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# Theory and the Generation and Subversion of Knowledge

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*This essay is an argument for the refurbishing of theoretical thinking in social work. In particular, the author calls for the infusion of generative as opposed to normative theory in the profession. Only generative theory has been proven to invigorate the thinking and doing of professional social workers.*

The current debate in the social work academy about positivist versus more heuristic approaches to knowledge development is clearly an epistemological struggle that, more often than not, hinges on concerns about method and methodology (Fischer, 1981; Gordon, 1983; Heineman [Pieper], 1981). Certainly in epistemological inquiry method must be of interest but it should not be, as it has turned out here, a singular obsession. Method, and the data that it may help us accumulate, is not synonymous with meaning, does not add up to understanding or even, except in the merest sense of the word, learning. Jeffrey Alexander (1983b) in his massive four-volume critique and exposition of the current state of sociological theory and governing theoretical logic puts it this way in decrying the sway of methodology over theory:

The crucial proposition of the positivist persuasion . . . is the belief that factual statements can be ontologically separated from non-factual statements or generalizations. From this central tenet other components of the positivist persuasion inevitably follow: the notions that philosophical or metaphysical issues play no essential part in a true empirical science, that theoretical disputes must be decided by reference to crucial empirical experiments alone, that methodological techniques of verification or falsification are of critical and ultimate importance. In opposition to these positivist tendencies, I suggested that general as well as specific thinking

is crucial to science, and I defined this "theoretical" . . . logic as the *concern with the effects of more general assumptions on the more specific formulations* (p. xiv).

Theory is not only a critical element in the advance of thinking in a particular discipline or profession, but it is absolutely essential, as Alexander argues, to method; without theory method makes little sense, and has little relevance in addressing compelling questions about the human condition.

This essay is an argument for reinstating theory into the epistemological debates in which social work is embroiled, as well as a plea for the particular poignance of generative theory over normative theory. Once a discipline or profession has decided that philosophical and theoretical issues are too far removed from the exigencies of life, and once empirical observation has become reasonably problem-free, then most practice issues and questions will inevitably be decided by method. At that point, theory becomes relatively useless to a profession, and what theory might conceivably arise out of this positivist, inductive scenario is, in the end driven by method, not conception, not value, not urgency, and certainly not philosophy. This "normative" view of theory, it will be contended, is inadequate for illuminating the concerns of the social work profession.

Alberto Guerreiro Ramos (1984), in his attempt to revive organization theory, makes the distinction between normative theory and science, and what he calls the substantive view. The former, regnant over social science, is "scientistic. . . it assumes that the correct model of reality can only be articulated according to the . . . technical language of natural science" (p. 40). He goes on to maintain that a "sound argument against (normative) science. . . simply asserts that method and technique are not standards of truth and proper scientific knowledge. . . . To consider this mode of knowing as the paradigm of knowledge in all realms of reality is precisely what Whitehead called the 'fallacy of misplaced concreteness'" (p. 40).

### *The Necessity of Theory*

If method is insufficient as a means for revealing, shaping, or informing the world of language and action and if the accumulation of methodically derived fact will not add up to

knowledge, truth, reality, or understanding, maybe even not interest, then it behooves us to carefully examine the nature and role of theory. The other side of this coin is that probably *no* methodological entree into the world of experience is without presumption or "theory," anyway, although usually implicit.

Theory can be formally defined. The prototypical definition in social science is probably Robert Merton's:

It is only when concepts are *interrelated* (my emphasis) in the form of a scheme that a theory begins to emerge. Concepts, then, constitute the definitions (or prescriptions) of what is to be observed; they are the variables between which empirical generalizations are to be sought. When propositions are logically interrelated, a theory has been instituted (1957, p. 89).

The task of the theorist is to explain and account for relationships between empirical generalizations, usually at a higher level of abstraction. An empirical generalization, which may or may not have theoretical pertinence, is a proposition which asserts, thanks to replicated observation, a consistent relationship between at least two variables. Frequently mistaken for model, concept or even empirical generalization, it is theory's work to explain the relationships between seemingly isolated empirical generalizations at a more abstract level of conceptualization.

The classical example often referred to in the sociological literature is Emile Durkheim's theory of suicide (Greenwood, 1960; Merton, 1957). Durkheim's initial observations revealed a number of puzzling uniformities (empirical generalizations): Protestants have more suicides than Catholics; unmarried individuals more than the married; urban dwellers more than rural. The quest for explanatory devices for these empirical generalizations led Durkheim (1951) to the concepts of social integration (cohesion, richness of social relationships) and individualism. He eventually constructed a theory of suicide out of this and other conceptual material, posing the central formulation of the theory as: "suicide varies inversely with the degree of integration of social groups" (p. 209). This ultimately yielded three kinds of suicide—altruistic, egoistic, and anomic, all variants of the differing relationships between degrees of solidarity and individualism.

Once having established the theoretic pertinence of a uniformity (e.g. the suicide rate differential) by deriving it from a set of interrelated propositions provide for the *cumulation* both of theory and research findings. The differentials-in-suicide rate uniformities add confirmation to the set of propositions from which they, and other uniformities, have been derived. This is a major function of *systematic theory* (Merton, 1957, p. 97).

Although Merton seems of two minds about the function of more general and sweeping theories (at one time suggesting they yield theoretical insights and help clarify the relationship between concepts; at another arguing that they are too remote from the reality of behavior), he has consistently promoted the value of "theories of the middle-range" which focus on "*verifiable statements of relationships between specified variables*" (Alexander, 1983a). Perhaps the best examples of theories of this scope exist in social psychology: attribution, cognitive dissonance, reactance, and reference group theories.

Thomas Kuhn (1970) has argued that if you want to get at the gist of "normal science" (i.e., the prevailing views of method and instrumentation, of theory and theory-building in a given discipline or area of investigation) look to the textbooks that "scientist-to-be" (or practitioners-to-be, we might add) read. Let us, then, turn to one representative text used to teach research to social science and social work students, Nachmias and Nachmias' *Research Methods in the Social Sciences* (1987) to see what they have to say about theory in normal social science.

A theoretical system is one that provides a structure for the complete explanation of empirical phenomena. . . . A theoretical system . . . consists of a set of *propositions*, that is, statements of relationships between two or more empirical properties that can be verified or refuted: such a set of propositions forms a *deductive system* . . . (and) some propositions are deduced from others . . . (and) they are said to be explained as well as to provide predictions . . . (p. 43).

Thus, the normative approach to theory is that it explains relationships in a systematic way, between discrete groups of uniformities that, without theory, would seem to stand in no relationship to each other. Theory yields propositions which



can be tested in the real world for their correspondence with observable data.

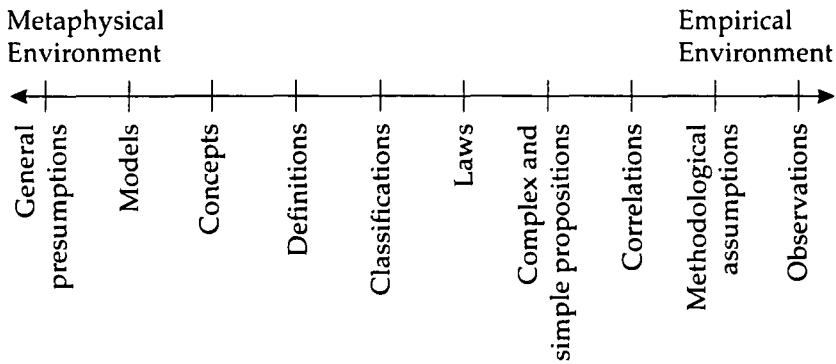
The problems with theory as ordinarily understood are many. First, many schemes identified as such are not theory, even by the normative definition. They are instead empirical generalizations ("Morale among older new residents in public housing is initially lower than among younger new residents"), conceptual frameworks ("We can look at a football game as an interactive tension between the catharses of instrumental, playful aggression and the stimulation of malignant aggression"); models (the "systems" approach), or post hoc inferences about sets of facts ("The rise of admissions into schools of social work during the Reagan Administration is more an effect of joblessness in other sectors rather than optimism about the future of social service").

A second problem with theory, as Alexander (1983a) contends, is that after the Grand Theorists—Marx, Weber, Durkheim, Pareto, et al.—theory development, in sociology, has flagged, the central reason being the reduction of the concerns of theory to exclusively empirical preoccupations (method, design, statistical and logical analysis, instrumentation). This fuels the delusion that methodological rigor ultimately adds up to theoretical relevance. Alexander (1983a) constructs a continuum of kinds of scientific thought—all of them requisite parts of the scientific enterprise—ranging from the most general, the *metaphysical environment*, to the most particular, the *empirical environment*. At the metaphysical end we find modes of thought from general presuppositions to models, and then concepts stretching to the empirical end, where we find correlations, methodological assumptions and, last, observation. Those elements at the general end might be lumped together as "theory" and those at the narrower end as method (and data). A common mistake is to assume the qualitative discreteness of elements of thinking along the continuum, or that the elements of the empirical environment alone constitute legitimate science.

Every piece of actual scientific analysis contains implicit references to, and is at least influenced by, each of the other analytic levels of scientific thought. What appears concretely to be a difference in

Figure 1

*The scientific continuum and its components*



*Note.* From *Theoretical Logic in Sociology, Vol. I* (p. 3) by J. C. Alexander, 1983a, Berkeley: University of California Press. Copyright 1983 by University of California Press. Reprinted by permission.

types of scientific statements—models, definitions, propositions—simply reflects the different emphasis within a given statement on generality of specificity (Alexander, 1983a, p. 4).

Given this, social science has failed in the development of a logic and a methodology of generalization that compels it to move from the empirical all the way to the metaphysical and back again, to develop understanding of phenomena at all levels of thinking. Without such a discipline we are fated to experience a foofaraw of isolated data, and methodological nitpicking. With no means of evaluating the struggle between theoretical propositions that goes beyond appeals to data ("Let the facts speak for themselves"!) we can only develop a Babel of ultimately meaningless data.

Another problem with theory—there isn't much. Consider social work. Historically, we have claimed to: (a) translate social science theories for employment in social work practice, and less frequently, (b) develop practice theories out of the observations and evaluations of practice. In actual fact, little translation is in evidence. Even in the case of theories of psychotherapy and

human behavior, most are imported wholesale and with little modification to the unique social purposes and ethical infrastructure of social work. Instructive in this case are two current "theories" that have their roots in other disciplines but are widely used in social work texts: systems theory and ecological theory. The first question to be asked is: Are they in fact theories? Or are they models, conceptual schemes, or metaphors? Second: how do they orient the practitioner to her world?

Of course, it is unfair to characterize a corpus of enormous size in a few sentences and then critique it. What is intended here is merely suggestive. A widely used textbook in social work education, reputed to have already sold, in its three editions, more than 100,000 copies is based on the systems approach (Anderson and Carter, 1984). The authors open their discussion of systems with sociologist Marvin Olsen's observation that the systems approach is not a theory but a model and as a model it provides housing for any number of theories. Fair enough, *if* theories can analytically be transformed into either the language or metaphor of systems. A review of the chapters—on culture, communities, organizations, groups, families, and the person—reveals that, in this book, there is little integration of systems thinking with the theories and empirical generalizations that are presented. The point? Unless one is willing to cast every dimension of natural and social living in the language of systems as James Miller (1978) has done in *Living Systems*, this model (perhaps, any model) offers very little of resonance to the practitioner or learner. How has, for example, systems thinking infused and extended Carter and Anderson's discussion of Piaget and Erikson? Very little it seems. What might have been a vehicle for the integration and recasting of some theoretical notions has had only superficial impact on them. Models are pale imitations of life, and the systems model is especially so. In the absence of vigorous theorizing, models rush in to fill the gap but, except in remarkable cases, they cannot do the job. Compare, for example, the challenge to, and elaboration of developmental theory authored by Carol Gilligan (1982), its richness and generativity, with Anderson and Carter's systemic treatment (I recognize that it is unfair to compare a small section of one book with an entire book devoted to the

same subject but I merely want to contrast the potency of one with the other).

Finally, a long-standing critique of normative social theory ("normal science") is that it supports and rationalizes the existing moral, social, and political order, and thus, orients the user to the world of conventional wisdom. Sociology, for example, via the manifold versions of its reigning theory, structural/functionalism, and its supporting methods and morality, reflects the limited aims of a welfare state run by and for the middle class and driven by an implicit ethic of utilitarianism (Gouldner, 1970, pp. 61–87). Recently, Russell Jacoby (1987) reported that a sociologist, Patricia Wilner, had surveyed the official organ of academic sociology, *American Sociological Review*, expecting over a 45-year period (1936–1982) to find articles and studies grappling with, clarifying, and informing the knotty issues of the day, from the cold war and McCarthyism to the civil rights movement and social protest. Less than 5.1% of the articles addressed such topics. The favorite subject of the sociologists? Mate selection (p. 158). Perhaps that reflects Gouldner's acerbic and sexist observation, "In loyalty tinged with bitterness, most [sociologists] stick it out to the end with wives who saw them through graduate school . . ." (1970, p. 57).

Ecological theory, a variant of systems, has arisen as a new "hope" in developing a broadly based theory to undergird social work practice by defining its spheres of interest, foci of intervention, and the range of permissible and possible outcomes.

People, like all living organisms, together with their environment form an ecosystem in which each shapes the other. . . . In these complex transactions between people and environments, upsets in the usual adaptive balance or goodness-of-fit often emerge. These upsets create stress. In our conception of the life model, we treat stress as a psycho-social condition generated by discrepancies between needs and capacities, on the one hand, and environmental qualities on the other. It arises in three interrelated areas of living: *life transitions, environmental pressures, and interpersonal processes*" (Germain and Gitterman, 1980, pp. 6–7).

More prescriptive and focused than systems models, ecological approaches, too, are translations in which the normative

views of the world, the conventional idiom are recast in a more neutral, less indicative language. Translation is suspect when dressed in the new lexicon, it simply appropriates traditional and normative understandings of the world. Normative here may refer to either the larger society's conventions or those traditions of the given profession or discipline. Of course, the conventions of profession and society frequently intersect. But the essential focus of ecological thinking is on *how individuals adapt to environmental demands*. While there is talk of changing environments, the message of the ecological approach in general is that, in many cases, it is the client(s) who will have adapt: "the *transactional* emphasis of the ecological perspective fosters individually oriented interventions directed towards promoting personal competencies for dealing with environmental blocks to achieving personal objectives" (Holahan, Wilcox, Spearly, and Campbell, 1979, p. 8). In her feminist critique of the ecological model, Gould (1987) argues: "One of the most important limitations of the life model. . . is its overestimation of the role of purpose and its underestimation of the role of power in human change" (p. 348). The realities of power, conflict, oppression, and violence, so central to the survival of many groups, are given a curious and unreal patina by the adaptation perspective.

While it would be difficult to draw any hard and fast conclusions from such a cursory review of the problems of normative theory, two come immediately to mind: Disciplines, whether practice-oriented like social work or research-dominated like psychology, seem to have a declining interest in theorizing, or in the metaphysical issues and symbolic foundations of the discipline (language, imagery, values, and ethics). The decline of theorizing may end in a dangerous thwarting of critical thinking, a fateful reduction in the pursuit of answers to fundamental questions by which a profession is energized, chastened, emboldened, and revised.

Joel Fischer (1981) heralds, inadvertently, the danger:

The necessity for basing practice on empirical knowledge and for utilizing a range of effective techniques that may be adopted from several different approaches bespeaks the need to re-evaluate the conceptual basis of practice. The major alternative to traditional

practice grounded in particular theories of practice (my emphasis) is the development of an eclectic approach to practice made up of a variety of empirically derived and validated principles and procedures (p. 203).

Second, much of what passes for theory not only lacks interest by *denudes* the complexity, richness, volubility, and conflicts of modern societies (as well as the elegance of modern professional practice.) Gouldner (1970) observes, as an example, that is Talcott Parson's massive tome, *The Structure of Social Action*, a total of five pages are devoted to the problem of violence and aggression. It is, then, little wonder that few academicians, and practitioner-academicians have substantial investments sunk in theory.

#### *Generative Theory.*

The term "generative theory" is Kenneth Gergen's (1983). Gergen is a social psychologist with impeccable and seemingly appropriate "normative" credentials. That is, he has conducted empirical research, contributed to a body of theory (developmental-personality), and has even written a popular introductory text in psychology. But, over time, he has voiced some of the concerns reviewed above and recently has expressed some dismay over the way that theory is typically conceived, as well as some wonder at the gap between the elements of social life as we experience them and as psychological, behavioral science theory describes and elucidates them.

Most everybody these days seems to agree that theories are cognitive products that we impose upon nature; stories that we tell about reality. The rift seems to be over the nature of the reality these conceptions bespeak. Sir Karl Popper (1982), examining the influence of quantum theory in physics, expresses the *realistic* view of the relationship between theory and reality:

Thus theories are our own inventions, our own ideas: this has been clearly seen by the epistemological idealists. But some of these theories are so bold that they can clash with reality: they are the testable theories of science. *And when they clash, then we know there is a reality: something that can inform us that our ideas are mistaken. And this is why the realist is right* (p. 3).

Gergen departs from the realist view. He contends that what human beings are doing all the time, whether conversing, building a theory, conducting an experiment, making a business decision, or wooing a lover, in both sacred and profane contexts, is engaging in discourse, establishing linguistic conventions, both *constructing* as well as *construing* a reality that satisfies, protects, interests, and is palpable and plausible. In other words, much of daily life is spent proposing and testing theories to figure out what is happening, what we will do, and what, in fact, did happen. Over time, some of our stories become collectivized, become conventions that are institutionalized and create the basis for individual motives, desires, and orientations to the world. We, scientists and lay person alike, are in the business of developing languages of understanding, themes and patterns of discourse, and that is how we construct our world, making it resonant and reducing chaos and surprise (Gergen, 1983, pp. 93–106).

From a generative point of view, normative theory and its empirical research program are not themselves really divorced from this subjunctivity of human life. The desire to explain, predict, and control in a methodical and rational way, in its fashion, is similar to what we all do in creating meaning, however tentative. Those who conduct research are also deeply ensconced in particular sociohistorical contexts, and the concerns, values, presumptions, and linguistic conventions of the era imbue their work. The obverse is true, as well. The scientist is an active agent whose opinions, statements, and theories influence patterns of conduct, values, even the discourse and colloquies of everyday life. It is quite common now for experts of every sort to appear on media talk shows to tell us what to make of wife-battering or saturated fat or Mikhail Gorbachev or punk rock. For example, Stanley Milgram's (1974) 10 years of research on obedience to authority, by all accounts elegant and scientifically respectable even if ethically controversial, was widely disseminated (a TV movie was made about it, for example), and changed for those who were familiar with it the way they considered obedience, how they valued it, and, not insignificantly, what it meant. In many social circles, obedience was once regarded as a civil virtue. Thanks to Milgram, the evaluation of obedient behavior



is more difficult and in some corners the obedient may even be regarded with suspicion.

However, in the virtual absence of vigorous and generous theorizing, much but not all (e.g. Milgram) of the program and discipline of the social sciences has narrowed, become methodologically precious, of interest only to cognoscenti, having little lasting or broad impact on society, politics, and culture, or, in the case of social practice, the disciplines of assessing and intervening. Of course, the prevailing attitude in the scientific enterprise would appreciate that: What we should be doing is fine tuning and focusing our knowledge of discrete phenomena. But what we are also doing is turning our backs on the great urgencies and aspirations of the early social theorist—the search for an “anthropodicy”; the explanation of evil and alienation in human life, and a basis for the development of plans and visions for the resurrection of the human spirit. Ernest Becker (1968) put it this way:

The science of man [*sic*] in society must be a superordinate value science; on which has opted for human progress, and which has a clear and comprehensive, compelling idea of what constitutes such progress. The task of such a science would be the incessant implementation of human well-being (p. xiii).

Such an ideal would be a product of the achievement of a thoroughgoing theory of human alienation (which Becker believed we already had in immanence and which he devoted his life to vivifying).

The great theories of our immediate past, those that dwarf our efforts today—Marx, Freud, Weber, Mumford, etc.—were not simply theories to be tested but were explicit and implicit critiques of convention and social order, and had within them proposals for reform, revision, or revolution (Becker, 1968, pp. 33–67; Gergen, 1983, pp. 107–108; Gouldner, 1970, pp. 87–102; Jacoby, 1987, pp. 3–26). In the end, however, it is not the scope of these theories that should bedazzle us, it is instead that these theorists were literate, they generated discourse, controversy, and contravening notions about the nature of society, the relationship of the individual to society, and the meaning of history. Today, academia-bound intellectuals “share

and idiom and a discipline. Gathering in annual conferences to compare notes, they constitute their own universe" (Jacoby, 1987, p. 7). Generative theory creates doubt and sheds light; normative theory promises certainty, and narrows its beam.

In his thoughtful article on theoretical (and methodological) pluralism, John Brekke (1986) advocates for the ideas of Imre Lakatos as the basis for developing criteria for selecting one theory over another. These criteria involve a kind of generation: That is, how much *more* knowledge can a new theory generate compared to a more established one? How much more of the real world will be revealed? How much of contending theories can be accounted for in the terms of this theory? The problem with Lakatos' criteria is that they depend on the assertion of a real world that exists and can be known apart from human subjectivity and subjunctivity, and they seem strangely aloof from the concerns and conditions of everyday life. In Lakatos' view, theory is progressive if it leads to new predictions. It is empirically progressive if these conditions are verified experimentally. In essence, what Lakatos suggests is that, in spite of hard-core commitments of a scientific program, that because the world awaits discovery, scientific knowledge is cumulative, and as it accumulates, brings us closer to the truth (Baker and Gholson, 1984).

Generative theory, by contrast, joins with concerns about the human condition within contemporary society and unabashedly asserts its social interest.

Theoretical accounts (must) be compared in terms of *generative capacity, that is the capacity to challenge guiding assumptions of culture, to raise fundamental questions regarding contemporary social life, to foster reconsideration of that which is "taken for granted," and thereby to generate fresh alternatives for social action*; (Gergen, 1983, p. 109).

Any theory "may truncate one's capacities for problem solving" (Gergen, 1983, p. 109) or put blinders on prophets, but the value of generative theory is that it continually urges that need to think anew, take a different perspective, develop a new discourse, a different structure of meaning. Two examples leap to mind, though neither may have achieved the fullness of theory yet. Carol Gilligan's (1982) challenge to the usual psychosocial,

cognitive accounts of human development reveals two things. Existing theories of the lifespan are pretty much synonymous with acceptable and reputable social wisdom. Furthermore, the emendations of Gilligan make it clear that not only do the theories implicitly support current sexist notions but that they have prevented us from seeing, over the past seven decades of such theorizing, development in a different light. Is Gilligan right? Who knows for sure? But she has initiated a new conversation, new possibilities for meaning, revised exchanges between developmental thinkers, and she has upset the interaction between developmental theory and social institutions and their keepers. Out of such discourse "validity" will come: That is, we will discuss how such thinking affects the way we raise children, the morality of parenthood, and our notions of male and female identities, and the possibilities for revising action and policy that may follow. Not the least of the effects of such thinking, for example, would be to raise the status of connectedness and caring to debatable moral and social issues (Davis, 1985; Rhodes, 1985).

Weick's (1983; 1986; 1987) efforts to challenge the basic presumptions of the social work academy, and profession in their search for a knowledge base has generative qualities. Her work focuses upon the waning power and frail human relevance of an empiricist/positivist epistemology for the profession and its supporting "sciences." By searching other fields in turmoil (physics, health, biological structuralism, for example) she seeks to develop means of inquiry, frames of presumption that turn us toward the novel, the whole ("web of relationships"), and the transformational to which we, as a profession, claim to be committed.

I will begin by looking at the social work belief in the transformational capacity of individuals. The use of the word "transformation" signals an interesting shift in language. The term is commonly used in holistic health and the new psychologies to express a belief in the inherent capacity of human beings to engage in fundamental personal and social change. It connotes an interior ability that stands in sharp contrast to the more traditional notion of an externally stimulated or socially created ability (1987, p. 224).

The idea of generative theory and implicit in both Gilligan's and Weick's work is that we do not need to brush another theoretical patina on the surface of official "reality." What we require are telling perspectives that open our eyes, draw attention, direct us to new pathways and novel possibilities.

*The Two Qualities of Generative Theory: Critique and Narrative*

*Critique.* The essence of generative theory, for Gergen, is the power it has to render part of the social world intelligible in a way that exceeds the conventional wisdom, and extends the reach and possibility of the relevant social groups. A generative theory must create doubt about the current constructions of the world, especially narrow, univocal, and stultifying ones (pp. 167–169). In this sense, insight or intelligibility is a function of systematic, mutually authored social critique (Saleebey, 1987; Walzer, 1987). Such generative re-interpretations should not only give us reason to examine existing social institutions, cultural forms, political ideologies, and moral imperatives (as well as existing social and practice theory) but they should also at least imply or, better yet, fully enunciate alternative plans and programs for individual and collective life (Gergen, 1983, pp. 169–170). Since social change (in the sense of human betterment) is at stake here, the relationship of value to theory becomes critical and obvious; theories exist, unwittingly or deliberately, to sustain and promulgate values or to challenge them. Attachment theories of early human development implicitly uphold, for example, the value of the continual presence and emotional involvement of the mother in the early months and years of the child's development and raise doubt, in some instances, about the capacity of other caretakers to encourage attachment behaviors and provide bonding-promoting responses (Bowlby, 1969). To carry this a step further, they may also raise doubt about some child care ventures outside the home.

If, then, the function of theories is to provide the basis for alternative views and practices what is to prevent a cacophony of theoretical voices from drowning our sensibilities? The fact that knowledge and rationality are products of interpersonal negotiation, debate, dialectic, and dialogue is one protection. We decide what theories prevail because we have concluded

together that they provide more interest, open up other ways of interpreting phenomena that generate new alternatives of inquiry and action, clarify difficult moral and ethical choices, and create new meanings. Theories *do not discover* new knowledge. They give us an amended or fresh lexicon and grammar with which to discourse about ordinary and extraordinary events, structures and relationships. They also pose new alternatives for social and individual action. Their rationality, their value, their humanity, in the end, is judged in dialogue and praxis.

*Narrative.* Jerome Bruner (1986), perhaps the real inspiration for the reviving of cognitive theory in this country and Europe, describes two modes of knowing—argument and story, or the *paradigmatic* (the current, scientific/positivist world-view), and the *poetic* or *narrative* (p. 11). The two manners of knowing are, in his view, complementary but irreducibly different. Arguments *convince* us of the truth; stories *imbue* life with meaning. What either can tell us about human nature and the human condition is problematic. Science, the paradigmatic, attempts to “make a world that is invariant across human intentions and plights . . . on the other had the humanist deals principally with the world as it changes with the position and stance of the viewer” (p. 50).

Narrative succeeds or has interest because it deals with “subjunctivities,”—the worlds of human possibility—and because of its sensitivity to shifting and varied contexts of human consciousness and interaction. Argument, or science, succeeds as it demonstrates context independence and persistence (p. 50). Precisely what this implies is not clear. But one might make the case the “science” can tell us about the non-subjunctive world, a world bereft of cognitive intent, that it can inform us about parameters of the social world that we shape with our consciousness. For example, we can be enlightened about:

How many people are suffering from A.I.D.S. and what socioeconomic, ethnic, and cultural groups are “over-represented” (although designation of these groups can be a figurative problem)? How many children are sexually abused by a same-sexed parent? What people say about the coming presidential election in terms of who they will likely vote for and why, and so forth?

This sounds like pretty routine stuff—banal, even. W.V.O. Quine said in his review of Nelson Goodman's *Way of World Making*, that physical theory is preponderantly conceptualization, even poetry, and very limitedly, observation (Brunner, 1986, p. 100). Science as method brings us the mundane and that is a small part of the epistemological enterprise. Generative theory weaves a literate fabric of understanding and interpretation.

So we have come full circle. The data do not tell us the story; the method does not bring us closer, in most cases, to human "reality." Normative theory abhors the novel, supports the conventional, and sustains an epistemology of adjustment and adaptation that is increasingly hard to rationalize. What we seek is theory, a story, a narrative that makes our world resonant and intelligible. Not just our professional world, but our personal world as well because the two unite as we construct an interesting interpretation of our circumstances. Bruner (1986) provides words to close our case with:

If I have, then, made much of the contingent and subjunctive not so much in story-telling as in story apprehending, it is because that narrative mode leads to conclusions not about certainties in an aboriginal world but about varying perspectives that can be constructed to *make experience comprehensible* (p. 37).

### *Conclusion: Generative Theory in Social Work*

Generative theory is both requisite and possible in the profession of social work. there are at least three reasons for this.

First, the nature of practice, as we have construed it in the "normative" sense: That is, the professional as an applied scientist, or technologist wielding principles and techniques deduced and derived from scientific theory—probably has very little to do with what professionals actually do. If this is the case, then normative definitions of theory (and practice) tend to draw the professional (and the educator for the professions) off the mark. That may explain in part why there is often such a gap of relevance between academicians and practitioners. Donald Schon (1983), along with Chris Argyris (1978), has studied the nature of professional knowing and doing for many years. In his words:

In the varied topography of professional practice, there is the high hard ground where practitioners can make use of research-based theory and technique, and there is the swampy lowland where situations are confusing "messes" incapable of technical solution. The difficulty is that the problem of the high ground, however great their technical interest, are often relatively unimportant to clients or the larger society, while in the swamp are problems of greatest human concern (p. 12).

If the bulk of what practitioners do is in reality's bog, then normative theories may be of relatively little value to them, and generative theory, formed of the shared experiences and dialogues between practitioners and clients, and between practitioners and academicians might, in fact, have more value, be more democratic, more provisional, and take many more shapes and forms depending on the shifting contexts of practice.

Second, the ethical and historical traditions of social work profession would seem to make the impulses and orientation of generative theory ideal. Social work, in the pursuit of social justice, fired by an ethic of indignation, and absorbed with the plight of the vulnerable, the disadvantaged and disenfranchised, would seem to be a particularly hospitable environment for the development of interpretations designed to restore a critical and productive alternative perspectives on social "reality." It is still true, protestations to the contrary, that normative theory supports a conservative professional regimen: adaptation and adjustment to the environment, and restrained social change and challenge. Whether or not social work's current disengagement from vulnerable populations is an effect of the infusion of the *weltanschauung* of normal science or whether the disengagement is the cause of such infusion is uncertain; the more generative view (in the sense that it will cause us to reconsider seriously the place of "science" in social work education, research, and practice) supports the latter hypothesis. In any case, there is ample historical and ontological reason to embrace a generative approach. As Habermas (1970), Marcuse (1966), Mumford (1970), Barrett (1976), Freire (1973), and others (Foucault, 1980) have shown us, knowledge and method can either oppress or liberate. It is in the nature of the normative view of science and technology, through the methodological



requisites of distantiating and manipulation, the mandate of expertise and exclusivism, to subjugate. It is in the nature of generative theory to offer a means, a venue, of liberation. What would be more hospitable to the ethical impulses of the profession of social work?

Finally, what profession is more comfortable with narrative, story, the meaning of the moment for the client, than social work? Our history is rich with respect for the narrative accounts of others, although fears of not being scientifically respectable may have made us more tentative in this regard. As Howard Goldstein (1986) suggests:

The task of both the worker and the client is to develop . . . a theory in collegial fashion, as they join together in pursuit of *understanding and meaning that is relevant to the client's life* (my emphasis, p. 46).

In describing the oral, preliterate culture of Alcoholics Anonymous (AA), a former alcoholic (Elpenor, a pseudonym) talked of the absolute importance of narrative and story-telling as a kind of generative theory for the needy alcoholic wanting to sober up.

In the rooms, then, where AA people tell their stories, there are really two dramas going on, the events recounted in the narrative and the narrator's struggle to recover his experience to build a new ladder of word on firmer footing. The story emerges rung by rung, sometimes as farce, sometimes as melodrama: a situation comedy or horror show. Often it is both (1986, p. 46).

Without narrative, the "bottomless neediness" and "wondrous hopes" of the newly sober individual remain just that, and the bottle becomes the only means of sating both. Narrative and story-telling are important to all clients; we, as social workers should know. Perhaps, as Schon implies, the central activity of the professional is framing, "setting" problems in phenomenal terms that generate movement, interest, and possibility. In other words, what we offer the client are grounds and language for a more plausible, action-freeing narrative. For the drinker, the narrative of possibility is the one that bathes the past in unique meaning and frames the future with palpable hope; we should wish no less for those we presume to help.

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# Beyond An Underclass: An Essay on Up-Front Politics

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*Debate about underclass conceptualization has once again forced sociologists to acknowledge the political context and implications of our work. This article extends the critical examination of underclass conceptualization to relatively undeveloped but politically important areas of concern. Initially we discuss the political economic context of conceptual controversies surrounding poverty. With a preference for structural analysis, we call for the return of class to economically marginalized people and suggest how that goal might be enhanced by a focus on relations of distribution as well as production. Valuing subjects' vantage points, we recommend how sociologists' work can return agency and diversity to economically marginalized people. Finally, acknowledging the agency of sociologists, we call for greater attention to the implications of our class positions for how we, too, make history, either by intention or default.*

Periodically critics within and outside of sociology challenge the relevance, appropriateness, or accuracy of our conceptualizations. As a case in point, a growing number of analysts are reconsidering or discarding altogether the concept of an underclass. William Julius Wilson's recent decision (1990) to substitute "ghetto poor" for the term "underclass" in his ASA Presidential address is a significant step for the author with whom the concept was most readily identified in the 1980s. Wilson acknowledges the influence of Gans' (1990) award-winning critique in his choice of alternative terminology, hoping that the switch will "... move us away from the controversy over the concept underclass..." (Wilson, 1991:6). At the same time, Wilson's address reflects how his own ideas have benefitted from the scholarly and political critiques around underclass conceptualization.

For example, he more explicitly emphasizes structural factors in economic marginalization even as he attempts to link them systematically to issues of the social milieu of economically marginalized people. Furthermore, he highlights researchers' responsibility "...to ensure that their findings and theories are interpreted accurately by those in the public who use their ideas" (Wilson, 1991:12).

While we concur with Gans' (1990) call to abandon underclass altogether as a sociological concept, we nevertheless consider it premature to put aside the critical issues its usage has raised. In particular, debate about an underclass has forced sociologists once again to acknowledge the political implications of our work. The purpose of this article is to extend the critical examination of underclass conceptualization to relatively undeveloped but politically important areas of concern. The following critique is intended to contribute both to the sociology of knowledge and to the empowerment of economically marginalized people.

The more conscientiously we understand the political implications of our work, the more likely we will achieve the goal of accurate interpretation by those who use it. Morris (1989) contends that the ambiguity of underclass terminology has enabled it to mean all things to all people, scholars and policy-makers alike. Such ambiguity led to the work of a self-proclaimed social democrat like Wilson being quoted with favor by conservative thinkers. The latter promote policies significantly different from Wilson but use his claims to bolster their agendas. In order to avoid situations like Wilson has experienced, we maintain that sociologists must more carefully consider the social context of our work, how we think and talk about marginalized people, and where we choose to stand, by effort or default, in the political issues that surround our work.

This article addresses the foregoing political questions directly, by (1) highlighting the political economic context of the underclass controversy, (2) arguing the need to emphasize class issues of economically marginalized people, including the primacy of structural factors, and (4) suggesting that the class position of social scientists and welfare professionals is a central feature of the current controversies around an underclass.

Present ideas about an underclass present the most recent manifestation in a legacy of debate that goes back to the Elizabethan Poor Laws nearly four hundred years ago (e.g., Stoesz et. al., 1989; Morris, 1989; Gans, 1990). That legacy has fostered different terminology over the years (e.g., lumpenproletariat, dangerous classes, problem families, paupers, the disadvantaged, the disreputable poor, the underprivileged, the hard-to-reach). Yet each new conceptualization has served the purpose of setting some impoverished people apart from others, specifically with regard to their attitudes, values, and behaviors. The extent to which such distinctions have been empirically sound and theoretically meaningful is problematic, but these concerns have not deterred policy-makers from acting as if meaningful distinctions exist.

There is no denying the severity of hardship and marginalization experienced by a disturbingly large segment of the U. S. population. At issue is how scholars might best apprehend the contours of such a situation and, having done so, can most productively inform social movement for the eradication of extreme need and social alienation. In this article our purpose is to show how scholarship might proceed in ways that demonstrate both respect for the subjects of investigation and commitment to meaningful social change by making the connection between scholarly activity and its political influence explicit.

### The Political Economic Context of Conceptual Controversies

Terminological shifts occur within specific political economic contexts and are occasioned as much by political forces as they are by empirical findings. Consequently, Morris (1989) argues, the term underclass found favor at precisely the juncture that culture of poverty language had become ideologically discredited due to how it stigmatized those it described. The ideas of an underclass and a culture of poverty hold in common a focus on individuals' marginalization as a result of their values, attitudes, and behaviors. At the same time, Morris notes, the shift in terms was accompanied by three significant shifts in emphasis, all of which added new elements to previous formulations: blaming welfare programs for dependency, emphasizing



racial-ethnic minority groups, and assuming that the situation would continue to worsen.

Gans (1990) points out that the original meaning of the term underclass was purely economic (Myrdal, 1962), with a focus on the need for economic reform to create employment. Auletta (1982) may have been the first to attach the idea of social pathology to the term underclass when he maintained that psychological and social disorganization separated the underclass from others who were poor (Stoesz et.al., 1989). After that, the emphasis shifted increasingly to peoples' behaviors as the cause of poverty, so that by 1988 Ricketts and Sawhill operationally defined the underclass by behavior *rather than* income, claiming that "... the continued reliance on measures of income or poverty to differentiate the underclass from other groups is inconsistent with discussions which characterize the underclass as a group engaging in socially dysfunctional behavior" (p.318).<sup>1</sup>

The changing emphases are not surprising in light of the different political winds of the 1960s culture of poverty era and the 1980s underclass era. Indeed, the latter decade has been witness to diminished federal commitment to welfare programs and racial equality. These political shifts have risen in conjunction with an increasingly vulnerable national economy within an increasingly competitive international marketplace. How politically convenient it is, then, to find embedded in the very conceptualization of social issues the messages that welfare hurts peoples' life chances, poor people—especially people of color—create their own disadvantages, and the public should not expect improvement in the lives of the very poor.

The manner in which underclass terminology frames political debate, therefore, is of major importance. Because political language (Edelman, 1977) is inevitable when discussing social issues, we contend that scholars must give greater attention to the words we use, even if it means declining to reproduce terminology currently in widespread usage among our colleagues. Linguistic framing determines, among other things, the perceived severity of a problem, the nature of needed interventions, appropriate interveners, and images of those involved in the issue. Among the issues Gans (1990) explored when deconstructing the term underclass is his concern that the so-called

underclass themselves will be reified as causal agents and then subjected to policies of social control. In the process, he fears, the fundamental issue of poverty will be sidestepped.

Two recent illustrations of actual policy proposals reinforce what for Gans appeared to be a hypothetical concern. First, in the city of Atlanta, whose economy is heavily dependent on tourist and convention trade, repeated suggestions have been offered by city officials and business organizations to establish a "hospitality zone" downtown. Within that zone police would have a stronger presence and would be encouraged to arrest people for loitering, public drunkenness, and panhandling. The effect would be to push homeless people into other areas of the city or city jails away from tourists and conventioners. As yet none of these proposals has been implemented because advocates for the homeless have been able repeatedly to mobilize vocal opposition to the plans. The latter groups inevitably recommend that the city put funds into social services instead of social control. The implication of hospitality zone ideas, however, is that the city cannot solve the problem of homelessness; the best it can do, then, is to make homeless people less troublesome for city visitors and workers. Such an emphasis guarantees that the problem will not be resolved.

Even more alarming because of its unapologetic bluntness is Conforti's (1990) proposal to move homeless people to underutilized or unused military reservations. Conforti admits that he initially was repulsed by such an idea but has eventually come to embrace it due to the failure of homelessness to be alleviated during the 1980s. Again, such a drastic measure ensures that the fundamental causes of homelessness would be sidestepped. What Conforti fails to realize is that the problem was not resolved in the 1980s precisely because policy was inadequate, not, as he implies, because the problem is relatively intractable.

Conforti's (1990) assumption of intractability reflects Gans' (1990) key concern: that underclass terminology is a linguistic strategy to prepare the public for permanently economically marginalized groups—a caste. If such a scenario unfolds and some people are set off as essentially different, usual constraints around treatment or intervention could disappear (Newby, 1989b). Efforts toward change may be abandoned altogether (see

Herring, 1990), proposals for segregation or extinction are more likely to emerge (see Conforti, 1990), and mechanisms of social control would escalate (witness the present dramatic growth of prisons and jails).

While considerable energies have fueled debate about an underclass, it must be noted that few writers have seriously pursued the complementary notion of an overclass. (See Matza's passing reference comparing leisure strata at the bottom and the top of the class structure, both of which are "... given to predatory sentiments and behavior" (1966:291).) Yet Gans (1990) postulates that responsibility for the emergence of an economically obsolete caste would reside with (undefined) overclasses.

Presumably Gans is referring to individuals experiencing increasing concentrations of wealth and political leverage in the 1980s (e.g., Braun, 1991), or the current collection of power elite. Their power theoretically enables them to prevail in defining macro-level problems (such as dramatic economic changes) in micro-level terms (such as the values, attitudes, and behaviors of "underclass" individuals), thereby obscuring their own roles in the generation of social problems (Neubeck, 1991). Furthermore, sociologists' tendency to "study down" rather than to "study up" exacerbates the problem. Even when our scholarship highlights the broad social forces at work that produce economic dislocation, seldom is the human agency behind such social forces examined (i.e., the actual decision-making—interests, motives, and the like—that generates economic and social policies and actions). Insofar as the foregoing occur, there is reduced likelihood that an overclass will be identified, either as individuals or groups, as sources of social problems.

Instead, the 1980s produced an intriguing politics that effectively defined select members of the surplus population as overclass! We are referring to the vocal debate around the claim that the elderly are busting the federal budget with the variety of social security, health, and social service programs for which they are eligible and about which some see them as greedily demanding. Others (e.g., Minkler, 1991) have addressed the inaccuracies of such claims. The point here is that acrimonious debates about generational equity along with popular notions

of an underclass enable the overclass-underclass dualism to be confined to two groups within the surplus population. Each is claimed to be the cause of the nation's fiscal crisis because of their particular personal attributes. The capitalist overclass to which Gans refers remains untouched by, and stands to benefit from, these dynamics. While the notion of capitalist overclass(es) may be riddled with definitional pitfalls comparable to those surrounding an underclass, our point is not to insist on that specific conceptualization. Instead, our call is to challenge the dynamics that focus expansive scholarly and political attention on a so-called underclass and yet offer sparse investigation of a so-called overclass, especially when the behaviors of the latter are likely to be linked to the conditions of the former.

#### The Return of Class to Economically Marginalized People

The term underclass nominally appears to signify one's location in the relations of production, even though it has more frequently been used to signify cultural difference. However, we concur with Gomes and Katz Fishman (1989) that class must be seen as a social relation of production rather than as a static description of income and lifestyle. Furthermore, they argue, and we agree, that those said to constitute an underclass are in actuality a segment of the working class marginalized through the logic of capital accumulation. This shift in conceptualization is critical for placing individuals within material history in dynamic relationship to the larger society. It also serves to reframe their situations in structural terms so that our key foci become issues such as the out-migration of capital and jobs from communities, the changing nature of available jobs, diminished purchasing power, and the like.

Additional theoretical utility can be gained by adopting Acker's (1988:497) position that "classes are structured through relations of distribution as well as relations of production". Relations of distribution, according to Acker, include the wage (which is also an aspect of production), personal relations (marriage and kin), and welfare state benefits. Although the wage is a contested phenomenon in the relations of production, it

confers considerable personal autonomy within the relations of distribution. Personal relationships of distribution are typically the vehicle wherein wages are distributed to the unwaged. Thus, the recipients within personal relations of distribution (e.g., children, retired elders, wives earning less than husbands) are dependent on the benevolence of waged individuals for their personal well-being. Welfare state benefits (e.g. AFDC, food stamps, Social Security retirement benefits, SSI) are a residual form of distribution that substitute for the inadequacy or unavailability of the other two forms. Ironically, as Acker (1988:490) points out, "the state helps to create the conditions it is then called on to remedy". That is, state complicity in organizing relations of production on behalf of capitalists at the expense of the working class fosters the need for welfare initiatives by the state (see also O'Connor, 1973).

By identifying various relations of distribution, Acker enables us to think in new ways about some of the controversies surrounding the so-called underclass. For example, some critics have bristled at the (unintended) implication of Wilson's marriageability index that supposes women need husbands for economic well-being, not so much jobs of their own (Billingsley, 1989). If Wilson had conceptualized relations of distribution, he would have been able to discuss, as Acker has, how wages are gendered phenomena, how sexist arrangements mean that women often must rely more so than men on personal relations of distribution, and how both forms of distribution have implications for women's economic survival. Furthermore, a focus on the various relations of distribution illuminates the small set of options available when one does not have access to a wage or the selected welfare state benefits based on wage labor (e.g., unemployment compensation). Recognizing this, one may view data about presumed pathological behaviors of economically marginalized people (e.g., welfare fraud, drug sales) as economically structured behaviors required for survival in severely constrained circumstances.

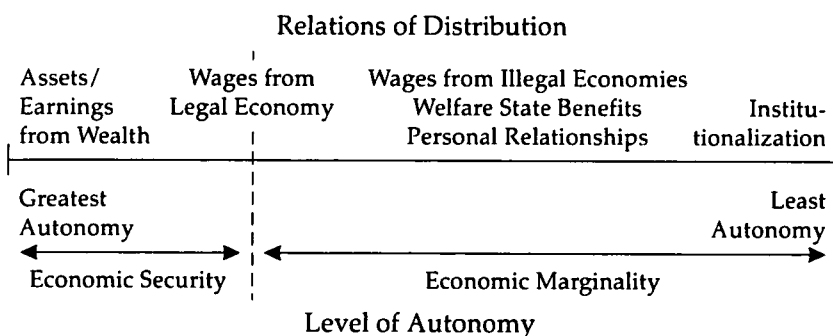
Acker's identification of three basic forms of distribution and their various possible combinations in individuals' lives offers an appropriately complex and dynamic approach to the configuration of class. It is useful to expand the forms to include assets/earnings from wealth (e.g., property, stocks, bonds),

which are most readily accessible to capitalists (the "overclass"), and institutionalization (most notably incarceration), which is disproportionately a relation of distribution imposed by the state on the working class. In addition, wages can be derived from either legal (formal waged labor) or illegal (informal underground) economies. These modifications and the original forms Acker identified are posited on a continuum of individual autonomy as shown in Figure 1.

Individuals experience movement along the continuum or varying combinations of distributional relations across their lives. Of particular note here is the diversity of ways in which economic marginalization gets played out within the relations of distribution. This scheme captures more fully the diverse experiences of economically marginalized people than does a focus on relations of production alone or the notion of a relatively homogeneous underclass. It also addresses certain concerns of scholars of the underclass such as welfare dependency and incarceration without having to abandon class based conceptualization or shift to notions of individual pathology or cultures of poverty. Conceptualizing class through production *and* distribution is an avenue that sociologists should pursue more fully as we move toward replacing the term underclass with more theoretically useful conceptualization.

Figure 1

*Relations of Distribution and Levels of Autonomy*



### The Return of Diversity and Agency to Economically Marginalized People

Discussions regarding an underclass have been formulated in ways that deny diversity and agency to economically marginalized people. The typical ways in which diversity has been denied occur through the use of underclass as an omnibus variable and through commission of the ecological fallacy.

Sociologists have repeatedly used the term underclass as an omnibus variable. That is, a combination of factors are said to comprise the group, such as: place of residence, occupational location or labor force status, educational experience or training, level of poverty/welfare dependency, criminal activity, and "other forms of aberrant behavior" (Wilson, 1987:8). The 1990–1991 Social Science Research Council's request for proposals for research about the underclass indicates that current conceptualizations tend to focus on the convergence of three factors: spatial concentration, persistent poverty, and "non-normative behaviors (e.g., crime, drug abuse, out-of-wedlock birth, participation in an 'unrecorded' or 'illicit' economy)" (Social Science Research Council, n.d.). Stoesz et.al. (1989) note that the features of this social category include being "predominantly urban, poor, black, underemployed, and poorly educated" (p.3). Ricketts and Sawhill (1988) identify minority status, deviant behaviors, concentration in older industrial cities in the Northeast, and social, cultural, and geographic isolation from the mainstream as key features of scholars' portrayal of an underclass.

We seriously question the need to bring together so many different *variables* under a single term, especially when research clearly demonstrates that the selected features do indeed *vary* among the people to which the term underclass has been applied. (Illustrative research is discussed below.) Failure to separate the several distinct variables embedded within underclass conceptualization prevents their utilization alternatively as independent, intervening, and dependent variables. Yet, the sorting out of how one variable affects another (e.g., (How) does spatial concentration impact the level of poverty? Is drug abuse cause and/or effect of persistent poverty?) and the recognition of possibly varying needs of marginalized people (Gans, 1990)

are critical for the formulation of meaningful social policies and the restoration of diversity to so-called underclass members.

Probably inadvertently, but nonetheless significantly, sociologists employing underclass terminology have produced a homogeneous picture of economically marginalized people that feeds the prejudices of the privileged. Through such formulations sociologists have perhaps unwittingly contributed to social control over marginalized groups via the linked images of need and deviance. With the term underclass we have taken one dimension of social "deviance"—economic need—and generalized the deviance to psychosocial properties of individuals ("aberrant behavior"). These are some of the concerns Herring (1990) had in mind when he questioned whether the concept of underclass was a category constructed more so for political than for social scientific purposes. As we look toward improved conceptualization, we must strive to utilize unidimensional concepts that vary rather than a sensitizing concept that may obscure important variations, even as it seeks to illuminate a serious social concern.

Even as a sensitizing concept, underclass is still seriously lacking. Billingsley (1989) has noted the highly diverse communities and highly diverse residents that Wilson's (1987) operationalization of underclass areas embraces. He is especially concerned that from such a broad sweep of neighborhoods, "Wilson proceeds to treat the whole neighborhood and all the people in it as though they are poor, or unemployed, or on welfare, or engaged in street crime" (Billingsley, 1989:24). The ecological fallacy inevitably results from the omnibus meaning of the underclass designation and the area-based manner in which it is operationalized.

A host of scholars looking more carefully at the people and communities that would be described as underclass offer evidence challenging the concept's definition and the generalizations forthcoming from it. For example, Dill (1989) highlights the community stability apparent even in neighborhoods undergoing dramatic economic transition. Hayes-Bautista (cited in Winkler, 1990) finds that Latinos in California have a high rate of nuclear family arrangements and working males—factors that presumably insulate them from "the underclass"—yet they are



still severely poor. In sharp contrast to expectations that those in "the underclass" possess different values and life orientations, Perilla-Parker (1990) finds that her sample of elderly homeless men in one urban area are not unlike their non-homeless peers on a series of psychological measures, including levels of depression, outlook on life (which was significantly *higher* than the rural elders on which the measures were normed), and self-esteem. Along similar lines, our own work (Aid to Imprisoned Mothers, Inc., 1990) has produced clinical data demonstrating that impoverished children of imprisoned mothers score within normal ranges on a host of behavioral and psychological measures, despite the unique challenges of their family and economic circumstances. Naples' (1991) interviews with women on AFDC enrolled in college reveal aspirations similar to their classmates, despite the contradictions they face between state welfare policies and academic operations. Nor are people who reside in impoverished neighborhoods necessarily isolated from the larger society. Gooley (1989), for example, observes the knowledgeable ability of men working (for meager wages) on one city's water lines. Their work gave them detailed knowledge about the city's physical infrastructure and local politics, issues that extend well beyond their residential settings in public housing. Together these citations illustrate but by no means exhaust data that document a more varied picture of the so-called underclass than its current definition allows.

All of the foregoing studies suggest that many people described as underclass tend to be everyday, normal people caught in stressful situations which they try to negotiate to the best of their abilities, options, and resources.<sup>2</sup> That some negotiate through activities like shoplifting (e.g., Ray and Briar, 1988), other property crimes (e.g., Snow et.al., 1989), drugs or "senseless brutality" (Duster, 1988:7) is often a reflection of how desperate or how obsolete people have come to view their lives.

Our caution here is that economically marginalized people are heterogeneous—in family arrangements, residential locations, labor force participation, utilization of social assistance, and personal habits, values, and aspirations. The scholar's task is to determine what factors inform particular stances and outcomes for various individuals.

In addition to the need to reclaim the diversity of economically marginalized people, scholars must ensure that our work enables their agency to be seen. We recommended earlier that we move from a static notion of class as lifestyle to class as a dynamic relationship to production and distribution. Reconsidering underclass as working class highlights the structural sources of their marginalization. Yet sociologists must be clear as we pursue the latter course that we not see economically marginalized people only as victims of monopoly capitalism, for example, or a core nation's hegemonic decline (e.g., Shannon, 1989). Reframing marginalized people within a materialist history enables them also to be seen as historical agents.

This is not to say that objective economic conditions do not frame peoples' lives. On the contrary, we are calling for greater articulation of those conditions so that observers will not be so tempted to fall back on ideas of individual pathology or cultures of poverty. At the same time, viewing the marginalized working class as historical agents is also necessary in order to avoid over-determination and dehumanization. Gismondi (1988:99) clarifies the matter as follows: "Recovering the human agency of dominated people requires consideration of how their social experiences inform the subjective initiatives they take in the face of objective determinants—i.e., the sense in which dominated classes make history, even if they do not always make history to their choosing."

This orientation enables us to consider the broadest range of individual and collective expressions of marginalized people without being reductionist or imposing middle class expectations upon subjects. We can recognize economically marginalized working class people as "making history", whether it be in constructive or auto-oppressive (Fanon, 1963) ways, in ways more or less to their choosing. Actions heretofore framed as "aberrant" can be reconsidered as ways to "articulate discontent, resist social exploitation, (and) maintain social identities. . . ." (Gismondi, 1988:99). At the same time, this stance does not romanticize self- or community-destructive (auto-oppressive or horizontally oppressive) behaviors, but it does locate them in a situated context of objectively oppressive conditions.

The proposed reorientation offers agency, responsibility, and hope to dominated people by moving them to center stage as potential change agents. This move contrasts sharply with Wilson's apparent orientation to change, which Herring (1990) describes as top-down. The shift enables us to see history as open-ended and problems as resolvable, thus, simultaneously challenging the assumption of intractability discussed earlier. Finally, it insists that those who write about marginalized people get close to them in some respects and come to know their vantage points and their worlds.

### The Return of Class to Social Scientists and Welfare Professionals

The significance of returning class to social scientists and welfare professionals is captured literally and allegorically in the following event reported in the *Atlanta Constitution* (1990). Recently the Atlanta Housing Authority (AHA) announced that tenants wishing to live in newly renovated housing facilities would be required to attend housekeeping and maintenance classes. One of the housing project's activists pointed out that many of the women already earned their livelihood as domestic workers and that the requirement is insulting to them. A Legal Aid attorney called the program "paternalistic" and "presumptuous." Presumably the AHA planned to hire a professional to teach residents skills they already use to make a living.

This vignette symbolizes the tension between the actual lives of the so-called underclass and those who have control over their lives through the services they provide and the knowledge they produce. It highlights the absurd consequences that can occur when people who think they know about others have the power to impose their knowledge upon them. As sociologists who volunteer with community agencies working with people in severe need, we wish to improve the relationship between scholarship and social action. The following observations in effect call for sociologists to clean our own houses.

The development of "underclass" arguments by middle to upper class agents of knowledge production is riddled with contradictions at the core of the research enterprise. Such

contradictions primarily stem from the social distance between the producer of knowledge and the subject of investigation. Such an arrangement strongly recommends the need for grounded theory (Glaser and Strauss, 1967) in order to interpret and utilize macro-level statistical findings appropriately. The largely qualitative and inductive research findings mentioned in the previous section demonstrate the importance of apprehending an issue through the vantage point of the subjects under consideration.

We have concern that knowledge produced deductively from existing frameworks may perpetuate social distance and lack of understanding between producer and subject, especially when those frameworks have been generated by previous agents from similarly middle and upper class backgrounds. In addition, sociologists working with secondary data collected by other similarly situated colleagues, graduate students, and government agents are twice removed from the topic of their concern and presumed expertise. The consequences of such distanced knowledge production are played out in flesh-and-blood terms, nevertheless, in the lives of the subjects of social policies. Might sociologists who are strangers to the communities about which they make pronouncements be repeating the same presumptuous and paternalistic patterns as the Atlanta Housing Authority cited earlier? In order to minimize the possibility, we strongly endorse the need for sociologists to have personal interaction with the issues of their investigation. This suggestion is both empirically sound and ethically compelling.

Ehrenreich and Ehrenreich (1979) enable us to see similarities between AHA's consultants and sociological knowledge-brokers through their conceptualization of a professional-managerial class (PMC) in monopoly capitalist societies. They define the PMC as "salaried mental workers who do not own the means of production and whose major function in the social division of labor may be described broadly as the reproduction of capitalist culture and capitalist class relations" (Ehrenreich and Ehrenreich, 1979:12). The nature of the AHA consultant's work would reproduce capitalist cultural stereotypes about the "underclass", and it would reinforce ruling class control over the working class, albeit through the former's PMC surrogates.

Scholars employing underclass conceptualization unwittingly reproduce cultural stereotypes. In addition, by allowing debate to shift repeatedly to social pathology, they set the stage for ruling class control over the working class, albeit via the work of other members of the PMC. Insofar as that analytical shift is realized, we also surrender opportunities to emphasize macrosociological questions containing the potential for fundamental social change.

Ehrenreich and Ehrenreich (1979) further note that as buffers between the ruling class and the working class, the PMC find themselves in a class location that is objectively antagonistic to both. The PMC struggles with capitalists over control of the workplace, and it clashes with the working class over skills, knowledge, and culture. The creation of professions and professional associations became a platform from which both kinds of struggles could be waged.

Regardless of objective antagonisms, however, PMC workers may choose consciously to align themselves with one class or the other. Gilkes (1983) describes the conscientious ways in which community workers in her study utilize the opportunities of their professional stature to "go up for the oppressed." In doing so, they realize that they must abandon traditional trajectories of careerism. One's alignment with ruling classes is likely to be more subtle and perhaps not even recognized. When Wilson purposely chose to employ the language of conservative scholars (such as "reverse discrimination" and "social pathology") in order to counter their claims, the effect was quite the opposite. This situation suggests that "respectable pragmatism" (Newby, 1989b:131) serves to align scholars with ruling groups even when their expressed allegiance is to the working class.

A number of sociologists reject disciplinary discussions such as this. They argue for research, even policy studies, that are objective and non-political. We are continually amazed at how the boundaries of sociological analysis stop for some at our discipline's door. This article is not necessarily a call for sociologists to become political activists. Rather, it is a call for us to become more reflexive about our work, to realize that the academy is not set apart from the larger society and its politics,

and to understand that we, too, have "class", with all of its implications.

### Conclusion

We have suggested a number of avenues for focusing explicit attention on the politics of sociological work, including careful attention to class issues. We have not explored the critical ways in which race and gender intersect with class to produce phenomena described variously as a "Black underclass" (see *The Black Scholar*, 1988) or the "feminization of poverty" (Pearce, 1978). These terms, too, would benefit from scrutiny and reconceptualization to bring racism, sexism and their articulation with class and with one another to the forefront of analysis. Burnham's (1985) work exemplifies the potential along these lines.

In addressing the foregoing issues, we are reminded of some central dilemmas W.E.B. Dubois experienced with sociology in its early years. Dubois fully embraced empirical investigation and the statistical method; at the same time he was an impassioned advocate for sociologists to exert moral force in the larger society. Throughout his life he searched for ways to merge empiricism and social action, but he eventually moved from a largely scholarly approach to social issues to an increasingly politically activist stance (Rampersad, 1990). Ultimately his concerns for social justice could not be accommodated by disciplinary requirements. Many of the issues we have raised seek ways to blend the features of scholarship and social justice that Dubois himself found irreconcilable.

Almost a century of disciplinary history separates Dubois' dilemmas and the problems we highlight here. Yet their similarities are so striking as to suggest some inherent contradictions within the profession. How each scholar or each generation chooses to resolve those dilemmas and contradictions varies with personality, politics, and circumstance. Social scientists must recognize that, purposefully or not, our work contributes to the making of history. That history can be more or less to our liking, depending upon the extent to which we acknowledge the inherently political nature of what we do. Our suggestions

admittedly flow from a particular set of political stances: respect for subjects' vantage points, a commitment to the importance of structural analysis, and a desire for a more egalitarian society. We have offered ways of doing social science that embrace those particular values up front.

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## Notes

1. See Aponte (1990) for more extensive coverage of this literature.
2. To be sure, there is considerable contradiction in the Ricketts and Sawhill (1988) study, since they use census tracts with high proportions of "prime age males not regularly attached to the labor force" and "welfare recipients" (along with two other variables) as their criteria for determining underclass areas. With no more than passing concern about the income-relatedness of these measures, they conclude that there is a high, but not a perfect, correlation between low income areas and areas evidencing "deviant social behavior."
3. Aponte (1990) notes that behavioral definitions of the underclass shift attention away from structural sources of poverty and imply that behavioral change alone can propel one from the realm of poverty. He argues that if this is the case, then perhaps the specialty of deviance is a more appropriate arena for inquiries into poverty.
4. This conclusion parallels some from the 1960s and 1970s that challenged culture of poverty theses. Stack's (1970) work is representative of that collection of usually ethnographic reports.

# Race, Gender, Occupational Status, And Income In County Human Service Employment

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*Data obtained from more than 1,900 public welfare workers employed in five regions of the country were examined to compare occupational status and earnings by race and gender. The study group was stratified so that respondents' educational attainment and job seniority levels could be taken into account. Findings indicate the presence of significant sex and race-linked differences.*

## Introduction

Although little empirical information has appeared in social work literature regarding race- or gender-related inequities in human service employment, numerous writers have asserted the existence of inequities (York et al., 1987; Kravetz & Austin, 1984;), often relying on aggregate data (rather than data stratified for length of employment and educational attainment) made available by the U.S. Bureau of Census or by other sources providing gross aggregate data (Martin & Chernesky, 1989;

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Dressel, 1987). The following statement summarizes the position of those who have asserted the existence of race and gender inequity:

First, men and whites are more likely than women and Blacks, respectively, to be found disproportionately in administrative positions. Second, while the social welfare enterprise is majority female, the lowest rung is overwhelmingly female. In other words, white men fare best in social welfare work, as they do in the private sector labor force. They are more likely than their race/sex counterparts to control others. . . . Women of all racial/ethnic groups and men from oppressed racial/ethnic groups are (employed) disproportionately (in work that is) deskilled and poorly paid (Dressel, et al., 1988:121).

A recent survey of public welfare workers located in several regions of the country indicates that a large contingent of today's employees do, in fact, feel that they are being victimized by discriminatory practices and policies or by favoritism (McNeely and Shultz, 1986). Most frequently cited are concerns about income, occupational status and promotions.

A large number of those expressing dissatisfaction, however, contrary to popular conception, are European-American males who feel they are being victimized by unfair affirmative action policies. The same survey revealed that very few nonminority women expressed any concerns about discrimination against females in the awarding of salaries; there were virtually no assertions that women may be segregated occupationally in the human services workforce. Again, this is at odds with popular opinion. It is at odds with the assertions of writers such as those cited above, and it also is inconsistent with the frustrations expressed by women in many other employment sectors. It is not, however, inconsistent with studies of female human service administrators in which 80 to 85 percent of respondents indicated gender either to have no effect or a positive effect on hiring and promotion, and a majority (56%) believed gender to have no effect on the awarding of salaries (Kravetz and Austin, 1984).

The present survey of public welfare workers indicated that African-Americans, in particular, and to respectively lesser

degrees, Hispanic and Asian-Americans, voiced concerns about discriminatory treatment in salaries and upper-echelon employment opportunities. 'two recent reports, in fact, have documented discrepancies both in income and occupational rank for the latter groups of human service workers, even after several control variables were taken into account (McNeely, 1989; McNeely, 1987).

But what of African-Americans, and what of women? Too, what is the situation insofar as European-American males are concerned? The present report sought to examine the degree to which disparities in income and occupational representation are evident by race and gender and, presuming they do exist, the degree to which any disparities can be explained by factors such as educational attainment and length of service to the employer. In so doing, the present study sought to examine whether or not data disaggregated for seniority and educational attainment supported those asserting inequity in the occupational distribution of human service employees and discrimination in the awarding of their salaries.

### Method

A mail survey of 3,970 county human service workers located in five geographically disparate areas of the nation yielded 1,933 usable questionnaires and a response rate of 51.6%. Sixteen respondents who returned usable questionnaires but failed to indicate their racial status or gender were deleted, resulting in a sample useful for most statistical purposes of 1,917 subjects.

The data were extracted from a parent study (cf. McNeely, forthcoming) examining the job satisfaction of human service workers in five county welfare departments located in Dade County (Miami), Florida, El Paso County (Colorado Springs), Colorado, Fulton County (Atlanta), Georgia, Genesee County (Flint), Michigan, and Sacramento County (Sacramento), California. Study sites involved in the parent study are being selected to achieve twin objectives: An effort is being made to represent a variety of discrepant fiscal conditions under which the public social services are operating presently, and an effort is being made to represent each broad region of the country. Data

collection from sites involved in the present study concluded in 1987. Readers may wish to bear in mind that the instrument developed for this study was constructed to obtain information on job satisfaction, not discrimination, and that income data obtained for the study were obtained in reference to job satisfaction rather than discrimination concerns.

The questionnaire solicited demographic information on race, gender, age, length of employment, education, income, occupational status, etc. Respondents were asked to check one of five categories to report their racial status: Asian, Black, Hispanic, White (Non-Hispanic), and "Other." For purposes of this report, "Other" refers to all respondents excluding those who checked Black or White (Non-Hispanic). Among 232 "Others," 70 were Asians, and 127 were Hispanics.

Administrators were individuals who set broad policies and exercised overall responsibility for their implementation, or directed individual departments. Supervisors included individuals who monitored, evaluated, and provided overall guidance of subordinates, day-to-day activities. Professionals were in jobs requiring specialized and theoretical knowledge usually acquired through advanced training. Paraprofessionals were those in occupations requiring less formal training wherein workers performed some of the duties of a professional, often in a supporting role (eligibility workers constituted the largest segment of paraprofessionals.) Clericals were individuals responsible for internal and external communication, filing, recording and retrieval of information, and general paperwork assignments. Servicers were those with no special skills or comprehensive knowledge obtained through specialized programs. For example, servicers included custodial workers, vehicle operators, security guards, etc.

Chi-square, Cramer's V, F-tests, and the Scheffe procedure were used to analyze the data. Following the advice of Miller (1977:172-176), who has urged that all  $X^2$  analyses be accompanied by tests of association, Cramer's V was used to examine associations involving a nominal variable. Readers should bear in mind that Cramer's V is one of several imprecise measures of association that can be used with nominal variables. As such, the statistic is likely to understate the true strength of

association between variables. It is also limited in that it has no percentage reduction in prediction-error interpretation. On the other hand, Cramer's  $V$  avoids several problems linked with alternatives for assessing association with nominal variables, such as Lambda (cf: Blalock, 1972: 302–303), Phi (cf: Kurtz, 1983: 303), Tschuprow's  $T$  and Pearson's contingency coefficient  $C$  (Blalock, 1972: 296–298), and has the advantage of requiring no assumptions beyond those of the chi square test while being easy to apply (Kurtz, 1983: 306) and interpret (Nie, et al., 1975: 225) use of an accompanying statistic such as Cramer's  $V$  is quite important in interpreting  $X^2$  analyses involving large samples, as  $X^2$  values are unusually sensitive to sample size (Kurtz, 1983: 172) and to the number of rows and columns in the  $X^2$  contingency table (Wright, 1986).

Finally, readers are urged to consider an important caveat relating to data subsequently reported: The earnings of European-American women are likely to be understated. This is because, European-American women, more than any other race/gender group, are likely to be employed voluntarily in part-time work (Nardone, 1986). As the questionnaire used in this study was constructed to obtain information on job satisfaction and selected issues pertinent to job satisfaction, it was not set up to capture information on employees' average weekly hours. Thus, the income of European-American women may be understated due to a proportionately higher percentage of these women, compared to other workers, who earn part-time salaries voluntarily. As an illustration of the potential significance of this factor, when part-time status is taken into account by examining full-time employed household heads, European-American women earn more than African-American men; when it is not taken into account, European-American women appear to earn less than African-American men (Bureau of the Census, 1986:7). one implication of these points is that data that are not disaggregated for weekly hours of work are likely to evidence a higher degree of income inequality for European-American women than is actually the case.

In a related vein, as the instrument generating data for this study was not constructed specifically to examine discrimination, information was not collected on the type of academic

degrees respondents held. As Dressel (1987:299) has noted, increasingly acceptable credentials for available administrative jobs are degrees in public administration or business administration; but women are more likely to have less competitive MSW degrees, despite reporting more interest than men in pursuing additional degrees (Kravetz and Jones, 1982). Dressel (1987) also noted that women partially reproduce inequitable occupational distributions in public welfare work because they are less likely than men to enroll as graduate social work students in a course of studies focusing on social welfare administration. Both factors contribute to women being less competitive as candidates for administrative positions. The questionnaire used to obtain data for this study did not solicit information detailing the type of undergraduate or graduate degree respondents possessed, nor did it request respondents to identify whether or not they had selected social administration while enrolled in a MSW program.

### Findings

As may be derived from Table 1, 76% of all respondents were females, a figure reflective of their disproportionate representation in public human service employment. While female European-Americans comprised 45.2% of the sample, they constituted 33% of the administrators, and 50% of respondents in supervisory positions. Male European-Americans occupied 40.2% of the administrative positions and 21% of the supervisory positions, although they comprised only 15.7% of the sample.

Respectively, 37.6%, 30.1%, and 29.4%, of the European-American females (54% held college degrees), African-American females (50% held college degrees), and Other females (52% held college degrees) were employed in upper echelon jobs, including administrative, supervisory, and professional positions. More than 68% of male European-Americans (86% held college degrees) were engaged in upper echelon positions, whereas only 46.6% of male African-Americans (67% held college degrees) and 52.8% of Other males (69% held college degrees), were in these positions. Thus, females were less likely than

males to be engaged in upper echelon positions, but European-American males and females were more likely than their same-sex counterparts to hold jobs of high rank. Additionally, although African-American and Other females are similar in the within-group percentages each contributed to upper echelon jobs, male African-Americans were less likely than either European-American or other males to be so employed. Differences in occupational rank by race and gender (see Table 1) were statistically significant ( $\chi^2=261.18$ , 25 d.f.;  $p<.001$ ).

Higher percentages of African-American (33.1%) and Other (30%) females, compared to European-American females (21.8%), had received, at some point during their adult lives food stamps and/or Aid to Dependent Families. Similarly, 20.8% of Other males, 20% of African-American males, and 11.6% of European-American males had received assistance. The efforts of those formerly receiving aid in securing gainful employment and the opportunities made possible by the county welfare departments in providing jobs are commendable. Of more significance, however, as related to this article, is that these data, taken on their "face," tend to argue against discrimination, at least in terms of the access points to employment available to job seekers who formerly, during adulthood, were recipients of public assistance.<sup>1</sup> Speaking in regard to access points, as well as subsequent opportunities, about 20% of workers formerly receiving aid were employed as professionals, supervisors, or administrators at the time of the survey.

Male European-Americans had been working longer ( $\bar{X}$  = 10.4 yrs.) in their employment settings than African-American males ( $\bar{X}$  = 6.6), Other males ( $\bar{X}$  = 5.9), European-American females ( $\bar{X}$  = 9.3), African-American females ( $\bar{X}$  = 7.2), and Other females ( $\bar{X}$  = 7.1). These differences were statistically significant ( $F$  = 18.75;  $p<.001$ ). European-American males tended to be a bit older ( $\bar{X}$  = 41.9 yrs. of age) than both their male ( $\bar{X}_A - AM$  = 40.6;  $\bar{X}_{OM}$  = 41.2) and female ( $\bar{X}_A - AMF$  = 36.3;  $\bar{X}_E - AF$  = 40.4;  $\bar{X}_{OF}$  = 39.4) counterparts ( $F$  = 13.85;  $p<.001$ ). Similarly, male European-Americans had completed more years of schooling than any of the other race/gender groups, but males, regardless of race, all had completed more years of schooling than any of the female cohorts ( $\chi^2$  = 271.63;  $P<.001$ ). In fact, whereas





27,000-32,999	39	9.0	9	12.0	100	11.5	58	19.3	12	7.5	5	6.9
33,000-38,999	6	1.4	5	6.7	21	2.4	22	7.3	3	1.9	2	2.8
> 38,999	0	0.0	4	5.3	10	1.1	17	5.6	1	0.6	0	0.0
<i>Education</i>	435	99.9	75	99.9	872	100.0	302	99.9	160	100.0	72	100.0
< High School	20	4.6	4	5.3	6	.7	1	.3	5	3.1	5	6.9
High School Diploma	215	49.4	21	28.0	395	45.3	40	13.2	72	45.0	17	23.6
College Degree	155	35.6	28	37.3	366	41.9	167	55.3	54	33.8	29	40.3
Graduate Degree	45	10.3	21	28.0	101	11.6	84	27.8	27	16.9	17	23.6
Ph.D./M.D.	0	0.0	1	1.3	4	.5	10	3.3	2	1.2	4	5.6
<i>Marital Status</i>	436	100.0	75	100.0	871	100.0	302	100.0	160	100.0	72	100.0
Married	190	43.6	47	62.7	453	52.0	188	62.3	87	54.4	53	73.6
Widowed	17	3.9	0	0.0	32	3.7	3	1.0	4	2.5	1	1.4
Divorced	78	17.9	9	12.0	216	24.8	47	15.6	31	19.4	6	8.3
Separated	34	7.8	3	4.0	20	2.3	8	2.6	10	6.3	1	1.4
Never Married	117	26.8	16	21.3	150	17.2	56	18.5	28	17.5	11	15.3
<i>Age</i>	428	99.9	74	100.0	868	99.9	301	100.0	160	100.0	72	100.0
< 30 years	105	24.5	9	12.2	121	13.9	23	7.6	30	18.8	10	13.9
30-41	211	49.3	35	47.3	412	47.5	143	47.5	68	42.5	31	43.1
42-53	93	21.7	18	24.3	215	24.7	96	31.9	36	22.5	17	23.6
> 53	19	4.4	12	16.2	120	13.8	39	13.0	26	16.2	14	19.4
<i>Food Stamps/AFDC</i>	435	100.0	75	100.0	871	100.0	301	100.0	160	100.0	72	100.0
Recipient	144	33.1	15	20.0	190	21.8	35	11.6	48	30.0	15	20.8
Non-Recipient	291	66.9	60	80.0	681	78.2	266	88.4	112	70.0	57	79.2

80.4% of all males had at least a college degree, only 51.4% of all females had equivalent educational attainment. European-American males also earned the highest incomes ( $\bar{X}$  = \$27,356), followed respectively by male African Americans ( $\bar{X}$  = \$24,278), female European Americans ( $\bar{X}$  = \$22,673), Other males ( $\bar{X}$  = \$21,124), female African Americans ( $\bar{X}$  = \$20,143) and Other females ( $\bar{X}$  = \$19,686). These differences were significant ( $F$  = 46.01;  $P < .001$ ).

### *Occupational Status*

Chi-square analysis was performed to determine whether or not there was a relationship between race, gender and occupational status. This analysis was achieved by combining the race and gender groups. For example, female African Americans constituted one group, followed respectively by the remaining individual groups including: male African Americans, female European Americans, male European Americans, Other females, and Other males. Occupational status (1. Service; 2. Clerical; 3. Paraprofessional; 4. Professional; 5. Supervisor; 6. Administrator) was the dependent variable. Due to the small numbers of individuals employed as "servicers," these respondents were combined with clerical workers to form a single occupational group. As indicated in Table 2, the relationship between race, gender and occupational status is statistically significant ( $\chi^2$  = 261.18,  $p < .001$ ;  $CV$  = .165,  $p < .001$ ).

One question left unanswered by this analysis is whether or not the relationship between race/gender and occupational status can be explained by differences in educational attainment and employment length. Multi-dimensional  $\chi^2$  analyses were performed to answer this question.

To achieve the analysis, the sample was disaggregated for education and employment length. Educational attainment was dichotomized. one group included those who had, at least, a college degree. The other group included those who had less than a college degree. Employment length, similarly, was dichotomized. One group included those who had been employed in their human service department for less than six years. The other group included those who had been employed for six years or more.

As indicated in Table 2, controlling for education does not reduce the strength of the relationship between race/gender and occupational status to statistical insignificance. While the association (.165) indicated by Cramer's V was reduced somewhat for one educational group (CV = .131), it was higher (CV = .182) for the other group. Thus, educational attainment does not explain race and gender discrepancies in occupational rank.

But what about employment length? Can this explain differences in occupational rank? As indicated previously, there are statistically significant differences among the groups in employment tenure, with European American males and females having more seniority in their agencies than that of the other race/gender groups. However, Table 2 indicates that coefficients observed after controlling for educational attainment and employment tenure remain statistically significant, and no dramatic reductions in the strength of these associations are evident. Consequently, disproportionate representations in occupational rank by race and gender are not explained by educational attainment, nor employment seniority. At the same time, readers should note the actual values reported for Cramer's V. Although all of the values are statistically significant, the highest value reported is .220. A value for CV of .220 does not denote a particularly robust relationship, indicating that, at best, the capability of race and gender in predicting occupational status is no more than merely moderate.

Table 2 also indicates that the association between race/gender and occupational status steadily attenuates as education and seniority increase: The coefficients decline from CV = .220 to CV = .141. The greatest disparities related to race and gender, thus, occur for those who have the fewest years of schooling and fewest years of service to their agencies.

Although not depicted in tabular form, disproportionalities among those occupying "professional" positions were examined among race and gender groups. These data evidenced a clear gender-linked tendency favoring males among non-degreed employees. Compared to non-degreed females, higher percentages of non-degreed males, regardless of race, occupied upper echelon positions. For example, 37.5% and 33.3% respectively of European-American and Other males with six or more years

Table 2

*Race, Gender and Occupational Status: Controlling for Education and Length of Employment*

	N	X <sup>2</sup>	d.f.	Sig.	CV	Sig.
<i>Race/Gender × Occupation</i>	1917	261.18	20	<.001	.165	<.001
<i>Controlling for Education</i>	1916					
< College degree	801	133.44	20	<.001	.182	<.001
≥ College degree	1115	96.29	20	<.001	.131	<.001
<i>Controlling for Education and Length of Employment</i>	1902					
< College degree, < 6 yrs.	326	78.97	20	<.001	.220	<.001
< College degree, ≥ 6 yrs.	467	73.95	20	<.001	.178	<.001
≥ College degree, < 6 yrs.	430	50.37	20	<.002	.153	<.002
≥ College degree, ≥ 6 yrs.	679	58.22	16	<.001	.141	<.001

of service occupied these positions (23.1% of African-American males occupied these positions). These percentages are much higher than any of the corresponding percentages reported for female employees (E.g., 15.4%, 19.2%, and 20.0%, respectively, for female Others, European Americans, and African Americans). Many of these positions involve supervisory roles in nonprofessional departments and, to some extent, the overrepresentation of males can be explained by the fact that several of these departments such as building maintenance, security, storekeeping, and transportation have tended to be the traditional province of males. These findings, nonetheless, are a bit surprising. One might have expected to see an increasing representation of women in these positions given the intensification, occurring in recent years, of attacks on occupational segregation, even though studies have been demonstrating since the early 1970s that the thesis of occupational segregation as an explanation of income differences between the sexes is erroneous (Polachek, 1984; Fuchs, 1971).

Another perspective was gained by examining data reported for employees who had, at least, a baccalaureate degree. Among those recently employed, European-American males

were most likely (57.7%) to be in professional, supervisory, or administrative positions, whereas European-American females were least likely (29.3%) to be in such positions. Among employees with lengthier service to their agencies the pattern changed: other males (90.5%), European-American males (81.5%) and European-American females (71.8%), respectively, were most likely to hold the high ranking positions, whereas African-American males (68.0%), Other females (60.0%), and African-American females (58.4%) were least likely to be placed in these positions. Substantial disproportionalities are evident, thus, even among those who are the most seasoned and highly educated veterans of their agencies. The pattern is clear in favoring males, particularly European-American males. Among males, African Americans appear least favored.

### *Income*

The Scheffe procedure (Kachigan, 1986:315) was utilized to examine all possible groups to determine those pairs that were significantly different on income from one another at  $p < .05$ . Use of this procedure is superior to relying solely on an overall F-value because specific significant differences between groups are identified (the procedure essentially is a series of t-tests), whereas F-values only indicate the presence of significant differences among the groups, without identifying which groups are significantly different.

As indicated in Table 3, there are significant differences in income among the race/gender groups. European-American males, African-American males, and European-American females, respectively, earned the highest incomes. But, whereas African-American males and European-American females earned significantly higher incomes than African-American and Other females, European-American males, whose average income was \$27,356,<sup>2</sup> earned significantly higher salaries than every other race/gender group. The largest standard deviation reported was for African-American males, indicating that there is more variation in income for this group than that of any other group. Thus, relative to the other race/gender groups, African-American males have the widest income range, suggesting that, comparatively speaking, while some of these individuals are

faring quite well, others are faring quite poorly. Other females earned the lowest incomes of all the groups.

One question this analysis fails to address is whether or not these differences remain significant when educational attainment, employment length, and occupational status are taken into account. Occupational status was dichotomized for usage as a control variable. "Professionals" included managers, supervisors and professional workers. "Non-professionals" included paraprofessionals, clerical, and service employees. Employment length and educational attainment were dichotomized as noted previously.

### *Non-degreed Employees*

Although not depicted schematically, the incomes of those individuals who had not completed a college degree were examined. Unfortunately, although the sample frame is comprised of 801 non-degreed employees, the vast majority of these are African-American and European-American women. Thus, it was not possible to assess the statistical significance of gender-linked discrepancies on income in most of the cases because the number of male respondents was too small for reliable

Table 3

### *Race, Gender and Income*

Population Group	N	$\bar{X}$	Sd	Scheffe Contrasts*	F-value	Sig. of F-value
<i>Entire Sample</i>	1914					
1. African-Amer females	435	20143	6305.7			
2. African-Amer males	75	24278	10142.3	1,5		
3. European-Amer females	870	22673	6363.6	1,5	46.01	<.001
4. European-Amer males	302	27356	8827.3	1,2,3,5,6		
5. Other females	160	19686	6527.9			
6. Other males	72	21124	5857.6			

\* Denotes pairs of groups significantly different at  $P \leq .05$ . For example, the numbers "1" and "5" are reported for African-American males. This indicates that the mean income of African-American males is significantly different than that of groups 1 (African-American females) and 5 (Other females).

computation. Viewed in the aggregate, however, European-American males and females had significantly higher incomes than that of the other groups. European-American males, with a mean income of \$21,584, again earned the highest salaries reported for any of the race/gender groups. But the income of non-degreed European-American women (\$20,182) was not significantly lower than that of non-degreed European-American males, with both groups receiving salaries that were higher than African-American male (\$19,079) and Other male counterparts (\$17,725), and significantly higher than their non-degreed African-American (\$17,028) and Other female counterparts (\$17,297)

For whatever reason(s), there was considerably more variation in the incomes earned by African-American men than that of any of the other groups. Only in one subcategory, among non-degreed "professional" employees who had been working in their agencies for six or more years, was the standard deviation reported for African-American men similar to those reported for their cohorts in the other race/gender groups. Thus, particularly for African-American males without degrees, there is a considerable range in earned income, with some being paid quite poorly and others being paid quite well in comparison to other employees.

Consistently, among non-degreed workers, African-American and Other women were the lowest paid of all workers even when they were stratified so that their educational attainment, length of employment, and occupational rank was essentially the same as that of other workers. Only in one category were the incomes reported for all the groups roughly equivalent—among non-professional respondents employed for six or more years. Too, this is the only category in which the income reported for European-American males did not exceed that of every other group. For example, African-American women earned, on average, \$18,749, "Other" women earned \$18,908, and European-American men earned \$19,399.

On the other hand, the income of European-American males reported among long-term (employment length =  $\geq 6$  yrs.) "professional" employees was quite high. At an average annual income of \$30,665 per year, these workers were doing very well



considering they are non-degreed and employed in traditionally low-paying public service jobs. African-American women in this category earned \$19,438. "Other" women earned \$19,998.

### *Degreed Employees*

Among those with college degrees, as indicated in Table 4, European-American males again earned the highest incomes (\$28,263). Their incomes were higher than that of every other group. African-American males (\$26,878) and European-American females (\$24,792) earned incomes that were higher than that of African-American females (\$23,803), Other males (\$22,618), and Other females (\$21,902). This pattern was not consistent, however, when employment tenure was taken into account. Male European-Americans earned more than any of the other race/gender groups among those newly employed (<6 yrs.), but among longer-term employees ( $\geq 6$  yrs.) in non-professional positions, these males earned less than African-American males and females. Longer-term "professional", male, European-Americans also earned less than their male African-American counterparts.

Taking the broad view, minority individuals experience the harshest conditions compared to majority-group individuals when they are non-degreed and have limited seniority. Discrepancies in rank and income tend to attenuate as education and seniority increase. Degreed European-American women with lengthy tenure do comparatively well, particularly in contrast to those who have been more recently employed: 71.8% of high seniority staffers versus 29.396 of those more recently employed had been promoted to upper-echelon positions. The pattern was quite different for degreed African-American men. Among more recently employed individuals, African-American men (48.0%) were second only to European-American men (57.7%) with regard to the percentages within the ranks of each group who had been promoted to upper-echelon positions. Among longer-term employees, however, the percentages of African-American men promoted to upper-echelon positions (68.0%) followed, respectively, Other males (90.5%), and European-American males (81.5%) and females (71.8%). Only Other females (60.0%) and African-American females (58.4%) registered lower percentages.

Table 4

*Race, Gender and Income Among College-Degreed Human Service Workers: Controlling for Education, Length of Employment, and Occupational Rank*

Population Group	N	$\bar{X}$	Sd	Scheffe Contrasts*	F-value	Sig. of F-value
<i>≥ College degree</i>						
(All Subjects)	1113					
1. African-Amer females	200	23803	5783.9			
2. African-Amer males	50	26878	9731.1	5		
3. European-Amer females	469	24792	6305.9	5	17.05	<.001
4. European-Amer males	261	28263	8793.9	1,3,5,6		
5. Other females	83	21902	7221.6			
6. Other males	50	22618	5358.3			
<i>&lt; 6 yrs., NonProf.</i>						
	262					
1. African-Amer females	61	19867	3426.6	5		
2. African-Amer males	13	19846	3130.7	**		
3. European-Amer males	118	19651	3606.3	5		
4. European-Amer females	30	20398	2659.2	5		
5. Other females	26	16958	5686.4			
6. Other males	14	17999	2037.5	**		
<i>&lt; 6 yrs., Prof.</i>						
	168					
1. African-Amer females	36	21582	4350.0			
2. African-Amer males	12	25748	11682.3	**		
3. European-Amer females	49	25284	5048.2			
4. European-Amer males	41	26705	8152.8	1		
5. Other females	15	21799	5251.8	**		
6. Other males	15	20999	3926.6	**		
<i>≥ 6 yrs., NonProf.</i>						
	188					
1. African-Amer females	42	25855	4187.6			
2. African-Amer males	8	25498	7169.1	**		
3. European-Amer females	85	22904	5702.3			
4. European-Amer males	35	24170	4299.7			
5. Other females	16	21374	7962.9	**		
6. Other males	2	17999	4241.2	**		
<i>≥ 6 yrs., Prof.</i>						
	489					
1. African-Amer females	59	27914	6157.5			
2. African-Amer males	17	33705	8648.5			
3. European-Amer females	216	28207	5770.4	**		
4. European-Amer males	154	31148	9144.2	1,3		
5. Other females	24	27874	5192.8	**		
6. Other males	19	27788	5823.3	**		

\* Reported contrasts denote pairs of groups significantly different at  $P \leq .05$ .

\*\* N is insufficient and/or homoscedacity is insufficient to assess Scheffe contrasts accurately.

### Discussion: Do These Data Prove Discrimination?

The occupational rank of European-American males far exceeds that of the other race/gender groups. Whereas 68.5% are in "professional" positions, only 52.8% of "Other" men and 46.7% of African-American men are in jobs of similar rank. Respectively, 37.5%, 30%, and 29.4% of all European-American, African-American, and Other women are in high-ranking positions. Consequently, proportionately fewer women than men, regardless of race, occupy higher status jobs in public welfare employment. Among long-term, degreed workers, however, the percentage of European-American women in high status jobs is exceeded only by European-American and "Other" males, whereas African-American and Other women hold, proportionately, more than any of the other groups, the jobs of lowest rank.

As it is a *sine qua non* of work life that most employees start off in the least desirable jobs but progress in time to jobs that require more skill, permit more autonomy, and provide more perquisites (McNeely, 1988:167), "professional" jobs occupied by long-term degreed employees are most likely to be the "Plum" jobs to which human service workers aspire. Viewed from this standpoint, African-American women, Other women, and African-American men, respectively, have the smallest percentages of their employees placed in the most desirable positions, while Other and European-American males contribute the highest percentages.

Whether college-degreed or not, Other males, as is the case with Other females, simply do not tend to be among the best paid employees. Two explanations have been offered recently to explain the low earnings of Other human service workers. Speaking with regard to Hispanics, a lack of "fluid" bilingualism among some college-educated, short-term (<6 yrs.) workers in professional positions has been suggested (McNeely, 1989). Recent immigrant status, inexperience in the norms of American society, and a lack of fluent bi-lingualism have been suggested to explain the lower earnings of Asian-American human service workers (McNeely, 1987). All of these factors may be converging in the present study to explain the lower

earnings of others. It is also possible that the lower earnings reflect discriminatory treatment in the awarding of salaries.

European-American males, African-American males, and European-American females tend to be paid the highest incomes, while Other women, African-American women, and Other men tend to be paid the lowest incomes. Taken on their face, data reported in this article tend to support, generally, the arguments of those asserting race- and gender-related discrimination in social welfare work. At the same time, the data do not permit claims of unequivocal support or that discrimination has been proven. For one thing, as noted previously, the influence of women's self-selected choices for educational preparation in clinical rather than administrative tracts could not be taken into account. Nor could the greater proclivity of European-American women to work in part-time employment be taken into account.

Readers should bear in mind that part-time employment does not merely deflate aggregate income figures reported for categories of workers which have members that disproportionately seek voluntary part-time work. Departmental executives are less likely to select part-time employees, regardless of gender, for promotion, particularly into administrative positions, and they are less likely to select such employees for training opportunities or seminars designed to impart administrative or other technical skills that lead to positional authority and/or higher income. Consequently, simply equating the percentage of women versus men occupying positions of high rank does not provide a formula for determining the amount of discrimination.

One reason women are more likely than men to seek voluntary part-time work is because they are more likely to assume primary responsibility for child care. European-American women, because their spouses earn more than the spouses of African-American and Other women, often have more latitude in choosing to work only on a part-time basis. An additional reason why African-American women are less likely than European-American women to select part-time employment voluntarily is because a much higher percentage of African-American women are single household heads. All of this helps to explain another demographic factor that bears on the

interpretation of Bureau of Census data and, to some extent, on data such as that reported in this article: European-American women do not participate in the labor force to the same degree as African-American women.

European-American women are much more likely to have non-continuous work histories due to periods of absence associated with childrearing. Studies have indicated that for each year a college-educated woman stays out of the workforce she loses about three percent of income compared to her female cohorts who continue to work (Mincer & Polachek, 1974). Although employment longevity was taken into account in the present study, the stratification variable differentiated between those employed less than six years versus those employed six years or longer. Yet it is entirely possible that among degreed, long-term, ( $\geq 6$  yrs.) female workers the average seniority among African-American women is higher than that of European-American women. Factors such as this explain why some studies have found that college-educated, African-American women actually earn more than their female European-American counterparts (King, 1978). In the present study, high-seniority, degreed, African-American women in nonprofessional positions, in fact, did earn more than their European-American counterparts, but those occupying professional positions earned less.

To some extent, the latter finding was surprising because one may infer that educated, African-American women are more likely than European-American women to countenance continuous labor force participation. Preliminary Bureau of Census data for 1990 indicate that whereas 83 percent of all white households are married-couple households, less than half, 49 percent, of all Black households are married-couple households (WAPL, 1991). Given these realities, African-American women are more likely as young women to have the greatest expectation of full-time work experience, and studies not only have shown that women with such expectations choose jobs with the greatest earnings potential, they also have shown that never-married women have complete wage parity with their male counterparts (Polachek, 1984).

Given these points, one might have predicted degreed, African-American women to earn more than their female, European-

American counterparts, regardless of occupational status. Given these points, individuals contemplating future studies of income inequality in social welfare work might well be advised to incorporate into their questionnaires items soliciting information on expectations, particularly of female employees, and measures of marital status that include the "single, never-married" category.

Additionally important in interpreting gross income data is the fact that European-American women have lower labor force participation rates than African-American women after age 25 (King, 1978). Thus, simply comparing Bureau of Census earnings data for these women is misleading because there is a higher concentration of younger women among female, European-American workers than among African-American women; and younger workers earn less. Another consideration in interpreting gross Bureau of Census data is the fact that workers, even those who are classified as full-time, often do not work the same amount of hours. Men, for example, are much more likely than women to work, simultaneously, more than one job, which artificially inflates income differences between the sexes (Farrell, forthcoming). And minority workers often work more hours than European-American men, but still earn less (cf: Takaki, 1985), in this case artificially reducing the income gap between the races. One implication here is that future studies of income inequality in the human services should seek to examine not merely whether employees are part- or full-timers, but the actual number of hours employees work. Such data will not simply provide important information on employees paid by the hour, they will be somewhat reflective of work effort among salaried, professional employees.

### Summary And Conclusion

Although this study reported data that constitute an improvement on previous studies relying entirely on gross aggregate data such as Bureau of Census data, much more sophistication will be required of future studies before issues related to the nature and extent of discrimination in the human services can be resolved unequivocally. Meanwhile, from a statistical standpoint, and keeping limitations of the data in

mind, European-American males perceiving threats from affirmative action policies have little about which to complain. They comprised 15.7% of the total study group, but they contributed 40% of all the administrators and 21% of all the supervisors participating in the study. Minority men constitute 6.5% of the sample and occupy 6.5% of these positions, and the representation of European-American women in administrative and supervisory positions (45.6%) was virtually identical to their representation in the sample (45.5%). But African-American and Other minority women comprised 31.1% of all respondents and contributed only 17.5% of all administrators and 22.1% of all supervisors. Too, with only a few exceptions, minority women tended to earn the least. Thus, it is these women who experience the harshest conditions with respect both to income and rank in public human service employment, A finding not inconsistent with those of other studies examining non-human service segments of the U.S. population (cf: Dressell, 1988).

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### Notes

1. For a contrary interpretation see: Dressel (1987).
2. The data on income and standard deviations reported in Tables 3 & 4 have been derived by utilizing Blalock's (1960) recommended method for computing means from grouped data. Blalock indicates that when interval data are grouped, the actual means for subsets of the sample may be derived by computation. The questionnaire, for example, utilized in the present study, allowed respondents to report their incomes in one of 18 grouped categories. To illustrate, respondents reported their incomes by selecting from the following grouped choices: (1) <\$9,000; (2) \$9,000 - \$11,999; (3) \$12,000 - \$14,999 . . . (6) \$21,000 - \$23,999; (7) \$24,000 - \$26,999 . . . (16) \$51,000 - \$53,999; (17) \$54,000 - \$56,999; (18) >\$56,999. Thus, when income was computed, the *actual* figure generated for a subgroup, say Black males, was 7.092. The actual *dollar* income was then derived by multiplying .092 times \$2,999, and adding the sum to (7) \$24,000. This procedure yields a mean for African-American males of \$24,278, as were derived by multiplication of the To illustrate, the indicated standard 3.381893964. Multiplying this figure \$10,142.3, as indicated in Table 3.

Computations converting grouped merely to aid readers in interpreting reported in Table 3. Standard deviations indicated figure by a factor of \$2,999. deviation for African-American males was by \$2,999 yields a standard deviation of data into dollar figures were performed the income data reported in the tables appearing in this article. *All statistical tests, in fact, were Performed on the grouped data.* Thus, the F-value of 46.01 reported in Table 3 was computed by analysis of the 18 grouped categories, not by analysis of the derived dollar figures, and the grouped data were also used to determine probability statements and Scheffe contrasts. Consequently, as the grouped categories reduce continuation, the significance of income differences among the race/gender groups tended to be suppressed by use of this procedure. Put differently, the procedure utilized in the present report tends to produce the most conservative assessments of differences in income among respondents. Had the questionnaire been set up so that respondents could have reported their individual incomes in precise dollars, the differences among the race/gender groups most probably would have been even more statistically significant. Readers are urged to review Blalock (1960: 50-53) for additional information on computing means from grouped data.

# From Welfare to Work: Does it Make Sense?

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A great deal of thought and energy currently is being focused on moving welfare recipients off welfare and into the job market. This article reports the results of a study of the work versus welfare choice of women who are limited to the minimum wage job market. Due to the level of the minimum wage, these women face poverty even when working full time. Working often brings them little financial benefit compared to being on welfare, and does not include important benefits such as health coverage for their children. One might ask, then, why women facing this choice would be motivated to try to enter the labor market at all. This study was designed to understand, from the women's point of view, what keeps them in the labor market under these conditions, and to shed light on their perceptions of the work versus welfare choice.

The data obtained in this study indicate that a segment of women on welfare may be more motivated to work than is commonly recognized, and that federal welfare policy, instead of supporting this motivation, appears to obstruct it.

## Women and Welfare

When our current welfare system began, it was not expected that single mothers would work (Abramowitz, 1989). It was assumed that most of these women were widows, which touched the sympathy of the public. In addition, it was the norm at that time for women to stay home and care for children. In the decades since then, much has changed. The large majority of women now on welfare are divorced, separated, or never-married women (Duncan, 1984). Also, women have been entering the labor market at an ever-increasing rate since 1950, and women with young children are no exception (Wattenberg,

1986). Consequently, there is a growing consensus that welfare mothers should enter the labor market and become self-supporting (Kamerman, 1984).

In the 1960s, policy makers began to devise mechanisms to encourage welfare mothers to become self-supporting (Hill, 1982; Kamerman, 1984). One of these was a work-incentive that was built into the program called Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) in 1967. The work-incentive functioned like a wage supplement, to augment sub-poverty level wages. By this mechanism, when a welfare recipient found a job, her welfare check and Food Stamps were reduced by a proportion of her earnings. If her earnings increased, her welfare benefits would get smaller, eventually shrinking to zero. At each point, however, it was economically more advantageous to combine work and welfare than to be full-time on welfare.

Table 1 shows a typical work incentive scheme, in which the recipient's welfare benefit is reduced by 50% of earnings. For instance, if the recipient earns \$100, the welfare check is reduced by \$50. It also shows what happens to the welfare benefit when there is no work-incentive built into the model, and the benefit is reduced by the amount of money earned.

The impact of a work incentive model on a woman moving from welfare to a part-time or low-wage job becomes clear.

Table 1

*Total Income at Various Levels of Earnings, with Work Incentive Present and Work Incentive Absent*

WORK INCENTIVE PRESENT			WORK INCENTIVE ABSENT		
Monthly Earnings	Welfare Benefit	Total Income	Monthly Earnings	Welfare Benefit	Total Income
\$ 0	\$300	\$300	\$ 0	\$300	\$300
100	250	350	100	200	300
200	200	400	200	100	300
300	150	450	300	0	300
400	100	500	400	0	400
500	50	550	500	0	500
600	0	600	600	0	600

Whether she earns \$100 or \$500 a month, she is always better off working than not working. Finally, at \$600, she no longer gets a supplement from welfare; however, by that time her income is twice what it would be if she stopped working and went back on welfare.

In 1981, the Reagan administration took some initiatives to reduce expenditures in the AFDC budget and the work incentive was cut at that time (Levitan, 1985). The work incentive was reduced, and most of it was eliminated after 4 months of employment. It is eliminated entirely after 12 months of employment. At this point, the recipient is usually off the welfare rolls entirely. A major implication of this is that she is then facing the end of medical coverage for herself and her children which was an automatic part of being on welfare. Recent legislation (*Family Support Act of 1988*) has enabled Medicaid to provide family medical coverage for 12 months after a woman leaves welfare. However, the reality of the job market facing these women is that after twelve months of employment, they are still not in a position to purchase medical coverage, and few of the jobs available to them include such benefits as coverage for families.

### The Low-wage Job Market

Understanding the nature of the job market available to most women on welfare sheds light on the work versus welfare choice they face. The dual labor market model (Doeringer and Piore, 1975) describes a primary and secondary labor market. In the primary sector, where the majority of Americans work, the jobs offer relatively steady, full-time employment, fringe benefits, and a wage above the poverty level. Frequently these jobs are covered by collective bargaining, annual contracts, and include benefits such as health coverage, sick leave, and retirement.

Jobs in the secondary market, however, do not have these characteristics. They have low wages, and few benefits. Frequently, they are structured at less than full-time (35 hours per week or less) so that the employers are not obligated to provide health insurance or sick leave (Ellwood, 1988). Lack of health coverage is particularly important to poverty-stricken

single mothers. In Illinois, the site of this study, it is estimated that 25% of previous welfare recipients who leave work and return to welfare do so to obtain medical coverage for their children (Taylor, 1987).

Bluestone and Harrison (1986) have pointed out that while our economy created millions of new jobs during the 70s and early 80s, nonetheless unemployment and the poverty rate both remained high. This is due to two factors, one residing in population demographics, the other in the nature of the jobs being created.

The growth of the labor force has surpassed the rate of job creation, due to the coming of age of the children of the postwar baby boom, and due to the influx of women into the labor market since the Second World War. Consequently, although in 1987 the Reagan administration cited 20 million new jobs created in the previous decade, the unemployment rate remained above 7% during that time, and was frequently higher (Bluestone & Harrison, 1987).

Second, and fundamental to the understanding of the persistence of poverty in our country, is the fact that many of the newly created jobs are low-wage jobs. Bluestone and Harrison (1987) found that 44% of jobs created between 1979 and 1985 were at poverty-level wages or below. In addition, 30% of the total new job growth consisted of part-time employment.

Thus, at a time when the job market was creating a preponderance of low-wage and part-time jobs, the work-incentive that acted as a supplement to these wages for women leaving welfare was abolished, leaving many recipients with the choice of living in poverty on welfare or living in poverty while employed.

Researchers looking at large data bases discovered that the majority of women faced with these alternatives continued to work after the abolition of the work-incentive, although it was no longer financially profitable for them (Ellwood & Summers, 1985; Sarri, 1985; Wodarski, Parham, Lindsay, & Blackburn, 1986). This study was designed to understand, from the women's point of view, what keeps them in the labor market given these unrewarding circumstances, and to gain insight into their perspective on the choice of work versus welfare.

### Research Design

A qualitative design was chosen to shed light on the issues as seen from the point of view of the women: what, from their point of view, are the advantages and disadvantages of working in the secondary labor market as compared to being unemployed and on welfare?

The design specified respondents who have had substantial experience in the labor market. In other words, to qualify for the study, the respondents had to have demonstrated the ability to search for, find, and maintain a job. This was done to eliminate women who are "employment-impaired" due to inadequate education, mental or physical illness, substance abuse, and so on.

A sample of twelve women was chosen. They all had both experience being on welfare and experience in the low-wage job market. A snowball sampling technique was used, with the result that all the respondents were residents of two local housing projects. All were Afro-American single women, with one to four children. Of the twelve, all had become parents before the age of twenty; all but two had their high school diplomas, and only two had been previously married.

Of the sample, six were continuously employed during the time of the study, two worked off and on, and four were unemployed. Seven of the women had started working, at least part-time, before their first child was born. Typically, the women had held many jobs since they began working, although two of the women had held the same job for four and five years, respectively, and one respondent had been on her current job for twelve years. With one exception, the women worked for wages below \$4.50 per hour, and frequently much lower than that.

The method used was in-depth interviewing on the topics of work and welfare. The interviews took place over the course of a year, and were held primarily in the women's homes. The field work included many informal contacts with the women, to establish trust and rapport, in addition to the structured interviews.

The setting for the research was a midwestern town of 100,000. The town is characterized by a relatively low unemployment rate compared to similar communities, due in part to

the presence of a large state university, which provides numerous jobs within the service sector.

As the research progressed, and initial answers began to be formulated, the data was clustered into categories of Incentives to Work and Disincentives to Work, and it is the primary findings in these categories that are presented in this article.

### Experiences of Work

What is common in the experience of the women is a wealth of experience working, a variety of jobs, and an extremely flat wage scale. One respondent, for instance, began work at age 14 in a small neighborhood supermarket. She worked almost continuously for the next 13 years, in fast food restaurants, pizza parlors, a plastics factory, as a nurse's aide, and as a playground supervisor. Only one of these jobs paid higher than the minimum wage. (It paid \$4.00 per hour at a time when the minimum was \$3.35). Most of the jobs were part-time, and she frequently combined work and welfare. She took breaks averaging six months for the births of her three children, born when she was 16, 18, and 24. During these times, she was entirely on welfare.

The reasons for frequent job changes are numerous and difficult to generalize about: family needs, illness, frustration with wages, personal conflicts with supervisors, hours being cut, stores going out of business, and the discovery that in some cases working made one poorer than being on welfare. One respondent, who started working as a cafeteria helper in a nursing home at age 15, quit her job four years later because she had only had a total of \$.25 per hour raise in that time. During the time of the study, she was working two part-time jobs for a total of more than forty hours per week, and was still living below the poverty line.

### Incentives to Work

The most surprising finding to emerge was not that the women disliked their jobs (this was the expected response, considering the nature of the jobs), but the extent to which they enjoyed them. With one exception, all of the women had

significant positive things to say about the experience of working. Five main themes emerged in the area of attitudes toward working.

The first was labelled *mingling*: socializing with coworkers and customers, meeting new people, being part of the hum and rhythm of human encounters. The women said such things as:

—"I enjoyed working, period. You meet new people, and you talk, you learn things automatically."

—"I've always liked those types of jobs, too, where you're around people, do a lot of mingling. . . . dealing with people, and it kept me busy. . . . The people I worked with were real nice. I enjoyed it. I was a cashier—I wasn't making nothing but minimum wage. I would get a raise of ten cents whenever I went for my review."

—"I worked at [a canning factory]. I worked there as a cutter. That was fun, I mean everybody always worked there. . . . all my girlfriends, they worked there."

—"It wasn't the work itself—I was crawling all up and down under these machines. What I really enjoyed was, the people I worked with all got along. . . . Everybody got along. My supervisor was wonderful—you had to be, to put up with me! To put up with me, you had to have a good sense of humor!"

In addition to enjoying mingling, the theme of *liking to be busy* emerged from the data. One respondent spoke of enjoying being active and productive, although she stated "I'm not benefitting any," referring to her wages. She said:

—"[working] gives you something to do besides sitting at home all day. . . . I like to get out and meet people. I'm not a late sleeper, I'm ready to go in the morning. I have to have something to do." Another respondent stated that working:

—"gives you a sense of something, it makes you feel better, to me. Even though the money's not great or anything. Just sitting around here makes you think about your problems, about how you wish you could get out. At least if you're working, you have a little more self-esteem."

In addition to the personal feelings of enjoying mingling and being busy that many spoke of, some were *proud of working*. One woman, describing work at a fast food restaurant, said:



—"I could do everything there, I could do everything. I told them I wanted to learn everything. I could work the grill during lunch hour, it was no problem to keep up, to keep it going. It took time to learn how to do that. I knew how to call production—you know, to keep the food going, to tell them what we needed.

"I could do it all, I did a lot of other things that other people didn't even do. I would make things for the store. Around Christmas time, I made a stencil of Santa Claus. They kept it for a long time. The manager finally had it cut out of plastic so they could keep it for a long time."

Two of the women mentioned that *how their children see them* affects their feelings toward working. They said:

—"Whereas now, I ain't got no job, I'm real discouraged now. My kids are looking for me to have a job; other kids talk about their mom and dad go to work. They say 'Your momma on welfare'. . . . My kids used to me working. . . ."

—"At first, they [the children] wanted me to be at home. I explained to them that it was time for momma to get out there and do something instead of sitting at home. . . . Now, they like it. My daughters were telling me they don't want to be on Public Aid, they want to work."

To some women, working gives a *sense of independence and control* in their lives. For instance:

—"I just want a nice-paying job where I could pay all my bills, and still have money left over, so I wouldn't have to mess with Public Aid and all, I could be on my own. . . . What I mean by being free is that I don't have to get anything at all from Public Aid, no medical card, no Food Stamps, no cash, no nothing. I'd like to do it all by myself."

Many other women spoke of the dream of being able to be off welfare. One said,

—"I'd rather be off Public Aid. I really would. . . . You get a high-paying job, you don't have to worry about them digging in your business, you can live like normal. . . . You feel better when you got your own money."

The women described incentives to work that can be described as internal—that is, that address psychosocial needs. They include the enjoyment of mingling, and of being busy, of

pride in work, and looking good in the eyes of their children, as well as the dream of being free of AFDC and in control of one's resources.

### Disincentives to Work

With these incentives pushing the women toward work, what forces are operating in the other direction? Child care, obligations to ill or elderly kin, and transportation are barriers to employment that were mentioned, and these have been documented elsewhere (Stack, 1974; Wodarski et al., 1986). However, the strongest, most universal response to the question 'What forces operate against working in the lives of these women?' is that they are no better off financially by working, and are often worse off, especially when the loss of health care coverage is factored in. This was documented repeatedly:

—" . . . for me, when I was working, I found it to be harder working because there's more debts. Your rent is more, and you have all these different cuts on your Food Stamps and your [AFDC] check, and then sometimes, you get cut off your medical card, so that means you have to buy medicine and cover your own doctor bills. . . . I wanted to work, but when I got off into working, I felt like it wasn't, it wasn't really for me, because by the time I got the money in my hands, somebody else was getting it."

—" . . . but if I had stayed on the job, they would have took my medical card. My check got cut partly, and my Food Stamps got cut."

—"When you work and go out and get yourself a job, and it's a minimum-wage paying job, you're really defeating your purpose as far as working, because you're just losing out on everything. They snatch the medical card, they snatch the Food Stamps, they snatch everything."

—"When you're working, they take it all away, even the medical card. You work a minimum-wage job, and if your child is sickly, you can't afford to be takin him to the doctor all the time, you can't."

—"Public Aid practically cut me off, as far as money, and they cut my Food Stamps. It was hard, it was really hard, and I

said, 'Man, I might as well go on and quit working, and be on Public Aid, because I'm not getting anywhere.'

—"I didn't have any money. I didn't have any more working than I did on Public Aid. I said, 'This just doesn't make any sense!' It seems like I was supposed to have more, but I didn't. I said, 'Forget this, I can't get a baby-sitter like I want to anyway, so I'm just going to sit at home on my butt and get my Public Aid'—that was my attitude."

One respondent, (who had worked continuously for the last eleven years) when asked what she thought the welfare department could do to help people such as herself, said:

—"They could stop taking your money every time you make it!! That's the way I feel, Then, if they didn't take your money, that would give a chance where you want to work. They take too much percentage of your money when you work... the working people catch it, that's who catch it! You ain't benefittin' nothing!"

The point here seems clear—it certainly appears to be clear to the women as they tell it: that the structure of the AFDC system brings heavy financial disincentives to bear on the question of whether or not to work.

The experience of going out to get a job, and then finding the cash grant and Food Stamps reduced in such a way that they were actually worse off financially was not lost on them. Also, the inability to purchase medical insurance on a minimum wage job was mentioned again and again.

The primary disincentives, which came up over and over, have to do with how the AFDC system interacts with the labor market. Women found again and again that when they would work at the low-wage, part-time jobs realistically available to them, they would suffer such a reduction in welfare grants, Food Stamps, and medical coverage that they often were worse off by working than by staying on AFDC.

### Discussion

As the respondents described the various incentives and disincentives that bear on the decision to enter the job market,

it appears that the strongest incentives are internal ones, in the psychosocial domain, and the strongest disincentives are external, in the impinging environment. The strongest incentives, or forces that support work, are the feelings of enjoyment of mingling, socializing, being active and busy, the pride, the self-esteem, the escape from boredom at home, the sense of being independent and in control, and the dream of someday being free of AFDC.

The strongest disincentives, by contrast, come from outside the women. Those disincentives reside in the structure of the labor market and of the AFDC system. These structures interact to make work, as it is available to these women, not profitable.

These data indicate that the problem for this sample in leaving the welfare rolls to enter the labor market is not one of motivation. On the contrary, the motivation to work is frequently present, as is corroborated by other studies (Goodwin, 1972; Sarri, 1985; Wodarski et al., 1986). The problem lies in the experience of being worse off by working. The respondents gave repeated examples of the experience of job-hunting, beginning to work, and then discovering they were losing money and/or health coverage by so doing.

It is the "Catch-22" of women who start working in the labor market available to them, and find that they are worse off than when they were unemployed and on welfare. Although the women put the blame for this problem on welfare, it more accurately is the interaction of the AFDC regulations with the secondary labor market that penalizes the women in this study.

Looking at the AFDC system from the point of view of behavior theory, and what is known about the power of positive and negative reinforcement, it seems clear that the system fails to reward the desired behavior (working), and in effect punishes it through the rapid and extensive withdrawal of benefits and supports. If the respondents in this study had available to them jobs that provided earnings above the poverty level, then the response of AFDC to their work effort would not be damaging. As it is, however, the respondents are caught in a vicious cycle in which employment leads to increased hardship, which then creates an incentive to move back on to welfare.

## Recommendations

Welfare policy reflects a view of recipients as a homogeneous group in regard to certain characteristics such as a lack of basic job skills and experience, and which are true of only a segment of the welfare population (Duncan, 1984; Weinberg, 1989). The women in this study are experienced at finding jobs and at working, and they have many positive things to say about the experience of working.

For women such as these, the education and job training programs (accompanied by threats for non-compliance) contained in recent welfare reform (*Family Support Act of 1988*) may be an inappropriate response to their problems. Their problem is neither unwillingness nor inability to work. What they need is some way of increasing their earnings. This could be done in one of several ways.

One way is simply to return to the pre-1981 work incentive program through AFDC, where inadequate wages were supplemented through welfare to bring the family above poverty. This arrangement also provided health insurance for the family, as well as support for day care costs.

Another possibility is to raise the minimum wage. The U.S. Congress has recently done this, but due to opposition from the Administration, was not able to raise it sufficiently to bring the earned income of women such as those in this sample above poverty (Gendel, 1989).

A third possibility is to supplement inadequate wages through the income tax system. This is currently done, to an extent, with the Earned Income Tax Credit, but, as with the minimum wage, it is not at a high enough level to bring most working poor families out of poverty (Moynihan, 1986).

Whatever mechanism for supplementing inadequate wages is used, there needs to be provision for health care and child care on an indefinite basis. Currently, women who exit welfare via earnings are entitled to twelve months of health care coverage and child care subsidy (*Family Support Act of 1988*). However, it is fallacious to assume that within twelve months the women will have increased their earnings enough to cover health insurance and full payment of child care. The jobs these

women perform pay sub-poverty wages, and have very flat wage scales (Bluestone & Harrison, 1986). Raises reported by respondents were typically .10 or .15 per hour—hardly enough to enable them to purchase health insurance or good child care for their children.

In our current economy, it is not realistic to assume that all welfare recipients can be trained and educated to hold jobs that will bring their incomes above poverty. Goodwin (1989, p. 63) found that research from recent work-training programs supported findings from previous decades: that "work training is useful, but in itself will not deplete welfare rolls." Gueron (1987, 1988) found that welfare-to-work programs are most effective with chronically unemployed recipients, the so-called "hard-core." She found that with work-experienced recipients (such as the ones in this study), the education and training programs available did not raise their incomes significantly. The problem here is a labor market one: welfare employment programs focus on the supply side of the market, but do nothing to address issues on the demand side, such as wages and benefits available.

Many writers (see for example, Bluestone & Harrison, 1987; Ellwood, 1988) are predicting that our economy is going to produce an increasing percentage of low-skill, low-wage jobs, primarily in the service sector. The women in this research sample already possess the necessary skill and experience to hold these jobs.

The reality for these women is that they likely never will have "careers" in the middle-class understanding of that term (Groves, Cassella, & Jacobs, 1982; Hooks, 1984). They can, however, have satisfactory work lives. Recall that most of the women in this study did not complain about the nature of their work; rather, they complained that working did not enable them to support their families in a manner any better than being on welfare, and sometimes made them worse off.

What is called for is a policy that supports existing motivation to work. Currently, our welfare policy is in effect punishing the desired behavior by withdrawal of supports when a recipient enters the labor market. The problem that is not addressed in current welfare reform is the reality of the labor market that awaits many recipients leaving the welfare rolls.

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# Child Support Services And Non-Welfare Families

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*Under the law, Child Support Enforcement services are supposed to be available to all single-headed families with absent parents who are not paying support, or not paying enough support. Using Alabama as a case study, it was determined that factors operating at the agency level effectively control how many non-public assistance clients are being served. The number of non-AFDC clients was found to be a function of the number of AFDC clients rather than a function of the free-market of services. It is proposed that the incentive structure for collections, which limits incentive payments for non-AFDC to 115 percent of AFDC collections, is a key factor. Methods of advertising, or marketing of services to non-AFDC populations may be used as tool to control access to information regarding agency services.*

## Introduction

Child Support Enforcement (CSE) services for non-welfare families have been a part of the CSE program since 1975 with the passage of Title IV-D of the Social Security Act. Despite the inclusion of non-welfare families, services were not, generally, provided to this population (Lima & Harris, 1988). These services were reaffirmed by the Child Support Amendments of 1984 which clearly established that child support obligations were not to be confined to Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) cases (Stuart 1986, p. 204). The Family Support Act of 1988 again confirmed this obligation.

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Non-payment of child support has become one of the most pervasive of social problems (Dobelstein, 1990), affecting not only families in poverty but middle and upper-middle class families as well. However, most CSE services are directed at collecting from fathers of welfare clients (Cassetty, 1978; Kahn & Kammerman, 1988; Congressional Research Service, 1989; Miller, 1990). States, in an attempt to control welfare costs, seek to recover welfare expenditures from the responsible father and establish him, rather than the state as the financial provider. This research focuses on CSE services to non-welfare families. As CSE agencies have become a vital resource to families in securing child support from non-paying parents, assuring these services are provided to non-welfare clients is just as important as assuring services are provided to welfare clients.

#### *Non-Payment of Child Support as a Social Problem*

Financial support of one's children is a legal responsibility (Krause, 1983). However, without a support order and other enforcement measures, such as wage withholding, the absent parent often does not provide for the children concerned (Congressional Research Service [CRS], 1989). The Child Support Enforcement office is by law, supposed to provide services to all qualified clients seeking help in securing past due child support payments. Dobelstein (1990) estimates that there are perhaps 4 million families who qualify to participate in the Child Support Enforcement (CSE) program but do not. According to the U.S. Bureau of Census (1989):

- of the 8.8 million female-headed households, 5.4 million were awarded child support.
- of the 3.4 million women without child support awards, about half wanted awards but could not obtain them.
- seventy-four percent of the women who were supposed to receive payments received some payment, leaving twenty-five percent of female-headed families without any support.
- for those women who received payments irregularly or not at all, the main reason reported was the refusal of the father to pay (p.3).

Child Support Enforcement legislation can be seen as a response to the growing concern with the growth in the number of

female-headed families. From 1970 to 1988, there has been a 119 percent increase in this family type, where it is estimated that 7.4 million families are female-headed (Committee on Ways and Means, 1990). According to Duncan and Hoffman (1988), 75 percent of all welfare spells begin following a divorce, separation or out of wedlock birth; the longest term welfare recipients being nonwhite children born out of wedlock. However, just because a child support order is established, it does not mean the father pays. For example, the Nichols-Casebolt and Klawitter (1990) study of paternity adjudications for establishing support did not find a reduction in welfare use even though a child support order was established. While it is known that many women, who either through divorce, separation or illegitimate births, experience drastic income drops because of child responsibility (the poverty rate in 1989 for all women with children from absent fathers was 32 percent, and the poverty rate for never-married women was 53.9 percent [U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1991]), does not necessarily indicate a cause and effect relationship between income deprivation and welfare use. In fact, 81 percent of the mothers, who were owed child support but received none, did not become Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) recipients (CRS 1989, p. 7).

#### *The Federal Incentive Formula and Non-Welfare Families*

The failure of the OCSE to provide needed services to non-welfare clients can be attributed, in part, to the lack of federal incentives for serving this population. It was not until the 1984 Child Support Amendments that agencies were assured that they would be reimbursed for administrative costs for supplying services to non-AFDC clients. As of 1985, the Federal OCSE began to pay 66 percent of agency program costs and maintenance (CRS, 1989, p.67). In addition, an incentive payment for collections was also implemented.

States actually stand to make a profit from child support collections from AFDC clients through this incentive formula. Each State receives an incentive payment equal to at least six percent and a maximum of ten percent of the State's total amount of AFDC and its non-AFDC support collections. However, the federal program, worried that agencies would shift

collection efforts to the non-AFDC population, placed a limit on the incentive payment for non-AFDC collections, capped at a maximum of 115 percent of incentive payment for AFDC collections (CRS, 1989, pp. 61-2). Thus agencies are precluded from a financial advantage for serving non-welfare clients.

Overall, collections from non-welfare clients are higher than welfare clients, 16 percent more (Kahn & Kammerman 1988, p. 13). For example, for the state of Alabama, 1985-1989 (see Table 1), in 1985 non-AFDC collections represented 92 percent of AFDC collections (\$109,496-AFDC, \$100,783-non-AFDC). However, by 1989, non-AFDC collections represented 284 percent of AFDC collections (\$140,558-AFDC; \$399,463-non-AFDC).

Nationally, collections have increased substantially for both welfare and non-welfare clients. According to Stuart (1986, p. 203), total collections amounted to \$1.6 billion in 1981 with nonpublic assistance collections representing 58 percent of collections and AFDC representing 42 percent. In 1987 the U. S. Department of Health and Human Services (1987) report that AFDC collections grew by 54 percent from 1983-1987, and non-AFDC collection rose 122 percent (p.2). In addition, non-AFDC collections are cost effective (dollars spent by the agency to collect child support are less than dollars collected) whereas cost for AFDC collections continue to rise (p.7).

Table 1

*Child Support Collections for AFDC and non-AFDC 1985-1989, State of Alabama*

Year	AFDC	non-AFDC	Percentage AFDC/non-AFDC
1985	109,496	100,783	92%
1986	112,970	157,339	114%
1987	134,040	218,527	163%
1988	156,741	369,938	236%
1989	140,558	399,463	284%

Source: Child Support Enforcement Division. Montgomery, AL.

It is expected that both the 1984 "get tough" enforcement measures as well as the incentives for collections would greatly influence the number of AFDC clients and non-public assistance clients. This expectation is demonstrated in the caseload numbers for the state of Alabama (see Figure 1). Within one year, by 1985, agencies responded dramatically to federal legislation as demonstrated by increased caseloads for both populations.

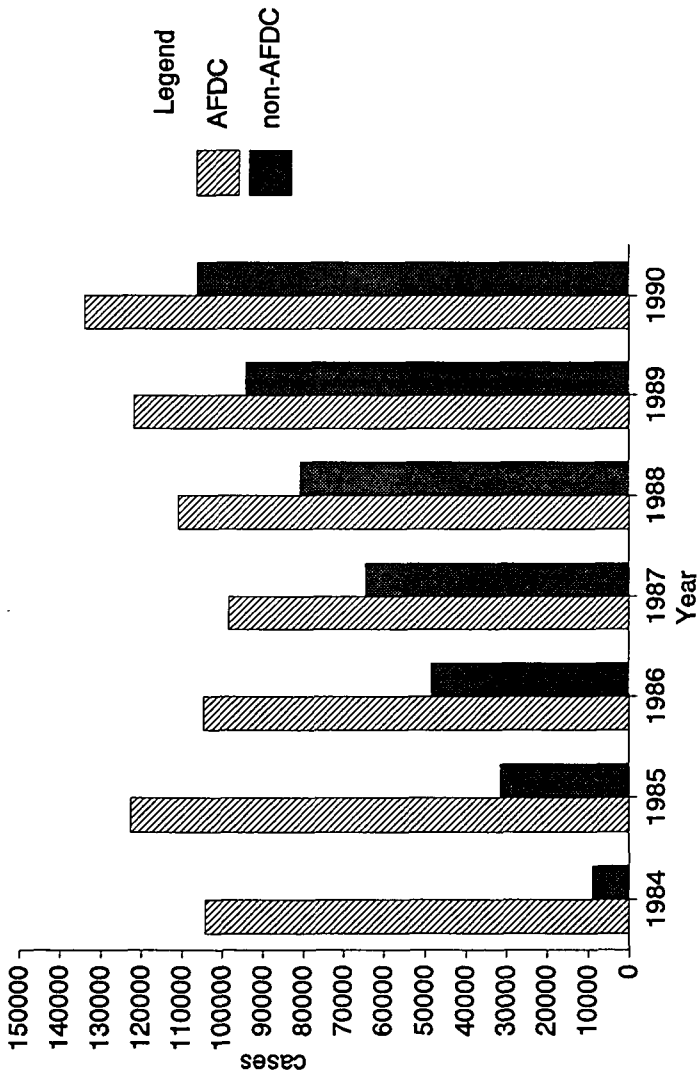
### *Clients and Services*

Welfare clients are mandated to participate in the child support enforcement program if they want to continue receiving AFDC benefits. Participation of non-welfare clients is a function of the free market of services,, based on client initiative. Typically CSE agencies advertise their services to the public via public services announcements on the television and radio, or through posters placed on bulletin boards in Veterans Administration and Social Security buildings. It is then up to the client to come into the agency. Therefore awareness plays a crucial role for obtaining the services. It is expected that as more women who are not receiving child support and not on welfare find out about the program, client numbers would increase. However, as was demonstrated with the dramatic increase in client use in 1985, agencies, acting on decisions made at the Federal level, most likely play a significant role in whether clients are encouraged to take advantage of OCSE services.

A number of studies have been conducted which address maximizing child support payments. Such studies focus on determining optimal income transfers (e.g., Oellerich, Garfinkel and Robins, 1991). Other studies attempt to determine why fathers do not pay (Chambers, 1979; Weitzman, 1988). These studies assume client use of CSE services but are not concerned with how or why the client seeks the services of the CSE office in the first place. Non-payment of child support cannot be tackled by the CSE agency unless the mother seeks the services of the CSE office. Thus, knowledge of availability of services can play a key role in getting mothers into the OCSE office. In such cases, optimizing income transfers is a moot point; the custodial parent in need of support needs to be in the system before any strategies can be effected.

Figure 1

*Child Support Cases for Alabama (1984-1990 AFDC and non-AFDC)*



The thesis proposed here is that child support collections/ payments could be substantially increased but that increase would depend on more non-public assistance clients seeking and being provided CSE services. Thus it is proposed that numbers of nonwelfare clients should be a function of the free-market of services, provided by CSE agencies. The alternative is that the number of clients is not a function of the free-market of services, and that something is controlling access to CSE services.

### Data And Analysis

The relationship between non-welfare case loads and AFDC case loads is examined for all counties ( $N=67$ )<sup>1</sup> in the state of Alabama. The data for this project are collected from quarterly reports (ending in September) from the State of Alabama Department of Human Resources for seven years from 1984 to 1990 (State Department of Human Resources Managerial Analysis Unit). There is no significance in the choice of the quarter other than this quarter was the period when data was available for all years. The data consist of the number of cases of AFDC clients and nonwelfare clients for each year, for each county. Data pertaining to child support collections were obtained from the State of Alabama Department of Child Support Enforcement (Montgomery, AL). Because the data are from the state of Alabama they may not be representative of other states, however as a case study, they provide insight into the relationship between federal policy and state response.

Summary statistics as well as several other statistical procedures were used to analyze the data to determine if the number of client cases is a result of the free-market of services, or if perhaps some other factor is influencing the number of nonAFDC users and those subsequently those provided services at county Child Support Enforcement agencies.

Descriptive statistics of the total numbers of clients per categories, AFDC and non-AFDC, are displayed in a graph (see figure 1). It becomes obvious that prior to 1985 the number of non-AFDC clients were minimal. For the year 1985 there is a significant increase in clients served for both groups, most



likely to increased enforcement capabilities, Federal subsidy of the program, and incentive payments. Visually, it becomes quite obvious that as the number of AFDC cases rises, so does the number of non-AFDC cases. To determine if this relationship has a statistical relationship, ratios were calculated for all years and all counties, that is, AFDC/non-AFDC (RATIO10) and non-AFDC/AFDC (RATIO01).

According to the data, the maximum ratio for AFDC clients to non-AFDC clients for any county was 191.5 to 1 in 1984 and the minimum ratio was .2655 in 1990. However, as one can readily see from Table 2, mean ratios tended towards 1 (1.649, 1.424, 1.294, 1.214) beginning in 1987 with corresponding decreasing standard deviations. Therefore by 1987, the ratio between AFDC cases and non-AFDC has stabilized as can be seen from a plot of the ratios (see Figure 2).

There were eight counties (or 12 percent), which have larger or more equitable distributions between AFDC clients and non-AFDC clients. T-tests done on the RATIO variables confirm that statistically, at the .05 level, the RATIO10 ratios for 1988, 1989, and 1990 are the same.

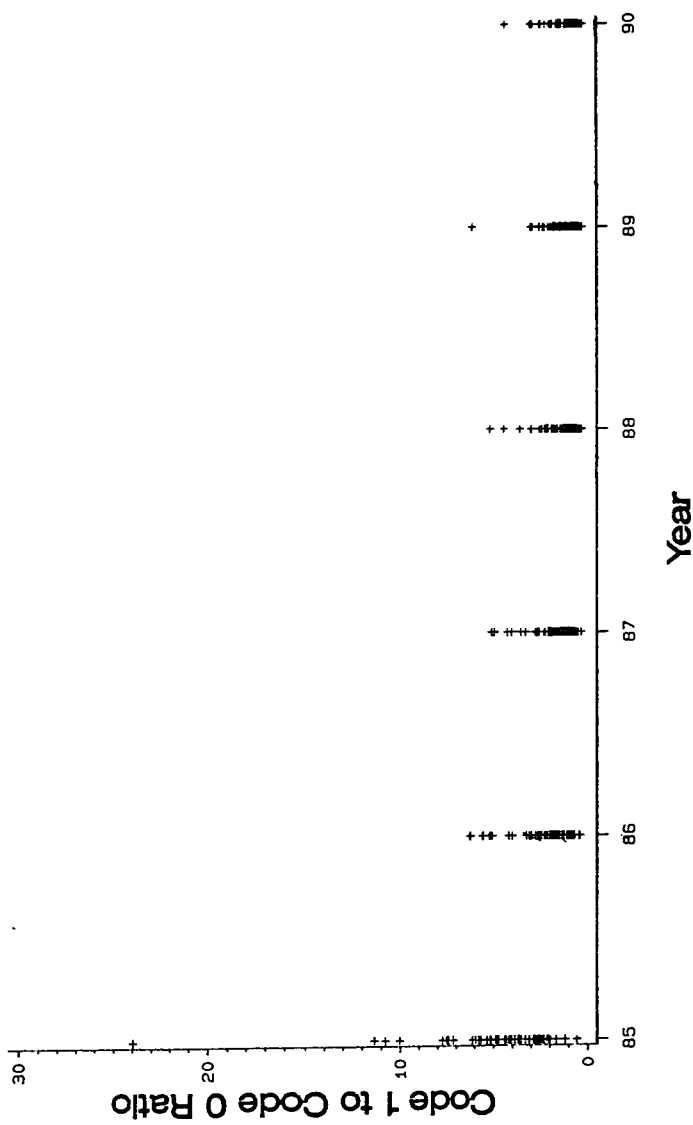
To determine if coding, that is, AFDC and non-AFDC, is a function of year, which may be influenced by such factors as the economy, a log-linear model, contingency table procedure (SPSS 1986) was used to select the model for fitting multidimensional

Table 2

*AFDC to non-AFDC Ratios for 1984-1990, State of Alabama*

Year	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
1984	.9167	191.500	20.003	30.146
1985	.5865	23.969	4.296	3.246
1986	.4135	6.282	2.173	1.422
1987	.3623	5.111	1.649	1.026
1988	.3029	5.205	1.424	.931
1989	.2903	6.150	1.294	.884
1990	.2655	4.410	1.214	.775

Figure 2  
Case Proportions (1/0) 1985-1990 (Alabama, 67 counties)



tables. The hypothesis tested was whether code and or year had an influence on the number of cases and if code and year (interaction) had an effect on the count, and whether these two were independent of each other. Using the design = Year\*code weighted by the actual number of cases for each category of client tested for year and code and year/code interaction (number of cases=year + code + year\*code). The null hypothesis is that year and code are independent. This goodness of fit procedure is described by Bishop, Fienberg, Holland, Light & Mosteller (1975) and is used to obtain summary statistics for discrete, dichotomous variables.

For this analysis, data were coded 1 for those agency clients on welfare (AFDC) and 2 for those who were non-public assistance clients. The goal was to determine if some cells differ from the general pattern of the others. Both factors, year and code had a significant effect on the number of cases, and the factors were dependent ( $p < .01$ ), indicating that code depends on year as measured by the number of cases.

The question becomes one of determining what accounts for the variability in the data. To determine if year has an effect on the ratio of cases, Proportional Analysis for General Linear Models (SAS, 1985) was employed. When all years were included in the procedure, where the dependent variable was RATIO10, the  $R^2 = .2381$  ( $p < .0001$ ). When the dependent variable ratio was RATIO01 the  $R^2 = .3439$  ( $p < .0001$ ). Therefore the ratio, non-AFDC/AFDC accounts for more of the variance. Year by year proportional analysis yields significant  $R^2$ s, but the highest is  $R^2 = .3021$  for 1984 for the ratio AFDC/non-AFDC. Therefore year accounts for a maximum of 30 percent of the variability due to the ratio of the cases.

A Pearson's correlation analysis and regression analyses suggest that the number of cases in one category, i.e., AFDC or non-AFDC is highly associated with the other. A Pearson correlational analysis for all years, where AFDC cases are correlated with non-AFDC cases, yields correlations ranging from  $r = .841$  for all years together and from  $r = .51$  for 1984 to correlations greater than  $r = .93$  for 1985–1990, with the exception of 1986. Therefore the number of AFDC cases is highly correlated with non-AFDC cases.

When a regression model is employed to see if the number of AFDC clients can be predicted from the number of non-AFDC using all years in the analysis, the  $R^2$  was only. 0007. However, year by year analysis yields significant  $R^2$ s for 1985 ( $R^2=.8827$ ,  $p<.04$ ); 1986 ( $R^2=.7816$ ,  $P<.0571$ ). For the years 1987 and 1988, the analysis produces an  $R^2=.9192$  and  $R^2=.9226$ , but neither are significant at the. 05 level. For 1989 the  $R^2$  had dropped to  $R^2=.8975$  but it was significant at the. 03 level. Therefore as one goes up so does the other. While this can be easily seen in a raw numbers graph (see figure 1), statistically analysis supports this assertion of relatedness between the two categories of clients; the number of non-AFDC cases depends on the number of AFDC cases.<sup>2</sup>

### Discussion and Policy Implications

If the number of non-welfare clients depends on the number of welfare clients, the question remains why. While the data and analysis indicate a statistical relationship between the two caseload types, these data cannot provide the answer as to why the two caseload categories are related. The incentive structure, whereby the agency is limited to 115 percent of incentive payment of collections from welfare clients, may have an affect on case loads; that is, agencies may be adjusting service delivery to nonAFDC clients based on the amount of average collections from AFDC clients. As demonstrated earlier, agencies in Alabama do not appear to be having difficulty with non-AFDC collections, where collections have exceed AFDC collections since 1986 (see Table 1).

If the agency is not provided an incentive for collecting for the non-AFDC client after a certain level, then it seems wise economic sense not to expend staff hours to take on new non-AFDC clients. A General Accounting Office (GAO, 1987) CSE program assessment drew similar conclusions regarding agency performance with respect to the AFDC component. Forty-two percent of the sample of programs in the assessment appeared to be providing inadequate service, primarily due to poor case management practices. The GAO concluded that financial objectives contribute to inadequate case handling (p.20). Similarly,

the GAO believes the incentive formula may encourage states to continue favoring cases with high collection potential (p. 44). This assessment, however was for AFDC cases only. What happens with the non-AFDC component is undetermined. However, if collections for non-AFDC are relatively more efficient, and the data from Alabama support this, their pursuit may be hampered by the non-AFDC incentive formula which is AFDC collections dependent.

The role of advertising may be a significant factor in how agencies control case loads. If the services of the agency are not advertised in places where a variety of potential clients are likely to see them, or if advertising is not on a fixed schedule, advertising could control case loads. If the goal is to optimize collection from responsible parents, then marketing services could play a key role. Where and how often OCSE services are advertised can be important. Targeting different audiences may require different strategies. Aversion to use of "welfare-type" services, if CSE agencies are housed within departments of human resources, may also be a factor.

The dependence of non-AFDC client loads on AFDC client loads has other implications as well. Besides inequitable service to non-welfare clients, the non-welfare, absent parent, is not being sought out with the enforcement capabilities of the CSE agencies. In the case of welfare clients, who are mandated to participate in the CSE program, the absent parent is most likely black (see Sweet and Bumpass 1987, p. 240). If the majority of women who have child support orders or agreements to pay, but do not receive support are white (66 percent according to the U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census 1989, p. 14), then white males, assuming white females are married to white males, are given "indirect" preferential treatment by state agencies. In effect, black absent parents are being discriminated against because their families are disproportionately on welfare. Therefore, if the incentive structure is a key factor, the Federal OCSE is instrumental in legitimating social inequality. Families which are not in poverty, and which do not receive support from absent fathers, are also effectively being discriminated against because their case numbers are being "controlled" at the agency level, caseload numbers which

according to this analysis, are dependent on the number of AFDC cases.

### Proposals

The following proposals are offered as changes which could be made in the structure of the CSE program, changes which could promote serving non-welfare clients and changes which would not necessarily discourage serving AFDC clients.

1. The incentive structure will continue to be a problem, but incentives for non-AFDC collections could be raised to 120 percent of AFDC collections to see if agencies respond accordingly. The \$25 maximum fee charge for non-AFDC clients could be changed to a sliding scale fee to help cover the costs of extra staff needed to handle non-AFDC cases.
2. In addition to incentives, agencies could be provided monetary recognition bonuses for outstanding collections on behalf of non-AFDC clients. The bonuses could be awarded quarterly, or could be used to provide for an additional staff member's salary.
3. The Office of Child Support Enforcements (OCSE) should ensure compliance with staffing requirements as specified by federal law and regulation (General Accounting Office 1987, p. 46) so that insufficient staff cannot be cited as justification for lack of services to non-welfare clients.
4. Advertising and marketing guidelines of CSE services need to be developed and monitored by the OCSE to assure that a variety of audiences are targeted on a fixed rather than an arbitrary schedule. Monitoring of client profiles would help to determine if agencies had broadened their target clients beyond low income populations. All public state and federal offices as well as private businesses could be targeted. Targeting places of employment is especially relevant as more employers are required to withhold child support payments from employees' checks.
5. Privatization of services to non-welfare clients could be an alternative. An agency not connected with human

services may appeal to some clients who have avoided investigation because of the association with welfare. However, as private agencies operate on a profit margin formula, an alternative for the incentive formula will have to be developed.

### Conclusion

The federal incentive structure may be a key factor in affecting both AFDC (GAO 1987) and non-AFDC case loads and handling. The incentive structure may be instrumental in influencing the "willingness" of agencies to serve non-welfare clients because of financial objectives aimed at maximizing the incentive received from the federal government. The incentive formula clearly favors the pursual of AFDC collections. This is of special concern,, not only because too many children are living in poverty, but because non-collection of child support is a pervasive social problem and affects not only the poor, but the non-poor as well.

As more well-to-do and celebrity child support cases reach the media, it should serve to stimulate interest in the child support issue. Stories about dead-beat-dad raids in the middle of night are dramatic, but they make the point that non-payment of child support is a social problem for all of society, not just a problem for people on welfare.

More needs to be done to assure that those who are not receiving support, or enough support, know about the services of the CSEL and that they are served once they get there. Guidelines for advertising need to be not only developed but monitored. The federal role appears to be very important in influencing what happens at the agency level. As a nation, we need to support the family, all families. We need to recognize that non-payment of child support is not just a welfare issue.

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### Notes

1. The GAO (1987) program assessment of states' CSE programs, specifically the AFDC component, recommends that the data obtained from these agencies can be unreliable, therefore, caution must be used in interpreting any analysis based on them.
2. Interpretation from the data need to be viewed with caution, as suggested by the GAO study of 1987. However, the extremely high  $R^2$ s and  $r$ s indicate that "something is going on." Whether this is artifact of agency recording or the result of agency case management strategy, neither situation is "good."

# Focus Groups, Program Evaluation, and the Poor

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*Focus groups are a qualitative research technique which can be applied to program evaluation with low income clients. Focus groups are relatively easy to organize and operate, can be less expensive than other research techniques, can provide quick feedback, and possess the potential to empower low income clients.*

*This paper discusses the development of focus groups, their strengths and weaknesses, and their utility in program evaluation. An example of their use in the evaluation of a state low income energy program is provided along with some guidelines for their use with low income respondents.*

## Introduction

This paper describes the use of focus groups with low income clients in program evaluation. "The focus group technique is a tool for studying ideas in a group context. The technique has the potential to assist policy making and policy-driven research... (Morgan, 1988, p. 5)."

Historically, focus groups have been used in industry to make decisions on marketing. Focus groups also have been employed in politics to assess deeply held attitudes and preferences of voters. More recently, focus groups have been used "...by academic researchers, by government policy makers, and business decision makers. Focus groups provide a rich and detailed set of data about perceptions, thoughts, feelings, and impressions. ... They represent a remarkably flexible research tool... (Stewart, *et. al.*, 1990, p. 140)."

With the increased use of qualitative methods in social science research, there is a growing appreciation of focus groups as a legitimate research technique. As part of this trend, there

is greater reliance on focus groups in social welfare research, especially in program evaluation.

### Focus Groups

Like individual interviews and participant observation, focus groups are a form of qualitative research. Focus groups are basically group interviews.

Focus groups had their beginnings in sociology and in psychiatry. Robert Merton and Paul Lazarsfeld were the first to use focus groups, or what they called focussed interviews, at Columbia University in 1941. Merton and his colleagues used focus groups initially to analyze the effectiveness of war time propaganda efforts and then to analyze the effectiveness of Army training films. A paper (Merton & Kendall, 1946) and then a book (Merton, Fiske & Kendall, 1956) on the focus group technique resulted from these early studies. Paul Lazarfeld and others pioneered the use of focus groups in marketing research (Morgan, 1988, p. 11).

"The legacy of psychologists and psychiatrists in the development of this technique was their commitment to the pursuit of unconscious motivation and their application of probing techniques to expose those motives without altering them (Goldman, McDonald, 1987, p. 3)." Bellenger, *et. al.* agree. They stress the similarity between focus groups and group therapy sessions. "This technique . . . allows the researcher to handle sensitive areas more effectively via the group method than with individual interviews (Bellenger, *et. al.*, 1976)."

Focus groups are special types of groups in terms of purpose, size, composition, and procedures. Focus groups are generally composed of eight to twelve individuals who do not know each other. The focus group members are selected because they have similar experiences which can be studied in order to understand some phenomenon. The intent of the focus group is to promote self disclosure among the participants about an issue, value, opinion, or experience (Krueger, 1988, p. 18).

The moderator or group leader should be trained and have experience in interviewing and in group dynamics. The moderator may be more or less directive, depending on the purpose of

the research and the characteristics of the group. The moderator attempts to keep the discussion on the topic without inhibiting the expression of ideas and opinions by group members (Stewart & Shamdasani, 1990, pp. 10–11). A skilled moderator is crucial to the success of the focus group as a research technique.

As the name implies, focus groups usually progress from general content to more specific subjects. They “focus in” on areas that are of major concern to the researcher.

In an important book, Krippendorff (1980) refers to the distinction between *emic* and *etic* data. Data which is in its natural form, with little imposition by the researcher or the research setting, is called *emic* data. *Etic* data is data which responds to the researcher’s imposed view of the situation. Focus groups and unstructured individual interviews collect *emic* data. Surveys and structured interviews represent *etic* data.

While surveys of large numbers of people are a quantitative method to study the breadth of attitudes and attributes, focus groups offer a mechanism for in depth analysis. Surveys provide the ability to predict from a random sample to a larger universe, and are amenable to statistical manipulation. Finally, surveys tend to be more expensive than focus groups.

A recent study by McNeely (1990), using a national survey, compared the results of a content analysis of the open ended comments on the questionnaire with the results of a statistical analysis of the closed end questions. McNeely concluded that in this study of job satisfaction, analysis of written comments was a better “barometer,” and that “forcing respondents’ replies into the structured explanators of closed-ended questionnaires simply may not tell all (p. 136).”

In contrast to the individual interview, the focus group can lead to relatively spontaneous responses from participants because of the stimulus of group interaction. According to David Morgan, “one advantage of group interviewing is that the participants’ interaction among themselves replaces their interaction with the interviewer, leading to a greater emphasis on participants points of view (Morgan, 1988, p. 18).”

When well conducted, with articulate participants, the focus group also can effect a relatively high degree of respondent

involvement. (Bellenger, Bernhardt, & Goldstucker, 1976). With the exception of Fern (1982, 1983), many researchers feel that focus groups can produce more and better ideas than do individual interviews.

A final benefit of focus groups is that they provide quick results. Several groups can be conducted and analyzed in a week by a skilled moderator. Administrators and workers can observe focus groups from behind one way windows or on videotape, and thus gain immediate feedback about their program (Wells, 1974).

Focus groups have several serious disadvantages. Because of their subjective nature, focus groups are vulnerable to bias and selective reporting. Specific difficulties with focus groups include:

- the moderator may not be fully trained, experienced and unbiased. It is relatively easy for an inexperienced or biased moderator to influence the direction of the focus group discussion and selectively report conclusions in a final report. Even competent moderators may have difficulty with running and analyzing the comments of specific groups.

- focus groups may not be representative of the total population since group members are not randomly selected.

- the technique is based on the interaction in the group and groups can vary to a considerable degree. Group interaction may emphasize the views of some participants over others. The personality types of focus group members can influence the group process (Quiriconi & Dorgan, 1985).

- inefficiencies can occur during arranging for an appropriate site to conduct the focus group session and while recruiting group members. In addition, during the focus group session, discussion can be diverted to irrelevant subjects (Krueger, 1988).

There are contradictory findings in marketing studies dealing with the validity of focus group results. Based on a review of some of the literature and his professional experience as director of a private research firm, William Yoell, questions the validity of focus groups (Yoell, 1974). On the other hand, Fred Reynolds and Deborah Johnson report on a comparison of focus group results with the findings of a national survey. They found that 97 per cent of the findings of the two studies were consistent

when focus groups were used to indicate the direction of change in consumer habits (Reynolds & Johnson, 1978).

Researchers are beginning to develop a theoretical base and associated empirical studies to better understand focus group behavior. Group dynamics, or the understanding of the behavior of groups and of the interactions among group participants, provide one important theoretical foundation.

Stewart and Shamdasani feel that the functioning of focus groups is influenced by intrapersonal, interpersonal, and environmental factors. Demographic, physical and personality characteristics, the social power of different groups members, and the degree of group cohesiveness affect focus group behavior and results (Stewart and Shamdasani, 1990, pp. 33–49).

However, focus groups are a special type of group because they meet only once. When applying group theory to focus groups, researchers and moderators must consider the theoretical implications of their single meeting.

### Program Evaluation and Focus Groups

Program evaluation is characteristic of applied social science. The purpose of program evaluation is to determine whether a specific social program is effective, efficiently organized and delivered, and/or supported by clients and community leaders. Program evaluation can use quantitative and/or qualitative techniques. Program evaluation can take the form of a process evaluation, a needs assessment, an outcome evaluation, a cost benefit study, or any combination of these approaches (Prosavac & Carey, 1989).

For almost 50 years, focus groups have been used by industry to evaluate public reaction to services and products. As Greenbaum writes, "throughout industry, focus groups are being used more than any other research technique as a method of providing research input into a wide variety of subjects" (Greenbaum, 1988, p. 19). Business has used focus groups for "...diagnosing the potential for problems with a new program, service or product (and) generating impressions of products, programs, (and) services..." (Stewart & Shamdasani, 1990, p. 15)."

In social welfare, focus groups are being used more in program planning and program evaluation. In some cases, focus groups are replacing individual exit interviews with specific clients and follow-up surveys by mail or by telephone.

"The distinguishing characteristic of the focussed interview is that interviewees have been exposed to concrete situations, the 'objective' character of which is known to, and has been previously analyzed by, the interviewer (Payne, 1951)." According to this criteria, focus group interviews are appropriate in program evaluation.

In program evaluation, focus groups have several advantages over other techniques for evaluating client perceptions and opinions. Focus groups can deal with complicated social programs. Social service interventions are often individualized. Different approaches are used based on client needs. In an alcohol treatment program or a job training program, for example, clients can have different experiences and different workers based on their presenting problems and needs. Because it is somewhat unstructured, the focus group technique is useful in these situations. Clients can respond to the similarities and differences among different approaches and workers within one program.

Focus groups can get under the surface to expose true feelings. Researchers know that respondents often answer questionnaires and interviews according to what they perceive is the expected answer. For example, respondents tend to answer "yes" to a question such as "Did this program help you?" Focus groups allow the careful researcher to explore the question in more depth and to use the group to create a thoughtful and critical atmosphere. Focus groups can give the researcher a detailed description of how a program is affecting an individual.

The author conducted two focus groups for a program evaluation of a pilot state low income energy program.<sup>1</sup> Focus groups had been used by other researchers to study low income energy programs (Brown & Baumgartner, 1985; Wisconsin Electric Power Company & Wisconsin Natural Gas Company, 1990).

All focus group members had participated in an experimental State program to help low income residents pay their total energy bills (heating and other energy). The pilot programs

used federal Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) monies and were conducted in an urban and rural Wisconsin communities.

The pilot low income energy program was sponsored by the State of Wisconsin, a leader in the low income energy field. It was operated through local Public Welfare Departments. Energy providers participated as part of the program on a daily basis. A unique aspect of the program was the use of private, community based social service agencies to assist with intake, client advocacy, and follow up (Magill, 1989b).

Money to help pay a portion of a client's energy costs was provided to clients based on their income, household size, and history of energy use. Both regulated utilities- the gas and electric companies- and non-regulated energy providers such as LP gas and wood providers, participated in the program.

From the client's point of view, the pilot energy program was complicated. Different clients worked with different energy providers, public welfare caseworkers, and private social agencies. Further, there were important changes in the benefit formula after the first year.

The purpose of the focus groups was to determine how clients felt about the program, what changes they would recommend, and whether clients practiced energy savings techniques. It was anticipated that clients would find the program hard to understand and that the main criticism would be that the grants to individuals and families were not large enough.

The two focus groups were composed of eighteen females and one male. Most participants were middle aged. One fifth of the participants were older than fifty. Half had not graduated from high school. Forty three percent had some college or technical education beyond high school. Half of the participants were African American. One quarter were white, and one quarter were Hispanic.

Three quarters of the respondents were single or separated and they had a total of 21 children. Over half of the participants had received AFDC during the past year.

The moderator worked from a carefully predeveloped set of five questions. Traditional group work techniques were very useful in conducting the sessions. An effort was made to help



everyone feel comfortable and to express his or her feelings about the topic. The focus groups were conducted informally, and participants were encouraged to speak and identify problems with the energy program. There was good participation. As could be expected, some participants concentrated on personal problems they had with the program. These problems were noted and dealt with after the focus group session.

There was agreement among participants in both groups on the major issues. However, there were some differences between those who primarily used natural gas as a principal fuel and others who used electricity or LP Gas.

The energy program was viewed very positively by the respondents. Contrary to expectations, clients felt that the energy grants were adequate. A woman seemed to summarize the good feelings of both groups when she said "It is a very good program. It helps my household."

As was expected, clients were confused by the program. They did not understand why their individual grant was different from their grant of the year before and from their friends' and neighbors' grants.

Both groups reported examples of rude treatment of customers by utilities. This criticism was not anticipated when the focus groups were planned.

Participants in both cities valued the relationship they had with specific social agencies. They felt that these agencies would assist them in an emergency and gave several examples of the help that specific workers had provided in energy related areas and with other problems. Support for the social agencies probably was influenced by the fact that the agencies helped in selecting the focus group participants.

The results of the two focus groups indicated support for the pilot state low income energy program. The disturbing treatment of clients by some utilities was communicated to a member of the State Public Service Commission who complained to the President of a major public utility. The utility consulted with the focus group moderator about how the utility could better serve its poor clients. In addition, the utility instituted periodic focus groups to monitor low income customer satisfaction.

The results of the focus group evaluation of the pilot low income energy program were reported to state officials, energy utility personnel, and social agency employees. The results were used in planning the next year's State Energy Program (Magill, 1989a).

Program evaluation is often shaped by the interaction between what is appropriate and what is politically possible. "Evaluation... is an endeavor which is partly social, partly political, and only partly technical (Herman, Morris, & Fitz-Gibbon, 1987, p. 11)." Questions such as, "What is the purpose of the evaluation?" "What resources are available to conduct the evaluation?" and "What political and/or social constraints are placed on the evaluation?" all affect the data collection method(s) to be used. Focus groups are especially vulnerable to bias. As Bellenger and his associates write, "focus group interviews are easy to set up, difficult to moderate, and difficult to interpret, and are therefore very easily misused (Bellenger, *et. al.* 1976, 27)."

Workers, agency executives, funding bodies, clients, and the broader community can have strong interests in the results of a particular program evaluation. The knowledge of conflicting interests can place pressure on a researcher using only a qualitative research tool such as focus groups.

Because there are potential problems with validity and reliability in the use of this technique, several focus group should be conducted as a part of a program evaluation. Focus groups also should be used in combination with quantitative techniques, either to develop a more structured questionnaire or to supplement a questionnaire. Focus groups also can be part of a larger research effort to "triangulate" different methods of collecting data about the same program (Morgan, 1988, p. 25).

### Focus Groups and The Poor

Focus groups, with their emphasis on personal interaction within a group, can be effective with low income people. Many urban low income individuals have experience in their home and neighborhood in groups. For many, privacy is a luxury of the middle and upper classes.

An advantage of focus groups is that they are flexible, and provide the moderator with the ability to move the discussion to the appropriate level of generality. Some social services clients think of programs in terms of their own personal problems and experiences with specific social workers. A moderator can help a group to interpret individual experiences and concerns on a program level in order to develop insights about social program operation.

The case example demonstrated that focus groups with low income respondents can be a mechanism for clients to participate in social change. Support from other group members can empower low income clients to express critical views of authorities and of established programs or institutions. Focus group program evaluation with low income persons can become a form of advocacy research (see, for example, Freire, 1970 and Argyris, Putnam, & Smith, 1985).

While focus groups can provide a vehicle for low income clients to change social programs, the result is dependent upon their concerns being communicated to the proper authorities. Focus groups do not replace the need for appropriate advocacy and community organization activities.

### Conclusion

As a research tool, focus groups offer the great advantage of an unstructured format. The experience of focus group leaders is that the results can be unpredictable and that groups often produce significant and unanticipated results.

Many social workers have experience working with groups. They should be able to adapt these groups techniques to program evaluation purposes.

Focus groups may appeal to social agency administrators, who are feeling increasing pressure to demonstrate through research the effectiveness of their agency's programs. Focus groups are attractive because they are quick and relatively inexpensive. Focus groups have been used extensively in business, and are easily explained to board members and community leaders.

Still, focus groups are vulnerable to manipulation and bias. Focus groups can be selected so that they are primarily composed of supportive clients. The format of the focus group, and the interpretation of the results, can be easily slanted to favor a questionable social program.

At the very least, several focus groups should be conducted to evaluate a specific program. If possible, this technique should be used in conjunction with quantitative research methods, in order to increase reliability and validity.

Focus groups are an interesting qualitative research technique. They are being used increasingly in program planning and program evaluation. As in any research, the final outcome will be based on the skill, sensitivity, and integrity of the researcher.

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International Migrants or Welfare Clients:  
The Selection of a Master  
Status for Indochinese Refugees  
by American Voluntary Agencies

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*Government funding of nonprofit organizations is a dominant trend in American social welfare and it has greatly influenced the voluntary agencies resettling Indochinese refugees. Some agencies identify their clients as international migrants from the Third World, but others view them primarily as welfare recipients. These distinctive master statuses lead agencies to provide different services, thus affecting the refugees' initial adaptation to American society. Religiosity, period of creation, links to the welfare state, and international activities shape the selection of a master status for Indochinese refugees.*

Voluntary agencies once aided arriving refugees without funding from the federal government. But since the 1960s, the privatization of the welfare state has restructured many social welfare organizations (Grønberg, 1982; Kamerman and Khan, 1989; Kramer, 1981), including those in the field of refugee resettlement (Bach, 1988; Rose, 1986; Zucker, 1983). The Refugee Act of 1980 codified the provision of income support and social services to recognized political migrants (Kennedy, 1981; Leibowitz, 1983; Strand and Jones, 1985). It created the Office of Refugee Resettlement in the Department of Health and Human Services: between 1980 and 1990 this office provided state governments with \$710 million for refugee social services and \$3.315 billion for public assistance and medical costs. The Act also established the Bureau for Refugee Programs in the Department of State, which provides a per capita grant of about \$500 to voluntary agencies for each refugee sponsored. These changes in the funding and organization of refugee resettlement caused a

confrontation between voluntary agencies and the welfare state (Hein, 1992).

This paper examines the response of the voluntary agencies to the increased presence of the public social-welfare system in refugee resettlement, specifically their work with refugees from Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia. Over 1 million Indochinese refugees have arrived to the U.S. since 1975. Some refugees, are sponsored by agencies that emphasize their status in the American public assistance system. Others find that their agency defines them as international migrants from the Third World. Each master status leads to different resettlement services and consequently different patterns of adjustment during the initial months of contact between refugee and agency. The paper concludes by suggesting structural factors that explain why voluntary agencies define refugees as international migrants or as welfare clients.

### Data Collection and Methodology

The data presented in this paper was collected through participant observation in a San Francisco voluntary agency during 1984–85. I read several hundred case files on clients, as well as some five years of correspondence with the agency's national office and state and federal refugee bureaus. In addition, I carried out field work: observing clients and caseworkers, assisting with some tasks, and then questioning caseworkers about events that transpired. During my seventh and final month I interviewed all the directors and caseworkers in the seven most active voluntary agencies: six native, white and one Indochinese agency director(s), and eighteen Indochinese caseworkers. I also obtained agency documents and then used them in interviews to determine the formal and informal procedures for resettling refugees.

Two months into the field work, all voluntary agencies adopted a technique called case management: developing an individualized employment plan for new arrivals and referring them to specialized social services depending on their needs. Prior to 1985 caseworkers had little control over a refugee's decision to seek employment, receive public assistance, or obtain

social services. The switch to the case management approach set up a "natural experiment." Agencies had to change their resettlement activities and I was able to observe them before and after the introduction of this new variable.

While conducting fieldwork I used a technique for analyzing qualitative data termed "the constant comparative method" (Glasser and Strauss, 1980). This technique requires the investigator to simultaneously gather data, code them, and make generalizations by comparing and revising coding categories. The initial comparison was between documents and caseworkers' actual practices at one agency. It then evolved into a comparison between the director's policies and the daily activities of the caseworkers. The case management project revealed the profound differences among voluntary agencies and the final comparison was between types of agency-client relations. The "grounded theory" developed with this method distinguished between voluntary agencies that treated their clients as "international migrants" or "welfare recipients." Directors, policies, caseworkers' routines, and agencies' documents all varied according to this distinction.

### Voluntary Agencies and Refugee Resettlement

Since 1975, the federal government has funded 14 voluntary agencies to resettle Indochinese refugees and there are many differences among them (see Table 1 and Glossary for identification of agencies). HIAS originated during the early 1900s in response to the settlement needs of Russian Jews, although it began work in Europe several decades earlier. The arrival of European refugees before World War Two and then displaced persons after the war produced seven other agencies. Three agencies developed in response to the Indochinese refugee crisis.

Agencies vary not only by their seniority but also by the degree to which they have an ethnic or religious affiliation. Three agencies (AFCR, IRC, and TR) began by assisting ethnic groups from Central Europe (Czechs, Germans, and White Russians, respectively). When the Indochinese arrived, refugees from these earlier cohorts were still represented among top executives and members of the board of trustees. The ACNS,



Table 1

*Historical Characteristics of American Voluntary Agencies*

Agency	Affiliation	Year of origin	Years Working With Indochinese	% of all Indochinese Resettled*
ACNS	Nonsectarian	1930	Since 1975	11
AFCR	Nonsectarian	1948	Since 1975	3
BCRRR	Buddhist	1979	1979-1986	1
CWS	Protestant	1946	Since 1975	9
HIAS	Jewish	1902	Since 1975	3
Idaho	Nonsectarian	1980	1980-1985	1
Iowa	Nonsectarian	1975	Since 1975	1
IRC	Nonsectarian	1933	Since 1975	12
LIRS	Lutheran	1948	Since 1975	5
PBFWR	Episcopalian	1939	Since 1982	1
TF	Nonsectarian	1939	Since 1975	2
USCC	Catholic	1936	Since 1975	43
WRRS	Evangelical	1945	Since 1975	5
YMCA	Christian	1844	1980-1983	2

\*For fiscal year 1981, the year with the second largest number of Indochinese refugee arrivals (131,000) and when all but one agency were in operation. The figure for PBFWR is for 1982. Total does not equal 100 due to rounding.

Source: Kelly, 1977, p. 152; U.S. Office of Refugee Resettlement, 1982, 1983, 1984, 1986, 1987, 1988; North, Lewin, & Wagner, 1982, p. 27.

which originated during the settlement house movement for immigrants, is the only agency that has historically lacked an ethnic or religious affiliation. The Idaho and Iowa agencies are state governments which could not legally have a religious orientation. Although eight agencies identify with a religion, they vary in their use of religious philosophy and institutions. Those that utilize church groups as sponsors (such as CWS and WRRS) carry much of their religious background into their contact with refugees. Agencies that provide services through caseworkers (such as HIAS and USCC) bring comparatively little theology to their work.

The migration of Cuban refugees to Florida during the 1960s first brought voluntary agencies into contact with the public

social welfare system (Taft, North, and Ford, 1980). In 1975, voluntary agencies received federal funds to resettle Indochinese refugees throughout the country (Kelly, 1977). Then the Refugee Act of 1980 formalized federal funding for nonprofit agencies working with political migrants, thrusting the welfare state fully into the previously privatized field of refugee resettlement (Wright, 1981). A large increase in the admission of Vietnamese, Laotians, and Cambodians during the early 1980s set the stage for extended interaction between voluntary agencies and refugees under the auspices of federal social-welfare bureaucracies. By 1982, about two-thirds of Indochinese refugees in the U.S. less than three years were receiving public assistance (U.S. Office of Refugee Resettlement, 1982, 1983). Some voluntary agencies responded to these changes by emphasizing their clients' status as welfare recipients in the U.S., while others continued to emphasize their status as international migrants from the Third world.

### Agencies Select a Master Status for Refugees

In most social welfare agencies a client's "cooperation is neither actively coerced nor freely given, but, rather, it emerges from the structure of alternatives" (Lipsky, 1980, p.117). According to Lipsky, agencies tend to "obtain client cooperation with client-processing procedures." One of the most significant social control mechanisms is the ability to shape clients' identity (Miller, 1986). Making a single identity disproportionately important allows agencies to define clients' needs and then provide services on the basis of this master status.

Some voluntary agencies process refugees by defining them as international migrants from the Third World. These agencies consider them uprooted newcomers from different cultures, and might be called migration-oriented agencies. Other agencies define these refugees as welfare clients, emphasizing a status acquired in the U.S. rather than a status associated with their flight and ethnicity. These can be called welfare-oriented agencies because they derive a master status from a western institution absent from their clients' homelands: the public social welfare system. The significance of these distinctive

master statuses is that they lead to very different procedures for resettling refugees.

*Caseworkers, Sponsors, and Refugees in San Francisco*

By 1980, California contained one-third of all Indochinese refugees in the U.S. and more than 20,000 lived in San Francisco, giving the city one of the highest refugee concentrations in the state. Voluntary agencies considered San Francisco an "impacted county" and the Bureau for Refuge Programs in the State Department gave it this official designation in 1982. As a result, only refugees sponsored by an immediate relative residing in San Francisco could move there from the refugee camps in Southeast Asia. Termed "the U.S. relative," this individual became responsible for the "core services" normally provided by caseworkers: picking up the new arrival at the airport, locating an apartment, registering the children in school, and obtaining Social Security cards. Voluntary agencies use a document called the "sponsor's statement of responsibility" to define the tasks refugees' kin are expected to undertake.

Voluntary agencies that emphasize their clients' status as international migrants design the sponsor's statement of responsibility with far less specificity than agencies that use the master status welfare client. At the former type of agency, the document lists few mandatory services and usually does not require the signature of the U.S. relative. The directors of the two types of agencies also have different expectations as to the actual use of the document. All four directors at migration-oriented agencies claimed they were willing to have caseworkers do some tasks if necessary, while the three directors at welfare-oriented agencies stated that the documents could not be altered. Two passages from the sponsor's statement of responsibility illustrate these differences with respect to employment:

*Migration-oriented agency:* You and [the voluntary agency] will be working together toward one goal: employment and self-sufficiency for the new arrivals as soon as possible. We ask you to set a good example by being employed, in an approved training program, or actively seeking employment.

*Welfare-oriented agency:* I also agree to the following: Help the refugee(s) locate employment within 90 days of arrival in San

Francisco, including assistance in contacting three places of business each week beginning with their date of arrival, for the purpose of applying for work.

The core services also include teaching refugees unfamiliar with urban America how to obtain food, cash checks, use public transportation, and avoid becoming a crime victim. Migration-oriented agencies allow the U.S. relative to orient their relatives, thus incorporating refugees' kin into service delivery. Conversely, in welfare-oriented agencies a caseworker conducts the orientation session. The director of a welfare-oriented agency stated: "When the U.S. relatives are on welfare we try to keep them out of things; they'll just try to put arrivals on welfare too." Another director at a welfare-oriented agency responded: "We require an in-office orientation. Arrivals meet with their caseworker to discuss our services, welfare, and employment: the client has to understand our role."

Agencies also use the per capita payment from the Department of State to provide cash grants to new arrivals. Migration-oriented agencies allocate grants by need and then give it directly to the new arrival. They consider clients' personal history and giving them the grant promotes autonomy. These agencies usually provide a longer period of support if the client is willing to seek employment. The director of a migration-oriented agency explained: "We give out money by need, but each new arrival gets the same amount in the end. If after a year there is still some of their grant left we send them a notice and they can let us know how they want it spent."

Welfare-oriented agencies give one fixed sum to the U.S. relative. These agencies treat the grant merely as material assistance and giving it to a relative presumes that a new arrival cannot be trusted to spend it wisely. Furthermore, if clients avoid finding work the money may be withheld, thus making the U.S. relative an ally of the agency in order to obtain the grant. A director at a welfare-oriented agency explained: "We give a lump sum of cash and maintenance money. For single refugees it's four weeks; for families it's ten weeks. But it starts only after the first two weeks. If they apply for welfare or refuse employment the money is suspended."

These three measures of voluntary agency services—defining sponsors' tasks, orientating new arrivals, and distributing cash grants—indicate the important differences between migration- and welfare-oriented agencies. The master status international migrant leads to greater autonomy for refugees and gives their kin a role in the resettlement process. Conversely, the master status welfare client gives more control to caseworkers and diminishes the role of refugees' kin. The affect of these master statuses became even more pronounced after 1985 when agencies adopted case management techniques for resettling refugees.

### *Implementing Case Management in Refugee Resettlement*

The case management project introduced the public assistance system's comparatively harsher methods of job placement into the work of San Francisco's voluntary agencies. Agencies began evaluating refugees' employment readiness using a point system derived from the variables age, English level, work history, number of months in the U.S., and level of motivation. Case managers started scheduling clients for Employment Search Activities workshops modeled on the county's Work Incentive Program for non-refugee public assistance cases. And case managers and caseworkers could now withhold public assistance from a refugee who did not cooperate, a process termed "sanctioning."

Voluntary agency directors began recruiting case managers and the hiring process forced them to define the position. If directors wanted the case manager to be a job developer interacting with American employers then, given the applicant pool, they would have to hire a native with administrative skills. But a refugee was clearly needed if the position was to be an employment counselor who would help clients with no work experience in the U.S. become work oriented.

Directors at migration-oriented agencies preferred hiring refugees because, as one stated, "they have an ability to relate to clients, particularly about the case management project and problems of motivation. A close relationship is a key part of mainstreaming people." A director at a welfare-oriented agency conceived of ethnic staff quite differently. He remarked: "The

ideal situation is enough money for professional staff and complementary staff for language—two for each position. But we don't have the funds so it's professional skills versus language. I hired for professional skills." Of the eight case managers hired by migration-oriented agencies, seven were Indochinese and one was a white, native. On the other hand, the welfare-oriented agencies hired two Indochinese and two native, whites.

While directors wrestled with the roles of new staff, Indochinese caseworkers and case managers had to come to terms with their new power to sanction clients' public assistance. Caseworkers at migration-oriented agencies viewed sanctions as appropriate when a client broke the relationship of trust caseworkers believed they had established. One caseworker stated: "You have to have a good reason for sanctioning someone, not just because you have the power. But clients do play games with us, like not showing up for appointments and pretending to be sick." A director of a migration-oriented agency expressed a similar view: "We shouldn't really apply sanctions, that's welfare's job. It mitigates our advocacy role."

Conversely, caseworkers at welfare-oriented agencies described the sanctioning process in legalistic terms: "If clients don't attend a training program I've referred them to, then sanctions will give them a lesson: otherwise they won't care." Another took an even more punitive view of sanctions' effect: "If we sanction some clients then we will have a rumor in the refugee community." A director of a welfare-oriented agency echoed this view: "Sanctions are necessary; many people will not cooperate unless there is a penalty."

Five months into the case management project all agencies had found some clients to be noncompliant. However, only one migration-oriented agency had applied sanctions while all three welfare-oriented agencies had done so. Yet the most frequent "noncompliant behavior" was clients not following the referral process or routinely filing out job-search forms, rather than refusing to take a job. Caseworkers termed this new tension with clients "the problem of motivation." Those at migration-oriented agencies tried to obtain refugees' cooperation by interesting them in improving their English, getting job skills, and earning money. One caseworker explained: "Usually lack

of English is the problem. I send my clients to school and for training. Later they will get a job. That's the main point of the case management project." Caseworkers at welfare-oriented agencies tried to change clients' attitudes more directly. They reported going back to the initial orientation session, explaining to clients that refugee policy was now less permissive, and finally pointing out that clients really had little choice. One caseworker reported: "I try very hard to motivate clients but it's up to them: sooner or later welfare will refer them back to me if they don't cooperate."

Caseworkers at both types of agencies frequently used the term "counseling" when discussing how they motivated clients. For caseworkers at migration-oriented agencies, counseling meant determining clients' interests and helping them attain their goals. This definition included providing information and showing refugees how to use the social service system. One caseworker summarized this approach as "teaching them to solve problems by themselves, especially explaining their problems so that Americans will understand." Such caseworkers avoid the conflict over employment between agencies and clients by directing their services to the comparatively easier problem of providing therapy to clients (Gold, 1987).

On the other hand, caseworkers at welfare-oriented agencies used the power of their position to orient clients to American customs, laws, and work habits. Many drew upon linguistic expertise, socioeconomic status, and access to resources to present themselves as authorities to clients (Moon and Tashima, 1982). For example, one caseworker defined counseling as "advising clients about the reality of life in the U.S.," which presumed that he was in a position to explain that reality.

These three measures of voluntary agencies' responses to the case management project—hiring ethnic or native staff, using sanctions, and method of motivating clients—demonstrate that their reactions were closely linked to their migration- or welfare-orientations. Agencies which organized relations with refugees through the master status international migrant modified the case management approach because it was inconsistent with their view of clients as political migrants from the Third World. Their directors tended to hire refugees for new staff positions,

while their caseworkers avoided using sanctions and worked to help clients develop and attain goals through case management. Conversely, agencies which had previously used the master status welfare client readily adopted the new approach to refugee resettlement because they had long defined refugees in relation to American social welfare institutions. Directors at these agencies tended to hire white, natives for the new jobs, and caseworkers applied sanctions with less reluctance, often by invoking the authority of their job to obtain cooperation. The reproduction of agencies' migration- or welfare-orientations reveals that there is much variation in the response of nonprofit organizations to privatization of the welfare state.

### Discussion: Explaining Differences Between Agencies

Table 2 presents national-level data on the voluntary agencies and distinguishes among migration-oriented agencies, welfare-oriented agencies, and all voluntary agencies (the latter category includes five that did not have offices in San Francisco and thus might have a migration or a welfare orientation). These data are averages for types of agencies and assume that local offices can be aggregated into a national agency. Given this assumption—that the offices in San Francisco are representative of their sister offices in other parts of the country—the structural factors in Table 2 provide descriptions of macro-historical differences among agencies.

Migration-oriented agencies tend to be secular, older, have stronger ties to the welfare state, and are engaged in international activities. Conversely, welfare-oriented agencies are sectarian, younger, have weaker ties to the welfare state, and are less active in refugee work overseas. The geographic location of refugees and agency offices, and the ethnicity of refugees resettled, do not show meaningful differences between the two types of agencies. The proportion of all Indochinese refugees resettled also is not an important factor because the percentage for the welfare-oriented agencies is an artifact of one large agency and two very small agencies. The same is true for the proportion of all voluntary agency income: it is an average of both large and small agencies. Thus national agencies' geographic scope



Table 2

*Structure of American Voluntary Agencies (1981)*

Structural Factors	Agency Orientation		All Agencies
	Migration	Welfare	
Total Number	3	3	11
Number Secular	2	1	4
Number Sectarian	1	2	7
Number Created Before 1939	2	1	6
Source of Federal Funds			
Health and Human Services	32	11	31
State Department	68	89	69
Expenditure of Funds			
Domestic Activities	65	75	63
International Activities	35	25	37
Refugees Resettled			
In California	35	32	32
In States Without Agency Office	1.4	5.9	3.4
NonIndochinese	7	9	18
Proportion of			
All Indochinese Resettled	9	17	10
All Voluntary Agency Income	12	10	11

Note: Values represent mean percents unless otherwise noted. One migration-oriented agency in San Francisco is an Indochinese mutual assistance association not affiliated with a national organization and data on its structure is not available. Two voluntary agencies operated by state governments are excluded from the column on all national agencies.

Source: Table 1 and North et al., 1982.

and organizational size probably have little affect on relations with refugees at the local level, particularly the selection of a master status.

A religious or nonreligious orientation is likely to affect agencies' selection of a master status because Christian agencies evince a strong aversion to public assistance (Fein, 1987). Such concerns lead them to emphasize refugees' position in the labor force and minimize their experience as newcomers from the

Third World. This generalization is obviously qualified by the limited number of agencies in Table 2.

Two of the three migration-oriented agencies were created before the beginning of World War Two, but only one welfare-oriented agency (again the small number of agencies must be noted). The 1930s was a formative period for American voluntary agencies: they coped with rising numbers of refugees fleeing fascist governments in Europe during a world depression (Marrus, 1985; Wyman, 1968). Agencies which developed following World War Two did aid large numbers of displaced persons (Dinnerstein, 1982). But their birth occurred after the major crisis of the twentieth century and during a period when the American government took a more favorable view of refugees, especially those fleeing communist countries (Loescher and Scanlin, 1986). The international dimension of refugee crises is not easily forgotten by agencies formed during the 1930s, and this orientation appears to influence agencies' relationship with refugees at the local level. Despite the intervention of the American welfare state since the 1970s, older agencies treat refugees as international migrants rather than welfare clients.

Linked to origins is the agency's contemporary role in working with refugees overseas. Migration-oriented agencies use a larger proportion of their funds for international relief. These activities include maintaining offices in Europe, Africa, Asia, or Latin American, as well as supplying aid to refugees waiting to return to their homeland or resettle overseas. Agencies working with refugees in the Third World carry this international orientation back to their relations with refugees once they arrive in the U.S. Conversely, the welfare-oriented agencies use a greater proportion of their funds for domestic activities and this appears to narrow their focus to employment and public assistance.

The most unusual finding in Table 2 is that migration-oriented agencies receive a larger proportion of their federal funds from the Office of Refugee Resettlement in the Department of Health and Human Services. Indeed, two of the three welfare-oriented agencies received no funds from H.H.S. in the year the data was collected. Funding from the Bureau for Refugee Programs in the State Department is a per capita grant for each refugee sponsored. It covers basic administrative costs

and the immediate needs of refugees, such as housing, clothing, and food. On the other hand, H.H.S. funds long-run needs, such as employment and language training. This counterintuitive finding—agencies that emphasize refugees' status as welfare clients have weaker links to the welfare state—is likely due to how agencies come to terms with refugees' temporary reliance on public assistance.

Approximately 80 percent of Vietnamese households rely solely on cash assistance for their income during their first year in the U.S., but the rate drops to about 25 percent after three and one-half years (Caplan, Whitmore, and Choy, 1989). Other studies indicate that only about 65 percent of Indochinese refugee households receive public assistance within one year of arrival, but that more than 45 percent still do after three years (U.S. Office of Refugee Resettlement, 1985, 1986). Indochinese refugees' household income is closely tied to the public assistance system for about two years, and voluntary agencies must respond to this economic fact.

It appears that migration-oriented agencies, which supply social services, focus beyond this period of high public assistance use. Welfare-oriented agencies, which primarily supply reception services, become preoccupied with refugees' entry into the temporary status welfare client. Agencies with greater ties to the welfare state view refugees' first few years in the U.S. as part of the adjustment process rather than a sign of "welfare dependency." These agencies expand the transition from international migrant to welfare client to include the final stage, working American resident. Thus voluntary agencies can retain their original relationship with refugees and receive funds from the welfare state only when they supply social services beyond those required to receive refugees and meet their immediate needs.

However, entering the labor force does not end Indochinese refugees' socioeconomic problems. Employment at or near minimum wage, often without health benefits, leads to high poverty rates. After three and one-half years in the U.S., Vietnamese refugees reach the poverty level of African Americans and Hispanics, about thirty percent (Caplan, et al., 1989). Other studies indicate that even after five years, the poverty rate among

Indochinese refugees is three times that of whites (Rumbaut and Weeks, 1986). These socioeconomic problems are beyond the purview of voluntary agencies, and they indicate that Indochinese refugees will remain an important concern for the American welfare state.

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### *Glossary of Voluntary Agency Acronyms*

ACNS	American Council for Nationalities Service
AFCR	American Fund for Czechoslovak Refugees
BCRRR	Buddhist Council for Refugee Rescue and Resettlement
CWS	Church World Service
HIAS	Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society
Idaho	Idaho State Voluntary Agency
Iowa	Iowa Refugee Service Center
IRC	International Rescue Committee
LIRS	Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service
PBFWR	Presiding Bishop's Fund for World Relief
TF	Tolstoy Foundation
USCC	United States Catholic Conference
WRRS	World Relief Refugee Services
YMCA	Young Mens' Christian Association

## Empirical Studies on Foster Care: Review and Assessment

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*This is a selected review and critique of twenty articles which investigate psychosocial characteristics of children in foster care. Each article represents an effort to describe the foster care population and/or to test hypotheses about issues in foster care. Articles were selected within the time frame of 1974 to 1989. Data are presented in summary tabular form. Discussion focuses upon behavioral characteristics and emotional/health problems of the children. A general methodological critique of research is provided. Policy recommendations incorporate those variables/factors most frequently studied and suggest direction for further research.*

A goal of the foster care system is to prevent the separation of the child from his or her biological family. If separation becomes necessary the goal then becomes provision of a stable substitute family for the child while helping the natural family to solve its problems so that the child can return home. When the child's best interests are not served by reunification with the biological family, the desired outcome becomes adoption or at least a stable long-term placement. The problems encountered in meeting these goals have resulted in countless studies ranging from reasons for placements; characteristics of the biological parents, the children, and foster parents; visitations; length of stay, to social workers, permanency planning and other related topics.

This research was completed under the support from the Department of Health and Human Services, Grant No. 90CW0950/01. Correspondence and requests for reprints should be addressed to Gay Kang, M.P.H., Ph.D., SUNY @ Buffalo, Department of Sociology, Park Hall, Buffalo, New York 14260.

One of the major problems facing researchers, practitioners and administrators is how to assimilate and process all of the information generated by these studies. It is extremely time consuming to review the existing research, let alone determine its trustworthiness and impact. We need to know if existing research is reliable and valid. A methodological evaluation of existing research is crucial.

An information retrieval tool devised by Raoul Naroll and H. Coh, (Naroll, 1983) entitled "THINCS—Theoretical Information Control System" was used to produce a systematic assessment of available research using government studies and related articles on foster care. THINCS provides 3 major products: (1) a *profile*—description of each study including the hypotheses and a methodological analysis of the research; (2) four *cross-indexes* based on—Author, Title, Main subject and Variable Key Word; and (3) a *review monograph* on the state of knowledge for the particular topic.

THINCS was designed to aid researchers, practitioners, and administrators in locating theories of specific topics quickly and easily, assessing the trustworthiness of the research, and providing a complete review of the state of the knowledge in the specific field involved. An example of a profile sheet from a THINCS of foster care is provided in Table 1.

This article presents detailed information from *THINCS: Foster Care* (see Kang et al, in press) on one aspect of the foster care system—psychosocial characteristics of foster children. The data are collected from journal articles published since 1975. All of the studies described here were analyzed using the THINCS methodology. Each hypothesis was set forth and coded for methodological strengths and weaknesses.

The first part of this article deals with studies relating to the characteristics of the children entering foster care. This is followed by studies describing the prevalence of emotional and health disorders among children in the system. Recommendations for improved methodology are then presented along with a discussion of service needs for foster children and their families based on the prevalence of the psychosocial disorders.

Table 1

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<b>DOCUMENT NUMBER:</b> 01
<b>PROFILE:</b> 001
<b>SOURCE:</b> Journal Article
<b>PUBLICATION YEAR:</b> 1985
<b>AUTHOR:</b> Wiehe, Vernon R.
<b>CITATION:</b> Locus of control in foster and non foster children. <i>Journal of Genetic Psychology</i> 148 (2): 183-187
<b>MAIN SUBJECT:</b> "Locus or control in foster and non foster children"
<b>HYPOTHESIS/FINDINGS:</b> ["A study comparing score of foster and non foster males female from the Nowicki Strickland Internal-External Locus of Control Scale found that] . . . [female foster children had significantly high scores indicating a higher external locus or control. No significant differences were noted between the male foster and non foster children . . . statistically significant differences [were found] amount each of the [age] groups . . . 3 years or less, 4 to 6 years, more than 6 years [with mean scores rising as years increased]" (Wiehe 1985:185)
<b>UNDERLYING THEORY:</b> "According to social teaming theory, . . . the critical events necessitating removal from the family and the placement into foster care, events over which a child has little or no control may reinforce a belief that one can assume little responsibility for the control of life events" (Wiehe 1983:1984).
<b>FOCUS/SCOPE:</b> Process
<b>DEPENDENT VARIABLE:</b> Locus of Control (Nowicki Strickland Internal-External Locus of Control Scale)
<b>MEASUREMENT SCALES:</b> Orindal Scale
<b>VALIDITY:</b> no reported test of validity; face validity is good
<b>VARIABLE 2:</b> Type of child (foster vs. non-foster)
<b>MEASUREMENT SCALES:</b> Nominal Scale
<b>VALIDITY:</b> direct measure
<b>VARIABLE 3:</b> Length or time in foster care (3 yrs. or less, 4-6 yrs., 6 + years)
<b>MEASUREMENT SCALES:</b> Nominal Scale
<b>VALIDITY:</b> direct measure
<b>VARIABLE 4:</b> Sex of child
<b>MEASUREMENT SCALES:</b> Nominal Scale
<b>VALIDITY:</b> direct measure
<b>VARIABLE 5:</b>
<b>MEASUREMENT SCALES:</b>
<b>VALIDITY:</b>
<b>VARIABLE 6:</b>
<b>MEASUREMENT SCALES:</b>
<b>VALIDITY:</b>
<b>VARIABLE 7:</b>
<b>MEASUREMENT SCALES:</b>
<b>VALIDITY:</b>

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Continued . . .



Table 1 Continued

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**SAMPLE SIZE:** 56

**TYPE OF UNIT:** individuals: children

**GEOGRAPHIC LOCATION:** Southern Metropolitan Community

**FINANCIAL SUPPORT:** no claim that the study was funded

**RESEARCH DESIGN:** small group comparison

**REFERENCES CITED:** 7

**DATA SOURCES:**

**DATE:**

**DIRECT TEST:** ANOVA, mean score on test

**CORRELATION COEFFICIENT:** vars 1 & 4  $F = 3.97$  vars 1 & 3  $F = 3.24$

**SIGNIFICANCE LEVEL:**  $p < .05$

**PROCEDURES:**

**CODER RELIABILITY:**

Source 1 no evidence of coder reliability

Source 2 no evidence of coder reliability

**DATA SOURCE RELIABILITY:**

Source 1 no evidence of reliability

Source 2 no evidence or reliability

**SAMPLE:** yes

**MULTIVARIATE ANALYSIS:** the researcher cross-tabulated 3 or more variables with substantive variables, used multiple or partial correlations, analysis of variance, or factor analysis

**LANGUAGE PROBLEM:**

Source 1 no mention of steps taken

Source 2 no mention of steps taken

**DATA COLLECTOR TRAINING:**

Source 1 No evidence is from a compendium and no mention is made of training

Source 2 No evidence is from a compendium and no mention is made of training

**DATA COLLECTOR AWARENESS:**

Source 1 No evidence of data collector unawareness

Source 2 No evidence of data collector unawareness

**CONTROL GROUP:** Random The subjects and controls were assigned randomly

Controlled The subjects and controls were matched or unmatched

Matched The subjects and controls were assigned randomly

Aware The subjects and controls were matched or unmatched.

**DOUBLE INCLUSION:**

Source 1 No evidence that the researcher checked for double inclusion

Source 2 No evidence that the researcher checked for double inclusion

**DEVIAANT CASE ANALYSIS:** Yes

**COMMENTS:** "There was no significant difference on locus of control scores for the foster children when analyzed by the age groups of 14 years and under or 15 years and above" (Wiehe, 1985. p 185).

*Behavioral Characteristics*

Many researchers have noted that the primary reason for placement of a child in foster care is family dysfunction, and not because of problems of the child. However, preplacement and placement experiences can be impediments to healthy psychosocial development of foster children leading to emotional and behavioral problems. In a study of placement prevention, Reid et al (1988) compared families where the child was placed in foster care with families where placement was avoided. They reported that placed children not only had more behavioral problems than the nonplaced children but these problems were of a more serious nature, for example, theft, or substance abuse. Problems of the nonplaced children were more likely to be school disturbances, or sexual acting out.

These researchers conclude that families in which children were placed were characterized by more problems and more serious problems of the children, fewer resources available for the family, less service utilization and less satisfaction with the efforts of the agency than families in which the child was not placed.

Taber and Proch (1987) studied the Chicago Services Project (CPS). They found that, while all of the youths in their sample had behavior problems, only 12 of the 51 had entered care for that reason. The problems were severe—13 youths had been held in detention or were committed to a correctional institution, 32 were eligible for special services for behavior disorders.

These authors also found that the older the child is at placement, the shorter the placement time and the greater the tendency to move to more restrictive settings. After CSP service, the mean number of moves dropped and placements were in less restrictive settings.

Stone and Stone (1983) examined the incidence and cause of foster placement breakdown. Thirty-one out of their sample of 64 foster children were withdrawn from their foster homes. In each case the reason for removal was disruptive behavior of the child. They report that successful foster placement is significantly associated better socialized children with good school conduct, with children who do not exhibit aggressive

behavior, and with children who demonstrate positive attachment towards parents, teachers, and caseworkers. Using multiple regression analysis, Stone and Stone found three variables which predict successful placement outcome: rapport of foster parents and agency, the child's school conduct, and the chronicity of the problem that required the initial placement.

Keane (1983) interviewed foster parents for their perceptions of the behavior problems of foster children in their care. Sixty-nine percent of the parents mentioned behavior problems at the time of initial placement, 22 percent reported five or more problems. Fewer problems were reported for children placed before age one but 54 percent of children placed between the ages of one and four had three or more problems. This is a higher proportion of problems than reported for the sample children five years and older. Keane also found that the greater the number of placements the more likely the child would display behavior problems at placement. An analysis of current problems found that foster parents reported a slightly greater number than occurred at placement. Children aged four to nine were the most problematic. Keane administered the Rutter A scale, used to measure behavior and emotional functioning of the children, to the foster parents and found that 30 percent of the children showed some degree of disturbance. These disturbed children displayed more behavior problems at placement, were less well integrated with the foster family, and were less fully accepted by the foster parents. Only 43 percent of the foster parents in this study expected to discuss behavior problems with the social worker. When the parents did discuss the problems only 39 percent said that it was helpful.

In an analysis of a home-based service program, Bribitzer and Verdieck (1988) report that in 49 percent of the families, the children had emotional or learning disabilities or physical or mental handicaps, 14 percent had at least one child with a history of alcohol or substance abuse, and 15 percent of the families had at least one child with a history of juvenile court involvement. These researchers found that families with a large number of children, younger families, families with no history of juvenile court involvement, and families that use a large number of support services tend to have

successful case outcomes, i.e., the child is returned home or emancipated.

Lauder et al (1986) investigated 185 children who had been in care for five years. They stress the fact that the majority of children who enter care are returned to their own families within a short time and that foster care is relatively stable. The majority of children have 1–2 placements while in care. They did find, however, that children with more behavior problems tend to remain in care as compared to children with few behavior problems who are returned home.

Pardeck (1983, 1984) found that children with behavioral and emotional problems have a tendency to experience replacements in foster care. This relationship holds even when controlling for years in care. Pardeck (1983) also notes that three years in care is the critical point at which the chance for multiple placements greatly increases. After this point, the probability of frequent replacement remains the same.

Borgman (1981) studied the relationship between parental rights termination (PRT) for abused and neglected children and placement status. His sample formed three subgroups—10 were in foster care and had never entered an adoptive placement, 9 children had experienced a disruptive adoption, and 12 were in adoptive homes that appeared stable. Bergman reports that 13 of the children had gross behavior deviations before PRT. The presence of at least one conduct disorder was related to adoptive placement. Eight of the ten children with no adoptive placement displayed conduct disorders while only 5 of the 19 who entered adoptive homes showed such disorders. The majority of his sample had experienced at least three placements before PRT with child behavioral problems being one reason for removal. Bergman also found that behavior problems erupted during the period between PRT and placement of the child in the adoptive home.

Seaburg and Tolley (1986) tested two models to identify predictors of length of stay in foster care. Model I consisted of variables that have been typically tested in previous research while Model II consisted of these same variables plus other variables not previously tested. They found that variables which had been significant in Model I became nonsignificant when the

number of predictor variables was increased. Model II showed that the most important predictors of length of time in stay were age and ethnicity. The older black child is likely to remain in care longer. Child behavioral problems, significant in Model I were not significant in Model II. However, deviant behavior of the child was related to a decrease in time in care. The authors note that it is possible that the deviant child is in some other form of substitute care due to their disruptive behavior.

Byles (1980), in a study of adolescent girls, found that length of time in placement is related to the severity of the behavior problems of the girls. He also notes that their deviant behavior escalated following their first placement. While status offenses were most prevalent in this sample, 57 percent of the girls also committed indictable offenses, for example, theft, vandalism, and assault. Twenty-three of the girls made suicide attempts.

Torczyner and Pare' (1979) examined the influence of environmental factors and psychological factors on foster care. They report that the families whose children returned home were denoted by significant improvements in their financial situation and an increase in social supports. The families whose children remained in care did not show improvement in these areas but did experience improvements in parental and child behavior.

Timberlake and Verdieck (1987) interviewed foster parents of adolescents for information about their perception of the children's psychosocial functioning. Two profiles emerged—an asset profile and a vulnerabilities profile. One-half of the adolescents were functioning moderately well to very well on 61 percent of the measures. One-fourth were not functioning or functioning very poorly. The authors suggest that those adolescents functioning moderately well to very well may be handling their fear of additional rejection and loss by trying to please others and to conform to what is expected of them in the current placement. Those adolescents who were functioning poorly may be trying to protect themselves from further rejection by avoiding close interpersonal relationships.

While many researchers have correlated parental visitation with successful reunification with biologic parents, Gean et al (1985) found that for children under age three visitation in the

biologic parents' home was associated with distress symptoms of the children, specifically toileting problems, clinging and crying. If the primary caregiver reported having anxiety about the visit there was an increase in the number and frequency of symptoms exhibited by the child.

McIntyre et al (1988) compared the psychosocial development of foster children with children home-reared in both poverty and non-poverty. Using discriminant function analysis, they identified two significant functions—the first distinguished between the poverty and non-poverty groups, the second distinguished between foster and home reared groups. The foster pattern that emerged was interpreted as the child's belief that external events determine the child's experiences and behavior. To the foster child unpleasant experiences have to be endured and pleasant experiences are to be exploited. The authors suggest that this pattern is due to learned helplessness and external locus of control.

Function 1, which distinguished between the poverty and non-poverty reared groups was also manifested by 44 percent of the foster children. This function was characterized by the child lack of involvement in establishing and maintaining familial relationships.

These authors also investigate peer social integration among foster children. They report that the foster children were more often disliked and rejected than were home reared peers.

Wiehe (1985) also investigated locus of control in foster care and non-foster care children. He found that female foster children had significantly higher scores on the Nowicki Strickland Internal-External Locus of Control Scale. A higher score indicated a higher external locus of control. No differences were found between foster male children and non-foster children. Differences were found among foster children based on length of time in care with those in care more than six years having significantly higher scores.

Daly and Carpenter (1985) investigated the adjustment problems of Vietnamese refugee youths in foster care in the United States. They compared refugee youths who had been in this country for one and one-half years with refugee youth who

had been here three years or more. They report that the youths who had been here longer had made positive adjustments and that adjustments improved over time.

Porte and Torney-Purta (1987) report conflicting results from the study by Carpenter and Daly with their research on Indochinese refugee minors in U.S. foster care. They found that while all of these youths were quite depressed those youths living in Caucasian or group homes had higher depression scores than those youths living with ethnic families or their own families. The youths living in ethnic setting scored higher in academic achievement and were more likely to regard their school achievement as a result of their own efforts and therefore under their own control. Children in ethnic settings more often sought out someone to talk to or turn to someone for help when feeling sad than did youths in nonethnic settings.

#### *Prevalence of Emotional and Health Problems*

The emotional and physical health status of foster children is of great concern to researchers, administrators, and practitioners. Several researchers have found that children in foster care have inadequate health care and are at a high risk for severe medical problems.

Schor (1982), in a study of the health status of foster children identified 2.3 chronic problems per foster child in his sample—psychological and behavior problems were most frequently noted. They were present in 37 percent of the children.

Schor also reports that 33 percent of his sample of 387 foster children were below the twenty-fifth percentile in height. Immunization records were also lacking—they were available for only 55 percent of the children over age 12 and for 81 percent of the children under the age of 12. Seventy percent of the sample were found to be inadequately immunized. The following problems were also found: ophthalmologic—35 percent; educational—31 percent; dermatologic—22 percent; allergic—17 percent; dental/oral—16 percent; otologic—12 percent; physical growth and development—12 percent; and musculoskeletal—9 percent. Schor notes that foster children are under-utilizers of medical care and suggest that the medical care of foster children is neither frequent enough nor is it comprehensive.

Moffatt et al (1985) examined the medical charts of 257 foster children and because so much information was lacking on the charts, the selected a random subsample of 35 of these children for an in-depth medical and psychosocial examination. Additional information was obtained from the personal knowledge of agency nurses, the children were interviewed and given health examinations. The foster parents of these children completed the Achenbach Child Behavior Checklist (CBCL) and the children's teachers completed the Rutter's Teacher's Questionnaire of Child Behavior (RTRS). Moffatt found that 13 percent of school age foster children had scores indicating pathology on behavior scales, 29 percent had abnormal scales, and 10 percent had known psychiatric problems. They report that 39 percent of the sample scored below the second percentile of normal on the Social Scale of the Achenbach Child Behavior Check List.

Moffatt reports that 18 percent of the chart review sample had not been examined in the past year. This could be due to lack of information on the hospital charts since only 5 percent of the subsample had not been given a health examination. They found that the immunization records of both samples were lacking. In only 48 percent of the chart sample and 26 percent of the subsample was there definite evidence of complete immunization.

The authors also found 10 percent of the subsample to be a height below the third percentile of normal. Eighty-six percent of the 35 children had a health problem with 40 percent having a serious or chronic problem. The chart review for this sample only uncovered such problems in 16 percent of the children. Out of 77 problems uncovered by this study, the agency was only aware of 40 problems.

Moffatt et al believe that the care provided by the agency for the children with serious illness was, in general, good. However, the medical record keeping of the agency needs to be improved as does the implementation of prevention procedure.

Hochstadt, et al (1987) evaluated 149 abused and neglected foster children. They found that half of these children had multiple physical abnormalities, 40 percent had a chronic condition. These researchers also found that 24 percent of the children were of a stature below the fifth percentile and 10 percent below the



fifth percentile for weight. None of the children had complete immunization records.

Using the Louisville Behavior Check List, Hochstadt et al (1987) found that foster children exhibited a significant number of behavior problems, far more than would be expected the normal population. They suggest that with age these problems become more frequent and more severe. Furthermore, thirty-four percent of this sample had potentially serious medical problems necessitating medical subspecialty care. Developmental delay was suspected in 38 percent of the children under age five.

Frank (1980) investigated in psychosocial problems and treatment of foster care children. He had his assistant, both MSWs, rate 50 foster children at the time of their initial placement and five years later, the treatment needs for both time periods, and the treatment received. The rating scale for the psychosocial problems ranged from 1—no problems to 7—most serious problems which included child psychoses. At the time of placement no children were found to be free from problems. Seventy-eight to eighty percent of the children were rated 6 and 7, indicating severe psychosocial problems. After 5 years the number of children rated as psychotic doubled. Many of the children rated 5 at placement received a 6 rating five years later and several rated 6 were rated 7 at the later time period. Assessment of the treatment the children received was also done using a 7 point scale with rating 1 indicating ideal treatment and 7 the most inadequate treatment. Treatment adequacy was rated 6 or 7 (most inadequate) for 85 percent of the children.

Haynes et al (1983) evaluated 16 infants hospitalized for non-organic failure to thrive. Eight of the infants were placed in foster care and 8 were returned home to their parents following hospital discharge. They found that after 6 months the majority of the infants' mental scores decreased in both the home and foster care setting. More infants in foster care improved in Motor Scale scores while more infants in the natural home decreased. The at home infants all improved in weight percentile or stayed stable while in the foster care group, five improved or stayed stable and 3 decreased. These 3 had however, been returned home one month prior to the evaluation.

*Methodology*

One of the major functions of THINCS is to evaluate the methodological rigor of the selected studies. It is imperative that the research be reliable and valid if solutions to many problems in foster care, or any other research area, are to be found.

A major criticism of empirical foster care studies is the frequent use by researchers of small, geographically limited non-probability samples. As can be seen by the accompanying table very few of the studies analyzed here used a random or probability sample. In addition, most of the samples were drawn from a limited geographic area, usually a large metropolitan area. It is very possible that there are local or regional variations in case types that do not reflect the characteristics of the entire foster care population.

A serious problem in foster care research is the reliability of the data sources. A large number of authors use agency or hospital records. Several factors can contribute to the unreliability of this source—high caseworker turnover, excessive case load size, untrained workers, and multiple replacement of the children. Moffatt et al (1985) found incomplete medical records and unrecognized medical problems in their indepth subsample nation.

In order to determine if data reliability is affecting the results of a study, the researcher could draw a random subsample and obtain more detailed information on each case. The hypotheses could then be tested on both samples to see if significant differences do arise in regard to the variables in question.

Another question of reliability arises from the study by Hochstadt et al (1987). These authors note that the foster parents rated the children after knowing them for only brief periods, *i.e.*, several days to one month. The children were also evaluated at a time of great stress, immediately after separation from the natural family.

The question of whether characteristics of foster children are different from the non-foster care population is extremely important. In one study, Timberlake and Verdick (1987) identified adolescent vulnerability and asset profiles for adolescents in foster care. Yet, we need to know if the profiles of non-foster adolescents would significantly differ from those in foster care.

Table 2

CITATION	VARIABLES	DATA	SAMPLE	STATISTICS	RESULTS
Borgman, R. (1981). Antecedents and consequences of parental rights termination for abused and neglected children. <i>Child Welfare</i> , 60, 391-404.	Adoptive status (stable, unstable, no adoptive placement.) Conduct disorders	Case Records	N=29 All children placed in group care with PRT 1970-1979 43 counties	Fisher's Exact Test	Conduct disorders related to adoptive placement.
Bribitzer, M. & Verdick, M. (1988). Home-based family-center interventions: Evaluation of a foster care prevention program. <i>Child Welfare</i> , 68, 255-266.	Case outcome (returned home emancipated, foster care). Child involved with court system	Case Records	N=42 families 55 children non-random	Pearson's r Multiple regression	Successful outcome related to families with large number of children, younger families, no history of juvenile court involvement, and number of support services offered.
Byles, J. (1979). Adolescent girls in need protection. <i>American Journal of Orthopsychiatry</i> , 50, 240-278.	Adolescent girls in placement, girls deviant behavior	Case Records interviews with girls	N=120 non-random	Comparison of scores Chi Square, Kendall's Tau	Length of time in placement & severity & number of girl's deviant behavior. Deviance more serious following first placement.
Daly, B. and Carpenter, M. (1985). Adjustment of Vietnamese refugee youths: A self-report. <i>Psychological Reports</i> , 56, 971-976.	Adjustment in life in U.S. Time lived in U.S.	Interviews Self-rating scale	N=41 non-random	T-Test, Chi Square	Refugee youths in U.S. 3 or more years were better adjusted than youths in U.S. less than 1-1/2 year—less worried & afraid; self more accepted

Frank, G. (1980). Treatment needs of children in foster care. <i>American Journal of Orthopsychiatry</i> , 50, 256-263.	Psychosocial problems of foster children; time in care; treatment adequacy	Interviews with social workers, school reports, agency data forms	N=50 non-random	Comparison of ratings	High ratings of children on psychosocial problems scale, indicating severe problems, after 5 years highest rating doubled.
Gean, M., Gillmore, J. and Dowler, J. (1985). Infants and toddlers in supervised custody: A pilot study of visitation. <i>Journal of American Academy of Child Psychiatry</i> , 24, 608-612.	Behavioral responses; Visitation of biologic parents; location of visits	Agency records; Bayley Scale of Infant Development Interviews	N=23 children under age 3 non-random	T-Test Analysis of Variance	Relationship between frequency of child's problems with visits in home of biologic parent and anxiety of parents about visitation.
Haynes, C., Culter, C., Gray, J., O'Keefe, J., and Kemps, R. (1983). Non-organic failure to thrive: Implication of placement through analysis of video-taped interactions. <i>Child Abuse and Neglect</i> , 7, 321-328.	Child's development disposition of child after hospitalization (foster care, home)	Hospital records Interviews, Bayley Scale of Infants Development; Observations	N=16 non-random	Comparison of cases	Majority of mental scores decreased in foster group.
Hochstadt, N., Jaudes, P., Zimo, D., and Schachter, J. The medical and psychosocial needs of children entering foster care. <i>Child Abuse and Neglect</i> , 11, 53-62.	Treatment needs of foster children; health and emotional status	Interviews with child, mothers, caregivers; hospital records; examinations	N=149 non-random	Comparisons of percentages	Medical & behavior history limited. Children exhibited emotional/behavioral problems in excess of normal population. Health problems frequently noted.

Continued...

Table 2 Continued

CITATION	VARIABLES	DATA	SAMPLE	STATISTICS	RESULTS
Keane, A. (1983). Behavior problems among long term foster children. <i>Adoption and Fostering</i> , 7, 53-62.	Behavior problems; Age at placement; Age at interview with foster parent	Interviews with foster parent; case records	N=139 non-random	Chi Square	69% of foster parents recalled behavior problems at placement; disturbed child less well integrated with family, foster parents less accepting of.
Lawder, E., Poulin, J., and Andrews, R. (1986). A study of 185 foster children 5 years after placement. <i>Child Welfare</i> , 65, 241-251.	Dispositional status (foster care, return to family); behavioral problems	Case records	N=185 non-random	Zero Order Correlation	Children with more behavior problems tend to remain in care as compared to children with fewer problems.
McIntyre, A., Lounsbury, K., Berntson, D., and Steel, H. (1988). Psychosocial characteristics of foster children. <i>Journal of Applied Developmental Psychology</i> , 9, 125-137.	Psychosocial development: foster child, non-foster child poverty/non poverty reared	Projective Test School records	N=169 non-random	Chi Square Discriminant function Analysis	Two functions distinguished between foster children and home-reared children, between poverty and nonpoverty children.
Moffatt, M., Peddie, M., Stulginskis, J., Pless, I., and Steinmetz, N. (1985). Health care delivery to foster children: A study. <i>Health and Social Work</i> , 10, 129-137.	Health status of foster children, immunization, School adjustment, behavior	Medical records Physical exams, Psychometric tests	257—char, 35—subsample, only was random	Comparison of percentages	Poorly documented immunization records, 86%—health or potential health problems, poor school adjustment, emotional problems.

Pardeck, J. (1983). An empirical analysis of behavioral and emotional problems of foster children as related to re-placement in care. <i>Child Abuse and Neglect</i> , 7, 75-78.	Number of placement reason; child's behavior	Precoded data	N=4288 Random	Chi Square	Children with behavioral and emotional problem—tendency to experience replacement.
Pardeck, J. (1984). Multiple placement of children in foster family care: An empirical analysis. <i>Social Work</i> , Nov-Dec, 506-509.	Multiple place-ments; child's behavioral problem; time in care	Precoded data	4,288 random		Children with behavioral and emotional problems more likely to have multiple placements; controlled for time in care.
Porte, Z., and Torney-Purta, J. (1987). Depression and academic achievement among Indo-Chinese refugee unaccompanied minors in ethnic and nonethnic settings. <i>American Journal of Orthopsychiatry</i> , 57, 536-547.	Depression and life satisfaction; placement mode (ethnic, group own family) home, Caucasian	Questionnaire, school reports CES-D scale	N=82 non-random	Chi Square, T-Test, ANOVA, Regression	Relationship between high depression and non-ethnic placement; school achievement and placement.
Reid, W., Kagan, R., and Scholsberg, S. (1988). Prevention of placement: Critical factors in program success. <i>Child Welfare</i> , 67, 25-36.	Placement status; child's behavior	Case records; Interviews with social workers and parents	86 families 31 placed 55 not placed only not placed group-random	Chi Square	Placed children had more behavior problems, problems of a more serious nature.
Schor, E., (1982). The foster care system and health status of foster children. <i>Pediatrics</i> , 69, 521-528.	Health status: foster children	Medical records	N=387 random	Comparison of percentages	Lack of medical care; poor immunization records; 2.3 chronic problems per child, psychological and emotional most frequent.

Continued . . .

Table 2 Continued

CITATION	VARIABLES	DATA	SAMPLE	STATISTICS	RESULTS
Seaburg, J. and Tolley, E. (1986). Predictors of the length of stay in foster care. <i>Social Work Research and Abstracts</i> , 22, 11-17.	Length of stay in care; child's behavior	Precoded data	N=3950 random	Multiple Regression	Tested 2 models to predict length of stay; behavior of child not related.
Stone, M. and Stone, S. (1983). The predictors of successful foster placement. <i>Social Casework: The Journal of Contemporary Social Work</i> . January, 521-528.	Placement foster parents rapport with agency child's behavior family problems	Case records	N=64 non-random	Correlation coefficients multiple regression	Successful placement is association with chronicity of family problems, child's school behavior, and foster parent's rapport with the agency less aggressive, better socialized child with successful placement
Taber, M. and Proch K. (1987). Placement stability for adolescents in foster care: Findings from a program experiment. <i>Child Welfare</i> , 66, 433-445.	Placement stability; Chicago Services Project (CSP)	Interviews with children caregivers; case records	N=51 non-random	T-Test	Severe problems, multiple placements, move to more restrictive settings; changes after CSP.

The utilization of matched non-foster control groups would greatly extend our knowledge.

To eliminate possible rival explanations in research, the use of multivariate analysis would be extremely helpful. Seaburg and Tolley (1986) found that when additional variables were introduced into their study, the effects of some previously significant variables were negated and/or the direction correlation was changed.

Our knowledge of all aspects of foster care can be vastly improved through the use of probability sampling techniques, valid and reliable data sources, and coder reliability checks. In order to determine the prevalence of psychosocial problems among foster children and work toward solutions, studies are needed which utilize probability samples drawn from a national universe using reliable data and defined measures. Comparisons with nonfoster populations are also necessary. Only through rigorous theory testing can we assess problems and find solutions.

#### *Policy Recommendations*

From the studies analyzed here, it appears that foster children have serious psychosocial problems and that these problems have deleterious effects on stable foster placements, adoption, or reunification with the natural family. The prevalence of emotional and health problems is high. Frank (1980) reports that 78–80 percent of the children in his sample were judged to have severe psychological disturbances with 12 to 16 percent rated as psychotic at placement. Five years after placement the percentage of children with severe disturbances escalated to 90 to 91 percent with 22 to 28 percent rate psychotic. Yet 85 percent of these children were judged as receiving inadequate treatment.

Moffatt et al (1985) reported that 52 percent of their sample had behavioral disorders—13 percent had pathological scores on the Achenback Child Behavior Checklist (CBCL). Twenty-nine percent had abnormal scores on the CBCL and/or the Rutter's Teacher's Questionnaire of Child Behavior (RTRS), and 10 percent had psychiatric problems. Eighty-six percent had a health or potential health problem with 40 percent considered



to have serious or chronic problems. Schor (1982) found that 76 percent of his sample exhibited at least one chronic psychological or physical problem with psychological and behavior problems noted most frequently—37 percent.

Several implications can be drawn from these findings. There is a critical need for improved mental and physical health services for children in foster care. Resources are needed for early intervention and preventive treatment. An increase in home-based services designed to assess and resolve psychosocial problems would be beneficial in preventing placement for children at risk.

If placement is necessary, it is important that the initial placement fit the needs of the children. Foster parents should be prepared to work with the problem children. Continuous support from social workers and other community agencies should be available to both the foster parents and the natural parents. Consistent treatment for the problematic children should be comprehensive and easily accessible.

There should be strong emphasis placed on hiring trained social workers and at the same time, reducing the case load size, so that more quality time can be spent dealing with the children and their natural and foster parents.

There is also a need for centralization and coordination of mental and physical health services and record keeping for this population of children. When replacement does occur the child's records must be available for foster parents, social workers, and medical personnel. Schor (1982) recommends that in order to best serve the foster child pediatricians must be familiar with both the foster care system and its effects on the child's health.

Taber and Proch (1987) concluded that the severe behavior problems exhibited by most of the children in their sample did not constitute the reason for placement. This finding indicates that placement prevention must begin elsewhere and most likely it should be with the child's family. Reid et al (1988), Bribitzer and Verdieck (1988), and Torczyner and Pare' (1979) associated the lack of family resources and supports with placement. At the community level, the formation of professional-indigenous neighborhood groups could provide families with

emotional and practical supports through friendship, activities, and concrete services.

Once placement has occurred, the foster care system must respond to the child's psychosocial needs. This is no small task and encompasses a variety of consideration.

The foster child's age is a factor that should be considered in service delivery. Keane's (1983) findings indicate that there are age ranges among foster children during which behavior problems are more numerous and/or frequent, and that the age variable is compounded by entry into placement and multiple placements. Although Keane's data is based on the perceptions of the foster parent, it is not diminished by this bias. Workers must be alert and sensitive to the foster parent's responses to the child on at least two counts: 1) psychosocial problems the child may be experiencing and 2) the potential for damaging interactions between the foster child and parents. Adequate training and agency support are essential.

Byles (1980) and Timberlake and Verdieck (1987) limited their studies to adolescents, the former to adolescent females. Byles's findings suggest that foster care dramatically escalates the difficulties experienced by many adolescents. Fifty-seven percent of the sample had committed indictable offenses. Families whose child's initial placement is during adolescence may benefit from the type of neighborhood support groups recommended for placement prevention. Concrete services, developmental education, and emotional support can assist and strengthen families with adolescents.

The methodology of the Timberlake and Verdieck (1987) study was discussed above. A focus of this methodology, however, made an important point: the strengths and assets of the adolescents should be assessed. Strengths are frequently overlooked by researchers and practitioners alike. To help the most troubled, we need to learn the positive components of how foster children cope with their situation and succeed. We must also balance the dysfunctional aspects of the foster child's psychosocial behavior with their assets and help the child strengthen those assets.

Visitation and reunification have been associated by a number of researchers (see Fanshel 1975). In this light, Gean's (1985)

findings are particularly disturbing. Biological parent and child visitation was found to be distressful for children under three years of age, especially if the foster parents were anxious about the visit or if the visit had been located in the biological family's home.

Workers must be sensitive to the foster parent's potential ambivalence concerning visitation and help the parent discover methods for reducing such anxiety. Further methodologically sound research is needed in order to understand the interaction between the child's developmental stages and the many aspects of foster care. It is the role of the agency to supply ideas from practice and provide a mechanism for evaluation.

The ethnicity and cultural background of the foster child may be problematic for the worker, decreasing the effectiveness of intervention and increasing the potential for psychosocial disturbance. Porte and Turney-Porte (1987) studied refugee children of Asian descent. They found that the adjustment and achievement of Indochinese foster children were associated with placements in Indochinese families. Seaburg and Tolley (1986) found that older black children were more likely to stay in foster care longer. The black child is also over-represented in the foster child population.

The community must set standards for the care of children and maintain those standards. Workers must understand and work with parents whose cultures define levels of abuse and neglect differently. Agencies must recruit foster parents from the ethnic and cultural groups represented by foster children. A further implication can be drawn: a need for well trained practitioners from these ethnic groups.

School aged children spend a significant proportion of their lives with the school. Their psychosocial development may be adversely affected by their interactions with teachers and peers. A child's locus of control plays a pivotal role in determining interactional outcomes. Whiehe (1995) found that foster girls had significantly higher scores on a locus of control scale than did non-foster children. In other words, the foster girls believed that experiences were controlled by external rather than internal events. This compliments McIntyre's et al (1988) findings that

foster children are more often disliked and rejected than home-reared children.

Although it is unclear where this spiral begins, the school is in a position to alleviate and discontinue its course. Cooperation and communication between schools and agencies are a necessity. In-school social skills programs geared to the needs of all children would be of great benefit for foster children.

This article has specifically addressed the psychosocial problems of children in foster care. The review indicates that much needs to be done in studying the problems of children in foster care. Improvements in methodology are also suggested. Psychosocial research on foster care children is a wide-open field of endeavor. Researchers and practitioners cannot hope to prevent the psychosocial problems which all foster children face at placement: separation and loss, and the pain and uncertainty that go with both. A child's negative acting-out and internalization of these experiences might be prevented by the type of research encouraged in this article in tandem with trained and dedicated workers and a community committed to children. Far more empirical research needs to be done. We must advocate for all of our children.

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# Social Support Networks of Gay Men

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*Although social workers and other helping professionals frequently stress the importance of social networks among gay men, there has been little empirical research to describe these networks. In the present study, the authors analyze data on perceived social support from 166 gay men recruited through gay community groups and social networks. Most gay men were found to have large and diverse social networks. Frequent communication occurs between respondents and network members, most of whom know of respondents' homosexuality. The most frequent and supportive network member was a close friend, and the most common type of support received was emotional. Those not in a committed relationship, and those living alone, are more likely to report feelings of loneliness and to talk to network members more often.*

Where do gay men find social support? According to social worker practitioners and social science researchers, gay men are embedded in networks of family and friends, and the concept of "community" plays an important role in the social creation and maintenance of homosexuality (e.g. Gagnon & Simon, 1967; Hidalgo, Peterson & Woodman, 1985; Shernoff & Scott, 1988). In the past two decades, both social scientists and lay writers have focused on the gay community as a source of social support. Despite this, there has been little research on the characteristics of social support among gay men. The purpose of this study was

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to describe the nature of perceived social support networks as reported by a community sample of adult gay men.

### *Social Support in the Literature on Homosexuality*

*Community* Homosexuals in America were not always viewed as members of a community. Early psychoanalytic studies of homosexuals were limited to individuals who had sought treatment for their sexual orientation (e.g. Bieber, 1962). These patients tended to be isolated from other homosexuals, and their sources of social support were friends or family members who were often unaware of the patient's homosexuality and unsympathetic to homosexuals. Prior to World War II, gay men and lesbians came together only in small and secret friendship cliques; the bars, social clubs and political organizations which define today's gay and lesbian communities were virtually non-existent (Berger, 1982).

In the 1950's, Evelyn Hooker, perhaps the first social scientist to gain access to the social friendship networks of gay men, began to study gay men drawn from the community rather than from treatment settings (Hooker, 1957; Hooker, 1958). She described the gay community as an amalgam of people, activities and places. Although the main gay community institution was the bar, Hooker described the community outside the bar as "a loosely knit extended series of overlapping networks of friends." (Hooker, 1967, p.180). These networks were of three types: small intimate cliques, larger cliques, and loose networks whose members met only on occasion. Hooker said little about the nature of social support provided within these networks.

During the 1960's, sociologists of deviance began to study homosexual men and women in relation to their community. Homosexuals were seen as acting out a social role or deviant career that existed only in the context of others' definitions. New definitions for the social role of 'homosexual' were made possible by a gay community subculture, which provided a distinctive and reinforcing set of values, behaviors and language. Thus, homosexuals looked to the gay community for support in the broadest sense: to provide an alternative, non-stigmatizing definition of their status, and to provide role models and a

"career path," as well as a range of social and sexual opportunities (Gagnon & Simon, 1967; Schur, 1965). In many areas of the country today, gay men and women have access to a large and diverse gay community which includes a variety of institutions from churches to social and political clubs and business leagues (Moses & Hawkins, 1982).

*Social Support* Today, despite the dearth of empirical research on gay social networks, social workers and other writers almost universally advocate use of social support from the gay community to help clients achieve psychosocial adjustment (e.g. Burns & Rofes, 1988; Moses and Hawkins, 1982; Woodman and Lenna, 1980).

For example, Krysiak (1987) concluded that high school counselors should help gay and lesbian students by informing them of resources provided by the local gay community. At the other end of the age spectrum, Berger (1984) found that older gay men and women believed that maintaining supportive friends was a key ingredient in good adjustment to growing older. Daugelli and Hart (1987) reported that rural gays and lesbians often lack social support because of the non-existence or limited availability of rural gay community organizations.

Gay community and social support also appear as important concepts in models of sexual orientation identity formation. For example, Berger (1983) noted that a homosexual identity is often established with the help of peer association: the development of social support networks of other self-identified homosexuals. These support networks help the individual to understand, cope with, and ultimately to accept his identity.

*Impact of Social Support on Adjustment* Despite this extensive literature on social support in the gay community, the authors were able to locate only four empirical evaluations of the effects of social support on psychosocial adjustment of gay men. These studies suggested that those who have good social support experience better adjustment.

Weinberg and Williams (1975), in their questionnaire study of almost 2500 gay men, found that social involvement with other gays was positively related to good psychosocial adjustment. Gay men high on social involvement with other gays



were more likely to have an exclusive partner, were more acculturated into gay life, and had less desire to renounce their homosexuality. Those low in social involvement had more psychological problems: they had less self-acceptance and greater depression, loneliness, and anxiety regarding their homosexuality. They were also more likely to desire psychiatric treatment for their homosexuality.

In his study of 112 gay men over the age of forty, Berger (1982) found that integration into the gay community (presence of gay friends) was positively associated with psychological adjustment. Jones and Bates (1988) reported that among gay male couples, social support to the individual and to the couple were not related to relationship quality or satisfaction. However, the authors did not make clear their method of measuring social support and their sample was small ( $N=28$ ). In a more substantive study of 69 gay and 50 lesbian cohabiting couples, Kurdek (1988) found that social support was related to psychological adjustment for both male and female couples.

*Characteristics of Social Support* A few studies in the past two decades have illuminated the nature of social support networks among gay men and women. Based on interviews with 104 gay men, 61 lesbians, and 84 heterosexual controls, Saghir and Robins (1973) reported that the majority of gay men and women had at least one close friend whom they saw often, confided in and considered a source of help. Most of the friends of gay men were other gay men. About half of respondents' parents knew of their child's homosexuality; of these parents about half were described as compassionate and understanding toward their child's sexual orientation. Half of the gay men believed that their homosexuality adversely affected their social life.

Bell and Weinberg's (1978) interviews with 977 gay men and lesbians and 477 heterosexual controls, yielded a similar picture of social networks. Most gay men and lesbians had five or more close friends and most of these were same-sex friends. Gay men and lesbians had greater numbers of close friends than did heterosexuals, which Bell and Weinberg attributed to the need for 'extended family' among homosexuals and the greater family involvement of heterosexuals. While few heterosexuals

had same-sex friends who they knew were homosexual, gays and lesbians tended to have both homosexual and heterosexual friends. Compared to single gay men and lesbians, those who were coupled understandably spent less of their leisure time alone and more of their time at home.

Berger's (1982) study of gay men forty years of age and older, debunked the stereotypical notion that older gay men are socially isolated. Among 112 older gay men, Berger found that only one-third lived alone. Most had had a lover at some point in their lives, and most had friends and participated at least occasionally in gay community activities. Most older gay men preferred to associate with age peers.

Based on a questionnaire study of 49 gay and lesbian adolescents, Mercier and Berger (1989) reported that isolation from other gays and lesbians was a major difficulty for these youth. Almost all adolescents had recently turned to friends for help. By comparison, only about half had sought help from a parent, a lover or from a support group. Siblings and mental health professionals were consulted by about a quarter of respondents.

Four studies shed light on the social networks of gay male couples. Mead's (1979) intensive case studies of five male couples suggested that "support systems" was a significant theme in their lives. McWhirter and Mattison (1984) found that most male couples formed extended families which included other gay couples, close friends and family members. However, many couples did not enjoy full support from family members. The great majority of male couples considered their closest friends to be other gay people. All had gay friends and about two-thirds spent almost all their socializing time with other gay people. Berger (1990a) reported that among 92 male couples, two-thirds felt that their parents and siblings were supportive of their couple relationship.

Kurdek (1988) conducted the only empirical study which looked specifically at social support among gay and lesbian couples. Based on a questionnaire study of 69 gay and 50 lesbian cohabiting couples, Kurdek concluded that the most frequent providers of social support were, in order, friends, partners, family and co-workers.

*Social Support Literature*

At its simplest, social support refers to the resources provided by other persons (Cohen, 1985, p. 73). Since the 1970's a vast literature has emerged, offering many complex definitions of social support. In response to this literature, Vaux and Harrison (1985, p. 245) argued that research findings were often based on idiosyncratic measures and poorly defined concepts. They noted that the term 'social support' is too vague to be of use.

These conceptual problems have led to difficulty in designing appropriate measures of social support. For example, Cohen (1985) noted that there were almost as many measures of social support as there were studies (p. 73). Other authors have made similar observations (e.g. Barrera, 1986; Orth-Gomer & Unden, 1987; Vaux & Harrison, 1985).

Bruhn and Philips (1984) stressed the importance of measuring both the qualitative and quantitative dimensions of social support (p. 152). Another researcher measured social support by referring to direction (whether support is given or received), disposition (availability and enactment of support), description/evaluation, content (type of support: emotional, financial, etc.) and description of the network itself (Tardy, 1985, p. 188).

Barrera (1986) argued that the term 'social support' be abandoned in favor of three broad categories: *social embeddedness*, *perceived social support*, and *enacted support*. *Social embeddedness* "refers to the connections that individuals have to significant others in their social environments" (p. 415).

The subject's cognitive appraisal of being reliably connected to others constitutes *perceived social support*. Measures of this type of support typically assess individuals' beliefs that support would be available and adequate if needed; some measures of perceived social support also assess satisfaction with support. *Enacted social support* assesses what supportive persons in the individual's environment actually do when providing help.

Despite these conceptual and methodological difficulties, several studies have shown that well being is related to subjective aspects of support (perceived support or support satisfaction) (Barrera, 1981; Hirsch, 1980; Procidano & Heller, 1983). Therefore this study chose to measure perceived social support and support satisfaction.

*Research Questions*

This study sought to describe the following characteristics of the social support networks of gay men: 1) network size (number of persons in the network); 2) type of support; 3) sources of support (relationship of support providers to respondents, persons who were perceived to be the three most important sources of support, and gender of supportive persons); 4) frequency of contact (how often respondent talked with supportive persons); and 5) satisfaction with available support.

Three additional variables were included in this study because of their close connection to social networks and to social and psychological adjustment:

1) Passing as heterosexual (the extent to which an individual's homosexuality is hidden from others) is an important factor in the gay individual's relationship to his social network and in his psychosocial adaptation (Bell & Weinberg, 1978; Berger, 1982, 1990b; Braaten & Darling, 1965; Horowitz, 1964; Leznoff & Westley, 1967; Myrick, 1974a). For example, Weinberg and Williams (1975) found that among gay men passing was associated with depression, interpersonal awkwardness and feelings of anxiety about one's homosexuality (p. 250). The most important component of passing is *being known as gay*. Therefore, the present study asked respondents about the extent to which they were known as gay within their networks.

2) Weinberg and Williams (1975) also found that *living situation* was a significant social network factor. Compared to gay men who lived with others, those who lived alone were more isolated and had greater psychological problems: they more often anticipated discrimination, were less likely to be known as gay, were less integrated into the gay world, and were more depressed, lonely, guilty and anxious about their homosexuality.

3) *Relationship status* (whether the individual was in a committed relationship) was found by Bell and Weinberg (1978) to be predictive of good adjustment. Gay men and women who were in primary relationships in which the partners tended to look to each other rather than to outsiders for sexual and interpersonal satisfactions were dubbed "close-coupled." Individuals in these relationships showed "superior adjustment."

Compared to "single" gays and those in "open" relationships, they were more self-accepting, less depressed, less lonely and more happy.

Therefore this study also examined the impact of living situation and relationship status on social network characteristics as well as on perceived friendship deprivation and feelings of loneliness.

## Method

### *Questionnaire*

A five page questionnaire was developed to measure perceived social support and demographic characteristics. The social support items were adapted from an assessment tool developed by Vaux and Harrison (1985). Respondents were asked to list as many as ten persons who they believed were sources of social support. They were then asked to provide the following information about each person listed: sex; the person's relationship to respondent (e.g. lover/partner, parent, close friend); how often respondent spoke to the person; what types of support were provided (emotional, practical, financial, advice/guidance, and socializing); respondents' level of satisfaction with support provided; and extent to which respondents' homosexuality was known to that person. Finally, from the list of supportive persons, respondents identified three individuals they considered to be most supportive.

The questionnaire also asked respondents if they believed they had enough friends (friendship deprivation) (on a five point scale from "strongly agree" to "strongly disagree") and if they felt lonely (on a four point scale from "never" to "very often"). Demographic items included self-rated sexual orientation, race, sex, religion, education, age, income, living situation and relationship status.

### *Sampling*

Respondents were obtained by targeting friendship networks and a variety of gay organizations and community events over an eight week period during the Fall of 1989.

To obtain responses from individuals in friendship networks, questionnaires with postage-paid return envelopes were

distributed to contact persons known to the second author as a result of extensive professional contacts in the community. Followup calls and meetings with each contact person verified that the questionnaires had been distributed.

The authors distributed additional questionnaires at gay community organizations and special events in Southern California. Questionnaires were distributed to: Dignity (an organization of gay Catholics), Positive Living for Us (an organization of HIV-positive men), two additional AIDS-related organizations, a gay youth service program, a gay student caucus at a local university, an art lecture sponsored by a gay organization, a Gay and Lesbian Community Service Center, Front Runners (a gay men's athletic organization), men in attendance at a Gay Men's Chorus, and Project Rainbow (an organization for senior gays). In addition, questionnaires were distributed at a gay community dinner event in Atlanta. A total of 695 questionnaires were distributed.

Usable questionnaires were returned by 166 men and 34 women, for a response rate of 28.8%. This paper reports findings based on responses of the 166 male respondents. (Due to the small number of women respondents, data from this group were not analyzed).

Table 1 summarizes characteristics of these respondents. Virtually all respondents described themselves as exclusively or predominantly homosexual, they were overwhelmingly white, most were Protestant or Catholic, and they had above average levels of income and education. About two-thirds were in their thirties or forties, over a third were in committed relationships, and almost half lived alone.

## Results

On average, men in this study listed 8.5 persons in their support networks. The greatest number of supportive persons provided emotional support and the smallest number provided financial support (Table 2).

For all persons listed in respondents' social networks, Table 3 summarizes the number with various relationships to the respondent. By far, the most predominant type of relationship was close friend. On average, respondents listed about 4 close

Table 1

*Demographic Characteristics of Respondents (N=166)*

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Percentage

*Sexual Orientation (n = 163)*

- 75.5 exclusively homosexual
- 19.6 predominantly homosexual, only insignificantly heterosexual
- 2.5 predominantly homosexual but significantly heterosexual
- 1.8 equally homosexual and heterosexual
- 0.6 predominantly heterosexual, but significantly homosexual

*Race (n = 166)*

- 83.1 White, Non-Hispanic
- 7.8 Hispanic
- 4.2 Black
- 4.8 Asian, Native American, or Other

*Religion (n = 165)*

- 38.2 Catholic
- 35.8 Protestant
- 7.3 Jew
- 18.8 Other

*Annual Individual Income (n = 164)*

- 14.0 under \$10,000
- 20.1 \$10,000 to 19,999
- 17.7 \$20,000 to 29,999
- 21.3 \$30,000 to 39,999
- 14.0 \$40,000 to 49,999
- 12.8 \$50,000 and over

*Education (n = 165)*

- 64.2 four year college or graduate degree
- 29.1 some college
- 6.1 high school diploma
- 0.6 eighth grade or less

*Age (n = 166)*

- |                      |                  |
|----------------------|------------------|
| 14.5 20-29 years old | $\bar{X}$ = 40.5 |
| 36.7 30-39           | Md = 39          |
| 26.5 40-49           | range 23 to 78   |
| 22.3 50 and older    | s.d. = 11.0      |

*Continued . . .*

Table 1 Continued

## Percentage

*Relationship Status* (n = 127)

In a committed relationship with a person of the same sex?

38.6 Yes

61.4 No

*Living Situation* (n = 166)<sup>a</sup>

45.8 live alone

30.7 live with a lover

21.1 live with a roommate

3.6 live with other person

<sup>a</sup>Percentages add to over 100 because respondents could choose all responses which applied.

Table 2

*Number of Persons Providing Various Types of Support*

	$\bar{X}$	s.d.
Emotional	6.2	2.6
Socializing	5.5	2.3
Advice and Guidance	5.4	2.4
Practical	4.9	2.6
Financial	2.5	1.7
Total Network Size	8.5	2.2

friends. Overall, almost half of respondents' networks were composed of close friends.

When asked to identify the three most supportive persons in their networks, close friend again emerged as the largest category by far. As shown in Table 4, at least one close friend was listed by 105 out of 166 or 63% of respondents as being among the three most supportive persons. Parents, lovers, siblings and other persons were seldom listed. Overall, 53.8% of the three most supportive persons were close friends.

Men predominated among persons listed in respondents' support networks. An average of 5.5 males (range = 1-10,



Table 3

*Persons in Social Network with Various Relationships to Respondents*  
(N= 166)

	Mean Number	s.d.	Maximum number <sup>a</sup>	Percentage of network	Number of respondents who listed person in network
Close friend	3.94	2.18	10	47.6	156
Parent	0.88	0.84	3	10.6	97
Coworker	0.71	0.98	4	8.6	74
Sibling	0.69	0.87	4	8.3	80
Other person <sup>b</sup>	0.67	0.99	5	8.1	70
Social acquaintance	0.55	0.95	5	6.7	58
Lover	0.42	0.51	2	5.0	68
Other relative	0.37	0.72	4	4.4	43

<sup>a</sup> For each relationship the minimum number of persons listed was 0.

<sup>b</sup> "Other persons" were those not named in the other categories and included: ex-lover, ex-wife, neighbor, helping professional and clergy.

s.d. = 2.0) and 3.1 females (range = 1–7, s.d. = 1.5) were listed in respondents' networks. Of all persons named in these networks, about two-thirds (64.5%) were other men.

Overall, respondents spoke frequently with persons in their networks. A quarter (25.9%) talked with network members on the phone or in person, an average of two to six times a week; almost half (46.9%) talked to network members once to twice a week. Most respondents were known as gay to most persons in their networks. Over half (55.9%) believed that all the members in their networks knew of their homosexuality.

In general, respondents expressed satisfaction with support received from the persons they listed in their networks. Almost all (92.6%) reported that on average they were "moderately" to "extremely satisfied" with support received, and two-fifths (40.4%) were "very" to "extremely satisfied."

Table 4

*Three Most Supportive Persons: Number with Various Relationships to Respondent*

	Number listing person as among three most supportive	$\bar{X}$	range	s.d.
Close friend	105	1.9	1-4	0.8
Lover	44	1.0	1	0.0
Parent	39	1.2	1-2	0.4
Sibling	24	1.2	1-2	0.4
Other Person <sup>a</sup>	18	1.2	1-2	0.4

*Note.* Spouse, other relative, coworker, and social acquaintance were each listed by fewer than 7 per cent of respondents.

<sup>a</sup> "Other persons" were those not named in the other categories and included: ex-lover, ex-wife, helping professional and clergy.

A series of t-tests were run in order to test the impact of relationship status and living situation on social network characteristics. Specifically, those in a committed relationship were compared to those who were not (and those who lived alone were compared to those who lived with others) on the following variables: size of network, number of persons who provided various types of support, frequency with which respondent talked to persons in his network, satisfaction with social support, extent to which respondent was known as gay, and percentage of network composed of persons of the same and opposite-sex, close friends and persons who knew of respondents' homosexuality. In addition, t-tests were included to test the impact of relationship status and living situation on friendship deprivation and loneliness.

As shown in Table 5, relationship status was a significant predictor of three characteristics. Respondents who were not in a relationship were more likely to report feeling lonely; they talked to people in their networks more often; and their networks were composed of a greater percentage of close friends (although the overall network size did not differ).

Table 5

*The Effect of Being in a Committed Same-sex Relationship on Loneliness and Social Network Characteristics*

	N	$\bar{X}$	s.d.	t	p
<i>DO YOU FEEL LONELY?</i> <sup>a</sup>					
In relationship	47	2.17	0.67	2.165	.0326
Not in relationship	78	2.46	0.82		
<i>HOW OFTEN DO YOU TALK TO PERSONS IN YOUR NETWORK?</i> <sup>b</sup>					
In relationship	46	3.69	1.01	2.843	.0056
Not in relationship	78	3.18	0.90		
<i>PERCENTAGE OF NETWORK CONSISTING OF CLOSE FRIEND</i>					
In relationship	44	45.3	17.9	2.162	.0328
Not in relationship	76	53.6	23.9		

*Note.* All tests were two-tailed. <sup>a</sup> Coded: '1' = never; '2' = seldom; '3' = often; and '4' = very often.

<sup>b</sup> Coded: '1' = every day; '2' = 3–6 times a week; '3' = twice a week; '4' = once a week; '5' = twice a month; and '6' = once a month or less.

Living situation was a significant predictor of two characteristics. Table 6 shows that those who lived alone were more likely to report feeling lonely, and to talk to others in their social networks more often.

### Discussion

Much that is known to date about the social networks of gay men derives from unsystematic observation and professional opinion. This study illustrates the feasibility of conducting systematic research into the social networks of gay men, and of identifying factors associated with good and poor adjustment.

The findings of this study are consistent with those of earlier studies which showed that most gay men had at least a few friends (e.g. Saghir & Robins, 1973; Wienberg & Williams, 1975). This study showed further that the great majority of gay men, at

Table 6

*The Effect of Living Situation on Loneliness and Frequency of Communication*

	N	$\bar{X}$	s.d.	t	p
<i>DO YOU FEEL LONELY?</i> <sup>a</sup>					
Living alone	76	2.46	0.81	2.419	.0168
Living with others	88	2.17	0.71		
<i>HOW OFTEN DO YOU TALK TO PERSONS IN YOUR NETWORK?</i> <sup>b</sup>					
Living alone	74	3.14	0.82	3.787	.0002
Living with others	88	3.67	0.96		

Note. All tests were two-tailed.

<sup>a</sup> Coded: '1' = never; '2' = seldom; '3' = often; and '4' = very often.

<sup>b</sup> Coded: '1' = every day; '2' = 3–6 times a week; '3' = twice a week; '4' = once a week; '5' = twice a month; and '6' = once a month or less.

least in this sample, were embedded within large and diverse social networks which included friends, members of the immediate family and others. Close friends composed the largest part of most of gay men's networks, and emotional support appeared to be the most common type of support received. Social workers, who are trained to understand people in the context of their personal environments, should be aware of these characteristics of the social networks of gay men.

Gay men in this study were almost twice as likely to list other men, rather than women, as members of their social networks. This is consistent with Bell and Weinberg's (1978) finding that most gay men had mostly male friends. Nevertheless, on average, respondents named three women among those in their networks. Far from being misogynists, as some have suggested (Tripp, 1975), gay men are able to draw support from members of both sexes. This should be seen as a strength.

Not surprisingly, single gay men (those not in committed relationships), and those who lived alone, were more likely to

report feeling lonely. That these men also spoke more often with members of their network suggests that frequent social contact may occur when sources of primary support are not immediately available. Social workers may be helpful to single gay men, and those who live alone, by encouraging these clients to maintain regular contact with members of their social networks.

As in all studies of homosexuality, there are limitations inherent in the sample. Respondents in the present study were mostly white, lived in urban areas, and had higher than average levels of education and income. Conclusions drawn from this study may not hold true for gay men who are less educated and affluent, are minorities, or live in rural areas where supportive social networks are less accessible (Daugelli & Hart, 1987). Even so, social workers working with members of these groups are well advised to help their clients create and sustain supportive social networks.

Much research on gay men has depended on samples recruited through the public institutions of the gay community: bars, social clubs, political groups, and other organized activities. In any study of social networks it is particularly important to recruit also among the many gay men who never or rarely frequent these groups, because the social networks of these men may differ. The present study was successful in recruiting through informal social networks, as well as public groups, thereby strengthening the sample. However, the study sample did not include that minority of gay men who are socially isolated from other gays. This has been an exceedingly difficult group for social scientists to reach (Warren, 1977). Although the findings of this study do not necessarily apply to this group, gay men who are socially isolated from other gays are more likely to have psychological problems. They are also more likely to desire and need intervention by social workers and other helping professionals (Weinberg & Williams, 1975). It would be ideal for social work researchers and practitioners to collaborate to gain access to this group.

Popular rhetoric sometimes suggests that gay men are isolated from or rejected by family (e.g. McWhirter & Mattison, 1984; Moses & Hawkins, 1982). The present study indicates

however, that for many gay men, parents and siblings constitute important sources of support, a conclusion which was also reached in a recent study of gay male couples (Berger, 1990a).

While close friends predominated in the social networks of those in the present study, parents and siblings were also cited by at least half of respondents. These figures do not inform us about the level of acceptance of homosexuality offered by parents and siblings, but they do debunk the notion that gay men are universally isolated from their immediate family. Social workers should help their gay clients to explore the possibility of securing or enhancing support from family members.

The present study did not evaluate the impact of the AIDS crisis on the social networks of gay men. The chronic illness and mortality brought on by AIDS has almost certainly had a major influence on the social networks of many gay men, particularly those who live in large urban areas where the epidemic is most prevalent. Gerontological research may shed some light in this area, since gay men affected by AIDS face challenges which are similar to those of advanced old age: loss of one's own functional capacity and depletion of one's social network through death.

It will be important to also learn how AIDS has strengthened gay men's social networks. The gay community, at times with help from social workers (Shernoff, 1990), has organized to provide support to its members (Burns & Rofes, 1988). On an individual level, many gay men have learned increasingly to value friendships and committed relationships, thereby enhancing the quality of support received.

The most important research effort in developing an understanding of gay men's networks will be the development of a multivariate model and application of multivariate analytic techniques. Ultimately, a description of social networks is empty without an understanding of the ways in which network characteristics are related to psychosocial well-being, which is the result of a large number of network and individual factors acting simultaneously. In order for this to happen, researchers from social work and other disciplines will have to continue their study of the social networks of gay men.

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# Structuring Support for Volunteer Commitment: an Aids Services Program Study

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*Since the AIDS epidemic began over a decade ago, the bulk of services for people living with HIV in the community setting have been provided by volunteers. Volunteers are confronted with the stigmatized status of people with HIV and must learn to manage multiple crisis issues. This paper describes research on volunteerism in a buddy program for people living with AIDS and the perceptions of volunteers about the structural supports of the volunteer program. Issues around perceptions of stress and the relationship between bereavement and volunteering are explored.*

## *Introduction*

In just over a decade, the human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) pandemic has moved from a newly discovered virus found in a handful of people to a health disaster affecting perhaps as many as 12,000,000 people worldwide. The combination of new infections and the natural history of the disease among those already infected makes the decade ahead look inescapably worse (Mann, 1991).

The advent of AIDS, coupled with a trend in the 1980's towards cuts in social service programs and a reliance through-

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out the country on volunteerism to meet human needs, provoked a volunteer response of a magnitude unheard of in recent years (Arno, 1986). The initial response to AIDS was greatly a community based volunteer response (Rowe and Ryan, 1987) and still remains largely a volunteer response with program supports and professional managers.

The evolution of the response to AIDS has led to the development of volunteer organizations, many of which are large, complex and multifaceted. Volunteer activities have been as varied as exploring alternative medical therapies (Callen, 1988), providing a full range of services including professional direct care services (Gay Men's Health Crisis, 1991), and social and political advocacy (Shilts 1987). In that the role of volunteers has been central in the response to AIDS, it is important to know more about ways managers of programs and professional social service providers can foster structural supports to volunteerism.

This study provides descriptive data about the use of volunteers in the provision of direct services to people with AIDS. AIDS has been described as a "holocaust" (Kramer, 1989) because it has destroyed entire community groups within the United States, and has the potential to devastate entire countries, particularly in the developing nations of the world. In the face of this growing disaster, building volunteer community supports is imperative. Social workers at all levels of practice, especially within AIDS service organizations, need to familiarize themselves with methods of building support for volunteer programs.

### *Volunteerism & Stigmatized Groups*

The literature on volunteerism explores various issues in the structural support of volunteers. In a study of one AIDS services program, Velentgas and others (1990) report that volunteers expressed satisfaction with their contributions and the program supports. Volunteers can successfully play a variety of roles in service provision when programs structurally support those roles (Mech and Leonard, 1988). However, the needs of clients must be clearly known for volunteer services to be most effective. For example, in a study by Filinson (1998), families of Alzheimer's patients sought support and education rather

than tangible services from volunteers, contrary to program expectations. Matching volunteer roles with client needs and agency programs fosters successful volunteer experiences.

The early identification of AIDS among gay men and soon thereafter among injection drug users quickly associated AIDS and social stigma (Sigelman, 1991). Hoffman (1963) noted the tendency to avoid stigmatized and devalued people rather than share in the devaluation by association. AIDS quickly became a metaphor for failure, particularly seen as a moral failure (Sontag, 1989). Volunteers working with persons living with AIDS confront the "spread effect" of a courtesy stigma and its effect on the volunteer. The fact that AIDS has largely been perceived as a "gay disease" means that volunteers must learn to manage the courtesy stigma of homophobia. As the infections have spread among women and people of color, volunteers have been forced to confront issues of racism, sexism and classism and the stigma associated with each. The motivations of persons volunteering in AIDS work then includes persons who bring skills in stigma management often gained from their personal experiences.

The stigmatization of HIV illness had led initially to an under-funding of supportive services for people affected by AIDS. This stigmatization has also meant that traditional sources of support, such as from family, church, and friends, have often responded in a phobic and rejecting manner to people living with HIV. For these reasons, volunteers play a critical role in meeting clients' support needs. Recently as more money has become available, volunteers continue to be needed because of the increasing caseloads, the numerous biopsychosocial crises surrounding AIDS (Macks, 1987), the ongoing supports needed by persons living with AIDS, and because of the ongoing discrimination and stigmatization people living with AIDS experience (Sontag, 1989).

The presence of stigma highlights a critical issue for volunteer management. Volunteers must overcome their own possible negative reactions to people with HIV illnesses. These reactions may be a result of homophobia, racism, sexism or classism, but they may also be related to anxiety about relating to someone with a potentially fatal illness; questions about the possibility of transmission of infection; working with someone

who has chronic problems with substance abuse, mental illness or mental retardation; or responding to people with an often-times rapidly fluctuating mental and physical state (Dunkel and Hatfield, 1986).

In addition to their own issues about the client's stigmatized status, volunteers experience the "courtesy stigma" (Goffman, 1963) associated with working with people living with what yet continues to be a terminal illness. As one of the volunteers noted in the study, several of her friends questioned her motivation for volunteering with someone with a transmissible disease who would "just die anyway".

To understand and be able to nurture the volunteer experience, motivational issues are important. Ilsley (1990) defines volunteer motivation in two general categories, formal and informal:

*formal*—needs defined by programs; coordination by programs; volunteering is formally rewarded; traditional roles

*informal*—spontaneous expressions of service to a personally perceived social need; often without formal rewards.

The early response to the HIV crisis began with "informal" volunteerism primarily by gay men and lesbian women and has now become more "formalized" as funding and professionals are infused into service networks. Rowe and Ryan (1987) trace the evolution of the San Francisco AIDS Foundation as an example of this transition. Members of the gay and lesbian community began the response to AIDS because of their awareness of the growing need for support and realizing that as a stigmatized, devalued population, that the support would have to come "informally" from within their communities.

Many current volunteers in HIV services are there for informal rather than formal reasons. Schondel's (1989) study of volunteer motivations in AIDS service organizations found "self-help" a greater motivator than more formal rewards. However, as volunteerism in AIDS services has become subsumed in funded professional programs, volunteer supports have become more formalized and accountable to broader constituencies.

Volunteer services often spring from informal motivations fostered by the demand for social justice. As these services

become institutionalized, the more formal motivations, reflecting agency and program orientations, receive greater focus. There is a nationwide movement toward more extensive use of volunteers in response to many social problems (Ellis, 1985). Politicians often attempt to capitalize on this trend for diverse reasons.

In a study of several social service agencies' use of volunteers in Israel, Cnaan (1990) found a diverse set of reasons for agency use of volunteers and, as well, many reasons why people volunteer. Within the AIDS community, initial volunteers who responded because of informal motivations, merged with others who volunteered as AIDS services became somewhat more legitimized (and hence less stigmatized) and sanctions became formalized. Demographic changes that reflect the shift in communities most affected by AIDS also continue to change the volunteer scene.

As the face of AIDS has changed over the past several years, more women, children and people of color have become sick and in need of services. (It's not so much the face is changing but that more faces are being added). Women, for example, experience the social problems related to AIDS in unique ways (Lindhorst, 1988). Volunteers, who initially began Working with people living with HIV because of informal motivations usually related to their personal proximity to the gay male community, report feeling challenged by new needs reflected by this diversity.

Social services can support the informal motivations of volunteers and need not over emphasize a dichotomy between social change efforts of AIDS activism and professional service provision with formalized structures (Withorn, 1984). Empowerment based practice moves social work practitioners toward social change activities (Mancoske and Hunzeker, 1990) which may well lead to structuring support for volunteers' social change activities.

Guidelines for programmatic support for volunteerism have been developed by the Council on Accreditation for Services for Families (Council, 1982) and the Association of Volunteer Bureaus (Jacobson, 1978). Standards were established in the areas of planning, recruitment, screening, training, assignment,

supervision, evaluation and follow-up. This study examines one AIDS service volunteer based agency to explore how volunteer support is structured into program efforts.

### *Study Population*

The purpose of this study is to describe the perceptions of program supports of volunteers at a buddy program which provides a one-on-one match between volunteers and persons living with AIDS. The study explores the perceptions of the volunteers as to what extent the program was implementing the program components which shape the structural supports of volunteerism. The target (focus) population studied were the buddy program volunteers in a local AIDS service agency with a core of volunteer services.

### *Data Collection*

This cross-sectional survey was designed to elicit input from active or recent program volunteers. The survey consisted of both forced choice and open-ended questions about the volunteers' perceptions of the program's support structures based on program support components noted in the literature. This provided descriptive information about the actual implementation of the program per the perceptions of the volunteers.

The study instrument used was devised by the authors to measure perceptions and attitudes toward application of generic standards of volunteer support. It was devised for this study based on volunteer standards of national volunteer service organizations. In the absence of standardized, validated scales, the instrument was pretested by administrative professionals and agency based volunteer managers of related community programs. The anonymous, self-administered mailed survey was sent to all active volunteers and all those who had been volunteers within the past three years. The mailing list was part of the agency records. In total, 44 surveys were mailed.

### *Findings*

Twenty-six surveys were returned—a 60% return rate. There was no follow up mailing done. Some of the volunteers were known by the authors to have moved from the area and some were deceased.

Respondents were primarily middle aged (73% were between 36–55 years of age), white (92%) males (88%) who identified themselves as gay or lesbian (85%). Some were currently living with a lover (42%) though many (50%) were single. Many were Catholic (48%). Most were college educated (52%) and many also had graduate/professional degrees (40%). Most lived in the area for more than 5 years (73%).

Half of those responding volunteered for only one person living with AIDS (PWA) and the other half had volunteered for more than one. Most volunteers (61%) had been working with their PWA for over 6 months at the time of the survey. About one third of the volunteers spent about 1–3 hours a week volunteering, about one third spent 4–8 hours a week, and the other third spent more than 8 hours a week with their PWA. Thirty-five percent knew 1–3 persons who had died from AIDS, 39% knew 4–10 persons, and 15% knew more than 10 persons. Many volunteered in other capacities in the community also.

Volunteer activities reported included fairly traditional supportive volunteer activities. Most volunteers provided supportive listening, entertainment, hospital visiting, transportation, shopping and contact with the PWA's family. Some volunteers also helped with cooking, funeral planning, cleaning and personal finances.

Volunteers were asked to describe the amount of personal stress they were experiencing. An "Index of Clinical Stress" (see Hudson, 1982 for related information on scale) was used to measure stress. These standardized scales have a high reliability alpha (greater than .90) and reported face, content and discriminant validity. Twenty-five of the respondents completed the Index of Clinical Stress. The majority (72%) reported minimal stress. Twenty percent reported feelings of moderate stress, and 8% reported feelings of high stress. Volunteers were most likely to report receiving support for their volunteer experience from structured program supports and from their friendship networks.

These findings of stress and its management are remarkable in light of the high stress built into the AIDS volunteer experience. Informal comments on open ended questions indicated possible explanations, such as stress was mediated by supports received from the program, that volunteering connected



people to the AIDS service community for support, and that people find helping others "therapeutic" in addressing their own concerns. It is also likely that this was testimony to the adaptiveness and creativeness of the volunteers. Many have learned to successfully manage stigma in their own lives and this strengthens them in volunteering with AIDS services. This area of questions would benefit from further study.

### *Findings Related to Program Supports*

Traditional program supports for volunteers include planning, recruitment, screening, training, assignment, supervision, evaluation and follow-up (Council, 1982; Jacobson, 1978). The following perceptions and attitudes of volunteers in the AIDS services program indicate that formal supports are perceived as valuable, even by those who largely volunteer for informal reasons.

At the time of the survey, the program was operating from a reactionary and crisis management orientation, with no long range planning system in place. This is characteristic of many newly created community based volunteer agencies. Volunteers reported a perceived need for more formalized planning to address wide ranging needs. Confusion as to who was responsible for the planning process was noted in comments of some volunteers.

The accreditation standards (Council, 1982) recommend that volunteers resemble clients in social demographic characteristics. The program had a strong representation of the gay and lesbian community among its volunteers. The gay male volunteers were slightly greater in numbers than the reported gay male AIDS cases locally. Almost 20% of the volunteers were females which was considerably greater in numbers than female AIDS cases locally. The weakest area of demographic representation was evident with respect to race—30% of reported AIDS cases were among African Americans, and 8% of volunteers were African American.

Race itself may not have a major impact on the volunteer experience. In a study comparing black and white volunteers, Morrow-Howell (1990) found both groups perform similarly, their commitments were similar, and both felt similar levels of

satisfaction. However, race was felt important in the helping dyad. When people were matched by race, they reported feeling more satisfaction and had increased contacts. No similarly known empirical data on how sexual orientation matching impacts the volunteer experience is reported in the literature.

Volunteers felt screening efforts of the program were legitimate and essential. Screening for various issues, such as recent or multiple bereavement, motivations, commitment and how one handles one's own HIV status, were noted. Many volunteers reported strong social justice motivations for volunteering. This was also found among persons volunteering with rape crisis and battered women's programs. Black (1989) found volunteers with strong informal motivations were often feeling less support, less acceptance by paid staff, and their length of commitment was shorter. This seems to suggest that informal and formal reasons for volunteering, which can be examined in the screening process, may well be an area for program supports for informal volunteer motivations. This study's respondents felt supported for their informal motivational commitments by the program's philosophy and its staff.

The volunteers expressed a strong desire for specialized training in such things as substance abuse, bereavement and planning for death. The volunteers reported engaging in a variety of volunteer experiences which they needed specialized training. Additional training was generally reported as a priority need. Further study might help clarify if this is a measure of training needs per se or of feelings of a wider need for support in sensitive and complicated aspects of the volunteer experience.

Volunteers reported feeling assignment to PWAs was important. Such issues as neighborhood proximity, race, sexual orientation and social class were noted as important. Volunteers felt these concerns were addressed programmatically. Volunteers generally were pleased that assignments reflected their personal interests and stated desires. With the changing demographic characteristics of the HIV pandemic, an important program issue will be addressing the diversity of needs presented by persons affected by the pandemic.

The volunteers generally felt supervision provided by the program was available. Volunteer coordinators were generally

available and offered helpful and supportive advice. Most reported limited use of this formal support.

Evaluations of volunteers by the program were felt to be subjective and handled in an uncoordinated manner. Most volunteers had not received any feedback on their experiences. Most desired more feedback and felt it would enhance their volunteer experience.

Several aspects of the volunteer services with PWAS distinguish this service from other volunteer experiences. Assignment is to one client over several months to what is becoming years, includes much uncertainty, and generally ends with a bereavement process within the program studied. No formal follow-up process occurred. Forty-two percent of the respondents surveyed said they were unsure or definitely not going to request reassignment to a new PWA. A distinct trend was seen between volunteers whose PWAs were currently alive and those that had died. Only 1 volunteer in 9 whose client had died was definitely willing to be reassigned another PWA; whereas only 1 volunteer in 11 whose PWA was still alive was definitely unwilling to be reassigned.

This trend raises serious questions about the need for follow-up. It seems to imply that follow-up services are needed by the volunteers. It is unclear when or why this dramatic change in opinions about reassignment occurs. It is unknown why volunteer attrition occurs without adequate follow-up.

Though many volunteered in AIDS services for informal and personal reasons, they reported a need for stronger program supports emanating from a more formalized volunteer program. This study has shown that volunteers have positive attitudes about more formal program structures of support. Further empirical study of which program structures have the most impact on enhancing informal support motivations is indicated.

### *Implications for Social Work Practice*

This study provides descriptive, exploratory data on volunteers in AIDS services organizations. Social work practitioners need to familiarize themselves with methods of supporting volunteers through managing service networks and by providing nurturing program supports. Services by volunteers and

program supports for them is critical as the climate of service provision changes because of the growing numbers of those affected by the HIV pandemic, the changing demographics of those affected by HIV, and the increasing professionalization and formalization of services.

The findings of this study show that further research is needed to determine the nature of the relationships between variables shaping the volunteer experiences and program supports for volunteerism. The findings of this study indicate a strong influence of informal volunteer motivations in volunteers at this AIDS service organization. The literature alludes to differences in program supports, and the findings of the perceptions of volunteers in this study indicate uniqueness in the experiences described. However, further development of program supports need to be explored and impacts evaluated.

As the number of people affected by HIV grows, and as the people affected become less homogenous, traditional AIDS service organizations are being confronted with questions about priorities, historical bases of support, and decisions about their abilities to work within the divergent communities being stricken with AIDS. How do AIDS service organizations, the majority of which grew out of the experiences and resources of the white gay male community, nurture the involvement of members of other communities (particularly people of color and women)?

Several obstacles can hinder this process. Within the organization, often only superficial and stereotypical understanding of the issues of racism, heterosexism, classism and sexism exists; in non-gay communities, the impact of undisguised homophobia and AIDS phobia prevent the effective recruitment and use of volunteers. The social work profession's commitment to struggling with these societal problems and our ability to formulate strategies to confront these issues is needed in the AIDS services arena.

The early response to AIDS services by volunteers built upon gay and lesbian communities' strengths in management of stigma. Volunteerism as a response to an epidemic is not without built in limitations. Efforts to impose this early volunteer model of AIDS services on women and people of color who

are affected by AIDS are unlikely to succeed (Arno, 1991). New models emerging from the strengths of diverse communities experiences in dealing with problems are the key to further successes in the mobilization against AIDS. An important role for professionals in advocating for coordination and planning for services exists (Mancoske and Hunzeker, forthcoming).

The grief and bereavement needs of volunteers are of importance in developing follow-up support services, but they also have other implications for AIDS service professionals. The majority of volunteers in this buddy program were gay men, some of whom were also HIV positive. Although only a small number at the time, some volunteers have gone on to be diagnosed with AIDS. Volunteers and PWAs have described the peculiar devastation they feel on the discovery that "one of us" has become "one of them" (or vice versa). Agency staff can play a key role in helping at this critical service juncture.

How will AIDS service organizations and professionals develop methods of coping with the shifting roles and statuses of volunteers who become clients? If the majority of people who volunteer as buddies have experienced the death of someone they felt close to because of AIDS, how will programs develop screening techniques that recognize this experience as a motivation, and yet discern when individuals have unmet bereavement needs? As the number of people living with AIDS continues to rise, and since members of the lesbian and gay community comprise the majority of volunteers, how will their grief affect their ability to continue serving in these roles?

More information is needed on how gay men and lesbians are coping with what has been likened to a war, or a holocaust (Altman, 1986), and more so, whether volunteering can be fashioned into a healthy coping response. As further money is spent on service programs, the seminal work and experiences of volunteerism in the response to AIDS is essential. In the face of the ever worsening pandemic, building on the strengths of the informal volunteer community response to AIDS will strengthen the mobilization against AIDS.

This study examined an AIDS service organization and its volunteers. It looked at the formal and informal characteristics of the volunteer experience and the program support structure

for volunteerism. With the changing HIV pandemic, service organizations are confronted with changes in their programs. Services which build on the strengths of the volunteer network will serve to empower those affected by AIDS, which are us all.

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# The Welfare Reservation: A Worst Case Scenario For A Federal Role In Homeless Assistance

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*The purpose of the little-known Stewart B. McKinney Homeless Assistance Act of 1987 is stated as "... States, units of local government, and private voluntary organizations have been unable to meet the basic human needs of all the homeless and, in the absence of greater Federal Assistance, will be unable to protect the lives and safety of all the homeless in need of assistance: and the Federal Government has a clear responsibility and an existing capacity to fulfill a more effective and responsible role to meet the basic human needs and to engender respect for the human dignity of the homeless (U.S. Congress, 1987)"*

*Recent developments and policies could imply an increased use of surplus and underutilized federal facilities for programs for the homeless.*

In a context of New Federalism proposals and a retreat from earlier anti-poverty efforts, the 1980's has been a decade in which poverty became significantly more pronounced in American society. In its most extreme and manifest form this has meant that at least hundreds of thousands of people have literally been dumped into the streets without a roof over their heads. Except for some limited homelessness during the Great Depression, the homelessness that emerged in the 1980's is unprecedented. What further makes the current homelessness extraordinary by comparison to that earlier period, is not only its greater scope and numbers, but also the facts that it has occurred in a period of economic growth and that the society as a whole has done so little about it.

When a problem looms in such extreme proportions, and its disregard is so extreme, the conceivable solutions are likely

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to be extreme as well. This paper explores what is admittedly an extreme proposal. Perhaps it can best be thought of as a worst case scenario. In essence, it has been my anticipation for some time that abandoned military bases in rural areas may be transformed into welfare reservations to which poor people would be relocated from urban centers (Conforti, 1972, 1977, 1982a, 1982b, 1983).

In November of 1983 the Federal Task Force on Food and Shelter for the Homeless came into existence. The task force, created by Department of Health and Human Services Secretary Margaret Heckler at the direction of President Ronald Reagan, marked the initiation of the federal government's current endeavor to assist the homeless (Secretary of Health and Human Services, 1984).

It is the purpose of this paper to examine whether the anticipated possibility of the welfare reservation fits with the course of events since then, or if events and developments since then have been such as to undermine, or simply repudiate, such a possibility. This will be done primarily by examining federal programs and policies developed over this period to assist the homeless, that category of welfare-dependent poor people who would be the most likely to be moved to welfare reservations.

### *Precursors of a Federal Program*

The federal government's role in assisting the homeless can be divided into several phases. The first could be characterized simply as acknowledgement of a problem. Just before leaving office in 1980 President Jimmy Carter commissioned a series of reports that included *Urban America in the Eighties* (President's Commission for a National Agenda for the Eighties, 1980). In this report recognition was given to the changes occurring in many American cities, generating a very poor, highly dependent, increasingly homeless population, which the report referred to as the underclass, a term which gained much currency over the past decade (Auletta, 1982; Glasgow, 1981; Kornblum, 1984; Lemann, 1986; Wilson, 1987, 1989). Also in 1980 another form of recognition was given to homelessness by virtue of a count of the homeless being included in the decennial census (Burke, 1984).

In 1982 *The President's National Urban Policy Report* (U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, 1982) set a tone for the federal approach to dealing with poverty during President Reagan's two-term administration. The Reagan policy orientation, which became known as the New Federalism, had three components: cuts in social welfare programs, consolidation of categorical programs into block grants to be administered by state governments and an eventual devolution of responsibility for social welfare programs from the federal to local levels of government.

In keeping with such a thrust, Congress allocated funds in 1983 for food distribution and emergency shelters. The funds were initially allocated to the Federal Emergency Management Agency, which was in turn directed by Congress to allocate the funds to local levels of government and private voluntary organizations through a national board. The national board was to be comprised of the Federal Emergency Management Agency, together with The United Way of America, the Salvation Army, the Council of Churches, the National Conference of Catholic Charities, the Council of Jewish Federations, Inc., and the American Red Cross (Federal Emergency Management Agency, 1983). This body was allocated approximately \$100,000,000.00 to distribute to local programs for the homeless over a period of two years.

#### *The Federal Task Force*

When the Federal Task Force on Food and Shelter for the Homeless was established in 1983 it was viewed as an interagency unit led by the Department of Health and Human Services, including the Departments of Agriculture, Defense, Energy, Interior, Labor, Housing and Urban Development, and Transportation, together with the General Services Administration, the Federal Emergency Management Agency, ACTION, the Census Bureau, the Veterans Administration and the Postal Service. This was designed primarily as a coordinating effort, rather than an effort to focus new resources on homelessness. This is reflected in the assumptions on which the task force was based:

1. homelessness is essentially a local problem;
2. new federal programs for the homeless are not the answer;
3. knowledge of strategies used in many communities to help the homeless needs to be transferred to other communities (Secretary of Health and Human Services, 1984, p.6).

Its main thrust was to facilitate the distribution of surplus food from military commissaries, provide transportation to food banks by the National Guard, turn HUD-held houses over to local voluntary organizations to be used as shelters and to help arrange for local groups to get other facilities that might be turned into shelters such as a federally owned warehouse that the General Services Administration renovated. With apparently no new resources available to it, the task force undertook to enhance the likelihood that already available resources reached the local voluntary organizations (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 1984; Federal Task Force on the Homeless, 1985).

#### *Other Initiatives*

While the task force served as a liaison between the several federal agencies and local organizations, some federal agencies undertook efforts of their own. The Department of Housing and Urban Development conducted research to measure the extent of homelessness (U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, 1984a). This effort largely served to deflate the scope of homelessness by its embracing the lowest estimates of how many people were homeless in the United States (Hopper, 1984).

The Department of Defense took an ostensibly magnanimous position in offering its facilities. In an internal memorandum to the secretaries of the military forces the Secretary of Defense (1984) stated "The Department has permanent authorization to provide shelter and incidental services (10 USC 2546). We have all the authority we need to be good partners with local elected officials and religious and charitable organizations. There is sufficient money in the Department appropriation for us to absorb the expenses we are allowed to incur even in the

absence of a specific appropriation for the purpose of helping provide shelter for the homeless." In addition to their own funds, Congress allocated the Pentagon \$8,000,000.00 in 1984 to further facilitate its making Department of Defense facilities available to shelter the homeless. But of the \$8,000,000.00, the Department of Defense was only able to spend \$900,000.00, reflecting the difficulty it encountered in finding local requests for the facilities and services it offered (Department of Defense summary Report, 1984; *Time*, 1984).

In his 1986 State of the Union Address, President Ronald Reagan undertook to focus attention on poverty and welfare by calling for "...an evaluation of programs and a strategy for immediate action to meet the financial, educational, social, and safety concerns of poor families." The charge was directed to the White House Domestic Policy Council, which in turn established the Low-Income Opportunity Working Group. This large group thus presumably undertook to conduct *the* major analysis of poverty to the end of emphatically putting forth strategies that would be both new and bold.

In a certain sense it was a major project, producing a multi-volume report of more than a thousand pages. It even had a dramatic title: *UP FROM DEPENDENCY: A New National Public Assistance Strategy* (Domestic Policy Council Low Income Opportunity Working Group, 1986; 1987; 1988). The results of all this effort, however, were both surprising and redundant. Surprising because in over a thousand pages homelessness was not taken into account as a component of poverty or as a welfare problem that needed to be addressed. This may, in part at least, simply reflect the fact that the homeless are usually excluded from welfare programs (Freeman and Hall, 1987; Redburn and Buss, 1987). But it also implies an acceptance of such exclusion.

It was redundant in that it put forth strategies that were neither new nor bold. In what was titled "A New National Public Assistance Strategy," it was suggested that "It is time both to learn from, and to repair, the mistakes of our centralized system with a new national public assistance strategy that stresses grass-roots participation, state and local initiative, and ideas for reducing dependency." This was followed by several

specific recommendations stressing the need to shift as much responsibility as possible from the federal government to the local governments, the community, the family and the individual. This was still another reiteration of the New Federalism, reflecting the ideological perspective of such early influences on the Reagan administration as Stuart A. Butler (1985) and Emanuel S. Savas (1982), which continued through the entire decade (U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, 1982; 1984b; 1986; 1988a).

### *The McKinney Act*

While the Reagan Administration maintained a consistent stance of federal retreat from social welfare responsibility, the two houses of Congress debated a new program to assist the homeless, eventuating in the Stewart B. McKinney Homeless Assistance Act in July of 1987. In its initial statement of purpose in the Act the Congress notes "due to the record increase in homelessness, states, units of local government, and private voluntary organizations have been unable to meet the basic human needs of all the homeless and, in the absence of greater Federal assistance, will be unable to protect the lives and safety of all the homeless in need of assistance; and the Federal Government has a clear responsibility and an existing capacity to fulfill a more effective and responsible role to meet the basic human needs and to engender respect for the human dignity of the homeless (U.S. Congress, 1987)."

The act incorporated the Federal Task Force on Food and Shelter as the Interagency Council on the Homeless, maintained many of the efforts already being pursued by the Department of Housing and Urban Development and the Department of Health and Human Services. But it also introduced new programs, particularly shelter programs directed through HUD. In view of the comprehensive thrust of the act and the infusion of more than a billion dollars of new funds (almost \$2 billion by the end of 1990), the McKinney Act would seem to represent at least a bolder and somewhat newer thrust.

To some degree it is too soon to judge the impact of the McKinney Act (U.S. General Accounting Office, 1987). But because the McKinney Act requires an annual report by the

Interagency Council on the Homeless, it is possible to examine whether or not this new initiative has changed the perspective of the federal government's approach to poverty and welfare. In its first annual report *A Nation Concerned*, the Interagency Council on the Homeless (1989) emphasizes such terms as "the American tradition of localism and philanthropy," "privatism and localism," "nonprofit and private sectors" and "local nonprofit organizations." A detailed reading of the report makes it quite clear that there is nothing new in the approach. The emphasis throughout is that all the components of homelessness in all their configurations should be dealt with at the local level. In keeping with the devolution thrust of the New Federalism, the Council recommends that "over time, the McKinney Act programs and others that deal directly with homelessness should be integrated into existing programs (Interagency Council on the Homeless, 1989 1-13)."

#### *Welfare Reservations?*

To return to the question posed at the beginning of this paper, whether events have developed in such a manner as to support or challenge the anticipation of the welfare reservation, the answer is both yes and no. It is most emphatically no in terms of the policies and programs of the federal government over the past decade. There has been a consistent effort to define all welfare needs as essentially local matters, best left to private philanthropy if at all possible, with the federal role limited strictly to financing, as minimally as possible.

It should also be noted that this is not just the residue of the Reagan years, at least not thus far. The Bush Administration, following a study by the President's Domestic Policy Council, announced early that it would undertake no new initiatives to combat poverty (New York Times, 1990a).

On the other hand, it is precisely the maintenance of this approach, and the fact that it does not adequately address the problem, that is one basis for still anticipating the welfare reservation. While the federal government has sought to downplay the scope of homelessness, most observers seem to agree that there has been considerable growth of an increasingly manifest population of homeless people (Erikson and Wilhelm, 1986;

Hope and Young, 1986; New York Times, 1989a; The United States Conferences of Mayors, 1989).

Closely related as a second basis is the emerging consensus that local governments and private charities do not have the resources needed to cope with the problem (Bingham, Green and White, 1989; The United States Conference of Mayors, 1989). A simple example of this is available in terms of the particularly intractable problem of the mentally ill homeless. In 1985 the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation joined with HUD to set up a five year program providing funds to deal with the homeless mentally ill in large urban centers (Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, 1985). But five years later the Interagency Council established its own "Task Force on Severe Mental Illness and Homelessness" to figure out how to deal with the problem (Interagency Council on the Homeless, 1990).

Nor is the federal assistance being provided through the McKinney Act to local governments and private charities always sufficiently accessible. In providing "Supplemental Assistance for Facilities to Assist the Homeless," a program administered by HUD with McKinney Act funds, a local program must make a ten year commitment to serving the homeless in order to qualify for funds (U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, 1988b). Similarly, to qualify for the Emergency Shelter Grant Program, local governments must annually submit a detailed "Comprehensive Homeless Assistance Plan," covering all aspects of all efforts to serve the homeless in their jurisdictions, and additionally they must match the grant with an equal amount of money acquired elsewhere (U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, 1989).

A third basis is that there is a widespread disaffection on the part of the general public with the homeless, or at least that segment of the homeless population they encounter in public places (Painton, 1990). The homeless are feared as dangerous, are seen as a nuisance (such as beggars) and in general most people seem to want them out of sight and cared for by someone else. And they are being pushed out of many public spaces, though only to immediately move on to other public spaces. There is still another basis for anticipating the possibility of the welfare reservation. That is the simple fact that all the resources necessary

to such an integrated approach to homelessness are available. It was noted earlier that as far back as 1983 the Department of Defense was authorized by Congress to use its resources to serve the homeless. That it had few requests for military installations to serve as shelters, was mainly a reflection of the insistence that homelessness was a local problem. The few requests it did have came from urban areas where there were military facilities that could be used on a local basis, such as Philadelphia, Albuquerque, Corpus Christi, Alameda County near San Francisco and Montgomery County near Washington, D.C. (Department of Defense Summary Report, 1984; Time, 1984).

If the federal government was willing to define shelters and related facilities on a federal or regional basis (that crossed local and state boundaries), it could provide far more assistance to the homeless than it has thus far. The sites for such facilities would be military bases that have been defined as obsolete, surplus or underutilized. There are quite a number of them in the north, reflecting in part the Pentagon's preference for bases in warmer climates. These bases have long been kept active only in response to pressure from local groups concerned with the economic impact their closing threatened. But in December of 1988 a federal commission recommended the closing of over 80 bases throughout the United States (New York Times, 1988; 1989b). This closing of bases has been further accentuated by the thaw in tensions between the United States and the Soviet Union, reflected in the recent dismantling of the huge base in Fort Hood Texas (New York Times, 1990b).

The alternative use of such sites as welfare reservations could serve to meet the needs of both the military and the local economy. The threat of closing an active base would probably also diminish local resistance to establishment of a welfare reservation, much as rural areas welcome prisons as economic assets.

The federal government would probably retain ownership and ultimate jurisdiction over such sites, but not necessarily administrative responsibility. In keeping with the sentiment of emphasizing private philanthropy, private voluntary organizations could administer such facilities.

The idea of removing very poor homeless people from urban centers and relocating them to isolated military bases is of



course taken up with great hesitation. The prospect was always thought of as a worst case scenario and the term reservation was purposely chosen to draw a parallel with Indian reservations and the travail they have represented. But it should be remembered that the Indian reservations were at the time of their establishment the alternative to complete genocide. Similarly, there is a considerable consensus that a majority of homeless people are in need of various kinds of medical, psychiatric, nutritional and other services, in addition to shelter. That they have generally not received those services and are still out on the streets, clearly indicates that current efforts and resources are not sufficient.

Those who have studied welfare have emphasized that changes in the way welfare services are organized and delivered commonly derive from the limitations of the way in which they were previously organized and delivered (Katz, 1986). This lends itself to a repetitive cycle. such a cycle has been identified by David J. Rothman (1971) in terms of the distinction between "indoor" and "outdoor" relief. In his study of the development of institutional facilities in the 19th Century, he stressed that during the colonial period institutional facilities were almost nonexistent in the United States. Except in rare (extreme) cases, the poor, sick or mentally ill were provided "outdoor" relief. They were cared for at home or at least in the local community.

After 1820 institutional facilities were developed to address the needs of those who could not function normally in the community. According to Rothman (1971), the perspective that guided their development had two components: that adequate care could not be provided through outdoor arrangements and that the very problems to be addressed were caused and aggravated by negative environmental influences which would have to be counterbalanced and neutralized through indoor institutional arrangements.

After the 19th Century institutions became well established, the expectations on which they flowered withered away. It became ever clearer that rather than rehabilitate, the institutions would serve as holding tanks for undesirables (Rothman, 1971: chs. 10-11). That realization inspired efforts at reform that set the pendulum swinging in the opposite direction, away from

indoor relief and toward outdoor relief. Rothman (1980) identifies this movement in the early twentieth century development of parole and probation. Lerman (1982) notes further movement in this direction during the depression when economic conditions were so obvious a societal cause of poverty that attribution to the individual was undermined and outdoor relief (through various programs of income maintenance) became more acceptable. The New Deal programs served as a major thrust toward the expansion of outdoor relief, as did the Economic opportunity Act of 1964. The outdoor thrust was most obvious in the deinstitutionalization of the mentally ill that began in the late 1950's and continued into the 1980's (Curtis, 1986; Lerman, 1982, 1985).

Insofar as deinstitutionalization, the contraction of public housing programs and the elimination of anti-poverty programs (Katz, 1989, Wolch and Gabriel, 1985) have combined with other factors in such a manner as to make outdoor relief unworkable, the swing back to indoor relief seems inevitable. Indeed these terms have come to have particularly literal significance over the past decade.

What needs to be addressed in a consideration of the welfare reservation is the balance between the unmet needs it could meet and the dangers it poses. For the most part this balance revolves about the needs of the homeless, how they have or have not been met up to now and how they might best be met in the future. The greatest single need is, by definition, shelter. But their needs go well beyond shelter. The Ohio Department of Mental Health in 1985 suggested that there were three groups of homeless people (about 80% of the homeless) whose needs went beyond that of temporary shelter (Redburn and Buss, 1986). They included those who had temporary crises such as family dissolution or job loss; those who needed developmental assistance, such as drug rehabilitation or job training; and those in need of permanent custodial care, such as those with significant physical or mental impairments. The latter two groups comprised almost 60% of the homeless population addressed (Redburn and Buss, 1986: ch. 6). A more recent survey by the Urban Institute identified similar proportions of homeless people with needs beyond shelter (Burt and Cohen, 1989). Others

have similarly noted the needs of the homeless beyond shelter (Daly, 1990; Hope and Young, 1986).

It is specifically those in need of developmental assistance or custodial care for whom the welfare reservation is conceivably an accommodating arrangement, particularly when such needs are not otherwise being addressed. It is difficult to imagine how homeless individuals and families in need of various developmental or custodial services would not benefit from the concentrated coordination of such services when they are otherwise not available. It is also difficult to locate very many instances in which local governments and the non-profit voluntary organizations can or do provide so comprehensive an array of services.

At the same time that these facilities and services are desperately needed, their delivery through welfare reservations is fraught with dangers. The most general danger is that once out of sight, the homeless would be equally out of mind. Given the reluctance with which the needs of the homeless have been met, in combination with the many efforts to displace them, their removal from urban centers would in itself be viewed as the solution to the problem by many people. A similarly overarching danger is that the homeless, having been displaced from the society's mainstream institutions, might never be welcomed back. There are also a variety of particular dangers parallel to those of the Indian reservations. One is the danger facing children when their isolation in the rural areas of an urban society compound a variety of other disadvantages. There are similarly the dangers of neglect and abuse in all specific areas of need.

On balance, the welfare reservation does not represent the solution to homelessness. Where homeless people have very specific and limited needs such as the need for long term shelter, food or income assistance, such needs probably can and certainly should be met locally. The closer to the community such people stay, the easier re-integration into the community should be.

But in those instances where the needs are much greater and not likely to be met at the local level, the welfare reservation would provide a needed vehicle through which the federal government could bring together those resources that the McKinney Act promised. This does however require a major

change in federal policy. The federal government would have to acknowledge a national responsibility for assisting the homeless that superceded local jurisdictions of responsibility and a corresponding obligation to provide direct assistance. Fort Dix, one of the largest military bases being closed, could well serve the homeless of New Jersey, where it is located. But to preclude serving the homeless of Philadelphia and New York City from such a facility would contradict the promise, commitment and value of the McKinney Act.

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## Book Reviews

Vic George and Irving Howards. *Poverty Amidst Affluence: Britain and the United States*. Aldershot, England: Edward Elgar Publishers, 1991. \$15.95 papercover. (Obtainable from Ashgate Publishing, Old Post Road, Brookfield, VT 05036).

William W. Goldsmith and Edward J. Blakely. *Separate Societies: Poverty and Inequality in American Cities*. Philadelphia, Temple University Press, 1992. \$49.95 hardcover, \$19.95 papercover.

Lawrence M. Mead. *The New Politics of Poverty: The Non-working Poor in America*. New York: Basic Books, 1992. \$23.00 hardcover.

The problem of poverty is once again receiving public attention. Images of riot-torn urban ghettos, homeless people, unemployed youth, the lack of medical care for poor children, dilapidated schools, and the prevalence of drugs and crime in poor neighborhoods pervade the news channels, reminding suburban middle-class America that a substantial proportion of the nation's population is living in conditions of appalling deprivation.

Although many believe that something must be done, there is disagreement about which policy options should be adopted. Many conservatives continue to believe in the Reaganite maxim that the curtailment of state intervention in economic and social affairs and the liberation of free market forces will, of itself, generate high rates of economic growth and bring prosperity for all. Liberals counter that a decade of radical right economic and social policies have in fact exacerbated the problem and that the culture of individualistic acquisitiveness which was so assiduously cultivated by the right has caused social devastation on a massive scale. While many liberals are critical of conventional anti-poverty programs, they retain a firm belief in the virtues of the welfare state. Others have sought to replace conventional poverty programs such as AFDC with new policy proposals. Currently, debates about the virtues of alternative approaches, ranging from asset based individual development ac-



counts to workfare and enterprise zones continue apace. These approaches offer very different perspectives on the poverty problem as well as policy prescriptions for its alleviation.

The three books reviewed here also embrace different policy approaches for the amelioration of poverty. These reflect the different academic backgrounds of their authors as well as their different ideological preferences.

George and Howards approach the problem from a conventional social administration perspective, emphasizing the role of income maintenance programs in addressing poverty. Noting that the incidence of poverty is highest among certain sections of the population such as the elderly, single women with children and other deprived groups, they discuss the merits of four programs which seek to enhance the welfare of low income families through income guarantees and transfers. These programs include the 'benefits as of right approach', 'negative income tax', the 'basic income scheme' and the 'start even' scheme. The discussion of these approaches is informative, providing a useful guide to recent thinking about the role of income programs in poverty alleviation. The book also contains a useful comparative account of the incidence of poverty in Britain and the United States, and of different theoretical approaches to causation.

As urban and regional planners, it is to be expected that Goldsmith and Blakely will approach the problem of poverty from a spatial perspective. However, despite their focus on urban conditions and particularly on poverty in the inner-cities, this is a wide ranging book which will appeal not only to planners and human geographers but to all concerned with the study of poverty. The book begins with a detailed examination of the incidence and distribution of poverty, appropriately linking an analysis of poverty to broader questions of social and economic inequality, employment, trade and economic development. Its broad focus, meticulous use of factual information and lively critical style makes for rewarding reading. The final chapter offers an excellent account of the role of national urban policies in poverty alleviation. These policies seek to mobilize large scale resources to restore the cities so that they can once again participate fully in the nation's prosperity.

Lawrence Mead's work has attracted widespread attention for its audacious view that poverty is the consequence of individual moral and personal inadequacy, and that the solution to the poverty problem lies in reforming the character of poor people. These views are forcefully re-stated in his new book which deals with the 'non-working poor'—those who are able to work, and for whom jobs are available but who choose not to work either out of defeatism or idleness.

Mead claims that the problem of poverty in America is overwhelmingly a problem of non-work. The majority of poor people do not work and they outnumber the working poor by a significant margin. The costs of non-work are considerable. In addition, many of the non-working poor subsist on government welfare programs contributing to the decline of the nation's economic prosperity and social well-being. Mead emphatically rejects the idea that poverty is a function of declining employment opportunities, de-industrialization and falling wages. Low pay does exist, particularly in the service sector, but many people in low paying jobs are not poor. In addition, the service sector has many highly paid executives and opportunities for advancement are good. The argument that there are many obstructive barriers to employment has also, he contends, been overstated. There plenty of jobs. The problem is that the non-working poor choose not to work or believe that they cannot work. The solution to poverty, he insists, lies in policies that require the poor to work. Although Mead predicts that policies of this kind will be branded as authoritarian, he describes them as 'authoritative' since they give direction, and help those who will not help themselves.

Mead's policy prescriptions are distilled from a wider set of arguments. He contends that social policy in the United States has traditionally been associated with progressive politics which have sought to apply the resources of the state to enhance opportunities for social and economic advancement. With the popularization of the view that racism, de-industrialization and similar problems have effectively obstructed opportunities, progressive social policies have been replaced with dependency policies. These policies have effectively trapped the poor in

conditions of perpetual deprivation, and need to be replaced with radical alternatives which reinstate the progressive ethos. A return to progressivism offers the only means of escape from the morass of dependency and deprivation.

Although Mead's conceptual framework seeks to package a simplistic analysis of the nature and causes of poverty within a sophisticated theoretical analysis, his approach can readily be reduced to a set of crude postulates which have their roots in popular puritan attitudes and in the harsh heritage of the poor laws. For Mead and his supporters, the Elizabethan injunction to 'set the poor to work' offers a quick and easy remedy.

It may be inconceivable that social policy will return to the heyday of the poor laws, but the appeal of Mead's ideas should not be underestimated. His previous fulminations against the poor have been well received in political circles, and among those constituencies that advocate the adoption of coercive policy prescriptions as a solution to a variety of social problems. In this austere climate, one can only speculate about the future of those who now struggle to survive in conditions of deprivation and despair.

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Mickey Kaus, *The End of Equality*. New York: Basic Books, 1992. \$25 hardcover.

From 1981 to 1986 I lived on the west side of Baltimore. Half of the houses were boarded up; my neighbors were poor; the great majority were black; by far, the largest licit source of income was welfare. Callender Street was grim; violence was random; life was short. My neighborhood was what journalists, then sociologists, would come to call "underclass." In the Summer of 1992, I returned for two months, and the neighborhood had noticeably deteriorated—if that could have seemed possible.

What happened? In *The End of Ideology*, Mickey Kaus contends that "Money Liberalism" has destroyed the character and institution-building capacity of poor neighborhoods. By relying

almost solely on a cash-payments strategy to help the poor, liberals have inadvertently—and tragically—left many of the poor mired in the underclass. In place of income redistribution, Kaus argues for “Civic Liberalism,” social policies that promote mixing of the disparate classes of American culture. Instead of cashing the poor out of poverty through increased welfare payments, Kaus suggests limiting AFDC to a one-time, two year grant, at the end of which Mom would be offered a public service job. At this point Kaus would give those on welfare a simple choice: accept a public service job that would lift her family out of poverty—or get nothing.

The consequences of this would include more discretion on the part of poor women in becoming pregnant, enhanced status of welfare as perceived by taxpayers, and more constructive behaviors on the part of those dependant on public assistance. To his credit, Kaus understands that for his “work ethic state” to be credible, those who are poor and work must be advantaged more for their efforts, than those remaining on welfare. Hence, he is eager to supplement the wages and benefits of poor workers. Once expanding the Earned Income Tax Credit and day care for low-income workers is included, once job-training for welfare recipients is factored in,, once a compulsory national service is paid for, Kaus costs his Civic Liberal agenda at between \$43 and \$59 billion/year above existing appropriations.

Welfare state advocates will find Kaus’s treatment marginal at best, dystonic at worst. Poverty programs have lost significant value due to inflation; the poor are poorer; minority kids have borne the brunt of Reaganomics. Urban neighborhoods, in particular, have decayed. The solution to such egregious social injustice, goes the liberal litany, is more money for the poor. “Wrong!” counters Kaus, far better to encourage the poor to work their way out of poverty. Disconcerting though this may be, Kaus is right—and in ways even he may not appreciate.

Beneath the surface of his argument, Kaus has provided an analysis welfare advocates could put to good use. Fundamentally, Kaus analyzes the *social economy* of American culture, and he clearly favors the social. The primary error in liberal welfare state theory, he argues, has been in assuming that the economy is paramount—ipso facto, optimal solutions

to poverty are by way of cash payments. While recognizing that the cash payment strategy applies well for workers, it fails when applied to the non-working poor. For them, Kaus prefers social engineering.

What, it may fairly be asked, is more in the province of sociology and social welfare than social engineering? Yet, in adhering to Money Liberalism, students of social phenomena have largely conceded the welfare reform debate to economists. In proposing Civic Liberalism, Kaus in affect has invited social scientists back into the debate about poverty.

Accepting Kaus's invitation may take some practice given its atrophy among welfare advocates. Certainly it warrants imagination, considering the perverse way in which conservatives have manipulated "reciprocity" to punitive ends. Still, there is fertile ground to be tilled here. Some examples? Summer camperships for poor kids who do well in school, job guarantees for low-income high school grads, mandatory community service for human service professionals as a condition of licensure. . . The list goes on.

Thus, Kaus not only writes a provocative books about the relationship between work and welfare, but he also offers welfare professionals something for which they are particularly well-suited: the opportunity to get back into the welfare debate—smack dab in the middle of it.

Are welfare advocates up to it? I hope so—and I suspect my neighbors in west Baltimore do, too.

David Stoesz  
San Diego State University

Joel F. Handler and Yeheskel Hasenfeld. *The Moral Construction of Poverty: Welfare Reform in America*. Newbury Park: Sage Publications, 1991. \$48.00 hardcover; \$21.95 papercover.

Before discussing what *The Moral Construction of Poverty* is, it is important to look at what it's not. For one, it's not a light book written in a popular vein. This book is a complex and well-researched treatise on the causes, effects, and the social engineering designed to rectify poverty.

*The Moral Construction of Poverty* is divided into six chapters. In the first chapter, the authors lay out their theoretical framework for interpreting the activities and programs of the American welfare state. Handler and Hasenfeld argue that welfare policy can be understood as a composition of two prime ingredients—symbols and regulations. They conclude that while the concept of welfare is ambiguous (a function of the myth and ceremony that make up its symbolic aspects), its programmatic implementation is mediated by economic and political units of administration that try to make sense out of the policies. Chapters 2, and 3 are basically historical chapters. They trace how the themes of this book—industrial discipline, family policy, and race and ethnicity—have formed the ideological foundation of the American welfare state. Chapters 4, 5, and 6 discuss welfare and work. In particular, they examine the changes in the demographic and legal aspects of AFDC and the current emphasis on work participation as a prerequisite for benefits. Chapter 6 examines the 1981 Omnibus Budget Reconciliation Act of the Reagan Administration, and various works demonstration projects. In the last chapter the authors present their views about current efforts in welfare reform.

The theme of this book centers around two major arguments. First, social welfare policy cannot be fully understood without recognizing that it is basically a set of symbols that differentiates the deserving from the undeserving poor. According to Handler and Hasenfeld, this differentiation is important in terms of upholding such dominant values such as the work ethic, family, gender, race, and ethnic relations. In that sense, welfare policy is also targeted at the nonpoor since it conveys important messages about what is acceptable social behavior. Because of the ambiguousness of these symbols, welfare policy is fraught with contradictions and the administration of social programs is only loosely connected to welfare policy. Since greater emphasis is placed on the symbolic rather than the substantive consequences of welfare policy, its implementation often focuses on affirming distinctions between the worthy and unworthy poor. Handler and Hasenfeld refer to these features as “myths” and “ceremonies” because their main function is to confirm cultural norms about the poor. Handler and Hasenfeld’s second

major argument is that federalism is used to control social deviants (the undeserving poor) and to manage the conflicts generated by this control. The authors argue that occasionally the disjointedness between the symbols and the administration of welfare policy become important enough to threaten the legitimacy of the symbols themselves, a situation that can lead to welfare reform.

Despite its complexity, *The Moral Construction of Poverty* is well-written and interesting. Moreover, Handler and Hasenfeld should be commended for shaping a broad topic into a coherent and readable tract. The depth of the research and the thought that went into this book is obvious. Moreover, it is refreshing to read a scholarly and sophisticated treatise on social policy that also reflects commitment and passion on the part of its authors.

Apart from its strengths, the book also contains certain weaknesses. For one, *The Moral Construction of Poverty: Welfare Reform in America* is a somewhat misleading title. Although the book deals with welfare reform, it leans more toward the area of workfare. While this emphasis gives a clear focus to the book, it also unbalances it. Although workfare has been an important welfare strategy through several presidential administrations, other components of welfare reform are equally important, including health care, housing, etc. These welfare programs are unfortunately given short shrift as the authors focus on the inadequacies of forced workfare as the primary mainstay of welfare reform.

A second major problem is the argument about the centrality of the work ethic. While this ethic clearly retains importance for large numbers of people, it is being rapidly replaced by an emphasis on consumption over production. In that sense, the 19th century Protestant ethic of hard work and savings has been replaced by an emphasis on consumption, especially of the conspicuous kind. Handler and Hasenfeld unfortunately fail to address the implications of this changing work ethic for workfare programs.

Despite these weaknesses, *The Moral Construction of Poverty* is a sound piece of scholarship and a major contribution to the field of social welfare policy. Apart from its usefulness as a supplementary textbook for graduate courses in social policy,

it is also a valuable addition to any social work or social science library.

Howard Jacob Karger  
Louisiana State University

Jones, Jacqueline. *The Dispossessed: American Underclasses from the Civil War to the Present*. New York: Basic Books, 1992. \$25.00 hardcover.

It is not an easy task to tell the story of the poor and restore it to a central place in U.S. history. Jacqueline Jones has done it after seven years of research on how people become marginalized. In the first part she deals with the black and white labor conditions during the Civil War and Reconstruction. The conditions imposed by the white landowners on black slaves not only through Black Codes (vagrancy laws, passes, fines) but also through labor contracts effectually enslaved them back to their masters. The ruinous fines imposed for breaking a "contract" by absence from work would be as high as \$1.00 a day when wage was about 52 cents a day. Subsequent violations would increase fines and deprive them their share of the crops. White field workers had to sign similar contracts.

Legislation throughout the Black Belt restricting both white and black laborers' access to forests, streams, guns and hunting dogs prevented them from achieving food self-sufficiency. These actions combined to assure low wages, chronic unemployment, and wretched housing for the poor of both races.

The second part deals with the emergence of the rural working class in the South from 1870 to 1990. Domination of the emerging proletariat was achieved through an ideological definition of work. Only time-oriented and supervised hourly wage work was defined as *work*. Foraging, fishing, and hunting was condemned as non-productive although these activities rescued many poor families from starvation. Mobility to seek better opportunities was interpreted as a morally lacking, self-defeating behavior: "irresponsible," "restless disposition," and "aimlessness". Use of convict labor in the South further worsened the condition of the working classes by lowering wages



and increasing unemployment while violating the human rights of the convicts who were largely black.

The collapse of the cotton share-cropping system in the 1930s due to farm mechanization, federally funded crop reduction, and declining prices transformed a million croppers to agricultural migrants—"the army of the dispossessed". These migrants had no political voice and not even permanent addresses to claim Social Security benefits. The landed elites tried to block Work Progress Administration jobs in the 1930s to ensure a supply of cheap labor.

Jones describes the plight of Southern migrants of both races in the North and Midwest between 1910 and 1960, when 9 million people left the South. In the northern cities, blacks faced institutionalized racism and discrimination. White flight from inner cities led to the ghettoization of places where blacks lived thus promoting stereotype of a black underclass.

Throughout American history, groups of black and white workers had found themselves side by side—working together in a seventeenth century Virginia tobacco field, or later as cotton choppers, phosphate miners, or bean pickers; or applying for entry level jobs at wartime defense plants. . . . The preoccupation of middleclass white America with the pathology of the black ghetto only served to hide the plight of people who knew all too well that whiteness was never an absolute, or final, advantage. (p. 265)

Evidence from 1990 census data confirm that poverty was not solely black, Northern, or urban. Poor whites outnumber poor blacks by a ratio of over 2:1 (21 million to 9 million); black people constitute a minority of (39%) of AFDC recipients; a majority of the poor live outside the inner city in rural areas, small towns, and suburbs. Texas, South Dakota, and Missouri together account for the half of the 150 worst hunger counties.

Jones successfully demolishes the popular media and liberal myths of poverty and the poor, namely, 1) that poverty is primarily a black, "underclass" urban-ghetto phenomenon while the white people are middle class; 2) that the poor are lazy, wandering, and leisurely; and 3) they adopt a culture of poverty, matriarchy and family disorganization. She also makes the point that ideologically-hegemonic definition of work as waged work

has been applied not only to the women's work at home but also to non-waged work such as foraging.

In addition to overt class exploitation, Jones cites effects of the market, national economies, technological progress and business efficiency as causes of marginalization. However, I would observe that it is difficult to separate these from class exploitation itself. The de-skilling of jobs by mechanization, throughout the Industrial Revolution and continuing in the 1990s with computerization and robotization, has led to substantial loss of control over the production process by the working classes and alienated the working class from work itself.

Jones argues that there is a "deep malaise" affecting the national will to eradicate poverty. But perhaps she overlooks the deeper question of whether capitalist states ever act in the interest of the working classes and the poor. In the absence of strong working-class movements or parties, they rarely do. Welfare, and perhaps inner city enterprise zones, as Piven and Cloward have argued, essentially enable the privileged to regulate the poor.

The book is well written; in addition, it is well documented through an extensive archival records, oral histories, research reports and newspapers. If you are looking for a historical-materialist perspective to understand the poor and poverty in the U.S., this is your best source.

Henry J. D'Souza  
University of Nebraska at Omaha

Beverly Stadum, *Poor Women and Their Families: Hard Working Charity Cases* Albany, New York: State University of New York Press, 1992. \$49.50 hardcover, \$16.95 papercover.

In this historical analysis, Beverly Stadum utilizes case records from the Minneapolis Associated Charities society to examine the lives of poor women and their families from 1900 to 1930. In the recent tradition of history "from the bottom up," Stadum focuses on poverty as it was experienced by the poor themselves, rather than as it was perceived by charity workers and the broader public. The result is an absorbing

picture of poor women pursuing multiple strategies for survival in a world which seriously circumscribed their options for change.

The Associated Charities, Minneapolis's version of a Charity Organization Society, was founded in 1884 to cure poverty and dependence through the use of an enlightened and scientific charity. From the agency's archives, Stadum has randomly selected the case records of 300 applicants for aid; the records include both married and single women—whether divorced, separated, widowed, or deserted by their husbands. All had children, ranging from youngsters to adolescents and young adults. In examining these records, Stadum's major focus is on "the multiple roles of poor women and the hard work they did in both public and private sectors in order to care for their families." (p.x)

Stadum sets the stage for her analysis by describing the cases of three women and their families in some detail; while the three differ in their commitment to hard work and the propriety of their behavior (at least as perceived by their charity visitors), all are pictured by Stadum as locating and using a variety of resources and strategies to cope with economic and other crises. Applying for help from the Associated Charities was only one of the strategies pursued. Others included working, most often at a low-paid job, to supplement a husband's wages or to provide sole support in the case of single-parenthood; sending children to work; sharing resources with neighbors and friends; using creativity in the home by stretching scarce food supplies and making clothes; asking relatives for aid or sending children to board with family members; and taking in boarders. Stadum then pursues these themes and several others in her analysis of all 300 cases. In separate chapters she discusses the difficulties and challenges faced by women as homemakers, wage-earners, wives, and charity recipients. The chapter on wives describes the effects of abusive and drunken behavior by husbands on marital relationships and paints a pessimistic picture of how "marriages shifted, dissolved, and were reformed in a hostile environment" (p. 120) The chapter on women as charity recipients notes the often judgmental, insensitive approaches of the charity visitors as they sought to influence women's decisions and behaviors involving their families.

This is a sound book, well-grounded in the historical and policy literature. One wishes at times that the use of case histories was more systematic, in order to provide clearer and more convincing documentation for assertions such as those regarding the poor quality of most of the marriages in the case histories and the widespread resistance of clients to unsympathetic and controlling charity workers. However, the overall picture, carefully built up, of the day-today struggle of poor women is both convincing and enlightening. As a reminder that "clients" and "victims" struggle for autonomy and control over their own lives and those of their families, Stadum's study shows the power of history from the ground up in highlighting the strengths of ordinary people in dealing with adversity.

Leslie Leighninger  
Louisiana State University

Allison Zippay, *From Middle Income to Poor: Downward Mobility Among Displaced Steelworkers*: New York, Praeger, 1992. \$39.95 hardcover.

Although deindustrialization transformed the economy in every part of the United States, its effects were perhaps most sweeping in the states that extend from Pennsylvania to Illinois and make up the industrial heartland. There, in less than a decade stretching from the mid-1970s to the early 1980s, deindustrialization obliterated a way of life whose economic and social roots extended back nearly a century. The social and economic costs of this transformation are the subject of Allison Zippay's new book.

The focus of Zippay's study is the Shenango Valley, and particularly Sharon, its main town, with a population of 18,000. Located in western Pennsylvania near the Ohio-Pennsylvania border, the Shenango Valley was once a center for steel manufacturing and fabrication. In the early 1980s, however, the drive for higher profits by seven local companies resulted in the layoff of 6700 workers. In addition to precipitating a sharp decline in the workers' standard of living, these layoffs shredded the community fabric and gave rise to a host of troublesome social problems.

As Zippay emphasizes, factory workers were not like other groups whom the economic transformation affected. Farmers and the homeless at least stirred some charitable impulses. Displaced steelworkers, however, evoked neither romantic attachments to the land nor the good feelings that came from giving to a beggar on the street. Perhaps that is because the work they did was hard to romanticize—dirty, dangerous, and unpleasant. A country with claims to industrial preeminence might need this work to be done, but when the economy changed, few people who were not steelworkers spoke up to mourn its passing.

The strength of Zippay's book derives from her immersion in the life of the community. She knows the social networks that grew up among workers in heavy industry, and she writes knowledgeably about the interconnectedness of their lives. Others might look down upon Sharon—a 1985 Rand McNally survey listed it as the "least cultured town" in the United States, but at least those who lived there before the plant closings had a decent standard of living and the emotional satisfaction borne out of a life among caring families and friends.

While Zippay's analysis of deindustrialization is a little formulaic, the 102 steelworkers she interviewed clearly show the effects of the shift from an industrial to a service economy. Four years after the plants closed, thirty-five percent of the workers were unemployed, and eighty-seven percent reported a drop in household income, with the median income falling from \$25,000 to \$14,500. As a result, social welfare agencies were swamped: demands for public assistance rose by two-thirds, and the caseload of the local battered women's center doubled in just one year.

These statistics are damning, but they are not nearly as damning as the sense of personal betrayal that Zippay captures. Economies change, occupations flourish and then disappear. But when an economic transition occurs without adequate social supports, the people who are most affected feel discarded and embittered. As this useful case study shows, that is the real human tragedy of Shenango Valley.

Joel Blau

State University of New York, Stony Brook

## BOOK NOTES

United Nation Development Program. *Human Development Report 1992*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1992. \$16.95 papercover.

This is the third in a series of annual publications from the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) dealing with social development issues. Like UNDP's earlier reports, the 1992 *Human Development Report* examines the concept of social or 'human' development as it is called, provides useful statistical data pertaining to social welfare, and focuses on a specific issue relevant to social development. In this report, the issue is poverty and the global economy. The relationship between poverty and global economic development is explored, and an attempt is made to link thinking about the world economy with a concern for poverty and social well-being. The report is essential reading for anyone concerned with social development, particularly in the context of Third World development.

Ruth Ylvisaker Winger. *The Impact of Tax Legislation on Corporate Income Security Planning for Retirees*. New York: Garland Publishing Inc., 1992. \$66 hardcover.

As the populations of economically developed countries such as the United States age, more attention is being given to the question of income maintenance during retirement. Although social security provides a safety net, it must be augmented by private and occupational pension programs. Drawing extensively on the writings of Richard Titmuss, Winger explores the relationship between what Titmuss called occupational and fiscal welfare. The pension plans of nine well known business enterprises in the Minneapolis-St. Paul area are examined in the light of the way the tax system facilitates their operation. The study concludes that corporate retirement plans enhance governmental social security provisions and if properly regulated, can make a significant contribution to protecting retirees. However, the present system suffers from numerous gaps and weaknesses which Congress needs to address. The author calls for a more careful assessment of federal retirement

policy and for the introduction of policy modifications that will maximize social welfare for all retired workers.

C. Emory Burton. *The Poverty Debate: Politics and the Poor in America*. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1992. \$47.95 hardcover.

Burton's useful book offers a comprehensive account of sociological perspectives on poverty in the United States. It examines research findings as well as major theoretical positions on the poverty problem. The book discusses the incidence and distribution of poverty, explanations of the causes of poverty and policy prescriptions for its alleviation. The author takes a firm ideological stand against those who believe that poverty is caused by individual attitudes or behaviors. Theories of poverty that attribute causation to indolence, insobriety and a lack of ambition do not, he argues, offer plausible insights into the complex social and economic causes of poverty. His review of sociological perspectives on poverty focuses on the culture of poverty and the underclass question and provides a helpful summary of the field. The concluding chapter on policy options is primarily concerned with income maintenance and social service programs. Although the book does not provide any original theoretical insights, its attempt to summarize a complex field will be useful to students and researchers alike.

Amartya Sen. *Inequality Examined*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1992. \$29.95 hardcover.

This discursive account of the issues of inequality, poverty and social justice by the distinguished Harvard economist and philosopher, Amartya Sen, attempts a re-conceptualization of existing approaches in the field. Sen argues that despite the apparent rejection of equality in many ethical and philosophical discourses on the subject, all approaches recognize the centrality of equality in social life. This paradox can be explained by the fact that the key issue in the debate is not *whether* there should be equality but rather *what* criteria should be used to establish normative determinants for equality. The greatest error and source of contention lies in the argument that all human beings

are equal when in fact they differ enormously. The recognition of these differences together with a commitment to enhancing freedom to achieve objectives offers the only realistic and just way of proceeding. It is the recognition of different human capabilities and the freedom to achieve these capabilities that forms the basis for a socially just society.

Henry J. Bruton. *The Political Economy of Poverty, Equity and Growth: Sri Lanka and Malaysia*. New York, Oxford University Press, 1992. \$39.95 hardcover.

Since it first sponsored research into the relationship between economic growth and income inequality in the 1970s, the World Bank has commissioned various country case studies to examine this issue. Bruton's extremely thorough comparative study of Sri Lanka and Malaysia offers useful insights into both the conceptual and empirical bases of contemporary research into poverty, inequality and growth. Bruton argues that the experiences of these two countries, which share many common features, cast doubt on the usefulness of conventional conceptual approaches which emphasize the need for rapid economic growth and the reduction of disparities between high and low income groups. In both societies, the value of growth is subordinated to the preservation of traditional institutions and there is less emphasis on re-distribution between rich and poor than between different ethnic groups. While he does not regard Sri Lanka's widely reported (and criticized) egalitarian policies as a model for other Third World countries, his empirical research demonstrates that these policies have made a significant contribution to the social well-being of the population. He is skeptical of Malaysia's commitment to create an export driven capitalist economy and cautions that the new enthusiasm for the free-market may enhance social deprivation and inequality.

Bruce E. Moon. *The Political Economy of Basic Needs*. New York: Cornell University Press, 1992. \$45.00 hardcover; \$14.95 papercover.

Moon's book makes an important contribution to understanding the basic needs approach to development which



advocates planned government intervention to promote the attainment of minimum health, nutritional, educational and shelter needs in poor countries. It reports on the results of an ambitious statistical evaluation of basic needs performance among 120 countries as measured by the Physical Quality of Life Index, a composite indicator of education, literacy and life expectancy. The study traces differences in basic needs performance and correlates these with a plethora of factors. The analysis results in the construction of a sophisticated statistical model which effectively predicts basic needs performance.

Moon's research reveals that basic needs attainment is a complex process in which numerous factors play a variable and intricate role. There is no single, simple path to meeting basic needs in which either a free market or state dominated approach produces the desired result. While the state has a pivotal role to play, it is constrained by political, economic and social realities. Similarly, high rates of economic growth do not automatically correlate with high levels of basic needs attainment. Rather, satisfactory basic needs performance is attributable to a complex mix of factors in which the degree of modernization of the economy and the magnitude of state activism in both economic and social affairs are particularly significant. The major lesson of Moon's impressive research is that a commitment to meeting basic needs is not antithetical to economic development. Welfare and economic goals are, he concludes, highly compatible and should be the basis of development policy everywhere.

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Reviewing normally takes 60 days but can take longer in the event of split recommendations. Things move more slowly at the end of semesters and during the summer. Authors should feel free to write or call the editor if they feel an undue amount of time has elapsed.

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*Processing Fee.* The increased cost of typesetting has made it necessary to charge a processing fee of \$35 to authors who are accepted for publication. You will be billed at the time of acceptance.

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