andrade (1986, p. 27) reminds us that good science exists where the scope of the generalizations fits the extent of regularity found in the phenomena. He suggested that the social sciences should try to achieve limited generalizations.

We are closer to knowing things as they are when we try to find universal laws while eliminating claims to universality from our findings. The efforts to find universal laws are bound to fail, but it is this process that improves our knowledge about important contextual regularities. Attempts to find the universal characteristics of intelligence led the field of intelligence studies in psychology into a vicious cycle: intelligence was defined as what intelligence tests measure. Sternberg (1984, pp. 307–334) wrote that only the metatheory of contextualism has given research in intelligence the solid grounding that it generally lacked. In the contextualist view, intelligence is judged with respect to some context — culture, setting, adaptation needs, etc. Understanding knowledge as limited in its validity only to a narrow context, may save its 'objectivity'. It is the attention to the unique, the limitation, the private, that raises knowledge from a low subjective state and gives it more contact with things as they are.

The way to knowledge leads from the objective to the subjective, and from the subjective to the objective. Attempts to find universal objective laws lead to acknowledgment of the contextual, subjective nature of our findings. Attention to the particular contexts in which knowledge seems to be valid gives it a greater contact with objective reality. Shweder (1986, p. 178) wrote of the dichotomy between objectivity and subjectivity and proposed a "science of subjectivity":



The real world, it seems, is populated with subject-dependent objects and objectlike subjectivity . . . . Subjective phenomena can be studied objectively, and objective study always extends beyond the evidence in hand to the unseen and is never free of a subjective perspective.

Noting the limitations and abilities to achieve objective knowledge and its interrelatedness with subjectivity is not a new idea. Some of its roots can be found in Aristotle (Bernstein, 1983, p. 38), in the Kantian tradition (Rorty, 1979, p. 163), and other philosophical traditions. Modern science seems to express, based on its experience, a new refined understanding of the limitations and ability to know.

### Pragmatism: Methodological Problem Solving

Acknowledgment of the inability to achieve final objective knowledge of reality and an understanding of human knowledge as a subjective perception of things as they are, raises a question: how can we distinguish between knowledge statements that are closer to expressing things as they are and those that are relatively far from reality? Pierce suggested replacing truth with method: "Truth is whatever is in the end delivered to the community of inquirers who pursue a certain end in a certain way" (See, for a short discussion on Pierce's ideas on methodology, Hacking, 1981, p. 131). What we call truth is just the best that we can achieve using our methodologies for generating knowledge.

Lakatos (see Hacking, 1981, pp. 131–132) added an attention to growth of knowledge as a sign of movement toward greater contact with the objective. The theory that should be preferred is the one that generates the growth of new knowledge. A degenerating theory is the theory that gradually becomes closed on itself. One may note that knowledge is understood by Lakatos as a result of a conscious contextual process. The preferential theory is not the one that produced the 'final truth', but the one that continues to develop in explaining new contexts. Knowledge is the product of the specific scientific community. Pierce and Lakatos, as noted above, do not say if this knowledge is objective or subjective. This knowledge is a result of an effort to

reach objectivity, within the subjective limits of the specific community. The concept 'methodology', the study of the methods used to employ for achieving some end, as explained by Pierce and Lakatos, can support the continuum view of the relationship between the subjective and the objective. The methods are designed to give the closest contact with things as they are, but the methods are our human methods with our limitations.

Emphasis on the methodology that will generate continuous development of contextual knowledge is replacing the claim for 'truth'. McMullin (1984, p. 35) wrote that scientists accept theory, they do not believe it to be true.

Scientists are very uncomfortable at this use of the word 'true', because it suggests that the theory is definitive in its formulation. As has often been pointed out the notion of *acceptance* is very complex, indeed ambiguous. It is basically a pragmatic notion: one accepts an explanation as the best one available; one accepts a theory as a good basis for further research, and so forth.

Understanding knowledge in the continuum between the subjective and the objective is tied with a change in the meaning of concepts in a scientific theory. Kuhn (1970) emphasized the centrality of the paradigm, the general conceptual framework of a scientific community, and noted that paradigms are used as long as they can explain most of the phenomena that scientists are interested in. Looking at Kuhn's observations from the objective-subjective interrelatedness perspective, this means that concepts in scientific theory are neither objective nor subjective. They are the successful timely subjective ways of a certain scientific community to relate to the objective.

Motivated by the will to know things as they are, we are trying to find the final causal structure of a relevant phenomenon. But what we may find, between objectivism and relativism, are the causal powers — the tendency or potential of certain entities to be causes. Secord (1986, p. 200) wrote that "the structure and properties of an entity, under the appropriate conditions, give it the power or capacity to act in a particular way." Secord (pp. 202–203) noted that an emphasis on causal powers shifts the causal focus to the structural natures of entities or processes with contextual conditions as a background factor.

In observing the presence of certain causal powers, we may be in touch with some objectivity. But, we never know the final causal structure. Holzman (1986, p. 348) wrote that in the social sciences, as in the natural sciences, we are dealing with relevant causes, not with necessary or sufficient causes. We may know that some causes seem to be related to a certain entity. we can not know if they are always related to this entity or if they are all the causes that effect this entity.

Between relativism and objectivism, science is seen as a pragmatic problem-solving activity. Laudén (1977) saw scientific progress as achieved when theories display increasing problem-solving effectiveness. This increase in problem-solving effectiveness is what qualifies, according to Laudén, as rational. Wimsatt (1986, p. 295) described the heuristic nature of science. Heuristics are aids for learning, discovery or problem solving which generate knowledge without claims for its validity. Heuristics make no guarantees that they will produce any solution or even a correct solution to a problem, they are chosen because they are pragmatic and parsimonious. Wimsatt saw science as a combination of learning aids, rules of thumb and trial and error methods. Mullen (1985, p. 13) may summarize the trend for us: "Scientific work is reconstructed as a form of problem solving in which 'satisfying heuristics' are used, principally for pragmatic reasons of efficiency." The problem-solving perception of science ties the relative and the objective. Problem solving scientific theories seem to relate to some objective reality by responding to a need to solve a problem and by their ability to offer some solution, to create some change. The problem solving scientific theories are relative because they can only be proven able to relate to a specific problem in a specific context. They are objective and relative for the same reason.

### Conclusion: The Continuum Theory

Emerging from this discussion is a theory of knowledge as a continuum between the poles which objectivist and relativist philosophies have marked. The continuum theory is based on an acknowledgment of our inability to achieve final objective knowledge of reality and an understanding of human knowledge as a subjective perception of things as they are. The

continuum theory sees the way to knowledge as leading from the objective to the subjective: attempts to find universal laws end in findings which are limited and contextual. But the continuum also moves from the subjective to the objective pole: attention to the particular context in which knowledge seems to be valid gives a greater contact with objective reality.

The continuum theory sees concepts in scientific theory as neither objective nor subjective. Concepts are the successful subjective ways of certain scientific communities to relate to the objective at a specific point in time. The subjective and the objective are also tied together in the continuum theory by its understanding of 'methodology': methods of acquiring knowledge are designed to give the closest contact with things as they are, but the methods themselves are human methods with human limitations. Emphasis on the methodology that will generate continuous development of contextual knowledge is suggested as a replacement for methodologies that claim they will reveal 'truth'.

The continuum theory accepts objectivist attempts to find the final causal structure of a phenomenon, but only as a way to find relevant causes, not necessary or sufficient causes. An emphasis on identifying causal powers, or entities with potentials to be causes, shifts the causal focus toward contextual conditions.

The continuum theory sees science as a pragmatic problem-solving activity in which 'satisfying heuristics' are used. The problem-solving nature of scientific inquiry implies that scientific theories are objective and relative for the same reason. Scientific theories seem to relate to some objective reality by responding to a need to solve a problem and by their ability to offer some solution, to create some change. They are relative because they can only be proven able to relate to a specific problem in a specific context.

### Implications: The Continuum Theory in Social Work

Some social workers are trying to make the profession an objectivist science while others stress the relativist ethical and artistic dimensions. The continuum theory of knowledge, as existing between the poles of objectivism and relativism, may

narrow the gap in social work between what is regarded as its scientific or knowledge side, and what is called its artistic or value dimension.

Converse (1986, p. 45) noted that each science has its own "intellectual texture". Each science has its own particular and subjective way to deal with the objective. D'Andrade (1986, pp. 29–30) described how different professions work successfully with different understandings of science. Adopting an existing scientific model may not make social work scientific. Nor is there a necessity to give up the profession's aspiration to be more scientific. An understanding of its relative and unique situation may be of more help in the attempt to find what can be scientific in social work.

Social work knowledge, it seems, will have to include, unlike, other sciences, more of the relative, ethical and intuitive in its framework. Frankel (1986, p. 357) indicated a need, in the social sciences, for consensus based regulative principles that recommend different methods of knowing for different contexts. Following this recommendation, we may suggest another understanding of the knowledge base in social work. It is not just an accumulation of empirical or theoretical products. It is the current stage in the process of fitting methods of knowing to contents of social reality and the accumulated results of this process. For example, the knowledge base may tell us that the best way to compare between two existing programs is with empirical research. This knowledge base may also include a recommendation to use intuitive methods of knowing as part of a first attempt to contact a resisting client. It may add that certain theoretical frameworks were found helpful for conceptualizing ongoing relationships with clients.

Meehl (1984, p. xiii) described the movement away from naive objectivism as a process in which theories that were regarded as general and universal are not thrown away but seen as limited to a particular context. Leplin (1984, p. 5) noted that in the process of scientific development, successful theories of the past do not completely lose their referential ability but are incorporated in limited ways into successor theories. The continuum theory of knowledge implies that there is no place for the question: which social work practice theory is ultimately true. No practice theory knows or will know fully the nature

of human development, psychosocial pathology or helping relationships. We may ask what specific context of human development, psychosocial pathology, and helping relationship each practice theory seems to know well. Or, we may ask which theory seems to know the context that our clients are in or we are in with them.

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# Federal Relief Programs in the 19th Century: A Reassessment

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*The American model of the welfare state, incomplete as it may be, was not plucked out of thin air by the architects of the New Deal in the 1930s. Instead it is the product and logical evolution of a long historical process. 19th century federal relief programs for various population groups, including veterans, native Americans, merchant sailors, emancipated slaves, and residents of the District of Columbia, are examined in order to help better understand contemporary welfare developments.*

Many have argued that the federal government was not involved in social welfare matters prior to the 1930s — aside from two or three exceptions, such as the establishment of the Freedman's Bureau in the years after the Civil War and the passage of various federal immigration laws that attempted to stem the flood of immigrants in the 1880s and 1890s. Thus, "the Roosevelt era is generally considered the time when the federal government . . . assumed responsibility for social welfare activities" (Brilliant, 1973, p. 385). And "'welfare' was unknown in America before the 1930s, when the Roosevelt Administration introduced numerous public assistance programs in response to the Great Depression" (President's Private Sector Survey, 1982, p. i).

The lack of response by the federal government to the problems of the needy and destitute is often ascribed to the wide acceptance of the laissez-faire doctrine as the official, as well as the operative ideology of Americans for most of the 19th century (Lubove, 1968; Mohl, 1973; Rothman & Rothman, 1972; Pumphrey & Pumphrey, 1961). Manning's explanation of what happened is widely accepted:



Writers who have surveyed the history of social welfare in this country are in unanimous agreement that President Pierce's veto of the Dix proposals established the principle and pattern of federal nonparticipation in social welfare matters until the federal emergency relief measures of the 1930's and the passage of the Social Security Act of 1935. The effect of the 1854 presidential veto, it is believed, was to turn back the growing tide of expectation of congressional aid for specific categories of needy persons {1962, p. 44}.

### Low Federal Profile

Trattner (1976) already described the federal government's involvement in social welfare matters in the early 19th century; since his focus was on a one-time grant to the deaf-and-dumb asylums in Connecticut and Kentucky, many thought that this aid package was only marginal to social welfare matters. Gronbjerg (1982) also took cognizance of the federal government's support for social welfare in the 19th century, though he suggested that this support was given only reluctantly and was limited to education and disaster relief. on the basis of these and similar presentations, many assume that, aside from the exceptions already noted, the federal government did not assume any responsibility for nor engage in poor relief activities in the 19th century. This proposition has been so widely accepted that only few have made an effort to question it.

The failure of Congress to respond to pressing social problems, especially those that threatened the quality of life in the burgeoning urban areas, may have been due in part to the primitive level of organization of the federal government during most of the 19th century. The rudimentary transportation and communication networks, prior to the Civil War, seemed to preclude effective welfare activities on a national level, even if Congress had been inclined to pass such legislation. All of the federal government's activities in the 19th century were miniscule, when compared with those of more recent years. Throughout the 19th century the overall expenditure budget of the federal government remained at a relatively stable five per cent of the estimated GNP, even while the needs of the rapidly growing population escalated dramatically from decade to decade. These 19th century expenditure rates contrast with

more recent federal expenditure rates of 20–25 percent of GNP. In the decades after World War II federal expenditures for social welfare alone averaged 10 percent of GNP, while in 1979 they crested at 18.5 percent. (Gilbert, 1984; Kimmel, 1959; Mitchell & Mitchell, 1968).

The federal government throughout the 19th century maintained a low profile in every area of life, but its inactivity in the welfare area was especially noteworthy. This may have been due to the fact that the Americans rejected the very idea of national problem solving. Local government was held responsible providing basic relief, just as it had been in Colonial times. The Constitution, it was suggested, assigned responsibility for poor relief to state and local government since it did not mention this as one of the areas of federal competence and power.

The evidence supporting this federal noninvolvement and inactivity seems strong, especially when it is realized that it is much more difficult to prove inactivity than to document activity. Supreme Court decisions, Congressional laws, Presidential orders and written directives are more likely to be preserved in government archives than informal decisions to abstain from doing something or consensual agreements that a given area is exclusively in the sphere of state or local government. It is therefore quite possible that historians “will discover *relatively* more evidence of interventionism than was in fact characteristic of the place and period under study” (Spengler, 1949, p. 440).

In 1854 President Pierce vetoed the Ten-Million-Acres Bill, a bill which was meant to provide the States with funds to support institutions for the mentally ill. In his veto message he suggested that the Constitution did not permit federal activities (and especially federal funds) for welfare and charitable activities. More than forty years earlier in 1811 President Madison used the same argument to veto the Episcopal Incorporation Bill (Jackson 1967, p.7). While President John Quincy Adams did not hesitate to use the power of the federal government for various public purposes, he was not willing to exercise it in order to cope with the consequences of the 1820–22 depression since he believed that the federal government was unable to help victims of economic crises. Any federal intervention would only “transfer discontents and appropriate one class of people by disgusting another” (Adams, 1874–1877, vol. 5, p. 129). During the 1837–38

depression President Van Buren also warned against the consequences that would occur if the federal government were to become involved in relieving the unemployed (Richardson, 1907, vol. 3, pp. 344–345). Similarly the House Committee on Public Lands rejected almost all petitions for relief that it received, stating that “in this country provision for the maintenance of the poor has never been regarded as the proper subject of national legislation” (U.S.Congress, 1832, v. 32, p. 612, document no. 717).

Poor relief in the 19th century was primarily a function of local and state governments; nevertheless Washington’s role was not entirely dormant as has been suggested. While no one can claim that the federal government assumed a major responsibility for poor relief in the 19th century, a review of the welfare programs that the federal government did operate or sponsor in the 19th century will suggest at the very least that these programs, though limited, laid the groundwork for many contemporary federal relief activities and policies. Universal relief programs were not known in the 19th century, either on the local, state or federal level. But the federal government did sponsor a number of categorical relief programs for selected groups who had become “the wards of the federal government.” Many of these programs were shortterm, designed to meet an acute need, but Others became ongoing, permanent programs. In many cases the federal government was only the funding agency, while other levels of government or voluntary organizations provided the service, but in a number of instances the federal government itself provided services directly to the dependent population.

### Federal Relief for Veterans

The largest ongoing relief program operated by the federal government was designed to provide assistance to indigent war veterans. By 1813 veteran pensions accounted for 18 percent of all federal expenditures. Though the republic was still young, there were at that time already several hundred thousand more pensioners in America than in Great Britain. some viewed veterans’ pensions as a social insurance scheme, designed to solve the problem of economic dependency of many aged veterans and

of widows of ex-soldiers (Katz, 1986). The 1818 Revolutionary War Pension Act has been called *the first federal poor relief program* since it specifically provided cash benefits for veterans in reduced circumstances and in need of assistance (Resch, 1982).

When Congress debated the 1818 Pension Act, it was assumed that only 2000 veterans would apply, but approximately ten times that number did apply for assistance during the first year. As a result Congress added in 1820 a means test; previously an applicant's declaration of need was sufficient to establish eligibility. Even though the attorney-general ruled that only applicants "in the lowest grade of poverty" need be accepted, ninety percent of those re-applying for benefits were found to be eligible. In addition to this pension scheme for indigent veterans, the federal government also provided pensions to soldiers who were disabled during or after the war, as well as half-pay retirement pensions for commissioned officers. Originally all these benefits were only for men who had served in the Revolutionary War, but in time veterans of all subsequent wars were covered. By 1833 federal activities in this field were so extensive that Congress established a separate Bureau of Pensions, headed by a Commissioner of Pensions.

In an 1869 report on pensions, the Secretary of the Interior notified Congress that the last Revolutionary War veteran had died during the preceding year, but that 887 widows of Revolutionary War veterans were still receiving federal pensions. Altogether almost 188 thousand Americans received just under \$21 million in pensions in that year. This meant that slightly more than 0.5 percent of the total population benefitted from this one federal relief program (House Exec. Doc.1, part 3, 41st Congress, 2d Session, US Serial Set 1414). In the following year many Civil War veterans were added to the pension rolls and the total annual cost for pensions rose to \$30 million. Senator John Sherman of Ohio noted that this was probably "the largest pension roll that was ever sustained by any people in the world" (*Congressional Globe*, February 16, 1870, p. 132). By 1892 the annual federal pension appropriation was \$68 million (Breamer, 1980, p. 145).

### Federal Relief for Native Americans

In an historic Supreme Court decision, Chief Justice John Marshall ruled that the several American Indian nations did not constitute foreign nations, but were "in a state of pupillage; their relation to the United States resembles that of a ward to his guardian" (*Cherokee Nation v. Georgia*, 5 Peters 1, 1831). Indian tribes were considered to be "wards of the nation" (*Worcester v. Georgia*, 6 Peters 515, 1832). This may explain why many poor Indians quite early became the recipients of federal relief, almost on a permanent basis. The framework for this relief program was created already in 1789 when Congress established the Bureau of Indian Affairs in the War Department. The name of the unit and its location in the Washington bureaucracy was changed from time to time, but Congressional appropriations for the relief of indigent Indians became an annual event. A few examples will illustrate the "permanency" of this program. On May 13, 1800, Congress appropriated funds for rations, annuities, and medical care, as well as for agricultural tools and instructors for the Indian tribes. The Secretary of the Treasury's statement to Congress on May 20, 1826, concerning relief for indigent Indians refers to Congressional appropriations for rations, etc., for the two previous years (U.S. Congress, 1832, v. 15, p. 669, House Doc. 240). President Jackson in his 1835 Annual Message to Congress notes that the funds authorized for the maintenance of the Indian poor, as well as for the support of their schools and annuities, amounted to more than \$30.00 annually for each individual Indian (Richardson, 1907, vol. 3, p. 171). Even though this was less than a third of the pension paid to Revolutionary War veterans, for the Indian recipients this money may have meant the difference between starvation and bare subsistence.

Again, in 1854 Congress considered and approved appropriations for what we today would consider welfare services for various Indian tribes. Not only were the funds approved, but the services themselves were provided by the federal government (House Exec. Doc. 38, 33d Congress, 1st Session, US Serial Set 741). In 1860 the Secretary of the Interior reported to Congress on the relief activities undertaken by the federal Indian Bureau

for destitute Indians who had been forced by the local population to abandon their reservation in Texas (Senate Exec. Doc. 2, 36th Congress, 1st Session, US Serial Set 1023). Two years later Congress received detailed reports from the federal agents who provided relief to the Indian refugees who had fled from Texas to Southern Kansas. On February 6, 1862, the Commissioner of Indian Affairs telegraphed from Kansas to the Secretary of the Interior: "Six thousand Indians driven out of Indian territory, naked and starving. {US Army} General Hunter will only feed them until 15th. Shall I take care of them on the faith of an appropriation?" Within days he received the following telegram in response: "Go on and supply the destitute Indians. Congress will supply the means," (House Exec. Doc. 132, 37th Congress, 2d Session, US Serial Set 1138). Congress did appropriate the money, not only in 1862, but in every subsequent year for the rest of the century.

The deficiency appropriation bill of 1866 includes many instances of appropriations for the support of indigent Indians. The number of Indians who required subsistence in that year was estimated at over thirty thousand. The monies appropriated allowed an average payment of about 9 cents per person per day, but the "loyal Creek Seminoles and Wichitas" were budgeted for 15 cents per person per day. (Senate Misc. Doc. 116, 39th Congress, 1st Session, US Serial Set 1239). Throughout the 1860s and 1870s Indian agents (who were Federal employees) reported to Congress about their activities, especially about their distributing relief supplies and funds to indigent Indians (for example, see House Doc. 263, 40th Congress, 2d Session, US Serial Set 1343, for a detailed letter by the Special Indian Agent in Kansas).

### Federal Relief for Merchant Seamen

Another continuous federal poor relief program was begun in 1798 when Congress established the Maritime Hospital Fund (MHF) for the relief of sick and disabled merchant seamen (1 Stat. L. 605, ch. 77). This program, at a later date, provided the basis for the U.S. Public Health Service, but originally it was meant to serve two purposes: (1) to relieve port cities of the expense of caring for indigent sick seamen who are not local

residents and (2) to make service in the merchant marine more attractive by providing federal relief for seamen who could no longer work because of illness. The MHF was not planned as a progressive health insurance program, but was intended to remove from merchant seamen a handicap under which not even paupers suffered; paupers could obtain medical care in the Poor House of their home community, but sick or disabled seamen were not eligible for medical services while away from their homeport (Mustard, 1945, p. 32).

Unlike most other public relief programs, Congress decided that this program was to be financed by the covered participants; a twenty cents monthly "contribution" was withheld from the pay of each seamen. This contributory aspect has tended to obscure the poor relief features of the MHF. Thus one observer made the point that this program "was established for self-supporting, not dependent persons" (Falk, 1941, p. 759). But before the program had been in operation for many years, expenses exceeded income from contributions and the deficit had to be met by Congress. In 1804 Congress, for the first time, authorized a deficit appropriation of \$1000. Between 1813 and 1836 Congress approved ten deficit appropriation bills for a total of nearly \$290,000. Starting in 1840 deficiency appropriations were approved every year (except in 1846 and 1854). For the period 1798-1872, 41.34 percent of the Fund's expenses were met by Congressional deficiency appropriations (1872 *Annual Report of MHF, House Exec. Document 131*, U.S. Serial Set 1566, pp. 42-43).

The program had almost no staff. Until 1871 a single clerk constituted the total MHF administrative bureaucracy in Washington. In each port the Presidentially-appointed Collector of Customs became responsible for collecting the monthly contributions and for making local arrangements for the care of sick seamen. For many years, until Marine Hospitals were established, a mix of public and private institutions, such as local almshouses and hospitals, as well as private homes were utilized for the subsistence and care of sick and disabled merchant seamen (Ruschenberger, 1848, p. 7).

The Collectors of Customs generally were appointed by the president as a reward for their political services. Their ties to the local community were often stronger than their ties to the

Washington bureaucracy. Many took advantage of the poor relief features of the MHF to reduce local financial burdens. Thus we find the Secretary of Treasury writing in 1821 to the Collector of Customs at Philadelphia, urging him to follow the example of his colleague in Boston who refused to send incurable seamen to the marine hospital, but instead returned them to their home ports where they were treated by local authorities as indigent paupers. "The tax of 20¢ was never intended as a substitute for the poor laws . . ." (U.S.Congress, 1832, v. 15, p. 508, doc. 240).

Congress was very much aware of the relief features of the MHF. Thus, in 1847 Rep. Daniel P. King of Massachusetts, in a speech delivered in the House of Representatives in support of the annual deficiency appropriation for MHF, said, "Many of [the seafaring men] have no abiding home; they are citizens of the United States and have no particular claim on any municipality for relief. When overtaken by disease or poverty, they are the proper subjects of national charity" (Ruschenberger, 1848, p. 24).

### Poor Relief

Historians have noted that in earlier times destitute and needy people did not hesitate to turn to the government for help but "between 1815 and 1875 {they} grew habituated to the ideal of individual selfreliance {and} it came to seem inexpedient and then improper to rely upon the organized power of the {government} for positive social ends" (Berthoff, 1971, p.228). This idea has become so firmly accepted that few have considered the possibility that the federal government might have been involved in general relief activities during the nineteenth century. Yet from time to time local and state governments, as well as impoverished individuals did turn to the central government for help. For example, in 1809, the editor of the *American Citizen*, a New York City newspaper, demanded a federal welfare program "to provide for the distress" inflicted by the Embargo Act of 1807. In 1829 "certain citizens of the Territory of Michigan" petitioned Congress for the grant of a parcel of land in order to erect a poor house in their community. A few years later George Raymond, a resident of Ohio, asked Congress for help because he was indigent, had eleven small children, including triplets,



and found it very difficult to provide adequately for his family. In mid-century the Missouri legislature suggested to Congress that every poor family receive forty acres of public land. During the recurrent economic depressions which occurred about every twenty years in the 19th century the misery of unemployment was widespread. Whenever there was a general distress, wrote Sen. Thomas Hart Benton, "relief (was) the universal demand thundered at the doors of all legislatures, State and federal" (Daitsman, 1963, p. 256; U.S. Congress, 1832, v. 32, p. 607; v. 33, p. 147; House Misc. Document No. 29, 31st Congress, 1st Sess., US Serial Set 581; Benton, 1860, p. 6). But Congress almost always rejected these requests for help and refused to become "the almoner of the public charity" (Senate Report No. 370, 32d Congress, 2d Session, US Serial Set 671).

Yet there were exceptions when Congress did appropriate funds for poor relief. Thus, when Congress established the Freedmen's Bureau in 1865 it authorized the Secretary of War to provide "provisions, clothing, and fuel, as he may deem needful for the immediate and temporary shelter and supply of destitute and suffering refugees and freedmen. . . ." (13 Stat. L. 507). Major-General Oliver Otis Howard, the Civil War hero who was appointed to head the Freedmen's Bureau, noted in his autobiography "that the involvement of the federal government in relief programs was abnormal to our system of government." Yet he saw the establishment of the bureau as an important step in making the federal government responsible for giving "aid to the destitute" (1908, vol. 2, pp. 226, 203). He wrote in his Circular Order No. 5 of May 30, 1865, that he did not intend to supplant existing local relief programs, but if it became necessary to engage in federal relief operations, these "will be discontinued as speedily as . . . the return of industrial pursuits permits." Relief was to be provided only to those "absolutely necessitous and destitute." Congress similarly provided that "no person shall be deemed 'destitute' . . . who is able to find employment, and could by proper industry or exertion, avoid such destitution. . . ." (Fleming, 1906, vol. 1, pp. 309, 329; 14 Stat. L. 173-174).

During June 1865 the Union army provided 15,000 starving residents of Atlanta with all the necessities of life. No

distinctions were made between civilians and former Confederate soldiers who were then returning home (Fleming, 1906). But when the situation in the South became worse rather than better, Resolution No. 16 "for the relief of the destitutes in the southern and southeastern states" was introduced in the Senate in the spring of 1867 after the Senate Judiciary Committee had received a report that 32,662 white persons and 24,235 black persons were then in dire need. A sharp debate on the propriety of federal disaster relief was precipitated by the tabling of this bill. Some senators argued for self-reliance and against the resolution; they noted that in the past disaster-hit areas and fire-ravaged cities in their states had refrained from requesting federal aid. But proponents of the resolution pointed to numerous precedents where Congress had authorized disaster relief. The bill was passed since a majority of both senators and representatives felt that in the face of real disaster there was no generally accepted ideology that counterindicated federal aid. Congress had since 1827 repeatedly appropriated monies for disaster relief, but this was the first time that it passed a bill which specifically authorized federal agents to provide direct relief to a large number of destitute persons, "whites and blacks, loyal and disloyal" (*Congressional Globe*, 40th Congress, 1st Session, pp. 39-48, 83-91, 233-237, 256-263, 268, 274, 331; see also Abbott, 1940, pp. 691-693, for a detailed list of Congressional disaster relief appropriations for the years 1827- 1897).

The bitter and acrimonious fights about reconstruction policies and especially about the readmission of the secessionist states into the Union also resulted in the termination of the national relief program of the Freedmen's Bureau much earlier than had been planned. Subsequently Congress had to consider the need for relief of residents of the Capitol city. What Congress did and how this program operated can be learned from a report submitted in January 1871 by Lt. E. T. Bridges, the army officer in charge of relief operations in the District of Columbia:

... Compelled, by the terms of the law, to relieve only those recommended by {specified voluntary associations, such as the Washington Association for the Improvement of the Condition of the Poor and the National Freedmen's Relief Association}, still the right to decline relieving every person recommended was clearly

within the spirit and letter of the law; and consequently "temporary relief" has been furnished only . . . in cases of "absolute necessity." . . . not more than 2/3 of those recommended were relieved. . . . It is probable that relief has been denied to some who should have been aided; but no deserving applicant has been intentionally refused.

The harshness of the army's relief activities becomes apparent when one examines the statistical data provided by Lt. Bridges (Table 1 for sample of the original data).

Table 1

*Adults and Children Recommended for Relief and Actually Relieved in Washington DC for Selected Months, 1866*

	Recommended		Relieved	
	Adults	Children	Adults	Children
February	5681	6864	5401	6861
March	25962	25282	7876	8747
April	7458	6720	2427	2841

Source: House Exec. Doc. No. 57,  
41st Congress, 3d Session, US Serial Set 1453.

In a report prepared by Major George Bell, Commissary of Subsistence of the US Army, dated May 31, 1872, Congress learned the manner of disbursement of the \$12,000 it had appropriated a year earlier for the relief of the destitute aged in the District of Columbia. According to this report, the entire appropriation was expended during one year. Army personnel delivered 160,288 rations and fuel to the homes of the needy oldsters, 80 percent of whom were colored (House Exec. Doc. No. 16, 42d Congress, 3d Session, US Serial Set 1563).

Earlier, in 1869, Congress had appropriated \$6000 for the care, support and medical treatment of sixty transient paupers who were then in Washington. The Surgeon-General of the US Army contracted with Providence Hospital to provide sixty beds for these paupers. Subsequently he requested an additional \$6000 appropriation to pay for this hospital care (at the rate of

55 1/2 cents per person per day) (House Exec. Doc. 10, 41st Congress, 2d Session, US Serial Set 1416).

### Discussion

Poor relief, to the extent that it existed at all in the 19th century, was primarily the responsibility of local and state governments. Nevertheless, in various ways and at different times the federal government did become involved in poor relief activities. To repeat, these activities were not extensive if they are measured by contemporary standards. But these activities were of some importance because they did prepare the way for more active federal intervention in the 20th century, especially in the last sixty years.

Many of the principles that guide (or limit) contemporary federal relief activities can be better understood when one becomes aware of their 19th century origins. Among these principles are the following:

(1) *Categorical relief.* The practice of selecting specific groups of "worthy" charity recipients was known already in Colonial America, but it was greatly expanded in the 19th century. Veterans who had served their country, merchant seamen who had risked their lives on the stormy ocean, even "loyal" Indians, all these became the recipients of federal relief monies. Later in the century, freed slaves were added to this list, perhaps in compensation for the wrongs that society had inflicted on them.

The emphasis on categorical relief, rather than on general, universal relief, has characterized federal relief programs until the most recent times. Though the categories that qualify nowadays are not always identical with those of earlier periods, the principle of categorical relief is deeply imbedded in American welfare policy.

(2) *Indirect relief.* Congress preferred to appropriate funds for relief and then let others use these monies rather than set up new bureaucracies to directly operate federal relief programs. In line with this principle, Congress preferred to channel relief monies to the states and even to voluntary non-governmental organizations. Only in extraordinary circumstances was relief provided directly by federal agents, but even then Congress preferred to use personnel already on the federal payroll (such

as soldiers or Collectors-of-Customs) rather than add new personnel to the federal payroll.

Initially federal appropriations for various relief programs were made on an as-needed basis, but when Congress passed the Morrill Act in 1862, it authorized for the first time a conditional grant-in-aid program on an ongoing basis for all states (12 Stat. L. 503). This became henceforth the characteristic pattern of federal support, not only for higher education, but for all areas. Since 1935 this was the pattern that the federal government has used to support a wide variety of relief programs that are operated by the states.

(3) *Pragmatism instead of ideology.* Congressional legislators throughout the 19th century clearly showed a preference for pragmatic, ad-hoc responses to pressing problems rather than for long-range solutions based on ideological or programmatic considerations. The acceptance of the laissez-faire philosophy did not prevent Americans from requesting government help whenever this was in their interest, nor did it stop politicians from appropriating public funds whenever they thought that this might be advantageous to their party's political future or to their own personal fortunes. Only when these reasons were not applicable was the laissez-faire ideology used to reject requests for aid. We find that throughout the century some requests for help were accepted and funded, while others, equally meritorious, were rejected. Party politics, logrolling, and other pragmatic considerations played a more important role in making decisions than any programmatic commitment. As a consequence, Congressional policies in all fields, but especially in the welfare field, appear inconsistent and even contradictory.

(4) *Political realities.* One of the consequences of this pragmatic approach to problem-solving was that political realities replaced legal arguments. Though three presidents vetoed welfare measures by referring to the Constitution's silence on the federal government's role in welfare matters, this argument seemed to become irrelevant whenever the political realities so indicated. The constitutionality of the Morrill Act, for example, was never questioned in the courts, even though President Buchanan had vetoed a similar act in 1859 because he believed that the federal government did not have the power to make such grants

(Burdick, 1922). Other welfare measures were challenged in the courts, especially during the early days of the New Deal, but in general the constitutionality of these acts was supported.

### Summary

Like all modern nations the United States experienced significant changes in scale and complexity during the 19th century. The complexity, scale and incidence of social problems increased greatly as the country changed from an underpopulated agricultural settlement to an urbanized nation populated by immigrants from many different cultural backgrounds. The social programs that Congress did enact in response to some of these changes were, of course, subject to the political, budgetary and staffing restraints that limited the scope of all federal activities in the 19th century. Nevertheless, though limited, these programs set the direction and approaches that characterize nearly all American social programs to this day.

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# Alive On the Street, Dead In the Classroom: The Return of Radical Social Work and the Manufacture of Activism

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*International evidence is presented for a renewal of radical social work. After a decade of monopolization by neoconservatism in all aspects of public policy and private consciousness, a new commitment to radical analysis and transformation is detected. Radical social work, the second time around, will need to avoid the earlier mistake of abandoning action for critique. In the context of social work education the manufacture of radicalism in the classroom is explored.*

This paper starts from the observation that radical social work is again in an emergent state. If social work is to avoid one of its past mistakes, radical social work must attend more to its own teaching mission, hence the title of this paper. The continued deterioration in the capitalist condition sustains radical outposts of social workers reaching for a structuralist analysis and an activist style of intervention. In that sense radical social work is "alive on the streets". Whereas the street cannot but host the dreadful sick parade of capitalism (homelessness, poverty, militarism, corruption etc.) the classroom avoids street realities and turns inward to its ostensible agendas of education, when in effect it is tutoring us how to live in and not against capitalism. In that sense the social work classroom is dead.

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This paper picks up this issue by exploring the question of how students come to radicalism. It speaks of radicalism by default and intentional radicalism. The latter notion becomes a focus as the paper explores the question of whether, and to what extent, radicalism can be "manufactured" in schools of social work. It should be noted that this is a discursive and theoretical paper. It will be rejected by readers seeking empirical assurances. No apology is made for this emphasis. The new radical social work will have to be more theoretically sophisticated than its predecessor of the 1960s and 1970s, and will have to continue to challenge the distorted and power-laden realities that issue from empiricism (De Maria, 1982).

To hold to its focus on radical pedagogy this paper must avoid some critical issues. Three that come to mind are the politico-strategic question of how to develop and defend a radical social work "corner" in orthodox curricula, the ethical issues that arise in the inevitable race between the radical and nonradical educator to the hearts and minds of students, and the formidable obstacles that the profession, agencies, and governments mount to the practice of radical social work. This is a reluctant avoidance because these issues have been ignored for too long. I am not aware of any efforts to respond to the first two. The third issue has been picked up, but not to any satisfactory extent, (Reeser and Leighninger, 1990, pp. 88-89).

Some of my colleagues may well conclude that, notwithstanding these omissions, the paper is not radical enough. No space is given to how to teach students radical strategies like alliance building, collectivism, whistleblowing, protesting, and activist interpersonal helping. Important as they are, these issues are not directly part of the paper's analysis, which in a small way, attempts to contribute to an understanding of radical social work education by examining some of the methodological principles on which a radical pedagogy should proceed in the 1990s. The paper is in two parts. In the first I corroborate my claim that there is a significant renewal going on in radical social work. In the second part, I explore this issue of intentional radicalism.

### The Radical Social Work Phoenix

While I am conscious of the necessity to avoid a simple periodicity whereby social work history is staged like Freudian psychodrama (Kauffman, 1991, p. 5), and equally skeptical about "cycles" in social work history (Franklin, 1990), it is now a truism of our profession's history that the 1970s witnessed a call for the radical reconstruction of western forms of social work (Rein, 1970; Cloward & Piven, 1972; Bailey & Brake, 1975; Throssell, 1975; Galper, 1975, 1978; Leighninger & Knickmeyer, 1976; Lichtenberg, 1976; Cowley, Kaye, Mayo & Thompson, 1977; Dean, 1977; Hunter & Saleeby, 1977; Statham, 1978; Leonard & Corrigan, 1978; Skenridge & Lennie, 1978; Leonard, 1978; means, 1979). That the call was taken up is beyond doubt, despite the appearance of some notable reactions inside (Pinker, 1971; Donnison, 1975) and outside (Bell, 1973; Lipset, 1976) the profession, and the qualifications offered in a recent study into American social work activism (Reeser and Epstein, 1991, 29-30).

If social work had "entered its radical hour" (Pearson, 1975, p. 132) in the 1970s, the following decade saw a dramatic decline in the power of the radical message, (Wagner, 1989b, pp. 275-276; Kauffman, 1990, p. 13). The 1980s had the radical social work movement fighting its own Hasada against the international reappearance of conservatism in politics, social policy and social work. The radical message was again marginalised by mainstream social work in America, Canada, Australia and the United Kingdom.

Austin believes that American social work activism did not decline in the 1980s. I am not too sure whether this is a contrary view to mine or not. I suspect not. My point goes to the power (legitimacy) of the radical message. I am of the view that that declined. Austin seems to be talking programmatically, reflecting on how the activist agenda widened in the 1980s from its class base to encompass issues of gender, AIDS etc. My only quarrel with Austin's view is that what he saw as activist social work may not have been radical social work, which by the 1990s, I claim, had its back to the wall, (Austin, 1985). I comment on the dangerous (but understandable) fashion of changing the word "radical" to "activist" further on in the paper.

Confused and cautious, mainstream social work in the 1980s went hither and thither, sometimes articulating a liberalist rage against the cutbacks, (Mishra, 1984; Bean, Ferris, & Whynes, 1985; Munday, 1989), sometimes rediscovering its conservative clinical roots (Yelloly, 1980; Siporin, 1985; Pearson, Treseder, Yelloly, 1988; Spurling, 1989; Russell, M., 1990) (what Vayda called the "zestful endorsement of the therapeutic age" (p. 102)), sometimes privatising their practice, (Borenzweig, 1981; Chess, Norlin and Jayarante, 1983; Matorin, Rosenberg, Levitt, Rosenblum, 1987; Rosenman, 1989), sometimes opportunistically trimming its sails to the new winds of efficiency and evaluation (Butt & Palmer, 1985; Dalton & Morelli, 1988; Whittington, 1988; Wedel & Colston, 1988; Hart, 1988; Webster & Wylie, 1988; Sugarman, 1988) and sometimes finding security (and status) in the Pythagorean folklore of empiricism and the quantification of experience (Simons, 1987; Witkin, 1989), (what Weick calls "the subordination of question to method", Weick, 1987, p. 222). Caught within the workings of the neoconservative juggernaut, social work educational philosophy vacillated between generalist/critical and vocational modes with the latter's emphasis on skills training, (CCETSW, 1985).

For a while there in the 1980s it seemed that the radical message was being kept alive by loosely organised enclaves of feminist social workers (Brook & Davis, 1985; Hudson, 1985; Becker & MacPherson, 1988) and leftist community workers (Craig, Derricourt, & Loney, 1982; Lees & Mayo, 1984). In a real sense that was true. However, one must guard against overstatement here. Radical literature in the early 1980s was still being written for, and read by, the ordinary discontented practitioner who was not necessarily solely identified with feminist and community orientations. The works by Leonard, Simpkin, Withorn, Galper, Bolger, Corrigan, Docking & Frost, and Walker & Beaumont, come to mind here (Leonard, 1984, Simpkin, 1983; Withorn, 1984; Galper, 1980; Bolger, Corrigan, Docking and Frost, 1981; Walker & Beaumont, 1981). These books tended to stand out as the radical social work bibliography slowed down during the 1980s, a casualty of the ideological blitzkrieg that saw the effective and resolute plundering of the welfare states across the western world (Leonard, 1990).

By the end of the decade a new stirring in radical writing was to be observed. In the United Kingdom Langan and Lee edited a collection called *Radical Social Work Today* (1989). This book seemed conscious of being the last in an unplanned trilogy, after Bailey & Brake's, enormously influential *Radical Social work* (1975), and their equally important *Radical Social Work and Practice* (1980). Langan & Lee started off their collection with a piece pertinently titled "Whatever happened to radical social work?". They offer no sad, reminiscent piece on a past era. Far from writing a thanatology of radical social work, the editors proclaim a radical influence in current British social policy that is both strong and continuing.

A fresh interest in radical consciousness is also detectable in American writing (Wagner, 1988a,b; 1989a,b; 1990). Taking an ethnographic position, Wagner has collected biographic data on social workers involved in the production of *Catalyst*, the radical social service journal (of which he was one of the founders). Wagner constructed a social work history typology to explain the ebb and flow of radicalism in American social work. It seems that an understanding of what are the critical triggers for the reemergence of radical thought and practice are as important as insights into the absorption of radicalism. Hence lies the strength of Wagner's work. Reeser and Leighninger have also noted a willingness to reexplore radical issues through the establishment of a social justice specialisation at Western Michigan University's school of social work (Reeser and Leighninger, 1990). In Canada, Moreau has recently returned to his structural approach via the concept of empowerment (Moreau, 1990). Moreau first presented his structural approach in 1979, at the tail end of social work's first radical period. Now at the beginning of the second radical period, he appears again, restating his case for wider and more critical analysis and action and focusing this restatement on empowerment. Still on the Canadian scene Lecomte has recently documented the issues and conflicts thrown up at Carlton University School of Social Work as it moved to de-emphasise its clinical orientation and embrace a structural understanding of human suffering (Lecomte, 1991).

In Australia the reemergence of a radical consciousness in social work has been commented on and developed by Fook,

(1986, 1987, 1988, 1989, 1990, 1991b) and De Maria, (1991, a,b). Fook has worked in the important area of integrating radical theory into casework practice. one of her central premises being that casework is not inherently conservative, therefore it holds radical potential, (Fook, 1990, p. 22). Cole, another Australian social worker, has exemplified Fook's idea in the way she worked radically with a long term expsychiatric patient called "Bruce". She explains;

...I was trying to free [Bruce] to take more control of his life and relinquish the "sick" role, and in the long term, to challenge a society which condones a mental health system which creates victims out of people like Bruce. (Cole, 1990, p. 134)

In addition to these aspirations, the strength of Cole's work is visible in the way she weaves her practice into the contemporary radical social work literature. We can also note that the professional journal of social work in Australia (Australian Social Work) will carry for the first time in its history, a special issue in 1992 on radical social work. This is a result of the editorial committee being petitioned by social workers who wanted radical issues raised in the professional literature (Fook, 1991a, p. 2).

One can also expect that 1990s radical scholarship will build on the important rewritings of welfare history that occurred in the 1980s in Australia and elsewhere (Kennedy, 1982; Kennedy, 1985; Kennedy, 1985; Watts, 1987; Garton, 1990).

It remains in this section to note research that concludes radicalism was not just a 1960s fad, nor was it washed away by the reappearance of conservatism. Wagner's findings suggest that the popular view of the 1960s and 1970s radicals growing up and out of their radicalism and returning to the mainstream is simply that, the popular view (Wagner, 1988b). McAdam confirms this in his recent study of the activists involved in the 1964 Mississippi Freedom Summer Project (1989, p. 745). Works by Whalen and Flacks (1989) and Marwell, Aiken and Demerath (1987) also point to the durability of radical commitment. In 1990, *Socialist Review* published four special issues in honour of the journal's twentieth anniversary. These issues (particularly No. 4) attempted to attack the notion that radicalism is not alive in the Nineties. Notwithstanding this counter evidence,

one must concede the point made at the beginning of the paper, that the great majority of the international social work community practice is conservative and liberal frameworks. I mention this to signal an attitude to the reader that the central presupposition of the paper — that a radical resurgence is on the way in social work — speaks of a minority movement to radical consciousness and action. Our history seems to indicate that radical consciousness is irrepressible. However, whether this irrepressible minority actually grows in numbers is a new question entirely — and one that I am happy to keep outside the confines of this paper.

### That Word “Radical”

It would be reckless to proceed any further into this paper without some common understanding about that much feared and abused, yet taken for granted word radical. The radical social work education debate has often stalled in the past partly because the word radical was not conceptually defined in such a way as to encourage dialogue. Rather the word was usually found fluttering on ideological banners as divisions within social work engaged in overheated and seriously misinformed contests over purpose and strategy alike. The post 1990s radical education debate will be well served if and when some standardisation of usage is established.

It is important that this article reveals some attempt to meet this call. Otherwise we will continue to find ourselves in the position that Reeser and Epstein were recently in when they were scared off by the term radical and substituted the more upmarket and benign word “activist”, (Reeser and Epstein, 1991, p. 4). This substitution, driven I suspect by methodological as well as ideological considerations, does not assist as it ignores if not renounces on the dual criteria of radicalism, whereby change is fundamental and intervention transformative.

I propose to talk more about both these matters in the pages to come. I would only add here that it is recognised that this dual criteria put a high hurdle in front of social work. For the purpose of achieving a real identity for the new radical social work, this is the least we have to demand. The reason for this is that radical social work has lost much of the inner consensus it

had in the 1970s as a result of it no longer being socialistically aligned. The word radical in radical social work of the 1970s was based to a great extent on a class analysis. Today its fashionable relation activism appears to have floated free of this perspective. Indeed, Reeser and Epstein now talk approvingly of the social action issues of the 1980s being those that "transcend [ed] class" (Reeser and Epstein, 1991, p. 131).

I struggle with the issue of what (if anything) can transcend class. I think the struggle is important because unlike radicalism the first time round, 1990s radical social work will quickly succumb to anachronism if it insists that the transformative agenda can only be energised through a class-organised socialist framework. We can expect, at least for the visible future, that socialist conceptions of reality will continue to decline (Cowling & Wilde, 1989, p. 2). Radical social work operates now out of a multi-prescriptive community of radical feminists, radical Christians, radical community workers, critical policy analysts etc. Kauffman talks about the "politicisation of previously non-political terrains". He refers to sexuality, interpersonal relations and culture as "crucial sites of political contestation" (Kauffman, 1990b, p. 67). In the last twenty years gender and race have emerged as the two great arenas for the struggles against capitalist oppression, and radical social work has responded to these in very robust terms (De Hoyes & De Hoyes, 1986; Nes & Iadicola, 1989; Dominelli & McCloud, 1989; Dominelli, 1989). Radical social work can handle a waning in the class based nature of conflict as long as it holds onto the centrality of conflict deep within the nature of capitalism and the importance of fighting capitalist oppression on new sites.

While this multisite conception of capitalist oppression necessarily broadens and enriches the radical social work agenda, (Kauffman, 1990b, p. 67–68) it does pose problems of paradigmatic competition. For example, feminists have been active through the western world in getting strong pro-women legislation onto the statute books. The sad irony is that these statutes (and the oppressive bureaucratic practices so legitimated) sit alongside once relatively fair and generous social security legislation that now shows the effects of a twenty year campaign of stigma, cutbacks and victim-blame. Yet the feminists do not cry

much over this matter — a matter that I believe is properly understood as a class matter (the welfare class). So in this case we have the transcendence of gender over class. Women on welfare read about the successes of their better off sisters as one devours an escapist novel, yet the reading is done within the ostensibly intractable circumstances of their own impoverishment.

Given that the socialist alignment is gone or going, given that the emergent radical community is consequently multi-prescriptive, now more than ever we need a broad, non-ideological definition of radicalism.

The word radical has a Latin derivation, *radix*, meaning root. The etymology of this word is traceable at least back to the fourteenth century where it was used in the botanical context by medieval philosophers to refer to the “humour” or moisture naturally present in all plants (Simpson & Weiner, 1989, p. 91). By the sixteenth century the word was being used to refer to qualities inherent in the nature or essence of all things. Thus the following statement, dated by philologists at 1560; “Idilnes is Mother Radycall Of All Vicis” (Simpson and Weiner, p. 91). A meaning was emergent at this time that was associated with the root or foundation of phenomena. By the seventeenth century this meaning was popularised within a political context. In his treatise *On Parties*, Bolingbroke was able to say in 1735, “Such a Remedy might have wrought a radical cure of the evil that threatens our Constitution” (Simpson and Weiner, p. 91). By the eighteenth century the word also came to refer to English political action that sought fundamental change — hence radical reform.

In the nineteenth and twentieth centuries this meaning again changed to refer to the revolutionary acts of people on the extreme left of politics (radical left). It was in this broad period that the word probably picked up its pejorative sense. In 1819 Scott wrote, “Radical is a word in very bad odour here, being used to denote a set of blackguards” (Simpson and Weiner, p. 93). In 1873 Herbert Spencer added, “. . . the Radical does not see the benefit that there is in that which he wishes to destroy”. This quote raises another popular element in the word’s history. Radical is readily a description given by someone with interests in the status quo, to someone else interested in changes to that



prevailing order of things. People are usually called radical long before they accept the word as a meaningful self-description.

It ought not to be inferred from this simple history that the word went through various meanings in a clear-cut way. Some little time after Scott's statement we find Thompson saying;

The term radical once employed as a name of low reproach, has found its way into high places and is gone forth as the title of a class, who glory in its designation" (Simpson and Weiner, p. 93).

The meaning that needs to be recovered from this baffling tradition is one that emphasises a belief and interest in the fundamental. Muller sums up this denotation when he said: "There is a true radicalism in scholarships which despises all measures which do not go to the root of things" (Muller, 1885, p. 921).

Our task is still incomplete since we have to trim and tuck for a better fit into social work, because ours is a pragmatic, not a speculative enterprise. The social work radical is someone who has a philosophical leaning towards the importance of fundamental analysis. Within the radical social work context we can restate that as a commitment to discovering first causes of oppression. That however is only half the story and many social workers who are called radical end here. The next stage is to extend the insights gleaned from cause analysis into social action that is a direct logical contingent of the radical analysis. In other words, to move on from structural analysis to structural practice (Moreau, 1979, 1990; Fook, 1988, 1989, 1990), with the sobering awareness that the latter is far more difficult to achieve than the former. The connection between discovering the foundations of disadvantage, and acting upon these insights is, I suspect, crucial to any definition of radical social work and, by extension, is the basis upon which one builds a radical pedagogy. On that point we can note Paulo Friere's words to the 1988 World Conference of Social Workers; "The role of the educator, the dream of the educator, is the permanent transformation of the world" (Friere, 1990, p. 5).

### The Forgotten Student

Encouraging as these findings and developments about a radical renewal are, it is hoped that the new post-1980s interest

in radical social work will not replicate the blindspot inherent in the literature of the past twenty years, i.e. a clear, but nevertheless hard to understand neglect by the radical social work movement of its own teaching mission. The focus had been very much on radical practice after graduation, not radical education before graduation. One can make the same point about the radical writers in this period that has been said about Marx. It was observed that the person was not recognisable in Marxist writing until he or she donned overalls and was ready for factory work. The radical social work writers have similarly ignored the social work education process and, by extension, the social work student.

Galper (1976; 1980, Ch. 11) has been one of the few (until recently) to make published contributions in this neglected yet important area. He has spoken of the American social work student experience as "joyless and demoralising", with some schools trying to "casework" nascent radicalism out of students, and other schools ignoring the radical analysis altogether (1980, p. 231). Herrick's later study on why American social workers leave the profession corroborates Galper's view (Herrick, 1983). In a similar vein Vayda, commenting on Canadian education practice, reminds us of the commonplace betrayal of the critical, analytic mood in social work students for the acquisition of marketable skills (1980, p. 105). Speaking of Australian conditions, Watts sees what Galper sees. He juxtaposes the client experience onto the student experience and finds an educational process "fraught with anxiety and a foreboding and chronic sense of imminent failure" (Watts, 1983). Another recent Australian study points to a deep reservoir of discontent amongst social work students who feel let down by their professional education, (O'Connor and Dalglish, 1983).

Implicit in all these observations is the notion of the suffering student caught within a system unable or unwilling to practice what it preaches. Commitment is deflated by the grading policy, hierarchies of credibility are imposed by didactic teaching, and creativity downgraded by the pressure on students to accept a faculty map of the world. That the combined effect of all these forces produces a noncritical, nonactive, yet fully self-explored master of compassion, is of no surprise.

What is intriguing is that some students, salmon-like, each year go up the curriculum river against these currents. We have much to learn from these people, and the native educational — survival processes they use. Regrettably the student voice in social work education research is usually muffled, organised, and sanitised by the empirical and taxonomic procedures involved.

Some of these salmon students have travelled by default to radicalism. In other words, their prestudent life conditions of oppression offered ripe contexts to clearly perceive and respond to curriculum oppression. These students appear to have intuitively (if that is the right word) exploited the contradictions in their various learning settings to great personal effect. It needs to be said that no grandiose claims are being made here. Preradicalised social work students have to deal with enormous pressures that seek to delegitimize prior experiences or at best, reframe them so that they become respectable (if not neutralised) configurations on the faculty map. The little amount of research on this point confirms this observation. Philip's examination of preferred students in a conservative social work department offers clear examples of ideological discrimination, (Philip, 1991). Likewise, McCouat has drawn parallels between student oppression and client victimisation, (McCouat, 1991).

In Wagner's sample, just under half of his subjects saw themselves as being radical prior to their social work studies, (Wagner, 1987a, p. 391). This path to radicalism is usually not wide enough to take the whole class. If that were the case we would speak of intentional radicalism, because a curriculum purpose would be active. This paper wants to explore the unusual — the intentional radicalisation of social work students.

### Radicalism Through Curricula Intent

Wagner found in his study of social work activists that their radicalism was influenced by their social work education (Wagner, 1989a, pp. 390–391). In another paper he is more specific about this observation;

One of the most interesting findings of my study was the tendency of professional social work education (whether in the 1960s, 1970s or 1980s) to radicalise idealistic, but non-radical, entrants, and to

activate previously radical but relatively inactive entrants. *Subjects attributed this not to the overall political environment of social work school[s] but to a limited number of radical faculty, field instructors, or fellow students and to their reading.* (My emphasis.) (Wagner, 1989b, fn.25).

I have no reason to quarrel with Wagner's findings but they do raise the issue of the ghettoisation of radical pedagogy, protected by the yet to be totally destroyed university ethos of freedom of thought and expression. I think it is important to not only touch the tenuity and fragility of these teaching arrangements, whereby the radical agenda in a department is carried by one or two teachers, but also to reflect on what learning the radical student gets from these tokenistic or marginalised arrangements.

I am not talking about learning radical perspectives and content. From Wagner's results we note that radical teachers seem to effectively impart these things. I am talking more about learning how to *be* a radical social worker from modelling the radical teacher, when the model stands a big chance of being marginalised and victimised. I can offer no more poignant example of this than an experience I had in 1991 with Roy Bailey. I heard Roy sing in a Brisbane nightspot. Sitting in the audience, I was conscious of two things. I was listening to a man of utmost sincerity, with a marvelous voice who sang protest songs that were keenly inspirational. I was also conscious of listening to an exradical social worker; a man whose writings and teachings were remarkably influential in radicalism's first phase that I referred to above (Bailey, 1989, p. XVII). After the show I went with a social work friend up to meet him. She said that his writings had changed her world. While he remained courteous, the mention of social work blocked any further communication. We were emissaries from a world he had erased from his map. I was left with contradictory feelings. His loss to social work was a gain to worldwide radical consciousness, as he is probably a better radical as a folk singer than as an academic. Why? Probably because he is unfettered and is with friends. I also started to feel what the pressures must have been like on him; particularly as Thatcherism unravelled more and more of the fabric of public welfare.

If the social work student is offered a model that is radical, what does she or he learn of this? Although I am not aware of research on this point, it is logical to assume that many students would get scared off at the prospect of life on the fringe.

If radicalism is not marginalised in a social work department it either means that the school totally embraces it (like the department at Warwick University under Professor Peter Leonard) or there is a healthy dialectic struggle going on that has got beyond the sterile conflicts traditionally engendered in false dichotomies such as helping vs activism. I think it has to be admitted that I am talking about rare and infrequent departmental realities now. The more usual scenarios are marginalisation and indifference. With marginalisation the philosophy and content of radicalism is pushed to the edge of departmental life. Often this is done under the cloak of indifference, whereby resource and staff issues determine a need for a radical place in the curriculum for reasons such as widening the subject menu.

What are our options, demarginalisation? Probably not as that is another way of saying ideological cohabitation. In dialectical terms the frameworks (orthodox and radical) need each other. Cohabitation bleeds off the conflict and reduces tension. Without these we have lost the change dynamic. In the true spirit of dialectic contradictions we need closeness and distance between the contending frameworks. Radicalism needs to hold to an identity whereby it is, and is seen to be rebellious, transgressive and transformative. It also needs the context of the other, and vice versa, to achieve change.

What is the answer — peaceful coexistence? While this appears to be a common *modus vivendi* in schools of social work, it is a nonsolution, being based as it is on liberalist tenants emanating from the university ethos I spoke of earlier; rather than on dialectic principles, (De Maria, 1983). I can offer no answer to this question (in terms of finality) only the endorsement of a permanent process of paradigmatic conflict and struggle. Presently departmental realities are governed by tyrannies of consensus. The politics of homogeneity needs to be refashioned as a politics of difference, with this difference making its presence felt in the everyday life of departments; assessment, field

work placements, subject planning, resource allocation. If these matters are reformed from temporary sites of consensus to permanent areas of conflict then we have met the preconditions for the development of intentional radicalism.

Space requires that I push on to the final aspect of my paper; selected pedagogical features of intentional radicalism. The first thing that can be said about this is that intentional radicalism has to be influenced (if not infused) with a notion of critical pedagogy. I use Simon's definition here;

[Critical pedagogy] consists of three inter-related moments. First transformative critique views knowledge as socially produced, legitimated, and distributed . . . Second, knowledge is apprehended as expressing . . . particular interests and values . . . Third, seeking to negate the "objective" nature of knowledge and forcing the educator to confront the relation between knowledge, power and control . . . (Simon, 1985)

These moments can be pressed onto educational engagements in the social work classroom in the following way.

### *Revisionist Welfare History*

Social work education suffers from amnesia. The huge vocationally driven enterprise either has no memory of the past, or that memory recollects a rosy history studded with liberal heroes. One of the important contributions from Marxism was the detailing of a connection between history and domination. Giroux and Friere refer to this as "...the loss of historical memory [being] the precondition of all forms of domination", (Giroux & Friere, 1987, p. XI). The student going through a social work radicalising experience would need to enter a process with her or his educators that confronts a masked past. The process must be energised by a determination to rethink if not rewrite welfare history so that it no longer serves the interests of orthodoxy. The valuable work done by feminist historians in the last decade to find the lost women in the past is a paradigm case. Poor peoples' history, and race relations history are further examples. Revisionist and orthodox histories should be available to students, so they can understand historiographical tensions.

*The Street as a Classroom*

Historical revisionism is not just an unmasking affair. It is also a form of practical learning which involves listening to the survivors of past oppression (this is why oral history is so critical at this time). And then it is not just listening, rather developing new critical understandings.

This reasoning can be extended from the past to the present; a denominator remains common, social worker students listen to the wise counsel of the poor and disadvantaged. This can only be achieved through a dramatic heave-ho of the orthodox pedagogy which uses the poor as teaching material through the reificatory presentation of cases. The teacher, traditionally at the important intersection points of student learning, is replaced by the poor. The street becomes the classroom. The classroom, noted for its institutional separation from social life, is reformulated through the radical involvement of the poor in the education of social work students.

*Contextualised Dialogue*

This street-centred approach to learning appears unremarkable. What separates it from the way schools of social work commonly involve students with clients is that the client is not expected to relate to the student as tomorrow's professional, and the student is not expected to relate to the client as a source of compassion or interest. Rather a mutual, depowered dialogue is encouraged within a context of emancipation. Both student and client want from their relational moment what they want for the world, a liberation from the things that oppress *both*.

*Central Place of Subjectivity and Experience*

Contextualised dialogue infers a heightened priority for subjectivity, which in turn proclaims the often ignored significance of student experience. orthodox social work education, as evaluated in works already cited, often denies subjectivity in favour of objectivism, whether it be in the way we conceive our professional values or the way we construct our empirical methodologies, and experience (specifically student experience of themselves as students and in other roles) in favour of training. To centralise student subjectivity and experience in these

alien conditions is to reframe the school as a site, for political struggle. In the first radical period Pearson and Galper developed this issue, (Pearson, 1975b, Ch. 2; Galper, 1980, Ch. 11). In recent times the debate has been found in the writings of critical pedagogy. Although it has to be noted that the way the texture of class room education speaks the dominant values of patriarchy and racism, has engaged feminists and antiracists for years (O'Brien, 1987).

### *Radical Utopianism*

Finally, the radical teaching enterprise must be held together by a conflict-based dialogue on utopian possibilities. Giroux and Friere call this linking, "...the language of critique with the language of possibility", (Giroux & Friere, 1987, p. XIII). I say conflict based dialogue because of the aforementioned multi-prescriptive nature of the radical community. Without a busy market place of normative projections, emancipatory strategies remain incoherent. The feminist dream of depowered patriarchy conflicts with the multi-cultural ethic, with the one-class goal, the vision of the demilitarised state, etc. But together they contest against the neoconservative nightmare and the liberal wet dream.

### Conclusion

While an obvious deficit of this paper is its failure to set up discourse among these pedagogical elements, the paper has attempted in a limited fashion to explore ways of addressing the long forsaken agenda of radical education. The thrust of this paper was based on the proposition that teachers, students and clients in social work can and should participate together in constructing contentious frameworks for critically reflecting and acting on dominant constructions of reality. The social work school culture and curricula theory should be subject to constant radical critique and renewal, as an educational corollary to and apprenticeship for the other sites of social conflict that are positioned across the terrain of social work practice. Said another way, the paper calls for a student based critical praxis. An enormous task, and one that, I suggest, can only be actioned through



the development of a pedagogically sound theory of radical social work education.

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# Primary Prevention of Child Abuse: Is It Really Possible?

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*Despite the growing interest in child abuse and its prevention, to date no systematic research has been conducted to determine the usefulness of instruments used to identify and predict abuse or neglect. The present study is a review and analysis of predictive instruments of abuse or neglect with the goal of identifying the predictive efficiency of the instruments. Analysis reveals a variety of problems with predictive efficiency, particularly as predicting individual risk of abuse or neglect relates to primary prevention. Implications of the findings and suggestions for practice are discussed.*

## Introduction

One of the ironies of social program history in the United States is that the earliest *Society For the Prevention of Cruelty to Children* (SPCC) did not engage in basic prevention. In fact, the New York SPCC was single minded in its focus on "child rescue": its mission was a form of law enforcement; its devotion was to the already abused child. The strategy was to remove the child from a dangerous environment in order to "prevent" child abuse from *recurring* (Breamer, 1974, p. 117). While that may be a secondary prevention of considerable importance, it is not basic (i.e., primary) prevention in the sense of avoiding the damage of the original assault. The SPCC, in attempting to deliver the child from further harm, was not attentive to what antecedent causes for the harm might be.<sup>1</sup> The concept of antecedents are crucial to primary prevention because unless basic causes can

be unambiguously identified, first order consequences cannot be prevented.

Although the definitive intellectual history of child abuse has yet to be written, it appears to have taken nearly fifty years before primary prevention was actually embedded in child abuse and neglect program designs. This is of more than historical interest because this basic divergence between program designs intent on the protection of children (the child rescuers), those attending to the deficits of parents (the parental reformers) and those which have as their goal the prevention of initial abusing or neglecting events (the primary preventionists) persist to this day.<sup>2</sup>

For example, what is perhaps the best known concept in child abuse, the "Battered-Child Syndrome", is ideologically in the "child rescue" not the primary prevention tradition (Kempe, 1962). It is in the "child rescue" tradition because the syndrome profile is used to identify and treat those children who have already been abused. A modern example of the "parent rehabilitation" tradition in child abuse and neglect programming is Parents United. Its program design is one in which reunification of parents and children post-abuse is the central objective. Examples of the primary prevention tradition are program designs which seek to screen mothers of newborn children for "predictors" of potential child abuse and/or neglect. Healthy Start is an example of such a program.

Since funding for programs concerned with child abuse and neglect is limited, it is vital to assess the evidence for the effectiveness of these three approaches. But in what follows we focus on primary prevention, to the exclusion of secondary and tertiary prevention, because it appears to be the most difficult to evaluate. We review the existing literature, argue that there is no serious evidence supporting the efficacy of the predictors of child abuse that together create the program theories that have been used to shape prevention programs for child abuse, and then discuss the implications of that finding.

### Review of the Literature

The crucial issue for primary prevention is the ability to identify predictors of child abuse; if predictors do not exist, no

basis for primary prevention programs exist because one must identify an at risk population in order to properly shape and target a program of primary prevention.

In order to determine what is known about predictors of abuse or neglect, a thorough review of the empirical research and a subsequent analysis of those findings were undertaken. Efforts were made to identify major lines of inquiry that might be considered together in identifying the theoretical and conceptual issues pertaining to child abuse prediction. Unfortunately, these lines of inquiry seem to go no further than 1985, because no published studies of the type necessary for this analysis were found after that time.

### *Method*

The literature review began with a computer search of "Dialog"<sup>3</sup> which netted 24 nonredundant titles. In addition, all *Child Welfare* journals from 1963 to the present and *Child Abuse and Neglect* journals from 1970 forward were reviewed for articles that included prediction or correlation in relation to child abuse and neglect. Eighteen titles were added to the review. Finally, the bibliographies of several well known child welfare books were reviewed in the same manner. This process resulted in 29 additional titles. From the total of 71 titles, we were able to locate all but three dissertations and five articles.<sup>4</sup> Thus, this literature review is based on 63 published works.<sup>5</sup> "Publication bias" is always an issue in this kind of review, since it is well documented that positive findings are much more likely to be published. The authors were prepared to use various procedures (e.g., fail-safe N, etc.) to estimate the likely effect of publication bias had the preponderance of findings been positive.

The second stage in this literature search included a review of each article for relevance. The use of "prediction" in the title meant automatic relevance. If the abstract indicated either predictive or correlational research related to either abuse or neglect, the article was included. No article was included without data-based results. All conceptual or theoretical articles were excluded. Forty-eight articles remained after this second stage screening.



These articles were then reviewed thoroughly using a formal coding sheet (a reading guide to insure the same data was consistently gathered on all studies). The coding sheet included: a.) title, author, professional discipline, date of publication; b.) criteria by which article was selected; c.) theoretical base and specific research hypotheses; d.) definitions used for abuse/neglect; e.) sampling process; f.) research design used to test hypotheses; g.) measurement procedures and issues; h.) variables contaminating findings, moderating variables and sub-type issues; i.) predictive efficiency; and j.) overall quality of the research.

In the third and final stage of the review process, we eliminated all articles not containing data and analysis with potential for making the predictions of interest. Thus, to be included in the results reported here, the study had to present, for example, the results of regression or discriminant function analysis, t-tests or chi-square measures. Twenty-one studies met these criteria and were included.

It is notable that only two of these twenty-one studies concerned neglect (Giovannoni & Billingsley, 1979; Polansky & Polane, 1975). The rest focused on child abuse. Because so few empirical studies of neglect exist, we chose, reluctantly, to drop neglect from this review. It is also notable that the selected studies differed greatly in their choice of variables related to child abuse. Approximately half of the studies identified totally different variables for investigation and half used some, not all, of the same variables. No two studies by different authors considered exactly the same, nor even a high proportion of the same variables.

### *Results of the Literature Review*

Even with the difficulty in identifying like variables and with the problem of comparable operationalization of variables, three categories identify the general conceptual focus of the studies reviewed here. They are:

(a.) Attitudinal/personality focus on parent or child, including such variables as distress, rigidity, aggressive impulses, child behaviors, self-esteem as antecedents of child abuse.

(b.) Interactional focus on the covariance of personality or attitudinal variables of the parent with child-related variables (as noted above) and environmental variables such as social isolation, economic status, living situation, etc.

(c.) Ecological/environmental focus on socioeconomic or demographic characteristics, for example, income, race, welfare reciprocity.

These categories describe the variables the investigators are prone to use in explaining and, thus, predicting child abuse. Table 1 below shows the relationship of each study to these categories. Note that more studies focused on attitude and personality variables, though as we will see later, these particular variables do not represent a higher capacity for efficiently predicting child abuse.

### Analysis of Predictive Efficiency

The key question this review seeks to answer is whether there is any evidence for antecedents that can validly and efficiently predict the existence of child abuse. The prediction of future events is a complex business and a number of issues must be taken into account before an efficient predictor can be said to be available.

The analysis of predictive efficiency involves more than constructing correlation coefficients, regression equations or t-tests, although all of those summary statistics are useful. These statistical maneuvers are summarizing techniques for the purpose of contrasting groups. Here we are interested in making predictions about individual instances. When it comes to making predictions about individuals there are four different kinds of estimates that together determine predictive efficiency. They can be illustrated best by a 2x2 table which shows the possible outcomes of predictions with actual future events (see Figure 1).

"Positives" are instances where abuse *was* predicted and *did* actually occur. "Negatives" are instances where abuse *was not* predicted and *did not* occur. Both are instances of accurate prediction and, added together, are called "Total." Note that there are two ways that a prediction can go wrong. one is a "False Negative," instances where abuse was not predicted but

Table 1

*Types of Antecedent Variables Used in Predictive Research in Abuse*

	Attitude/ Personality	Interactional	Ecological/ Environmental
Study/Year			
(American)			
Anderson, Lauderdale/1982	x		
Cohn/1977	x		
Egelund, et al./1980	x		
Melnick, Hurley/1969	x		
Milner, et al./1984	x		
Paulson, et al./1977	x		
Seaberg/1977	x		
Schneider/1982	x		
Spinetta/1978	x		
Altemeir, et al./1984		x	
Gray, et al./1979		x	
Johnson, L'Esperance/1984		x	
Kotelchuck/1984		x	
Starr/1982		x	
Garbarino/1976			x
Spearly, Lauderdale/1983			x
(British)			
Hanson et al./1977		x	
Lealman et al./1983		x	
Lynch et al./1977		x	

actually did happen. The other is a "False Positive," instances where abuse was predicted but actually *did not* happen.

Traditionally these predictive estimates are calculated as ratios. It is important to note that in evaluating how good predictions are, the base for these ratios should be the relevant total predictions made (i.e. total positive predictions, total negative predictions, and grand total of predictions, etc.). In that way some estimate can be made of the proportion of right to wrong

Figure 1

*Illustration of the types of prediction the predictive efficiency concept generates.*

		Prediction	
		Abuse Will Occur	Abuse Will Not Occur
Actual Events	Abuse Did Occur	positive	false negative
	Abuse Did Not Occur	false positive	negative
		(total positive predictions made)	(total negative predictions made)

Figure 2

*Equations for Determining Predictive Efficiency*

Total positives	=	positive / total positive predictions made
Total negatives	=	negative / total negative predictions made
False positives	=	false positive / total positive predictions made
False negatives	=	false negatives / total negative predictions made
Overall Accuracy (Total)	=	$\frac{\text{Total positives} + \text{Total negatives}}{\text{Grand total (positive and negative) of predictions made}}$

predictions. We calculated the various predictive efficiencies as shown in Figure 2. In addition, the ability of a predictor to efficiently pick out abused children will be expressed by a "Missed Case" ratio, i.e., the ratio of false negatives to the total number of abused children actually (or estimated to be) in the population or sample.

Information about the relative proportion of right or wrong predictions is of practical value because, as we shall see in more

detail later on, there are ways in which even a very good predictor can go wrong. For example, it is perfectly possible for a variable to be extremely good at picking out all children who will be abused in the future; but in doing so will wrongly identify an equal or even greater number of children as abused-in-the-future when in fact they will not be abused at all! (See Light, 1973; Light & Pillemer, 1984).

In addition to correlational statistics or regression analyses designed to reveal general overall relationships between variables, our study required the reporting of additional statistical maneuvers (e.g., factor analysis, discriminant functions, etc.) that tested the ability of selected variables to make advance predictions in a different data set. We found 11 of the remaining 19 articles in the original pool contained sufficient information to estimate predictive efficiencies about abuse. All eleven focus on either attitudinal/personality or interactional antecedents as predictors. It is interesting to note that no study using ecological/environmental antecedents met this criterion for inclusion.

### Findings

Discussion of the results will be hampered by the unevenness of the quality of the studies on at least six counts. Most studies used sampling methods that were reflective of convenience rather than controlled comparisons which would allow generalization to a broader population. All studies, with the exception of the work by Lealman (1983) and by Altemeir and associates (1984), were retrospective. Researchers used samples of families who had already been identified as abusing. In addition, mothers only were the subjects in most studies, thus systematically excluding fathers or male caregivers. Only two studies of those included in our analysis, that by Egelund (1980) and Kotelchuck (1982), used data from a significant number of fathers. About a fourth of Egelund's and a third of the sample of the Kotelchuck study were male. Also, most studies included were conducted in hospital settings (usually public) to the exclusion of community based, private and nonmedical facilities. Possibly because of this limitation, the subjects in all studies reflect a lower socioeconomic strata, even though there are no empirical data confirming that abuse and neglect are limited in that way.<sup>6</sup>

Additionally, attempts to establish controlled comparisons or research designs that would rule out contaminating, intervening variables or other alternate explanations of results were only partially successful. Finally, potential treatment effects in some studies undermined the clarity of the results because data were gathered simultaneous with the provision of services to high risk or abusing families. Note that if treatments were effective, and generally they were somewhat effective, the consequence of collecting data while treating effectively is to reduce the number of abusing or neglectful incidents. This will cause a potential underestimate of the strength of an identified predictor variable. For example, if stress is a good predictor of abuse, but families in the study are learning effective stress management techniques, then stress will appear to be less robust as a predictor as the number of abuse or neglect incidents declines. Unfortunately, the studies with the potential for treatment effect do not give us clear measure of the effectiveness of treatment so that we can judge with precision the extent of this underestimation.

Given the methodological weaknesses of these predictive studies, the reader may question the usefulness of a discussion of the predictive ability of the instruments when their validity and reliability are essentially unknown. At this point it would seem that, contrary to current practice wisdom, we do not know how much we know. The results here are offered to underscore just how much we may not know and to give impetus to further refinement of capacities to predict abuse and neglect that seem to have stopped in about 1985.

The largest group of studies to be discussed (8) have been conducted in the United States. Three British studies have also been included. However, because child abuse is such a culturally defined concept, it would be misleading to summarize predictive studies across national boundaries. We would not wish to give readers the impression that the results of British studies could be utilized without replication on U.S. samples. On that account we will summarize U.S. and British studies separately. Table 2, however, arrays results of all the predictive studies simultaneously.

Table 2

*Predictive Studies in Child Abuse*<sup>1</sup>

Study (Year)	Total (%)	+	-	False +	False -	Missed Cases	N of Study
	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)	
(U.S. Studies)							
Altemeir, et al. (1984)	84	5	99	95	1	34	1400
Cohn (1977)	75	66	91	34	9	10	52
Egelund et al. (1980)	78	24	91	76	9	63	267
Johnson							
L'Esperance (1984)*	74	70	81	30	19	16	39
Kotelchuck (1984)	78	80	77	20	23	25	402
Milner (1984)	54	28	85	72	15	31	190
Paulson (1977)	65	54	73	46	27	39	114
Starr (1982)	70	n.a.	n.a.	33	27	n.a.	174
(British Studies)							
Hanson, et al. (1977)	83	97	64	3	36	21	187
Lealman, et al. (1983)	84	13	99	87	1	15	2802
Lynch, et al. (1977)	80	88	75	12	25	30	100

<sup>1</sup> Some studies cited in this table "validated" findings using samples different from those used to initially identify predictors. Where that was the case, data on predictive efficiency is always taken from the "validation" sub-study.

\* Unlike the other studies tabled, this one concerns prediction of recurrence of abuse.

*U.S. Studies*

Keeping the above caveats in mind, the seven U.S. studies show a relatively high overall accuracy rate with respect to predicting both those abused and free from abuse—71% accurate, on average (median total). There was consistency among the studies in this regard as all but one clustered within 10% of this figure. The best overall accuracy achieved in this set of studies was 84%.

Note, however, that the average (mean) false positive rate is very large—50.6%. While overall predictive accuracy is satis-

factory, on average the antecedents used in these studies will falsely identify half of those it accuses of child abuse, misidentifying one child as abused for every child correctly predicted to be abused. Moreover, these studies use predictors which would routinely fail to identify a substantial proportion of abused children: one of every three children who are actually abused, since the average (median) missed case rate is about 35% (with an average deviation of 11%).

While no study reviewed here has what could be considered an acceptable false positive rate, there is substantial variation among these studies with respect to false positives. The lowest false positive rate found was 20% (the Kotelchuck study using interactional variables). This means that even the best study relative to false positives misidentified as abused one of every five children on which it made predictions. There were two studies with false positive rates in the 30% range (both with interactional variables). All others were higher. The highest false positive rate was an extremely large 95% (the Altemeir study also using interactional variables).

With respect to missed case rates, there is not as much variability among the seven studies. The lowest missed case rate was 16% (with interactional variables) while the highest was 63% (using attitude/personality variables). The average deviation among the missed case rates was 10.6%.

An interesting detail in Table 2 is whether recurrence is any easier to predict than the initial occurrence. Contrasting the predictive accuracy of the Johnson/L'Esperance 1984 study of the prediction of recurrence among adjudicated abusers against the average accuracy of the studies predicting abuse in samples with no known history of abuse, we find that predictions of recurrence are only 6% more accurate! Note also that the problem of false positives is still with us in the prediction of recurrence. Even with the advantage of knowing an initial instance of child abuse, the false positive rate in the Johnson/L'Esperance study is 30%.

However, this false positive rate is less than the 53% rate found as an average of all studies and the Johnson/L'Esperance study produces one of the *lowest* missed case rates (16%) of any in the group. While their sample is very small, it does suggest



that recurrences can be predicted without overlooking a significant proportion of cases.

We could not explain the substantial variation in predictive efficiency in these U.S. studies by any obvious feature of the research process, such as sample size or method, research design, various characteristics of the subjects used, instrumentation, etc. For example, there are high and low overall accuracy, false positives and missed case rates among studies with large samples (N=1400) and studies with small samples (N=39). There are high and low overall accuracy, false positive and missed case rates among studies using matched controls, among studies using some version of random assignment, among studies using prospective and among studies using retrospective designs.

Nor is it possible to associate good predictive efficiency with any specific predictive variable or any set of them. It appears that wherever instruments or predictor variables are used with more than one sample, overall accuracy rates, false positives and missed case rates vary substantially. It is also clear that such variation in results cannot be attributed to the general type of antecedent variable used, at least with respect to the attitudinal, interactional, and ecological categories discussed earlier. Predictive efficiencies as a function of antecedent variables are presented in Table 3 below.

Our summary conclusion is that, based on existing empirical data, there is no reason to believe that child abuse in the U.S.A. can be efficiently predicted in advance. It cannot be

Table 3

*Predictive Efficiencies as a Function of Antecedent Variables in U.S. Studies\**

Type of Predictor Variable	Total Rate	False Positive Rate	Missed Case Rate
1. ATTITUDINAL/ PERSONALITY	66%	65%	44%
2. INTERACTIONAL	76%	45%	27%

\* Recall that studies using ecological antecedents produce data that does not allow the analysis of predictive efficiencies, thus those studies are not included in this table.

predicted without an alarmingly large proportion of mislabeling of non-abusers or of missed cases. Further, the damage done by mislabeling in the indiscriminant and/or mass use of these instruments in primary prevention programs would be likely to fall disproportionately on the poor and on racial minorities.

### *The British Studies*

All the British studies report findings with predictive efficiencies as good as or better than the U.S. studies. Of considerable interest is the 1977 Hanson, McCulloch and Hartley study which appears to have an overall predictive accuracy equal to or marginally better than any U.S. study, while simultaneously generating substantially lower false positive rates. The total rate exceeds all other predictive studies (83%). In addition, it produces the lowest false positive rate of any study we could locate—3%. Overall, these are better results than any found in the U.S. studies because, while the overall accuracy is equal to those found in the U.S. studies, the false positive rate is reduced almost to the vanishing point.

A crucial factor, however, is a high missed case rate. It may be that is order to achieve a satisfactory overall accuracy and a tolerable false positive rate in the prediction of first instances of child abuse, a high missed case rate is inevitable.

These generally improved results bear a closer look for U.S. application, for they appear to illustrate a research strategy that might be well to emulate. The Hanson, McCulloch and Hartley study clearly is directed at the high risk child abuse, overlooking the thornier "at risk" category (p. 48). They chose to target the kind of child abuse that ordinary physicians can agree *on medical grounds* is physical abuse or non-accidental injury. That same kind of clear targeting does not seem characteristic of the U.S. studies. The "at-risk" idea may be the cause of the too-wide, over-inclusive "net" that has been used by U.S. investigators in their search for predictors of child abuse.

Another strategically interesting point, the study distinguishes child abusers from others by a very simple concept: "number of adverse circumstances." Beginning with 67 correlates of abuse, the investigators analyze not for which particular set best accounts for the differences between abusers and nonabusers; but for some raw number of factors which

distinguishes between the two. In this sense the explanatory and etiological question is side-stepped and the emphasis is clearly on prediction.

### Discussion

This analysis of the research related to the prediction of child abuse is discouraging. We conclude that efficient prediction for the purposes of primary prevention is impossible for any practical professional purpose. What is the reason for this state of affairs? It is possible that we simply do not know enough to identify the important variables. It is also possible that the technical and methodological shortcomings in the research have obscured important findings. It is certainly true that despite earnest and skillful attempts, the research reviewed here was often disabled by errors in instrumentation, research design and sampling methods. Wherever the explanation lies, it remains quite clear that we have not come any noticeable distance in our ability to make practical predictions about child abuse. Clearly, if prediction is our goal, more and better conceived and implemented predictive studies are needed.

From another perspective, Richard Light (1973), and others after him, offer a clear clue to the reason why accurate prediction is so difficult here. Without going into the technical details of his argument, the problem is due to the relatively low incidence of child abuse. Efficient predictions of any very low incidence phenomenon require extraordinarily accurate instruments. Light shows convincingly that screening instruments for child abusers must be more than 99% accurate in order to be acceptable (Light & Nagi, 1977).

According to the results found here, it is quite impossible to predict the initial episode of child abuse without simultaneously overlooking a significant number or "scooping up" many more children than those who are really vulnerable. No set of variables, or combination, does a good enough job of early identification to allow those committed to child protection to speak thoroughly about the efficacy of primary prevention because accurate targeting is practically impossible. This review shows that any primary prevention program based on present data will be bound to intervene in many more homes than

are necessary. The current potential for stigma resulting from well-intended, but unnecessary early intervention should not be overlooked.

Further, it means that protective services workers as a part of secondary or tertiary prevention could, therefore, frequently and wrongly remove children permanently or at least potentially traumatize families and children who were in no danger. The problem of false positives is not trivial for any level of prediction; even given the *best* predictors available, one of every three to five children will be misidentified as endangered.

These conclusions have important implications for future funding allocations and should be taken seriously. Given present fiscal shortages, funding of primary prevention programs should cease unless or until mass prevention efforts of the non-stigmatizing sort, such as those seen in some Latin American countries, are accepted as the norm. This would require a legislative acceptance of the potential of high frontend costs of broadly-targeted services over long-term cost savings in secondary and tertiary prevention. The alternative is to cease funding of primary prevention programs until research provides efficient antecedents necessary to implement such programs.

Given the underfunded and overburdened nature of the child welfare system, in combination with the limits of current predictive research, the priority should be funding for programs of *secondary prevention* or treatment program designs that can show effectiveness with respect to limiting the damage of the first abuse incident and/or preventing recurrence. From our perspective, family preservation projects fall into this category.

Nothing said above should be taken to indicate that the concept of primary prevention of child abuse is hopeless. In fact, the British studies show a research strategy by which efficient prediction could be accomplished. Research funding is needed to replicate those promising results here in the U.S.A. To follow this research strategy, however, requires us to be much less ambitious about the type of child abuse we will strive to predict and to prevent. It means abandoning the attempt to identify children "at risk" and to clearly target physical abuse of the kind that is medically determinable. While ideologically that may not be the most satisfying way to proceed, were we able to

do primary prevention on the basis of validated predictions of even this limited scope, we would do our clients, their children and our profession a great favor.

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## Notes

1. Actually, there developed a divergence among SPCCs later in their history, some followed the New York SPCC child rescue viewpoint while others such as the Massachusetts SPCC emphasized rehabilitation of parents in order to return children to their original homes (Bremner, 1974). This program strategy was, also, not one which could focus easily on primary prevention.
2. Secondary prevention is prevention of recurrence or spread of the problem (treatment) and tertiary prevention is limiting or reducing the seriousness of the problematic condition (rehabilitation). Secondary prevention or treatment programs which reduce recurrence are extremely important, but have very different costs, benefits and operating characteristics than primary prevention programs.
3. The data bases for "Dialog" were: *Psycinfo*, *Psycalert*, *Child Abuse and Neglect* and *Dissertation Abstracts*.
4. Only the most recent of the articles in the line of inquiry pursued by Altemeir (1984), Milner (1985), and Schneider (1982) were included because the latest study represented the most recent and best development of their predictive instruments.

5. The complete listing of all sixty-three articles is too large for inclusion in this article, but is available from the first author upon request.
6. For a thorough review of the argument on this issue see Pelton (1978), who concludes that child abuse and neglect must be class related since every empirical study he can find confirms that statement. Of course, all the studies he reviews involve *official abuse and neglect reports*. Since Pelton himself concedes that poor people are more likely to be reported and prosecuted, his argument that this is not a reporting bias does not convince us.

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