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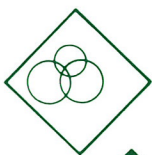
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# JOURNAL OF SOCIOLOGY AND SOCIAL WELFARE

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# A Communitarian Critique of the Child Protective System

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*Child Protective Services (CPS) has been defined as an ineffective system. Common criticisms are that the system is overburdened and that family preservation policy pressures CPS to reunite families that can't be repaired. However, empirical analyses that identify the deficiencies of this organization are limited. This study utilizes case files and in-depth interviews with interventionists within and outside of CPS to explore the issue. Results reveal that the most common criticisms of the system do have merit. However, it reveals additional system limitations. Results suggest that the child protective system is characterized by an individualistic approach and that this focus hinders its ability to protect children. Specific problems associated with this individualistic focus are identified and a communitarian framework is proposed as a way of reconceptualizing CPS deficiencies and needed solutions.*

## INTRODUCTION

In 1995 Elisa Izquierdo was on the cover of Time magazine. She was a six year old girl who, after enduring years of physical and sexual torture, was ultimately bludgeoned to death by her mother. The coverage emphasized that Elisa had repeatedly come to the attention of Child Protective Services (CPS), but it did not protect her. Cases such as Elisa's and corresponding critical assessments of CPS have consistently been in the news (Best, 1997; Johnson, 1989). Likewise, research shows that approximately one third of children reunited with their families by CPS reenter the system due to additional abuse or neglect (Courtney, 1995; Gorge, 1990; Wulczyn, 1991). In addition, scholars and practitioners regularly voice concerns regarding the efficacy of the system

(Gelles, 1996; Parent, 1996; Lindsey, 1994; Pelton, 1990). While many agree that the system is failing a sizable number of children, there are divergent views as to the particular systemic deficiencies responsible for high reentry rates.

Critics of CPS often represent liberal and conservative perspectives on state intervention with abusive and neglectful families. The liberal position tends to favor the current emphasis within CPS, which is to repair and preserve families. Their criticisms are of poor implementation of current intervention strategies. They present caseworkers as poorly trained, overworked, and apathetic, whos' work is riddled with errors (Costin, Karger and Stoesz, 1996; Parent, 1996; Valentine, 1994). Gelles (1996) offers a more ascerbic assessment writing, "it is only a mild exaggeration to state that the system, as it stands, depends on poorly paid 23 year olds who majored in art history to make life or death decisions" (p. 158). These criticisms often are associated with proposed solutions of lighter caseloads, more training of caseworkers, and hiring caseworkers with masters degrees (Abramczyk, 1994; Gelles, 1996). Conversely, the conservative perspective focuses on the futility of intervention and on the damage done by family preservation policy, which pressures CPS to return children to families that are often beyond repair (Costin et al, 1996; Gelles 1996). These arguments lead to calls for more prosecution of parents and easier termination of parental rights. The liberal and conservative debate as presented is admittedly oversimplified (Costin et al. 1996; Gelles, 1996). However, these positions, as outlined, are probably the most clearly defined, widely held, and influential ones in terms of affecting child protection policy and practice (N.Y.Times, 1998; Schran, 1997).

An alternate theory of CPS deficiencies, less prevalent in policy circles, is that CPS's biggest problem is not in implementation, but in ideology. Some have argued that the psychological model of casework is the dominant model of casework within CPS. This model leads CPS to emphasize individuals and to exclude external strains. While not labeled as such in the social service literature, for the present paper, this critique is subsumed under the broader rubric of communitarianism. Communitarians argue that excessive individualism in American society leads those responsible for defining and addressing social problems

to deemphasize the role of the environment in contributing to the problem and in being necessary parts of the solution (Bellah, Madsen, Sullivan, Swidler, and Tipton, 1985; Etzioni, 1994). Thus, solutions are often inadequate.

Best's work on social constructionism and child abuse (1997) reveals that media portrayals of the problem and its root causes are regularly biased towards individualistic rather than social accounts. This, arguably, promotes individualistic solutions. Likewise, early analyses of child abuse and neglect were dominated by psychological explanations and the resulting influence on interventionist philosophy is well-documented (Toikko, 1999; Jimenez, 1990). Research later revealed external strains such as poverty and isolation to be associated with child maltreatment (Kinard, 1987; Garbarino & Kostelny, 1992; Light, 1973; Pecora, Whittaker, & Maluccio, 1992; Spearly & Lauderdale, 1983). Consequently, sociological/ecological models were incorporated into social work training (Bronfenbrenner, 1977; Frankel, 1988; Wakefield, 1996). Some argue that these views have infiltrated social work practice (Tower, 1993; Whittaker & Garbarino, 1983). Others posit that the psychological model remains the predominant intervention model in the system (Janko, 1994; Lally, 1984). These scholars note that while there are numerous accounts of programs that attempt to incorporate an ecological framework, these programs are not the norm and are often not implemented as planned (Frankel 1988; Goldstein, 1990; Janko, 1994; Kahn & Kamerman, 1990).

While critiques of CPS are abundant, empirical support for them is sparse. An overburdened system and policy pressures are the most common criticisms. However, there is little empirical evidence to suggest that these are the premiere problems within the system which contribute to reentry. It is likely that children are reabused due to caseworker negligence and policy pressure, but are these typical reentry cases? Research on system deficiencies usually comes from singular sources such as an expert opinion, a dissatisfied caseworker, or a tragic case file (such as Elisa's). These could represent extreme cases rather than the most pervasive problems (Maluccio, 1997). Thus, an exploration of other critiques, such as the communitarian critique, is justified. However, as with the liberal and conservative perspectives, there is little

empirical support for the communitarian critique. Only one study has offered evidence of an entrenched individualistic approach and associated negative consequences. Janko (1994) conducted in-depth interviews with parents in the system about their experiences. She notes their complaints that external social and financial strains were not addressed despite their relevance. She points out that at the end of the interventions "specific skills may have changed, but familial contexts have not" (p. 117). However, her sample was quite small and reflects only the perspectives of parents, a view, which could be heavily biased against CPS intervention. In sum, many assertions regarding the most serious CPS deficiencies are speculative. Thus, scholars have called for more research (Staff & Fein, 1994). More specifically, Costin et al. (1996) lament that "Anecdotal evidence continues to replace the rigors of scientific research" (p. 100) in the area of CPS deficiencies.

This research does not focus on single cases, caseworkers, or parents, but instead uses triangulated methods to explore CPS deficiencies. Numerous case files of abused and neglected children reunited with their families, and in-depth interviews with interventionists from within and outside of CPS are used to explore why reabuse and reneglect rates are so high. These multiple data sources are employed to address questions such as, 1) which family problems are not responding to the intervention and why, 2) are caseworkers aware of the fact that certain deficiencies are not being repaired, and if so, 3) why aren't these children removed or services extended? Particular attention is paid to whether the liberal, conservative or communitarian critiques offer an accurate view of the system deficiencies most likely to contribute to recurrence.

## DATA AND METHODS

For this study, fifty-nine family reunification case files were drawn from a database of 1515 cases served in Houston, Texas from 1993 to 1996. These 1515 cases represent all of the cases of children removed from their families and placed in foster care due to abuse and/or neglect and subsequently returned to the family by CPS. These [hard copy] case files offer in-depth information on the children, their families, and the intervention process. Comments and reports from caseworkers, family members, judges,

ad litem, therapists, and police officers reveal detailed information on cases. A previous study utilizing these files showed that cases involving neglect, previous referrals, criminal history of the caregiver, substance abuse, parents' competency limitations, and social support deficiencies had a higher risk of system reentry than other cases (Terling, 1999). In the present study, the case files are reviewed in more depth where these risk factors are present. The intent is to gain insight into why these problems are resistant to change by the intervention (e.g. do substance abusing parents not receive services due to caseworker oversight or are the services received, but simply ineffective?).

While the case file analysis offers an important starting point for an investigation into system deficiencies, this study is largely based on the general perspectives of interventionists regarding why reentry is so high. Twenty-nine in-depth interviews, each lasting approximately an hour, were conducted. I spoke with those within the system (CPS caseworkers and supervisors) about barriers to protecting children. While they serve as important informants into the workings of the system, they might reflect a social desirability and/or selectivity bias. Those committed to the system may not be willing to reveal its flaws. Consequently, I also interviewed supervisors from an organization called Child Advocates. Child Advocates (CASA) is a non profit organization that works with CPS on family reunification cases, providing services and making assessments for the courts. CASA supervisors work closely with CPS but are not part of the system. Thus, they can serve as informants into the workings of the child protective system. I also interviewed three family reunification judges who play a critical role in decision making on these cases. While these in-depth interviews will not definitively identify the most critical deficiencies in the child protective system, they offer a systematic exploration of the weaknesses of the Child Protective system which contribute to the continued maltreatment of children.

Keep in mind while reading this study that it is an investigation of family reunification cases and interventionists working on these types of cases. Family reunification cases are those in which the children were removed from the home and placed into foster care due to abuse and/or neglect and later returned to their families. These cases differ from family preservation cases where



services are provided to the family, but the abuse or neglect is not considered severe enough to warrant removal of the child. Since family reunification cases by definition are more severe, it is likely that they will receive more attention from Child Protective Services. However, my earlier research found reentry rates of 38% on family reunification cases, suggesting that concern about system efficacy is warranted even with cases where CPS involvement is high (Terling, 1999).

## RESULTS

As discussed, the most common complaints of practitioners and scholars are of unknowledgeable and overburdened caseworkers and policy pressures that reunite children with families that can not be repaired. My research supports each of these criticisms. However, I also find that these system deficiencies are far from an adequate explanation for why so many of the children who enter the system are not being protected by it. The analysis that follows provides information on the merits of the most common criticisms of the system and raises additional issues to consider in understanding system deficiencies.

### *Common Criticisms*

In this study, respondents (interventionists) agree that caseworkers do not receive training or information that enables them to easily offer a profile of reentry risks. They note that developing a profile of reentry cases is difficult for caseworkers because they receive little feedback about the long-term outcomes of cases. For example, if caseworkers close a case one year, and the next year an additional referral comes in, they may not necessarily be notified or assigned to the same case again. However, while CPS training is limited, respondents reported that caseworkers are aware that certain types of cases, (neglect, substance abuse, previous referrals, etc.) are repeatedly in the system.

Another common assertion is that caseworkers, whether knowledgeable or not, are so overworked that errors in casework are inevitable. Respondents supported this assertion and identified excessive caseloads as a serious problem. They report that caseworkers have between 25 and 40 cases when a

more manageable caseload is around 15. One caseworker stated, "Sometimes we have so much coming at us we can't see straight".

While heavy caseloads are a problem, the case files do not portray reentry as due largely to caseworker error. Of the case files examined (n=59), only four reflected obvious mismanagement. Criteria for mismanagement were whether children were returned to a home where they had experienced severe and repeated physical and/or sexual abuse, and where the risk of additional maltreatment was known (eg. a sexual abuse case where the perpetrator had a history of convictions for pedophilia and who reportedly was not responding to treatment). My assessments of mismanagement are admittedly subjective. However, my intent is to determine whether cases exist that are similar to those in the media. It has been argued that cases such as Elisa's entailed risks obvious to even lay persons but that caseworkers were too overworked or apathetic to address these risks. The conclusion I drew is that these cases do exist. However, they are not the norm. In the vast majority of reentry cases, risk of additional physical or sexual abuse was not obvious. In addition, in two of the four cases where risk was evident, the decision to return a child was made by the judge, against the written recommendations of the caseworker. Thus, reentry is not always linked to negligent casework.

Gelles (1996) and Costin et al. (1996) criticize family preservation policy as placing too much pressure on CPS to reunite families. Most of the respondents acknowledge that policy does indeed emphasize family preservation, but most do not feel that higher level directives lead them to send children home who are in serious danger. The case files which reveal that most children return home to neglectful rather than abusive parents supports this contention. For the most part, respondents reported that termination of parental rights is common in abuse cases, that in most instances in which they have recommended it that it was granted, and that most key parties are in agreement on when termination should be pursued. In instances where the judge does not support requests for termination, respondents feel it was less of an issue of policy pressure than of the strength of the legal rights of parents in neglect cases, an issue that will be discussed in another section.

*Additional System Deficiencies*

*Inadequacy of Risk Assessment Procedures.* While caseworkers reportedly know that cases with previous referrals, substance abuse problems, low intellectual functioning, etc. are high risk for reentry, their formal assessments of risk often do not incorporate these factors. When assessing risk on a case, respondents reported that caseworkers strive to see each case as unique. They are discouraged from making generalizations based on whether the family fits a profile of a family likely to abuse again. The statement, "it goes on a case by case basis" was offered repeatedly by caseworkers when asked to identify risk factors. Respondents stated that the caseworker's approach to risk assessment is predominately to determine whether the primary caregiver has the ability and motivation to make the necessary changes. I argue that this approach hinders risk assessment by caseworkers in several different ways.

One problem with this approach is that those in the caregiver's social network and even the family are often thought to have minimal obligations or influence, despite the fact that these factors have been linked to abuse and neglect. Numerous cases in the case file analysis were closed even though external strains such as social isolation or a non-compliant substance-abusing partner were present. The focus on the primary caregiver is further indicated by a caseworker's comments regarding a neglect case. It was of a young mother, living with her children and her mother (the grandmother). The child advocate was working with the grandmother, encouraging her to repair the hazardous living conditions of the house. The caseworker strongly disagreed with this approach stating:

They (the child advocate) were trying to apply pressure to the wrong caregiver. . . . they were like, what is the grandmother doing to get the house fixed, but it is not the grandmother's responsibility. There is an adult parent; it is her responsibility to find a safe, secure environment for her children. It is not the grandmother's responsibility. If she doesn't want to ever return to that house it is up to her. So I felt, hey, you are focusing on the grandmother when it is not the grandmother's responsibility to do anything for these children."

This comment is informative as it suggests that the choice of who is the primary caregiver is an important one to be made,

rather than viewing the family as a system in need of repair. It also suggests that only the primary caregiver has a moral and legal responsibility to that child.

While the internal abilities and motivations of the primary caregiver are not the only relevant factors, they are of course important ones. Thus caseworker efforts to assess internal characteristics are likely not misdirected. However, making these assessments is quite difficult. Respondents and case files revealed that caseworkers attempt to identify the abilities and motivations of the caregiver by monitoring compliance with the treatment plan and by observing family functioning during home visits. However, analysis of case files reveals that compliance and these qualitative assessments of family functioning are not correlated with reentry. Glowing reports of family functioning and dedication to treatment were often associated with cases that subsequently reopened due to additional maltreatment (Terling, 1999).

Respondents recognize the limitations of caseworkers' assessment techniques, elaborating that parents' "presenting" was a terrible obstacle to accurately assessing risk. The fact that home visits are infrequent and usually planned facilitates this "presenting". One caseworker stated, "Everything could look rosy when I go out." Another stated, "The parent will clean up before I come out, but her ability to be consistent, that is what is in question." The privacy of the family creates barriers to understanding what goes on behind closed doors. Another caseworker noted that many parents were also quite skilled at deception, stating: "They are con artists, they really and truly are, especially someone who has been on drugs and the streets for years". While "con artist" is likely an extreme characterization, caseworkers feel that most parents will lie about what they are able or willing to do. Given the problem with "presenting", it appears that a necessary qualification for caseworkers is the ability to recognize when a parent is deceiving them. This skill does not automatically come with a masters degree in social work.

*Inadequacy of Available Services.* Respondents acknowledge that service plans are often not implemented in a timely manner due to heavy caseloads and high turnover. While the implementation of the service plan is clearly an important issue, the appropriateness

of the plan is revealed to be an additional concern. The CPS intervention model reflects the belief that the internal limitations of the primary caregiver are the cause of the maltreatment. Thus, the primary treatment approach is to provide the parent with information and therapy/counseling to overcome his/her parenting limitations. Respondents and the case file analysis reveal that these treatments are likely suitable and relatively successful for some problems. Case files and respondents suggest that parents practicing excessive corporal punishment, parents whose negligent behavior left their children vulnerable to sexual abuse by others, and parents who were physically or sexually abused as children tend to be receptive to information and therapy (see also Costin et al., 1996). However, low intellectual functioning and cases involving denial may not be particularly responsive to this approach. As noted from respondents and case files, these cases are higher reentry risks and there was much consensus as to why.

The general sentiment of many respondents was that therapy is a highly cognitive approach to solving problems and changing behavior that is not suitable for those with limited intellectual functioning. One caseworker explained, "We send people to individual counseling, and it probably is helpful, but they have no idea why they are going, and they may talk to somebody, but their understanding what they are talking about is a problem." Respondents also feel that even the general provision of information is an overly cognitive approach for these clients. One caseworker commented, "In parenting classes they tell you to do this, that, if the child does this, you do this. On one case that has been in the system for 14 years, she (the parent) has passed three parenting classes with flying colors. Can she implement anything? She cannot". Another caseworker noted, "these parents need to be shown, not told what to do. There needs to be help in the home or parenting classes geared toward parents with low functioning." In general, for low functioning parents, respondents offer very bleak assessments such as, "We are really missing the boat on that (problem)" and "We don't really have anything to offer." The misdiagnosis of needed services likely reflects the disconnect between the middle-class orientation of child advocates and practitioners and their more disadvantaged

clientele. For the middle class, it has been suggested that therapy has to some extent replaced social or community support. This approach to intervention is limited for the families that come to the attention of CPS with cognitive deficiencies.

Cases involving physical neglect and the associated denial of the parents also do not seem to respond to the services available. One respondent explained, "Neglect cases are hard to correct. Physical abuse is a bit easier, you can work with people and say, hey, you cannot beat your kids. It is not easy but it is easier. With neglect, people have grown up and lived their whole lives this way. There is not a class for that." Another stated, "I know they are coming back in because the parent is in so much denial. There is no service in the world we can provide to that parent to get them out of their denial". Another caseworker describes a difficult case and elaborates on the problem of neglect cases :

They (the parents) will be like, well I don't beat my child and they don't, but their child will have scabs all over them or rashes that haven't been treated, it just feeds in. Sometimes things left untreated will threaten the health of the child. If you are in a house where there are dog and cat feces lying around and you have small children picking things up off the floor and putting them in their mouths, you have a definite health hazard. A lot of people who grew up this way are just like, 'oh, the house is a mess, excuse me', and you are like, I am going to have to take custody! They don't understand why, they aren't leaving them alone or beating them

With these cases of denial, respondents speculated that many of these parents might have low intellectual functioning that simply is not identified. Respondents report that often, psychological tests are not given to clients due to the time and expense involved. Respondents stated that even if these parents did not have limited intellectual abilities, treatment would need to be support, demonstration, and assistance on a long term or permanent basis. If therapy is useful, it would need to be akin to an intensive long term resocialization process, not six weeks or even six months of parenting classes and counseling. Consistently, several scholars have argued that brief services characterizing CPS interventions are not sufficient for families whose problems are long-standing and severe (Besharov, 1994; Dore, 1993; Halpern, 1990).



Another limitation of services is the absence of mechanisms for lessening the external strains on these families. A common deficiency among maltreating families is the absence of social support, and these deficiencies have been linked to reentry (Terling, 1999). The previous discussion also suggested that long term external support is needed for many CPS clients to function as parents. It has been suggested that casework does work to develop external supports (Tower, 1993; Whittaker and Garbarino, 1983). Likewise, respondents reported that they work to develop supports for the families. However, respondents reveal that if isolation exists, the responsibility for that isolation is located with the internal limitations of the caregivers and the effort made is through information and therapy to "empower" the individual to affect his/her environment. In the interviews interventionists stated that parents can have friends and assistance if they are confident or assertive enough (issues they work on in counseling sessions). This finding is consistent with Pelton's (1992) and Jimenez's (1990) assertions that family preservation services are primarily aimed at changing people so that they can cope with their environment rather than at changing the environment. In addition, when respondents described their efforts to establish community supports, they usually referred to their success at setting up monitors: doctors, teachers, parole officers, that will inform them of any additional problems emerging for the families. However, teachers and parole officers do not baby-sit, model parenting techniques, or make themselves available on a day to day basis for emotional or instrumental support.

Given that respondents often acknowledge that services are often inappropriate for certain problems, they were subsequently asked, if you know that particular families aren't being repaired (eg. a fourteen year-old case), why do you return the children and/or close these cases? The following sections offer the reasons given by these interventionists why, in high-risk cases, children are often returned home and monitoring ceased.

*The Legal System.* In the court system, the child's right to be free from harm competes with the parent's right to his or her own children. As discussed, termination of parental rights is often and easily pursued in cases of repeated and/or severe physical

or sexual abuse. However, interviews with interventionists and judges reveal that parental rights often take precedence in neglect cases. The court decisions usually reflect the belief that if the child is not in imminent danger, the parent has the right to try to bring personal parenting skills up to CPS standards through the use of available services.

An additional problem is that the courts focus on the parent's compliance with the service plan (whether they have participated in services) as the primary indicator of improved family functioning. However, I found compliance to be uncorrelated with reentry (Terling, 1999). My interviews with interventionists are generally supportive of this finding. Respondents stated that compliance is an important part of decision making on cases but that it often does not mean that parents have changed. One caseworker expressed her frustration with this issue stating, "Basically if they cooperate, that is how they win"

Judges are not so rigid as to equate compliance and change if there is evidence to the contrary. However, gathering sufficient evidence is difficult. First, the burden of proof is not on the defendant (parent) to prove he/she will not abuse or neglect again, but on the state (CPS) to prove that he/she will, a more difficult position. In addition, in the legal system, what constitutes evidence is often narrowly defined. The parental history of abuse is often not considered relevant to decisions about whether the parent has changed. This is how a neglect case may have had twenty previous referrals but if the child is not in serious danger, the parent complies with treatment and appears to make progress, the history of maltreatment carries very little weight in arguing to keep the case open. This is consistent with Gelles' assertion of a ten strikes and you are out policy in the courts (1996). Finally, respondents report that caseworkers find much difficulty in accumulating evidence that the parent is unable or unwilling to change. Parents' "presenting" is a hindrance. Interestingly caseworkers mention that they often feel that they know when a parent is deceiving them. The problem is that their 'knowledge' of deception is based on "gut instinct", a term used repeatedly by caseworkers. This subjective tool for predicting risk is of little consequence for legal decision-making. One caseworker elaborated,

If the parent has done everything they needed to do. . . if during family visits they are implementing new parenting techniques, what are you going to do? Even if you know in your gut this parent is going to physically abuse again or they are going to go back to using, there is nothing that you can do. It is hard for caseworkers when you know in your gut a parent is playing you. You can't go up to the judge and say look, my gut is telling me this, they are going to look at you like, yeah, well maybe you have indigestion!"

The judges spoke to me about the need for caseworkers to accumulate evidence sufficient to override the parents' rights to their children. Judges were frustrated with caseworkers' lack of appreciation for the rules and regulations of legal proceedings. One judge stated, "If you try a criminal and he is found not guilty, you can't just decide that you want to follow him around anyway. He is free to go". However, as mentioned, accumulating hard facts to prove that a parent will abuse or neglect the child again is difficult. In addition, this "evidence" will usually involve exposing the child to additional periods of chaos, uncertainty and possibly maltreatment. Thus, regardless of family preservation policy, the legal process supports parents' rights in such a way that makes termination of those rights particularly difficult in cases involving neglect of children.

*Returning Children to Unsuitable Homes as the Preferred Alternative.* Not all barriers to reducing risk on cases involve the legal system. Caseworkers, child advocates, and judges reported that they often agree a case is high risk but that the children should stay in the home. Often these decisions are made in spite of the fact that the home is considered unsuitable. Respondents report that they agonize over these choices. One caseworker described a case in which the parent has low intellectual functioning and was overwhelmed by the needs of five children. The parent was providing no structure, and the children were fighting among themselves with knives. This caseworker commented:

We are going to leave them with the parents, even though we already know what is going to happen. . . . This case is very difficult. I am just burned out. We are going to court in November, and we aren't going to do nothing (sic). I don't want to say the kids are doomed, but I don't know.

The interviews revealed that decisions to return children to unsuitable homes were not necessarily due to error, apathy or policy pressures, but were often carefully calculated decisions based on the limited options available. The majority of respondents reported that they often send children back to unsuitable homes because foster care is a worse alternative. They are concerned with the breaking of a strong bond between parents and children, the inevitable separation of siblings, the fact that foster care placements regularly breakdown (resulting in further trauma for the child), and that for older children (over 7) adoption rarely happens. Thus, while they generally feel that foster care is better than putting a child back in a home where he/she may be injured, when comparing it to a neglectful home with bonding and love it is seen as the inferior alternative. The following comments offered by the interventionists interviewed, emphasize their dilemma:

In foster care they get with people that really don't care about them and those children can feel that.

Even though the children are in a safe environment, it is not the same as being with people who really love you . . . See a foster family will call me up and say 'move him' whereas parents don't do that. Parents call on how to get advice or how to deal with a problem, but a foster family will call right away. It is a one, two, three strikes, and you are out. So what good is that doing for the child? Then the child knows, OK, they don't want me. We are left to deal with that.

Suppose there is a mother leaving her kids alone because she is out using. There are four or six kids, the oldest is twelve. With the new legislation we can terminate in a year. Do you know how many thirteen-year-olds get adopted? These kids know who their mother is. It is very easy for legislators to say OK, the parents have a year to get their act together, or the kids will be put up for adoption. Are you planning on building orphanages? Because we don't have enough foster parents. Kids that are shunted from placement to placement end up with behavioral problems, and they end up in residential treatment centers. They end up being medicated for very real behavioral problems . . . Just going termination happy, I don't think that is the answer.

Respondents feel the futures of many children (particularly older children) are grim. The neglectful home and foster care

are both likely to be unsuitable and adoption unlikely. One caseworker that had mapped out for me all the options available to her concluded with much exasperation, "I don't know, these cases, the children are always going to be the losers no matter what. I'm just burned out".

A caseworker posed an interesting question, "If there is no structure it is really bad, but the baby is bonded with the mom, what do you do? Is it better to take him away? I don't know, that is the problem." Caseworkers are often blamed for being ineffective, but this caseworker's point is duly noted. We don't have an answer to that question for her. Research has left caseworkers empty handed in terms of information to guide such decisions. Even if caseworkers had adequate training and/or advanced degrees and light case loads, they still would not know the answer to the question, is it better to leave a child in a neglectful home with love than to place him/her into foster care? Placing children's lives in the hands of caseworkers without giving them the tools needed to make decisions, coupled with extensive criticism of their work, it is surprising that turnover is not higher. The following statement made by a caseworker mirrors this concern and also encapsulates the many barriers faced by caseworkers discussed thus far, "In a year, I am going to change somebody's ways? Be realistic . . . and if she doesn't have the ability . . . It doesn't matter how much stuff we give her, it isn't going to happen . . . yet how are we going to penalize these people? If we took everybody's children, the astrodome won't be big enough."

#### DISCUSSION: A COMMUNITARIAN CRITIQUE

This study supports numerous criticisms already levied against the current system. Caseworkers do need lighter case-loads and more training and feedback. It is also true that family preservation policy leads many children to be returned to families with extensive histories of abuse and/or neglect. However, I find several additional deficiencies which, according to multiple data sources, make more critical contributions to reabuse and neglect. These deficiencies include inadequate risk assessment procedures, inappropriate and incomplete service models, the legal system's focus on parents' rights, and a lack of alternative homes for children. Though these limitations are difficult

to incorporate into the liberal or conservative agendas, they do not represent a random set of supplemental issues. Rather they reflect a broader problem in the state and society's approach to child protection, one that is similar to the social critiques offered by communitarians.

Communitarianism, championed by scholars such as Bellah et al. (1985) and Etzioni (1994) assert that a critical problem in American society is the rampant individualism that characterizes it. Individualism causes its citizens and policy makers to locate the source of social ills within the individual and to develop solutions aimed at addressing these individuals' problems. The liberal solution is usually to try and repair the internal deficiencies of people, and the conservative perspective is usually to punish or remove the individuals causing the problem. These solutions, do not account for the role of social structure or the broader community in contributing to the problem and in being necessary parts of the solution.

The system limitations identified in this research reflect an emphasis on the individual and a deemphasis on the community (broadly defined). As discussed, caseworkers' risk assessment procedures are a limitation because they focus on the internal abilities and motivations of the primary caregiver. They do not view the family as a system and they rarely factor external strains into their assessments of risk. However, other members of the household and the availability of social support networks are significant predictors of reentry (Terling, 1999). The narrow focus on the internal resources of the primary caregiver contributes to inaccurate assessments of risk. Risk assessments, post-intervention need to include external strains in addition to the internal capabilities of the primary caregiver.

Given that caseworkers attribute the cause of the maltreatment to the internal abilities and motivations of the primary caregiver, it is not surprising that the intervention focuses on this problem. Interventions primarily involve providing information and therapy to remedy the deficiencies of the primary caregiver. However, in certain circumstances of extensive or long-term problems (e.g. low intellectual functioning), this approach is ineffective. What is required is most likely long-term external support. However, this is not part of the intervention philosophy.



In addition, when external strains exist, they are not addressed directly. Environmental strains (e.g. social isolation) are attributed largely to the personal inadequacies of the caregiver. It is argued that if parents were more assertive or self-confident they would be able to develop support networks. This strategy essentially blames the victim and ignores structural factors. Interventions need to be expanded to include strategies addressed at remedying the external strains of caregivers. They also need to offer long-term assistance to caregivers with permanent deficiencies that impede their ability to raise their children. While this is obviously difficult to do, programs such as big brothers/big sisters and adopt a grandparent have successfully linked civic-minded volunteers with others in need of guidance and companionship. Similar programs could be developed to help neglectful parents with intellectual deficiencies with their parenting responsibilities.

The individualistic focus of the court system represents an additional barrier to child protection. The court system focuses on individual rights rather than responsibilities. Debates tend to center around whose rights should take precedence, the parents or the child's. The child has a chance when his/her right to physical safety are weighed against the parents' right to the child. However, when it is the parents' right to their child pitted against their responsibilities of parenting the child for his/her long-term mental health, and contribution to the community, the parents' rights usually take precedence. This position deserves close scrutiny. In some court cases, the supreme rights of biological parents are starting to be challenged (e.g. cases involving custody disputes between biological parents and step-parents). While some argue that America began and continues to be the most rights oriented nation, these court cases suggest that the emphasis on biological rights in the court system is not intractable.

A final limitation outlined is the lack of options for children who are removed from their biological parents. When it is recognized by the state and the courts that the child's needs are not being met, their options for the child are limited because of the lack of commitment of the community to provide alternative homes for these children. At this time the responsibility of the community that has been communicated is largely one of

reporting suspected cases of abuse or neglect, not of being part of the solution. Citizens are usually outraged at the failures of the system. However, their responses are rarely the recognition of their unmet responsibilities but of frantic efforts to identify the 'individual' responsible for the error (usually a caseworker) (Valentine, 1994). Best (1997) notes that the news media have been a critical contributor to this individualistic focus. Thus he argues that they have the power to recreate the publics' views of child abuse and neglect and their role in stopping it. Some feel that the competitive individualism of American culture precludes the public from accepting such messages. However, it is noted that through media coverage, what was once considered nobody's business (child maltreatment), is now everybody's business due to mandatory reporting laws. In addition, the communitarian position tends to call for more community rather than state involvement, which may be less directly contradictory to American values. Brawley and Martinez-Brawley (1999) outline the many opportunities that exist for utilizing the media to engage in productive public communication activities.

Finally, the individualistic focus is evident in the solutions proposed to repair the system. The liberal position often traces incidents of additional abuse and neglect to individual caseworkers who were too overworked to be effective. They argue for more support of the current intervention approach. The conservative position finds fault with the biological parent and seeks to remove or punish these individuals. Both of these perspectives focus on individuals and ignore the role of the community in contributing to and alleviating child maltreatment. Even if caseworkers could devote extensive time to cases, they don't have the tools to repair all these families. However, removing children with no place to send them is not an effective solution either.

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# Estimating Poverty Rates in a Metropolis: The Example of Los Angeles/Long Beach

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*This study develops a technique to estimate and project annual rates of poverty for a large metropolitan area for various segments of its population. The annual estimates and projections are based upon the official rates compiled by the Bureau of the Census.*

*Using Los Angeles/Long Beach as the site of the experimental example, the evidence reveals a substantially increasing trend in the incidence of poverty for the overall metropolitan population. This increase is caused by the dramatic rise in poverty within the Hispanic and Children population groups. Trends in poverty are negative, however, for the Elderly, Blacks, Female Family Heads and Whites. Explanations are offered for the disparate trends in poverty among the various groups. These explanations may serve as an agenda for future research. The Appendix to the study provides the annual estimates and projections for each population segment for the years 1959 through 2000.*

## INTRODUCTION AND GOALS

Article I, Section II of the U.S. Constitution specifies that an enumeration of the population shall be made every 10 years. Consequently, the Bureau of the Census conducts decennial counts of the population and, at the same time, it compiles data on family and individual incomes (for the year immediately preceding each census year). Since 1960, the Bureau also estimates poverty at 10-year intervals for the nation, regions, states, counties, urban and rural areas, and tracts. The census surveys of poverty have been obtained from samples ranging from 15% to 25% of housing units. Since 1960, the Bureau has also obtained annual survey data on



income and poverty (for 1959 on) and has published it in March issues of the *Current Population Reports*. This data has been collected, however, only for the nation and for states. These annual Current Population Surveys are based upon national samples over the years ranging between 33,500 and 65,500 noninstitutional civilian households. But, except for the decennial censuses, no data on poverty are regularly compiled for *substate* levels.

The purpose of this study is to establish a methodology to provide annual estimates of poverty for an *urban* area between the census years. The methodology is patterned after a technique that was used successfully by Robert G. Mogull (1991, 1993, 1998) in obtaining estimates for the *state* of California. According to Wendell Primus (1995), "The real importance of a . . . poverty measure is not the number who are poor in any one year but the indicator's ability to show whether the number is decreasing or increasing over time" (p. 27). The assumption made by the planned methodology is that smoothed linkages between benchmarks, which have been established by the decennial censuses, will yield a valid and reliable charting of long-term trends.

## METHODOLOGY AND DATA

As the example, annual poverty estimates and projections will be created for the Los Angeles/Long Beach Standard Metropolitan Statistical Area (SMSA) since 1959 and Primary Metropolitan Statistical Area (PMSA) since 1983. This urban area is currently the second largest in the nation and the largest west of the Mississippi River, with a Consolidated Metropolitan Statistical Area population in 1996 of nearly 15½ million. Annual rates of poverty will be estimated and projected separately for seven (nonmutually exclusive) segments of the population—All Residents, Whites, Blacks, Hispanics, Female Family Heads (without a resident spouse), the Elderly (age 65 and over), and Children (related by blood or adoption to the householders and below the age of 18).

So far, official poverty estimates have been established by the Census Bureau for the years 1959, 1969, 1979 and 1989. These estimates are to be used as benchmarks or points of reference. Long-term linear trends will be computed from these points for

each separate demographic group to reveal smoothed average patterns of data. Annual interim estimates of poverty will be determined from these trend lines. The trends will be extended to the year 2000, when a new point of reference will be available from the Census Bureau.

The benchmark years are those when the income levels were estimated, rather than the census years when the populations were counted. The trend in years will serve as an overall proxy for a variety of trends in social and economic forces which affect poverty rates over time.

### OFFICIAL DEFINITION OF POVERTY

Measures of poverty that are used by the Census Bureau were originally developed in 1964 by Mollie Orshansky (1965, 1969) of the Social Security Administration and were subsequently revised by federal interagency committees in 1969 and 1981. Income levels for delineating the poor were based upon the minimal cost of a low-income nutritionally adequate food plan, which was designed by the Department of Agriculture. A 1955 Household Food Consumption Survey by the Agriculture Department determined that the average low-income family spent about one-third of its after-tax income on food. Consequently, in order to determine poverty income thresholds, Orshansky multiplied by three the cost of an Economy Food Plan. The income thresholds were set to cover minimal needs for food, clothing and shelter plus a little extra for other essentials. In 1969, the Bureau of the Budget (now the Office of Management and Budget) prescribed the thresholds as the official standard to be used by all federal agencies.

The poverty indexes which are used by the Census Bureau are determined by pre-tax money income only. They reflect the different income requirements both of families and of unrelated individuals. Currently, income cut-off levels vary accordingly to the number of family members and the age of the family head. Prior to 1982, however, the cut-off levels also considered whether a family lived on a farm and the gender of the head of household. Since 1965, the poverty indexes have been adjusted annually for changes in the national Consumer Price Index (now, for All Urban

Consumers). No adjustments are made, however, for regional differences in living expenses.

### ERRORS IN ESTIMATES

There are three categories of error in the Census Bureau's estimates of poverty. One category is sampling variability. This refers to the potential variability in evidence from one sample to another from the same population. Such variation is attributable to chance alone.

A second category of error is nonsampling variability and it is caused by a large variety of factors. Potential causes may include the lack of information (e.g., from nonresponses to questionnaires), misinterpretation of the survey's questions, improper imputations of missing questionnaire data, and human errors in the recording, coding and processing of data. Nonsampling variation can also occur from an undercoverage of a segment of the population. Such undercoverage can systematically vary by age, gender, and racial or ethnic group. Both the undercoverages and the nonresponses may produce biased sampling evidence.

An additional and separate source of error occurs as a consequence of the changing definitions of racial and ethnic groups which have been used by the Census Bureau. For example; in the 1960 census, blacks were classified under the more inclusive category of "nonwhites." This category included such diverse population segments as blacks, American Indians, Japanese, Chinese, Filipinos, Koreans, Hawaiians, Asian Indians, Malaysians, Eskimos, Aleuts, and others. Beginning with the 1970 census, however, blacks were classified separately.

A similar problem arises with the Hispanic category. Poverty data for this group did not exist prior to the 1970 census. Consequently, Hispanics were typically included within the white classification. Over the years, Hispanics have been alternately defined by the Census Bureau as persons of Spanish language, surname and origin or descent. This category has included immigrants and descendants from Mexico, Puerto Rico, Cuba, Spain, the West Indies, Central and South America, Indians and those of mixed ancestry. Furthermore, persons of Hispanic origin have been of any race. Such inconsistencies produced unknown degrees of bias from one census to the next and distort the benchmark estimates.

# THE EVIDENCE

Table 1 presents the officially tabulated rates of poverty for each of the seven population groups which have been classified by the Census Bureau for the Los Angeles/Long Beach SMSA/PMSA for the years 1959, 1969, 1979 and 1989. These are the discrete benchmark data points upon which the trends are based. Figure 1 traces the seven separate paths over time by connecting their individual sets of points.

As indicated by the official estimates (which are best seen in Figure 1), the category of Female Family Heads is consistently highest. The next highest set of poverty rates is shown by Blacks. According to the most recent census, however, the incidence of poverty within the Hispanic sector had overtaken that of Blacks. Closely mimicking Hispanics are the poverty rates for Children. The lowest rates are for All Residents, followed by those of Whites and then by the Elderly.

In examining the evidence, it should be kept in mind that the seven population segments are not mutually exclusive. In particular, the Hispanics sector especially includes Children, where the correlation between the poverty rates of these two groups is

Table 1

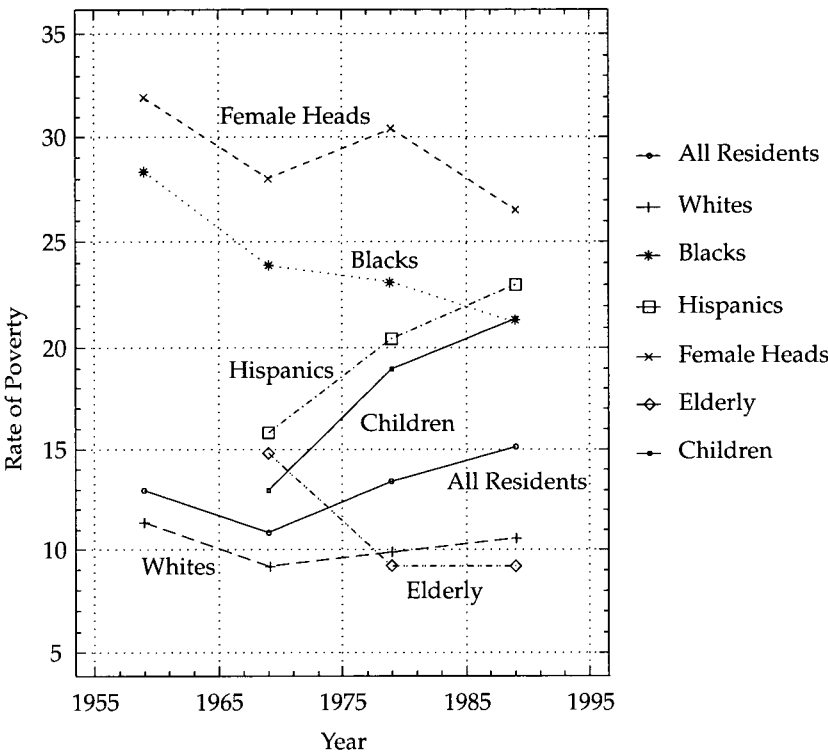
*Official Poverty Rates for Los Angeles/Long Beach*

Group	Percentages			
	Year			
	1959	1969	1979	1989
All Residents	13.0	10.9	13.4	15.1
Whites	11.4	9.2	9.9	10.6
Blacks	28.3	23.9	23.1	21.2
Hispanics	na	15.8	20.5	22.9
Female Family Heads	32.1	28.1	30.3	26.5
Elderly	na	14.8	9.2	9.2
Children	na	13.1	19.0	21.4

na = not available.

Source: Bureau of the Census, U.S. Department of Commerce.

Figure 1  
*Official Poverty Rates: 1959–1989*



+ .9985, which is significant at the .03 alpha level. (Statistics on correlation are not separately shown.) Hence, the rising rates within the two segments are very closely interrelated. And, it is a two-way effect. The typically low family income of Hispanics results in low income for their children and for the general category of all Children. But also, their traditionally large families incur a strain on already limited family resources and feeds back to contribute to the incidence of poverty among the Hispanics.

Further, the increasing rate of Hispanic poverty lifts the rate for All Residents. This is particularly true as the Hispanic share of the total population expands over time. (The correlation between

the poverty rates of Hispanics and All Residents is +.9972, which is significant at the .05 level.) Thus, it appears that poverty in this metropolis is tied closely to both the numbers and the internal finances of the Hispanic population in particular. This evidence mirrors the pattern observed at the state level, where poverty was traced for these groups over the same time period (Mogull, 1998: 630).

### THE TRENDED EVIDENCE

Table 2 presents the regression results for each separate group. The regressions express rates of poverty as linear functions of the years of data. Each specific regression equation is accompanied by the coefficient of determination ( $r^2$ ), the model's test statistic (F), sample size (n), and two types of measurement errors (the standard error of estimate and the mean absolute percentage error).

The qualities of the results are mixed. The best linear "explanations" of the variations in data are obtained for Hispanics, Children and Blacks—as revealed by the largest  $r^2$  and F values. Moderate results in this category are obtained for the Elderly,

Table 2

#### *Trend Models*

Group	Specific Regression <sup>a</sup>	$r^2$	F	n	S.E. of Est.	MAPE <sup>c</sup>
All Residents	$\hat{P} \cong -160.6 + .088Y$	43	1.53	4	1.59	7.8
Whites	$\hat{P} \cong 43.8 - .017Y$	5	0.11	4	1.12	7.2
Blacks	$\hat{P} \cong 460.4 - .221Y$	90	18.31 <sup>b</sup>	4	1.15	2.7
Hispanics	$\hat{P} \cong -682.8 + .355Y$	97	28.59	3	0.94	2.6
Female Family Heads	$\hat{P} \cong 317.5 - .146Y$	59	2.86	4	1.93	4.2
Elderly	$\hat{P} \cong 565.2 - .28Y$	75	3.00	3	2.29	12.2
Children	$\hat{P} \cong -803.5 + .415Y$	94	16.87	3	1.43	4.4

<sup>a</sup> P = Percent poverty.

Y = Year.

<sup>b</sup> Significant at .05 alpha level.

<sup>c</sup> MAPE =  $\sum_{i=1}^n [(|e_i|/P_i)100]/n$ , where  $e_i = (P_i - \hat{P}_i)$ .

Female Family Heads and All Residents. Poor results are obtained for Whites. This is due to the essentially horizontal path over time by the White poverty rates. When measurement errors are examined, the s.e. of estimates ranked from best to worst are for Hispanics, Whites, Blacks, Children, All Residents, Female Family Heads and the Elderly. According to the MAPE's, the smallest (i.e., best) values are obtained for Hispanics, Blacks, Female Family Heads and Children. Midway are the values for Whites and All Residents, while it is largest for the Elderly.

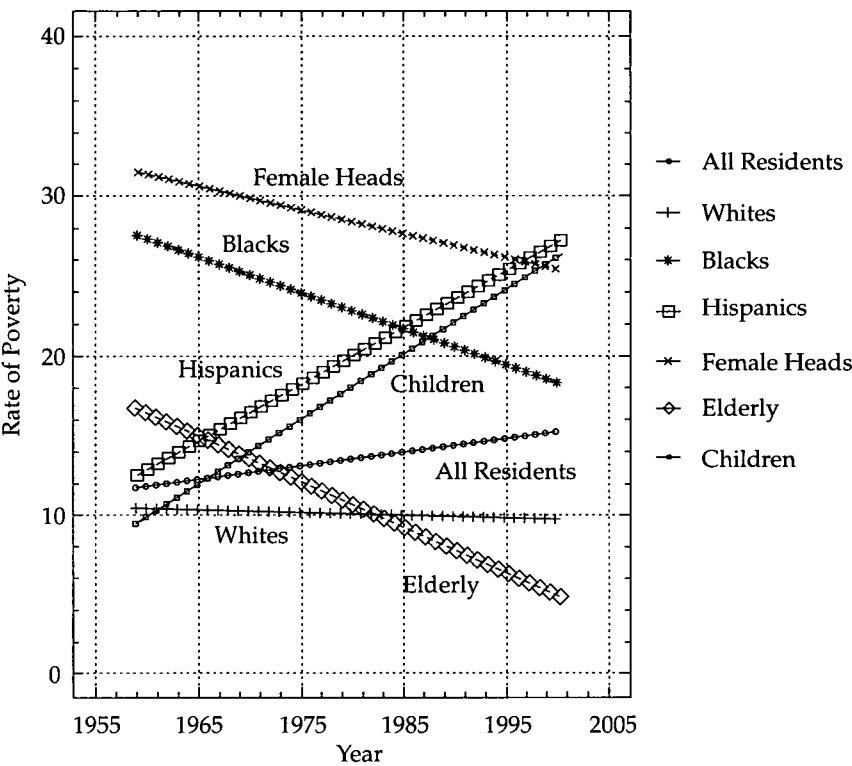
As shown in Figure 2 and in the Appendix, although the poverty rates are generally highest for Female Heads and Blacks, their descents to the year 2000 are steep. The smoothed downward trend is especially strong for the Elderly, where the rate in year 2000 is projected to be less than one-third the rate in 1959. However, the trend is only slightly negative for Whites. These downward trends are indicated by the magnitudes of the slope coefficients, which range from  $-.28$  for the Elderly to only  $-.017$  for Whites. The slope coefficient in the White model is roughly zero, which means that the White rate of poverty has changed very little over the time frame examined. This horizontal slope is the cause of the low  $r^2$  in the regression. That is, Years cannot "explain" the variation in a variable which has remained basically constant.

In contrast to the negative trends for the aforementioned groups, there are strong upward movements among Hispanics and Children. The rate for Hispanics in year 2000 is projected to be more than twice the rate in 1959. The poverty rate for Children will be almost triple what it was in 1959. The overall upward trend for All Residents is more gradual, where the incidence of poverty is projected to rise from 11.8% in 1959 to 15.4% in 2000.

As discussed above, the paths for Hispanics and for Children are closely interrelated. This is statistically revealed here by the closeness in magnitudes of their slope coefficients ( $+.355$  and  $+.415$ , respectively) and by their roughly parallel trend lines in Figure 2. The absolute strengths of the slope coefficients for these two groups are greatest among all seven groups. These forceful upward trends are indeed ominous for the LA/LB metropolitan area (as they also are for the state).

The overall rate of poverty for the general population of LA/LB is projected to rise substantially through the year 2000.

Figure 2  
Trended Poverty Rates: 1959–2000



This increase appears to be a direct consequence primarily of the large and growing Hispanic sector and its offspring. In contrast, the incidence of poverty within the other *measured* population segments is declining. The upward trends for Hispanics and Children more than offset the declines among the other groups.

### SOME POSSIBLE EXPLANATIONS

This study was designed to develop a tool to both estimate and project *annual* rates of poverty among demographic groups within a *metropolitan* area. It must be emphasized that it was



not the purpose of this paper to explain *why* a specific group experienced either an increase or decrease in its incidence of poverty. Nevertheless, in this section, several *possible* explanations are offered. Yet, no attempt will be made to defend the suggested explanations. They should, therefore, be viewed as an agenda to be explored more fully and tested in future research. At this point, they represent speculations and hypotheses.

The decline in poverty rates among Female Family Heads may be due to several factors—such as general growth in the local economy (which offers both more employment opportunities and rising pay levels), increasing female rates of labor force participation, a reduction in gender-traditional jobs (with a consequent expansion of opportunities), less job discrimination (especially at supervisory and managerial levels), a relative growth in service oriented jobs (where women traditionally find greater opportunities), and the growth of day care facilities for the children of working women.

The decline in poverty rates among Blacks may also be due to growth in the local economy and less employment discrimination, along with less housing segregation (which allowed Blacks to reside closer to the available jobs), and improved self-images which raised levels of aspiration and achievement.

The decline in poverty rates among the Elderly may be closely tied to the growth of service sector jobs (which provides more employment opportunities and also allows for prolonged labor force attachment), and improved health (which also permits longer attachment to the labor force).

The striking rise in poverty rates among Hispanics can probably be tied to several factors—such as increases in both legal and illegal immigration, greater competition for low wage jobs which is aggravated by increased immigration, comparatively low employment skills, a language barrier, a static job market for the low skilled, and a tendency to have many children. These factors all serve to depress or at least constrain Hispanic incomes.

The even stronger increase in poverty among Children is, as stated preciously in this article, probably a phenomenon tied closely to rising poverty rates among Hispanics. This connection is most likely a consequence of the rising rates for Hispanics in

general, but also of the propensity of Hispanic families to have many children.

The rate of poverty for Whites has been and is projected to remain fairly constant. The slight secular decline through year 2000 is not significant. Yet, the poverty rate for the aggregate of All Residents in LA/LB is rising. This overall increase is caused by the strong upward pull of poverty among Hispanics and Children. As the Hispanic population increases, it generates an ever larger influence on the general population. According to estimates provided by the California Department of Finance, the Hispanic share of the overall Los Angeles County population rose from 15% to 38% between 1970 and 1990 and is projected to rise to 51% by year 2010. The economic implications are clear and foreboding.

## SUMMARY

An attempt has been made to estimate annual rates of poverty for a large metropolitan area and also to project the trends in poverty for individual segments of the area's population. The annual estimates are designed to fill in for the absence of data provided by a governmental agency. The projections are constructed as an application and an extension of the annual estimates. The annual estimates and the projections are based upon discrete benchmark poverty counts by the Bureau of the Census.

The Los Angeles/Long Beach SMSA/PMSA was selected as the site for development and examination of the techniques. The evidence specific to this metropolitan area are presented in tables, figures and the Appendix to the study. The annual rates of poverty and the projections are computed from the specific regression equations which appear in Table 2. Figure 2 illustrates the smoothed linear trend lines for the years 1959 through 2000.

The resulting trend lines indicate a gradual but substantial increase in the incidence of poverty for the overall metropolitan population. This increase is the net result of both the declines in rates within the sectors for the Elderly, Blacks, Female Family Heads and Whites and the increases for Children and Hispanics. There is evidence that the two population segments with the rising rates are closely interdependent. The rapidly growing

impoverished Hispanic population generates a correspondingly rapid growth in poverty among Children. But also, the high fertility rates within Hispanic families feeds back to cause greater Hispanic poverty. This evidence for Los Angeles/Long Beach mirrors the findings at the state level.

In the final segment of this article, explanations are offered to account for the disparate trends in poverty among the various demographic groups. These explanations suggest an agenda for further research. The lists should be viewed as hypotheses to be examined and statistically tested.

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# Appendix

## Trended Rates of Poverty Los Angeles/Long Beach: 1959–2000

Percentages							
Year	All Residents	Whites	Blacks	Hispanics	Female	Elderly	Children
1959	11.8	10.5	27.4	12.6	31.4	16.7	9.5
1960	11.9	10.5	27.2	13.0	31.3	16.4	9.9
1961	12.0	10.5	27.0	13.3	31.1	16.1	10.4
1962	12.0	10.5	26.8	13.7	31.0	15.8	10.8
1963	12.1	10.5	26.6	14.1	30.9	15.5	11.2
1964	12.2	10.4	26.3	14.4	30.7	15.3	11.6
1965	12.3	10.4	26.1	14.8	30.6	15.0	12.0
1966	12.4	10.4	25.9	15.1	30.4	14.7	12.4
1967	12.5	10.4	25.7	15.5	30.3	14.4	12.9
1968	12.6	10.4	25.5	15.8	30.1	14.1	13.3
1969	12.7	10.4	25.2	16.2	30.0	13.9	13.7
1970	12.7	10.3	25.0	16.5	29.8	13.6	14.1
1971	12.8	10.3	24.8	16.9	29.7	13.3	14.5
1972	12.9	10.3	24.6	17.2	29.5	13.0	14.9
1973	13.0	10.3	24.3	17.6	29.4	12.7	15.3
1974	13.1	10.3	24.1	18.0	29.3	12.5	15.8
1975	13.2	10.3	23.9	18.3	29.1	12.2	16.2
1976	13.3	10.2	23.7	18.7	29.0	11.9	16.6
1977	13.4	10.2	23.5	19.0	28.8	11.6	17.0
1978	13.5	10.2	23.2	19.4	28.7	11.3	17.4
1979	13.5	10.2	23.0	19.7	28.5	11.1	17.8
1980	13.6	10.2	22.8	20.1	28.4	10.8	18.2
1981	13.7	10.2	22.6	20.4	28.2	10.5	18.7
1982	13.8	10.1	22.4	20.8	28.1	10.2	19.1
1983	13.9	10.1	22.1	21.2	27.9	9.9	19.5
1984	14.0	10.1	21.9	21.5	27.8	9.7	19.9
1985	14.1	10.1	21.7	21.9	27.6	9.4	20.3
1986	14.2	10.1	21.5	22.2	27.5	9.1	20.7
1987	14.2	10.1	21.3	22.6	27.4	8.8	21.2
1988	14.3	10.0	21.0	22.9	27.2	8.5	21.6
1989	14.4	10.0	20.8	23.3	27.1	8.3	22.0
1990	14.5	10.0	20.6	23.6	26.9	8.0	22.4
1991	14.6	10.0	20.4	24.0	26.8	7.7	22.8

*continued*

## Appendix

*Continued*

<i>Percentages</i>							
<i>Year</i>	<i>All Residents</i>	<i>Whites</i>	<i>Blacks</i>	<i>Hispanics</i>	<i>Female</i>	<i>Elderly</i>	<i>Children</i>
1992	14.7	10.0	20.1	24.3	26.6	7.4	23.2
1993	14.8	10.0	19.9	24.7	26.5	7.1	23.6
1994	14.9	9.9	19.7	25.1	26.3	6.9	24.1
1995	14.9	9.9	19.5	25.4	26.2	6.6	24.5
1996	15.0	9.9	19.3	25.8	26.0	6.3	24.9
1997	15.1	9.9	19.0	26.1	25.9	6.0	25.3
1998	15.2	9.9	18.8	26.5	25.7	5.7	25.7
1999	15.3	9.9	18.6	26.8	25.6	5.5	26.1
2000	15.4	9.8	18.4	27.2	25.5	5.2	26.5

# Job Stability and Wage Progression Patterns among Early TANF Leavers

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*This article reports on first-year employment experiences of a randomly selected sample of 213 Illinois TANF leavers. Aggregate employment levels were 70 percent at exit, and leavers typically generated earnings from a single full-time job. However, employment often was unstable, so that only about one-fourth of leavers had the same job both at exit and when interviewed 10–11 months later. Employment instability resulted from the marginal or temporary nature of many jobs, as well as employment barriers such as health problems and lack of day care. Average wage levels easily exceeded the minimum wage and grew during the first year after exit, but nonetheless often were insufficient to provide incomes above the poverty level. The findings underscore the need to develop post-employment service strategies that assist persons in accessing work-related benefits such as child care and Medicaid, as well as improved income support strategies such as expansion of the Earned Income Tax Credit.*

Since the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunities Reconciliation Act of 1996 (PRWORA) established state Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) programs, public

assistance caseloads have declined nationally by over 40 percent (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 1999). While these caseload declines have led to optimism concerning the impact of TANF in reducing welfare dependency, they also have raised questions about the wellbeing of persons who have left TANF. Particularly troubling are early findings indicating that TANF leavers typically do not earn enough to raise incomes above the poverty level (Brauner & Loprest, 1999; Tweedie & Reichert, 1998).

A related issue not well addressed in early TANF studies concerns the stability of employment and the progression of wages over time. From a theoretical perspective, the assumption underlying optimistic visions of welfare reform is that TANF leavers will gain experience in early jobs, which will translate into human capital required for higher paying jobs (Becker, 1967). However, a competing view is that TANF leavers are likely to be consigned to a secondary component of a dual labor market, in which movement from low-paying and unstable jobs to higher income careers in primary labor markets is difficult (Gordon, 1972).

The employment experiences of TANF leavers are important in assessing both these theoretical perspectives and related public policy implications. This article reports on first year employment patterns of a random sample of TANF leavers in Illinois. We will emphasize leaver experiences with wage changes, job changes, and job loss, as well as factors associated with difficulties in maintaining employment. Based on these findings, recommendations for welfare policy and program development, as well as for additional research, are presented.

## PREVIOUS RESEARCH ON WELFARE AND WORK

Research has shown that employment and earnings levels are among the most important factors in predicting initial welfare entries, welfare exits, and welfare recidivism (Bane & Ellwood, 1994; Boisjoly, Harris, & Duncan, 1998; Harris, 1993, 1996; Pavetti, 1993). Harris (1993) found that two-thirds of all AFDC exits were related to increased earnings. Partially because these employment exits often do not succeed, welfare recycling or recidivism is common (Harris, 1996; Pavetti, 1993; Spalter-Roth, Burr, Hartmann, &

Shaw, 1995). For example, Pavetti (1993) found that almost two-thirds of women who left welfare for work returned to welfare at least once, and Harris (1996) reported that earnings reductions were the primary reason for the high number of returns to welfare. Wagner, Herr, Chang, and Brooks' (1998) longitudinal study of welfare recipients participating in a voluntary employment and training project in Chicago further suggests how unstable employment patterns contribute to frequent welfare recidivism. Most participants in their study lost initial jobs quickly. Although many were able to obtain other jobs and eventually achieve steady employment, this process took considerable time and often involved intermittent public assistance receipt.

Both the structural characteristics of jobs and the characteristics of workers are important in understanding why employment exits so often fail. Several studies have shown that the jobs held by current and former welfare recipients are usually low-paying and tenuous, largely because welfare recipients typically lack the education and other human capital required to obtain higher paying jobs (Edin & Lein, 1997; Pavetti, Holcomb, & Duke, 1995; Riccio, Friedlander, & Freedman, 1994). Welfare recipients' levels of education and amounts of job experience likewise have been found to predict success in exiting welfare (Pavetti, 1993; Pavetti & Acs, 1997).

Problems in accessing medical care, child care, transportation, and other support services also may undercut attempts to leave welfare for work (Pavetti, 1993; Edin & Lein, 1997). These problems, when coupled with low wage levels, stimulated several analyses suggesting that low-wage work did not result in substantial improvements in economic wellbeing for welfare recipients (Bane & Ellwood, 1994; Brooks & Buckner, 1996; Edin & Lein, 1997; Gueron & Pauley, 1991; Jencks, 1992;). Correspondingly, public policy debates have focused on developing programs and policies to better support low-wage work efforts. As a result, the Family Support Act of 1988 and several federal Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) waiver demonstration programs emphasized the availability of these support services and improved earnings disregard rates, as have many TANF programs (Hagen & Davis, 1994; U.S. General Accounting Office, 1998). The expansions of the Earned Income Credit for low-wage workers



during the 1990's also have been geared toward making low-wage work more economically attractive (Ozawa, 1995).

Personal difficulties of individuals, such as poor physical or mental health, substance abuse, and domestic violence, also have been shown to influence the work efforts of welfare mothers (Kalil, et al., 1998). In addition, analyses of welfare to work demonstration projects have found that recipients often lost jobs because of problems with absenteeism, punctuality, or not following work rules and responsibilities (Berg, Olson, & Conrad, 1991; Hershey & Pavetti, 1997).

Considerable evidence is available on the effectiveness of pre-TANF work programs conducted under federal AFDC waivers. Though a review of these program results is available elsewhere (Friedlander & Burtless, 1995; Gueron & Pauley, 1991), a few points are pertinent. On the positive side, evidence suggests that welfare programs that emphasized a rapid attachment to the work force often led to increased earnings and decreased reliance on welfare, and hence were seen as cost effective from the governmental perspective (Friedlander & Burtless, 1995; Gueron & Pauley, 1991). However, in terms of overall disposable income, program participants in the short run generally ended up little if any better off than control subjects in traditional non-work oriented welfare programs. This resulted from the low initial wage structure of jobs into which AFDC recipients typically exited; difficulties in advancing to higher paying jobs; reductions in welfare benefit receipt as earnings increased; and work-related costs not incurred by those who did not work (Edin & Lein, 1997; Friedlander & Burtless, 1995; Pavetti & Acs, 1997).

Since TANF implementation, many states have initiated studies to investigate the employment experiences and economic wellbeing of TANF leavers. Early results from these studies have found fairly high levels of employment among leavers, but have presented little information on how employment at welfare exit changes over time (Brauner & Loprest, 1999; Tweedie & Reichert, 1998). Neither has research to date examined wage impacts associated with job changes by TANF leavers, nor the most prevalent reasons that TANF leavers offer for leaving jobs. The study findings presented here take an initial step in addressing these issues.

## METHODS

### *Program Environment*

Because TANF programs vary between states, research on employment patterns among TANF leavers is needed in a variety of program environments. Both because of its size and program characteristics, Illinois provides one important such environment. One year after the implementation of state TANF programs, Illinois had the third highest TANF caseloads in the country (New York Times, 1999). Like most states, Illinois emphasizes a rapid attachment to the labor force through mandatory job search soon after recipients enter the program (State of Illinois, 1997). However, Illinois also has been ranked highly among states in terms of developing policies designed to reward and reinforce work efforts (Center on Hunger and Poverty, 1998). Illinois parallels other states in continuing Medicaid coverage for up to a year for those leaving welfare for work, and coverage past a year is available for children. Working leavers also are eligible for day care assistance, with a sliding scale of co-payments based on income. Those TANF recipients who combine work with welfare are allowed to keep \$2 of every \$3 earned, which is one of the more generous state earnings disregard policies. Unlike most states, Illinois does not apply time limits as long as a recipient is working at least 30 hours per week, but does follow the federal policy of requiring work within two years for continued receipt.

### *Sample*

The study findings are based on telephone interviews conducted with a random sample of persons who left TANF in December, 1997, about six months after the Illinois TANF program began. The sample was stratified to allow regional comparisons. For sampling purposes, persons were included in the sampling frame only if they left in December 1997, and also remained off TANF in January 1998. This "two-months off" criterion was intended to assure that those interviewed really left the TANF program. That is, previous research has shown that many welfare recipients may leave welfare temporarily due to administrative errors, temporary failure to comply with program requirements, or misunderstandings with caseworkers, and then quickly be reinstated once corrective actions are taken (Pavetti, 1993).

Applying these criteria, a total of 4,050 Illinois TANF cases were closed in December 1997. From this sampling frame, 700 were randomly selected to be approached for interviews. Of these, 30.5 percent or 213 leavers were interviewed. Most of the non-response was due to inability to locate subjects, as opposed to refusals from those we were able to contact. Less than 10 percent of those with whom contacts were made declined to be interviewed.

The average respondent in the resulting sample was about 30 years old and had two children, and three-fourths of respondents were not living with a spouse or unmarried cohabitant. Respondents typically had limited education, with over two-thirds having received at most a high school diploma. Slightly over half were African-Americans, while 40 percent were white. The average of 5.6 years ever having received welfare indicates that respondents generally had considerable experience with the welfare system.

A comparison of respondents and non-respondents using administrative data provided by The Illinois Department of Human Services (IDHS) indicated that the sample closely resembled the population on most important variables. Respondents did not differ significantly from non-respondents on gender, age, number of children, and educational level. Respondents were slightly less likely to be married than non-respondents (21.9 versus 26.9 percent). In addition, respondents were somewhat more likely than non-respondents to be either white or African-American, and less likely to be Hispanic.

### *Survey Development and Conduct*

The authors developed the survey instrument in collaboration with IDHS staff. In addition to detailing employment experiences since leaving welfare, respondents were asked about their reasons for leaving welfare, barriers to employment, use of support services since leaving welfare, hardships experienced before and after leaving welfare, and family and demographic characteristics. Although the survey design is not longitudinal, useful information was captured on employment dynamics not available from other cross-sectional studies. Respondents were asked about their employment both when they left TANF and most recently, which allowed for analysis of job stability and wage changes.

Based on addresses provided by IDHS, all leavers selected for study were mailed a letter that described the study and offered \$15 if they would complete an interview about their experiences since leaving TANF. A toll free number was provided to contact if they were interested. Calls also were made to potential respondents based on IDHS provided telephone numbers. Because many addresses and telephone numbers were outdated, other data bases subsequently were used to find updated address and telephone information. For those recipients for whom working telephone numbers were found, at least 12 calls were made on various days and times of day before the case was closed as a non-response.

Trained survey research staff conducted the telephone interviews, which generally lasted from 20 to 30 minutes. Interviews were conducted in October and November 1998, 10 to 11 months after the December 1997 TANF exit used as selection criteria. At the time of interviews, 77 percent of respondents had not returned to TANF at any time before being interviewed, and 8 percent had returned to TANF at some time but were off again when interviewed. About 15 percent were back on TANF when interviewed.

## FINDINGS

This section presents study findings on respondent employment patterns. Aggregate data are presented first on work status, hours worked, types of work, and wage levels both at TANF exit and at interview. To demonstrate the dynamic nature of post-TANF employment patterns, we then examine how the employment patterns of respondents changed during the period between TANF exits and study interviews.

### EMPLOYMENT RATES, WAGES, AND TYPES OF WORK

Slightly over 70 percent of study leavers were employed when they left TANF (Table 1). Employment rates had declined slightly to 64.8 percent at the time of interviews 10 to 11 months later, but this decline was not statistically significant. While slightly over 35 percent of leavers thus were unemployed when interviewed, about one-third of these lived in households in which spouses or other household members were working. As a result, about one-fourth of all respondents were living in a household in which no one was working.

Table 1

*Household employment patterns for study leavers (N = 213)*

	% At Exit (n)	% At Interview (n)
<b>Total</b>		
Employed	70.4 (150)	64.8 (138)
Unemployed but other household member employed	10.8 (23)	11.7 (25)
Unemployed and no other household member employed	18.8 (40)	23.5 (50)
	100.0 (213)	100.0 (213)
<b>Cases with no Partner Present</b>		
Employed	73.5 (122)	67.1 (108)
Unemployed but other household member employed	4.2 (7)	4.3 (7)
Unemployed and no other household member employed	22.3 (37)	28.6 (46)
	100.0 (166)	100.0 (161)
<b>Cases with Partner Present</b>		
Employed, but partner unemployed	26.1 (12)	23.5 (12)
Employed and partner employed	32.6 (15)	35.3 (18)
Unemployed, but partner or other household member employed	34.8 (16)	35.3 (18)
Unemployed, and no other household member employed	6.5 (3)	5.9 (3)
	100.0 (46)	100.0 (51)

Working leavers typically found jobs that approximated full-time work. The mean weekly hours worked at the time of exit was 36.4, and this number remained stable at 37.4 hours at interview. Both at exit and at interview, only about one-fifth of working leavers were working less than 30 hours per week. Further, over 90 percent of working leavers were able to generate their work hours from a single job, indicating that the norm for working leavers was full-time work at a single job.

The wage levels of leavers generally were well above the minimum wage, and mean hourly wages rose slightly from \$7.36 for those working at exit to \$7.95 for those working when interviewed. This indicates that there was potential for earnings growth. However, low wages remained a problem for many leavers, which is reflected when the recent employment experiences of leavers who were unemployed when interviewed but had worked since leaving TANF are included in the analysis. About 15 percent of respondents who had worked since leaving TANF earned the minimum wage (\$5.15) or less on their current or most recent job, and 35 percent earned \$6 per hour or less. Assuming that a leaver relied totally upon her own earnings, a wage level of at least \$7.20 per hour would be required to raise a family of three above the poverty level. Over half of study leavers earned less than this wage level on their current or most recent job.

Respondents who were unemployed when interviewed but had worked since leaving TANF typically reported lower wages on their most recent jobs than did workers who were working when interviewed. Thirty-seven percent of these unemployed leavers earned the minimum wage or less on their most recent job, and 57 percent earned \$6 an hour or less. Mean hourly earnings on the most recent job for these leavers were \$6.62, or \$1.33 an hour less than mean hourly wages for those who were working when interviewed.

Nearly three-fourths of working leavers had service-related jobs when they left TANF. Sales/cashier (23.5 percent of working leavers) and clerical (18.8 percent) were the most common service jobs, and substantial numbers also worked in hospitality services and hospital services. While some patterns of occupational job shifting occurred between exit and interviews, respondents typically remained in service-related jobs.

#### EMPLOYMENT DIFFERENCES BY MARITAL OR CO-HABITATION STATUS

Slightly over one-fifth of study respondents lived with a partner, either a spouse or an unmarried co-habitant. Table 1 reveals variations within overall employment patterns according to whether respondents lived with such a partner. Those

leavers not living with a partner were more likely to be working both at exit and interview than their married or co-habiting counterparts. However, this gap had narrowed by the time of interviews, because employment rates for those living with a partner remained stable while rates for those not living with a partner declined slightly.

Because partners often worked, those living with a partner were much less likely to live in households where no one worked. Only 6 percent of those living with a partner lived in households where no one was working at the time of interview, as compared to nearly 29 percent of those not living with a partner. In addition, about one-third of those living with a partner lived in households in which both the leaver and the partner were employed. As a result, those living with partners reported mean household incomes of \$1,677 in the month immediately preceding interviews, as compared to only \$932 for those not living with a partner. While leavers with partners also had on average higher income needs because of larger household sizes, per capita income differences remained when household size was taken in account.

### JOB TURNOVER AND WAGE CHANGES

The similarity of aggregate employment levels at exit and interview may suggest fairly stable employment patterns for TANF leavers. However, more detailed analysis of individual employment patterns reveals considerable movement both into and out of jobs over the 10 to 11 month period between exits and interviews. Table 2 shows that 87.3 percent of study leavers worked at some time during the study period, and correspondingly that only 12.7 percent were continually unemployed. However, employment frequently was sporadic. Only 51.6 percent of study leavers were working both when they left TANF and when interviewed, and just 38.0 percent of those leavers who were working at exit still had the same job when interviewed. About 19 percent of leavers were employed at exit but unemployed when interviewed, while 13 percent were unemployed at exit but employed when interviewed. These sporadic employment patterns were similar for the partners of leavers, although partners who were working at exit were more likely to have the same job when interviewed than leavers were.

Table 2

*Employment patterns between exit and interview for study leavers and their spouses/partners*

	Percent of leavers ( <i>n</i> = 213)	Percent of spouse/partners ( <i>n</i> = 38)*
Employed some since leaving	87.3 (186)	76.3 (29)
Employed both at exit and Interview	51.6 (110)	55.3 (21)
Employed at interview/Unemployed at exit	13.1 (28)	13.2 (5)
Unemployed at interview/Employed at exit	18.8 (40)	7.9 (3)
Unemployed at exit and Interview— some work Between	3.8 (8)	0.0 (0)
Continually unemployed since left	12.7 (27)	23.7 (9)
Still have same job as at exit	38.0 (57)**	58.3 (14)**

\* This number includes the employment patterns for spouses/partners only for those cases in which the respondent was living with a partner both at exit and interview.

\*\* The base for this percentage calculation is the number of respondents who were employed at exit.

Job tenure data further illustrate the short-term nature of many jobs for TANF leavers. For those who were working when interviewed, median tenure on their current job was six months, and over one-third had been in their current jobs three months or less. For those who had worked since leaving TANF but were currently unemployed, median job tenure on their most recent job was only three months.

Respondents who were employed both at exit and at interview frequently experienced wage gains between these time points (Table 3). The mean wage gain for these respondents was 71 cents per hour between exit and interview, and 58.6 percent had received wage increases. In comparison, 26.0 percent had the same wage as when they left, and 15.4 percent had wages decline.

While the short job tenures for many leavers suggest that spells of unemployment between jobs may be problematic, job



Table 3

*Wage change patterns for leavers employed both at TANF exit and when interviewed*

	<i>Total with jobs both at exit and interview (n = 104)*</i>	<i>Kept same job (n = 52)</i>	<i>Had different job (n = 52)</i>
Percent with:			
Wage increases	58.6 (61)	50.0 (26)	67.3 (35)
No change	26.0 (27)	40.4 (21)	11.5 (6)
Wage decreases	15.4 (16)	9.6 (5)	21.2 (11)
Mean wage change	\$0.71	\$0.41	\$1.02

\* Six (6) respondents who worked both at exit and when interviewed were not included in this analysis, due to incomplete wage data.

changes often led to wage growth. In fact, respondents who had changed jobs were more likely to have received wage increases than those who kept the same job (Table 3). Slightly over two-thirds of those working respondents who had a different job when interviewed than at exit from TANF were receiving higher hourly wages, as opposed to 50 percent of those who had kept the same job. The average hourly wage gains for those who changed jobs was \$1.02, as compared to \$.41 for those who kept the same job.

In sum, the prevalence and nature of job turnover is complex. The nearly one-fifth of respondents who were working at exit but not at interview suggests that many working respondents had difficulty finding new jobs after job loss, and about one-fifth of those who changed jobs experienced wage reductions. However, changing jobs resulted in greater aggregate wage growth for those who remained employed, at least over the relatively short time period of this study.

#### WHY DO TANF LEAVERS HAVE TROUBLE FINDING OR KEEPING JOBS?

Respondents who had worked since exiting but were unemployed at the time of interview were asked why they had lost

their jobs. Analysis of the open-end responses for these 48 unemployed leavers again demonstrates the diversity of employment experiences, with both the structural characteristics of jobs and the personal characteristics of recipients prominently mentioned. Twenty-nine (29) percent of these unemployed leavers said they had lost jobs involuntarily. Most of these involuntary job losses resulted from the temporary or seasonal nature of the jobs, while a smaller number were due to firings. Another one-fourth indicated they had quit their jobs because of selected job characteristics, including low wages, inconvenient hours, and poor work environments. Health reasons or pregnancy were offered by slightly over one-fifth of respondents, with the health reasons about evenly split between respondents and their children. Finally, job support issues such as inadequate child care were mentioned by about 10 percent of these respondents.

All respondents also were asked a series of closed questions concerning whether they had experienced selected barriers to employment. Table 4 shows that various child care problems, transportation, and additional expenses related to work each were reported as barriers by over one-fourth of all respondents. Unemployed respondents were significantly more likely than employed respondents to report barriers related to health, transportation, and caring for an elderly or disabled relative. Differences in self-reported health barriers were particularly large, with 41 percent of unemployed but only 13 percent of employed respondents indicating such barriers.

The educational levels and ages of the youngest children also were compared for employed and unemployed leavers. Educational levels were found to be significantly different, with 71 percent of those with a high school degree or GED working at interview compared to 47 percent for those without these educational credentials (chi square = 10.2;  $p < .01$ ). No differences in work patterns were found based on whether or not a respondent had a child under age three.

To explore the extent to which leavers experienced multiple employment barriers, an index was constructed that included six of the self-reported employment barriers plus whether or not the respondent had completed a high school education or GED. The six self-reported barriers included were health, cost of child care,

Table 4

*Percentage of respondents indicating selected employment barriers*

	Total ( <i>n</i> = 213)	Employed when interviewed ( <i>n</i> = 138)	Unemployed when interviewed ( <i>n</i> = 75)
Health	23.0 (49)	13.0 (18)*	41.3 (31)*
Paying for child care	33.3 (71)	32.6 (45)	34.7 (26)
Finding someone to care for children	36.6 (78)	35.5 (49)	38.7 (29)
Finding child care at needed hours	28.6 (61)	26.1 (36)	33.3 (25)
Child care transportation	17.4 (37)	15.2 (21)	21.3 (16)
Caring for elderly or disabled relative	9.4 (20)	5.1 (7)*	17.3 (13)*
Additional expenses related to work	29.1 (62)	26.8 (37)	33.3 (25)
Transportation to and from work	29.6 (63)	24.6 (34)*	38.7 (29)*

Notes: Chi square difference of proportions—\*  $p < .05$ .

finding a child care provider, child care transportation, caring for an elderly relative, and transportation to work. Respondents had an average of 1.7 of these seven barriers, with about half of the sample having two or more barriers. Unemployed leavers were significantly more likely to indicate these barriers than employed respondents, as they reported an average of 2.3 barriers versus 1.4 barriers for employed respondents ( $t = 3.63$ ;  $p < .01$ ).

While unemployed respondents thus had several problems which differentiated them from their working counterparts, employed respondents still reported fairly substantial problems in some areas, particularly in child care. The burden of child care costs also was suggested by responses to a question on out-of-pocket child care costs; of those reporting that they had paid child care arrangements, monthly out-of-pocket child care costs averaged \$172.

## DISCUSSION

The findings from this study suggest both reasons for optimism and caution in interpreting the employment patterns of TANF leavers. Like initial TANF studies from other states (Brauner & Loprest, 1999), we found that Illinois TANF leavers typically were working at exit, and aggregate employment levels had declined only slightly one year later. Those who worked generally earned wages well above the minimum wage, and average wage levels at the time of interviews had risen. Further, most leavers who were employed both at exit and when interviewed had achieved wage gains. This suggests that leavers who maintain employment often gain job experience that improves their human capital and results in wage growth.

However, the jobs into which TANF recipients exited often did not last. Average job tenures were short, and only about one-fourth of study leavers held the same job both at exit and when interviewed. While some respondents lost work because of personal factors such as health problems, the temporary nature and poor quality of jobs were the most common reasons for job loss. Both the findings on high job turnover and reasons for job loss are consistent with pre-TANF research studies (Edin & Lein, 1997; Harris, 1996; Pavetti, 1993). This consistency should not be surprising because, as Boisjoly, Harris, and Duncan (1998) have noted, TANF largely ignored job quality issues.

The sporadic nature of work is consistent with the pathways model of welfare exit developed by Herr and Wagner (1995), which emphasizes that welfare recipients frequently cycle through several jobs before obtaining stable employment. There are several implications to this model for public policy. First, if it is recognized that initial employment efforts often are unsuccessful, the development of services that help those who lose jobs find new ones quickly appears important, as does the need for continued safety net supports as persons experience unemployment spells between jobs. Perhaps more fundamentally, the provision of a range of post-employment services may be necessary to improve the probabilities of successful work efforts. For example, the Project Match service model developed by Herr and Wagner (1995) provides follow-up counseling and trouble-shooting to

those who exit welfare for jobs, and also facilitates the provision of support services such as child care. These tasks are consistent with potential case management roles envisioned for TANF case-workers (Hagen, 1999), except that the provision of services does not end at the time of welfare exit.

The wage levels received by most study leavers also present reasons for concern. Consistent with early findings from other states, average wage levels often are inadequate to raise family incomes above the poverty level if they are the sole sources of income (Brauner & Loprest, 1999; Tweedie & Reichert, 1998). When coupled with study findings on job instability and the concentration of leavers in service jobs, these wage levels again raise the question of whether TANF leavers will work largely in secondary labor markets with limited chances of advancement. Information on the job experiences of leavers over a longer time period is needed to address this issue.

Both the job instability and wage level findings underscore the importance of income supports for working TANF leavers. Assuring that low-wage workers receive the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) appears particularly important in this regard. While this credit has been expanded substantially in the 1990's (Ozawa, 1995), previous research has shown that welfare recipients often do not receive or understand it (Anderson, 1998). This suggests the need for further information dissemination efforts regarding the tax credit, as well as programs to assist low-income persons with tax preparation. At least part of such information dissemination could occur in TANF agencies, both in conjunction with employment and training activities and in exit interviews when persons leave TANF. Tax counseling projects for low income persons, which rely heavily on volunteers, also have helped persons in several cities obtain the EITC and could serve as useful program models (Center for Law and Human Services, 1998). In addition, further expansion of EITC credit amounts and the development of related state tax credits merit consideration, particularly given on-going policy debates regarding how to spend both federal and state budget surpluses.

Study findings parallel previous research on the importance of selected employment barriers. Respondents with poor educational credentials were significantly less likely to be employed,

and child care and transportation barriers were reported by substantial numbers of respondents. Health problems were frequently cited as a reason for losing jobs, and unemployed respondents were much more likely than employed respondents to report health problems. These findings reinforce the importance of the availability of health care and child care services for the working poor. Social workers and policy analysts should continue to advocate for the development of these critical support systems, and can play critical policy and program development roles in related service implementation.

Finally, the analysis of employment patterns by marital status again demonstrates the extremely difficult task of income provision facing low-income single working parents. While they were more likely to work than their counterparts who lived with a partner, single respondents fared considerably worse from an income perspective. Two-adult families benefit from the possibility of having two earners, or alternatively from choosing work opportunities according to which adult has the greatest earnings potential. The presence of the second adult also provides greater flexibility in making child care arrangements.

### IMPLICATIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

While this study has provided useful findings on initial income growth and employment stability patterns for a sample of TANF leavers, additional research is needed to examine these topics more fully. In particular, longitudinal studies that track the employment experiences of TANF leavers over several years would allow a more extensive assessment of wage growth patterns. This also would permit a detailed elaboration concerning whether leavers move into more stable career paths after gaining employment experience, including time frames over which such career growth may occur. Conducting such studies with sufficient samples to allow comparisons of employment experiences across varying local labor markets would be particularly useful. Research on whether the receipt of child care subsidies, the EITC, medical coverage, and other support services affects the stability of employment and prospects for wage growth also is needed.

The impact of job changes and job loss by TANF leavers also needs to be better understood. This study found that leavers who

changed jobs were more likely to have received wage increases than those who remained on the same job. Yet, many leavers who lost jobs had not found new employment by the time they were interviewed. It may be that the job changers who experienced wage gains typically made proactive moves to new jobs with higher wages, while others sought new jobs only after losing jobs. Research could identify the extent to which proactive job search strategies are used by persons who already are employed, as well as the job search methods and information sources used. Additional information also is needed on the lengths of unemployment spells generally encountered between job loss and reemployment, and the roles that social service systems play during these employment transitions. The relative ease with which those who lose jobs can re-apply for TANF is especially important in this regard.

This points to a final concern often overlooked in early leaver studies. That is, aggregate employment levels in TANF leaver studies generally are in the 50–70 percent range at exit, which indicates that substantial numbers are not working at the time they leave TANF. Little is yet known about the survival strategies of this subset of leavers, or about why they left TANF without being employed. Examining the role of TANF sanctions and leaver interactions with social service caseworkers appears to be important in investigating these issues. It also would be interesting to determine whether those who leave TANF without being employed subsequently are forced into lower paying jobs than those who are employed at exit.

## CONCLUSION

Proponents of TANF argue that the program will lead to improved economic wellbeing through an increased focus on work, while skeptics counter that insufficient and poorly paid jobs will result in poor outcomes for TANF leavers. The findings from this study provide a more complex and dynamic picture of post-TANF employment experiences. While many leavers find good jobs and experience at least modest earnings gains if they can maintain employment, many others face uncertain job tenures and periods of unemployment. An important challenge for research is to learn more from both the employment successes and

failures of TANF leavers, so that public policies can be refined to maximize the probability that TANF work exits will result in economic security.

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# “Welfare Reform: A Social Work Perspective for Assessing Success”

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*The Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996 has instituted major changes in providing for the poor in the United States. This article examines the importance of evaluating the impact of this legislation from a social work perspective. Using Mannheim as a theoretical orientation, welfare reform is examined in relation to dominant ideologies of the 90's. The salience of social work research, particularly qualitative research, in evaluating welfare reform outcomes is explored. Social workers are encouraged to challenge current ideology and utilize social work expertise to conduct research and disseminate information documenting the achievements and misfortunes of clients as a result of welfare reform.*

## INTRODUCTION

Although The Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996 was enacted nearly half a decade ago, the impact of this major piece of social legislation is still being felt nationwide. Welfare reform has prompted major changes in how Americans attend to the needs of the poor in each of our communities. The consequences of welfare reform are numerous, involve multiple systems, and will require evaluation over an extended time period.

Using the writings of Karl Mannheim for theoretical guidance, this article examines dominant ideological tenets that gave rise to The Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996. An utopian based, social work perspective for analyzing the effects of welfare is offered emphasizing the value of qualitative research. Various modes of disseminating research

and information describing the effects of welfare reform for clients are provided.

### WELFARE REFORM

Coined as "new federalism" and couched in a spirit of self-sufficiency, the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996 represents a major change in the provision of benefits for the poor in the United States. In addition to spending reductions in low-income programs, estimated at 55 million dollars over six years, this historic piece of legislation continues to shift social responsibility for the needy from the federal level to state and local jurisdictions.

As the various tenets of Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996 become enacted, social workers are seeing the consequences of the law for clients. Unfortunately, the ramifications of welfare reform for the poor are many and difficult to ascertain as state and local programs vary in their definition of welfare policy and implementation of welfare programming. Field research and qualitative data from communities and agencies can provide a deeper understanding of the meaning of welfare reform for poor families and supplement national, state, and county findings focusing on welfare expenditures and enrollment figures. The problem for social workers is that qualitative research is time consuming and expensive and requires a conscious, concerted effort to implement in the context of contemporary social work practice.

As a result of the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996, Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) has been replaced with Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), a new federal block grant. Although eroded over the years by inflation, AFDC cash assistance has been the stalwart welfare program for poor parents and children in the United States for the past five decades. In recent years, and as a prelude to welfare reform legislation, some states received special waivers to experiment with various AFDC provisions, mainly work incentives and mandates. TANF extends this "customizing of programs by waiver" logic by providing states and locales with even greater discretion in determining eligibility requirements and income assistance levels for poor families and children.

In theory, welfare reform is implemented in a reductionistic manner. States develop strategic plans for using TANF block grant monies that are consistent with federal guidelines and mandates concerning work requirements and payment levels. States, in turn, ask local areas (often counties) to create service delivery plans, compatible with federal and state regulations, to address the needs of local constituents. The net result is a proliferation of state and local initiatives, each unique in name and substance, that reinforce the two main federal directives emphasizing employment and time limits on financial assistance.

### MANNHEIM'S IDEOLOGY AND UTOPIA

Welfare reform, like any legislative act, constitutes a product of a social time and place. To more fully grasp the meaning and consequences of welfare reform requires an appreciation of the social-psychological context and setting from which it arose. Just as politicians create and enact laws using the logic and terminology of the time, researchers approach evaluation of social legislation influenced by the prevailing forces and attitudes that define life.

When attempting to analyze the sociology of knowledge, the work of Karl Mannheim is particularly helpful in facilitating a wider, structural view of knowledge acquisition. For Mannheim (1952), the meaning of a phenomenon "can be determined only with reference to the conceptual system to which it belongs" (p. 9). Ideas, concepts, and measures are not seen as isolated, self-contained units but are viewed as parts of a wider social structure.

The manner in which a person conceives of a notion or a phenomenon is partially a consequence of one's social and historical setting. Social and political processes affect thinking and behavior in a multitude of ways. Consequently, to grasp the prevalent outlook or perspectives of the time is to identify the various invisible forces underlying thought, concern, and action.

To assist in understanding contemporary opinions and positions, Mannheim (1936) describes two main categories of ideas, ideology and utopia. From an *ideological view*, ideas are seen as a function of the person(s) who holds them and one's position in a social structure (p. 56). Ideology "signifies that the politician's

feeling for reality took precedence over and displaced the scholastic, contemplative modes of thought and of life" (p. 72). Ideological thinking can be full of deception and distortion and works to prohibit true recognition of situations which are incongruent with a person or groups own interests. Ideological thinking is often offered by a dominant social-historical group or class and "means opinions, statements, propositions, and systems of ideas are not taken at their face value but are interpreted in the light of the life-situation of the one who expresses them" (p. 56).

*Utopia* refers to visionary thinking, void of the bonds of an existing order, that is less responsive to time and social place. Utopia represents freedom from political and economic evaluations and rule. An utopian outlook "seeks to understand and interpret particular insights from an ever more inclusive context" (Mannheim, 1936, p. 105). Utopian thinking breaks away from the perspectives of the status quo in an attempt to "bring the conceptual system and empirical reality into closer contact with one another" (p. 200).

Written to challenge the logic and validity of knowledge, the writings of Karl Mannheim serve as a reminder that the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996 is a product of a group of politicians promoting popular beliefs in a particular social historical time and place. Mannheim (1952) can be an important influence in recognizing that ideology influences policy formation and analysis, and can be traced to "concrete groups, their aspirations, and their interactions" (p. 20).

### DOMINANT INTERESTS OF THE 1990'S

Any attempt to analyze the social world in which one lives and works should be considered from the onset as partial and incomplete. Thus, the hope is to identify and describe some of the more salient social or psychological forces that have served to underlie and shape individual and collective thought and behavior during the decade.

One approach is to identify the presence of dominant interests, also known as ideologies or sets of beliefs, in a social structure. Ever-changing, ideological beliefs guide thought and help convince people of the righteousness of specific ideas and actions.

Ideological tenets sway scientists in their approach to a research topic and the manner in which a particular substantive domain is conceptualized. Ideologies are important vehicles for transmitting the values of the prevailing social order to individuals and groups.

Several dominant belief systems can be identified concerning the formation and implementation of the Welfare Reform Act of 1996. These positions include:

*Fiscal Responsibility*—Emphasis is placed on decreasing the number of welfare recipients for the purpose of reducing spending on welfare. This is an accounting-business perspective that seeks to cut people off welfare to curtail the expenditure portion of governmental ledgers (Kilty, Richardson, & Segal, 1997).

*Self Sufficiency*—Efforts to reduce dependency on public assistance are stressed. Proponents differentiate between short-term recipients, long-term dependents, and repeat users of income maintenance programs. Public assistance is perceived as a temporary commitment. Long-term and repeated use of public assistance are viewed negatively (Bane & Ellwood, 1994).

*Less Eligible*—Requirements and procedures surrounding receipt of public assistance are conceived in ways so that individuals do not enjoy receiving welfare (Garvin and Tropman, 1992, p. 8). This incorporates a punitive tone suggesting only those in dire financial circumstances should even consider applying for public assistance.

*Traditional Families*—Marriage and two-parent child rearing practices are encouraged. Welfare reform is viewed as a means of reinforcing traditional family relationships among the poor while discouraging out-of-wedlock pregnancies and child rearing (Blank, 1996).

*The Primacy of Work*—Employment in the private workplace is a goal for all. Parents with dependent children need to find and maintain work to provide sustenance for the family. Availability of jobs and mediating factors that constrain employment (e.g. the lack of education, the absence of employment experience, the age or special needs of dependent children, or the presence of disabilities or special needs) are de-emphasized.

*State and Local Control*—A strong desire for home rule has emerged in America. The notion that states and local jurisdictions should



define and address their own needs is prevalent. Oversight and governance at the state and local levels is preferred over federal intervention.

These are popular beliefs from American culture embraced in the formation of the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996. Note how the legislative title alone signals the importance of individualism and work in the statute.

To understand the perspective of politicians in constructing welfare reform necessitates the consideration of key ideologies, such as those noted above, that undergird the form and substance of the law. Mannheim refers to this as "relationism" where ideas expressed are related "to the concrete situation which led to their expression" (Mandelbaum, 1938, p. 76). Thus, using Mannheim's orientation, the Welfare Reform Act of 1996 represents a piece of social legislation connected to a social order and its beliefs.

### A SOCIAL WORK PERSPECTIVE

Human service professionals strive for objectivity in scientific inquiry and research, but like other people are vulnerable to personal motivations, social pressures, and the political context of an era (Kilty & Meenaghan, 1995). While specific attitudes vary, social workers share interests with many citizens in reinforcing fiscal responsibility in government, promoting effective administration of human services, enhancing self-sufficiency, preserving family life, and encouraging meaningful work experiences. Core cultural values, in one fashion or another, act upon all of us.

One way social workers can be distinguished from others involves their adherence to long held professional ideals. Most notable are commitments to social-economic justice and human dignity. Social workers hold a common bond in believing that people deserve fair and reasonable access to basic resources (e.g. food, housing, employment, education, and health care). Control over resource allocation and a just distribution of resources are important considerations in social work practice (Reid and Billups, 1986). Social workers, reflecting utopian ideals, often approach human strife in a *client driven* fashion with primary consideration given to the needs of clients—placing human distress above the

ability to procure goods or services. This contrasts markedly from a *resource driven* approach where client needs are cast in terms of the availability of existing resources and services (Long & Holle, 1997, p. 231). In the 90s, the resource driven outlook appeals to the interests of the dominant social order and represents an ideology based mentality.

From the onset, social workers have been skeptical as to how welfare reform would protect the poor from a predominantly low wage, part-time U.S. labor market and improve "access to jobs, medical coverage, quality child care, and paid family leave" (Piotrkowski & Kessler-Sklar, 1996, p. 546). Social workers question whether these, and other structural flaws in the economy, constitute serious constraints for recipients hoping to break away from public assistance programs, escape poverty, and establish quality living (Poole, 1996).

Given social work's humanitarian commitment, emphasis on the social environment, client-centered focus, and utopian mentality; evaluating how large scale policy initiatives like welfare reform effect the dignity of human life is a logical mandate for the profession. Without such a commitment, social work practice could be readily reduced to simply helping clients survive and cope with the "micro aspects of human strife" or what Meyer (1993) describes as "the least complex, narrowest, most 'doable,' private or internal aspects of cases" (pp. 6-7).

Unfortunately, a call for social worker practitioners to engage in research examining the ramifications of welfare reform needs to be tempered by current "realities" in social work practice. Social workers laboring in the trenches of day-to-day practice often find themselves overwhelmed by large caseloads, multi-need clients, paperwork, and severe time constraints. Consequently, inclinations toward the study of welfare reform by colleagues engaged in direct service stand the risk of being relegated to an ancillary professional obligation or pushed to "off-work" hours. It is reasonable to expect that front-line social workers, who directly observe the ramifications of welfare reform for their clients, will consider giving little priority to research on this topic or political-policy issues in general (Domanski, 1998).

Given the hectic state of social work practice, the real risk is that practice based research will become under-represented in

the post-welfare reform research literature. If this occurs, many of the trials and tribulations experienced by social work clients as a result of welfare reform could escape scientific scrutiny in favor of research driven by those in power and their ideological base (Powers, Meenaghan, & Toomey, 1985, p. 4).

It is important to note that social workers in academic or research settings, who by lieu of their positions are often one step removed from direct practice, frequently rely on survey research and secondary data analysis to empirically examine social phenomenon like welfare reform. Indeed, quantitative research can be helpful in identifying the characteristics of children affected by welfare reform (Smith and Yeung, 1998) and for determining welfare exit rates using subgroup analysis (Kost and Ersing, 1998). Yet, this kind of research yields limited insight into the daily lives of people encountering welfare reform.

The importance of generating grounded theory by social workers, especially concerning new phenomenon, should not be underestimated. *Grounded theory* is the enterprise of discovering concepts and formulating theory from systematically obtained and analyzed data (Glaser & Strauss, 1967, p. 1). It is common in scientific inquiry, often field research, to find that "one generates conceptual categories or their properties from evidence; then the evidence from which the category emerged is used to illustrate the concept" (Glaser & Strauss, 1967, p. 23). Welfare reform by definition denotes change and newness. Beyond the innovative rules and language of welfare reform, the lives of public assistance recipients are being altered. Without utopian based grounded theory, it will be difficult for scientists to begin to think about, conceptualize, or categorize the experiences of public assistance recipients. As welfare reform is implemented, sensitivity is needed to both client hardships and achievements. Qualitative analysis of welfare reform by community and agency based social workers is needed to acquire grounded knowledge and to advance a thorough, more inclusive, conceptualization of needs.

### EVALUATING WELFARE REFORM: OUTCOMES

Goals for evaluating program, policy, or legislative effectiveness are often stated in vague or grandiose terms, rendering them

difficult for use in outcome research (Rubin & Babbie, 1997). How would you respond if asked to identify the purpose of welfare and the goals of the Welfare Reform Act of 1996? Idealistically, social workers would hope that welfare programs would enhance the capability of clients to cope with life in ways that are satisfying and promote realization of aspirations (Compton & Galloway, 1975). At a macro-level, and irrespective of their political persuasion or strategy for promoting change, social workers seek welfare reform aimed at the elimination of poverty (Belcher & Fandetti, 1995).

Using Mannheim and the notion of ideology, one would expect the creators of welfare reform to utilize outcome evaluation stressing various accounting criteria: budgetary relief, cost-effective utilization of services, changes in the number of recipients on welfare rolls, and back to work ratios (Kilty & Meenaghan, 1995). Indeed, since the advent of welfare reform, news accounts seem to dwell on shrinking welfare rolls and the ability of states and counties to move welfare recipients into work.

However, if welfare reform is to be held to higher, humanitarian standards such as self actualization and the reduction of poverty, this research will need to be promulgated within and by the social work profession. Be assured, without a social work perspective, economic kinds of measures will render a restricted and distorted picture of the success of welfare reform.

Social workers, inspired by utopian ideals, dedicate their careers to promoting the well being of clients. Before welfare reform, social workers were skeptical and critical of the "safety net" approach for providing services (Ozawa & Lum, 1996). Now that welfare reform has occurred, the fate of disadvantaged families and children is even more uncertain. Social work is unique in that it is client-driven and as such dictates concern for client satisfaction. Thus, while ideological thinking points to employment of welfare recipients as an indicator of success in welfare reform, the more utopian (idealistic) social work perspective introjects interest in the type of jobs available, the prospect for long-term employment, benefit packages, and the size and commitment of companies hiring former welfare recipients.

Most will agree that "An informed public policy requires outcome assessments of programs initiated to resolve key societal

problems" (Gordon and Herson, 1998, p. 1 ). For social workers, it is the criteria and measuring systems that are set in place by various constituencies to gauge the success of welfare reform that constitutes concern. Decentralization and local control of social services allows states and communities great freedom and provides variability in evaluating the effectiveness of welfare reform.

With few exceptions, the selection of criteria by politicians and researchers in evaluation is inherently linked to the orientation of the actor, ideology or utopia. Consequently, it is essential that "In deriving outcome criteria, one should not be confined to the goals of a program or to its underlying theory [premises]. It is important to be aware of unintended consequences of a program . . . Thus, a wider perspective needs to be brought to bear, perhaps one informed by other theories [perspectives]" (Reid and Smith, 1981, p. 312). A comprehensive view of welfare reform includes assessment from different vantage points, sensitive to both the immediate and durable effects of the law, and emphasizes an unencumbered vision of the present life situations confronting the poor.

Whether through case studies, content analysis, field interviews, life histories, or ethnography, social workers can champion efforts to delineate and document how the lives of welfare recipients have changed as a result of the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996. As social workers, "We bear an obligation to know. We have an obligation, to the best of our ability, to know the facts" (Ewalt, 1994, p. 246) and to report the stories that are unfolding across the United States as individuals and families leave welfare. This type of research is known as *action research*, where detailed portraits of human adaptation and strife can be used by social workers as a form of power to challenge the ideological tenets associated with welfare reform (Neuman, 1997, p. 23).

## IDENTIFYING UNITS OF ANALYSIS

Researchers not only decide what to study but make choices concerning the level of social life to be placed under scrutiny. Irrespective of the research question, there are multiple units of analysis to consider. These include: individuals, families, groups,

organizations, neighborhoods, cities or towns, counties, nations, and social artifacts—"products of social beings or their behavior" (Rubin and Babbie, 1997, p. 117). It is important in each study that the unit(s) of analysis correspond to the research question(s) under examination.

Welfare reform, like other major social problems, is complex and involves multiple, interrelated systems. The unit of analysis can range from the individual level focusing on changes in personal characteristics of clients (duration on welfare, employment status, marital status, etc.) to examination of community or societal aspects (amount of spending, number of recipients, employment rates, etc.). Given this variability, studies may produce different, at times conflicting, depictions of the effect(s) of welfare reform. This occurs as research projects are often limited in scope and represent small (manageable) components of a larger social phenomenon (Glisson, 1994).

As an example, it is not surprising that quantitative data indicate that family income, on the average, increases substantially as parents move from welfare to part-time and full-time work (The Urban Institute, 1998, p. 3). While these findings are encouraging, this information provides little understanding concerning the plight of families and individuals, predominantly mothers, as they struggle to comply with the complex work requirements imposed by welfare reform. A broader, utopian mentality, embraces labor market, worker satisfaction, benefits, child care, transportation, housing, role conflicts, reliance upon others, family preservation, group support, community commitment, and the involvement of key organizations as important units of analysis to consider as persons move from welfare to work. Unfortunately, those who struggle are often an invisible lot and reliance on quantitative statistics, like family income, can be misleading and reflects a narrow (ideology based) view of the needy.

### IMPLICATIONS FOR PRACTICE

Social workers practicing with the poor are afforded a special position for understanding and documenting the hardships and accomplishments of people experiencing welfare reform. Educated and trained to approach social issues in a client driven

fashion and sensitive to social-environmental determinants of poverty, social workers are uniquely prepared to conduct qualitative analyses examining welfare reform from a more utopian based outlook.

A major contribution of Mannheim's work is to liberate the social worker from current ideological tenets (e.g. individualism, self-sufficiency, work, traditional family structure, fiscal responsibility, and local control of services) when conducting qualitative research. Social workers need not be bound to the ideological interests of the day when documenting the lives of people encountering welfare reform. The vivid, unencumbered insights of the practitioner can serve to heighten public awareness and correct misconceptions as to the everyday, life consequences of welfare reform.

Social workers can ill afford to be passive as others define and measure the success of The Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996. The work of social work calls for us to advance the quality of life of clients (Mendelsohn, 1980). The overriding issue involves how social worker professionals can act, individually and collectively, to promote effective allocation and utilization of resources during an ideological era characterized by social reductionism. To assist practitioners, the following considerations are offered.

### *1. Challenge Current Ideology and Strive for Utopia*

Mannheim emphasizes the importance of social-historical setting and ideology in conceiving constructs and ideas. The decade of the 90's has been characterized by a fiscal, accountability mentality. A major task for social workers is to use action research to actively contest this logic and find ways to move public discourse and the perspective of policymakers beyond a strict monetary approach to life when examining problems and issues confronting the poor.

As an illustration, other than initial savings in spending, it is important to consider the short and long-term ramifications of shrinking county and state public assistance rolls. Forcing people off public assistance does not necessarily result in self-sufficiency nor self-actualization. The disenfranchised, like other Americans, seek sustainable livelihoods characterized by meaningful

employment, medical coverage, and a "family friendly" work environment. Cutting welfare, while ignoring structural availability for gainful employment, can be a disastrous formula. The public should be forewarned that welfare recipients dismissed from assistance without sustainable work are forced, sometimes in desperation, to seek alternative measures to meet their needs.

While citizens may be impressed by a national reduction of over 5 million welfare recipients during the Clinton administration, it is also significant that most of our country's top 100 largest companies still have no plans for welfare-to-work programs (Meckler, 1998). Public sentiment against persons receiving welfare comes from the belief "that moral character of individuals, not inequities in the social and economic structure, is at the root of the problem" (Wilson, 1997, p. 161). Constructive dialogue and debate is needed that questions the various ideological premises underlying the Personal Responsibility and Work Reconciliation Act of 1996 as well as the criteria and units of measurement utilized to appraise its success.

Haynes and Mickelson (1997) point out that "Regardless of work setting, the practitioner continually encounters unmet needs, social problems, and gaps in or barriers to service. However, recognition of such needs and problems seldom results in collective, public activity by practitioners" (p. 72). Systematic dissemination of information describing unmet needs and gaps in service delivery is crucial for public conversation. Findings from field research and qualitative studies yield insight and are empowering when social workers act to enlighten the public and politicians to a view of the world based on a "grounded" reality.

Vignettes and human interest stories, based on practice experiences and constructed in a fashion to be distributed to media outlets (newspapers, radio, and television), can heighten awareness and prompt action concerning the ramifications of welfare reform. Brawley and Martinez-Brawley (1999) encourage social workers to develop mutually rewarding (working) relationships with representatives from the media for routine dissemination of information and as a means to facilitate advocacy efforts (pp. 74–75). Vignettes and case examples can be important mechanisms for documenting unbeknown types of human achievement and



suffering and powerful tools for informing the public and policy makers.

## *2. Utilize Social Work Expertise*

Social work has a rich tradition of serving people who have relied upon public assistance. Social workers have familiarity and expertise in working with welfare recipients. Yet, using false ideological tenets, many Americans continue to conceptualize and stereotype welfare recipients as a single homogeneous group. Ignored is the variability and diversity that exists among persons labeled as welfare recipients.

Social workers are educated and trained to partition the needs of clients and to identify various population groups at-risk. For example, finding employment will be easier for some welfare recipients than others. Young, pregnant females who have never married and lack education or work experience are many times marginally employable (Bane and Ellwood, 1994). Persons with difficult to diagnose or undifferentiated mental and physical disabilities often suffer a similar fate. What are the consequences of welfare reform for these and other special population groups who struggle with employability? It is important for social workers to identify and describe salient characteristics of various sub-populations that are especially vulnerable and evaluate the consequences of welfare reform for these constituencies.

Agencies, specialized departments in larger organizations, and planning associations structured around well defined client populations may choose to construct their own tools to assess the effects of social change. Here, checklists, observational techniques, and structured interviews are customized to a target population and elicit information to monitor the well-being of clients as welfare reform and managed care influence delivery of service (Resnick and Tighe, 1997). In these instances, summary reports are written for distribution to funding sources and interested constituency groups to highlight the state of predetermined attributes (e.g. health insurance, child care, housing,) and to provide descriptions of changes observed with the client population.

At the community level, The League of Women Voters and other organizations publish information evaluating local politicians, grade cards and narratives, for distribution to newspapers,

television affiliates, and radio stations. Over the years, many citizens have learned to look for these types of news releases depicting the status of political candidates, school systems, and community desirability. In a similar fashion, local social service organizations and/or coalitions can publish yearly report cards and narratives to grade (A through F) and describe the current state of local conditions (infant mortality, prenatal care, and economic support) for the children and families (see, for example, Gregg, 1998).

### *3. Disseminate Information and Publish Research*

The Urban Institute has established a \$30 million dollar initiative, the "Assessing New Federalism" project, to monitor the effects of new national policies that shift social responsibility from the federal to the state level (NASW News, 1997). Topics examined include: health care, income security, job training, as well as social services. The Urban Institute's project includes: a household survey, studies of policies in 13 states, and a database with information on all states and the District of Columbia. In addition to quantitative findings, examining factors such as family income and wage rates, The Urban Institute also sponsors forums where experts meet to address the progress of welfare reform (The Urban Institute, 1998, p.1).

An important "watchdog" effort, the "Assessing New Federalism" project represents just one source of information on welfare reform. While social workers should monitor these findings and contribute to the Urban Institute's data base, other forms of printed work and distribution of information are also important to consider.

Formal dissemination of findings through publication in scholarly works (practice based forums, monographs, books, and special editions of journals) is critical. While quantitative studies describing the impact of welfare reform have begun to emerge, qualitative information is needed to document the real life circumstances experienced by the poor. Using pre-welfare reform data, Edin and Lein's (1997) work is a good example of qualitative research aimed at identifying and describing the daily struggles of welfare recipients. Based on 379 semi-structured in-depth interviews, Edin and Lein (1997) offer a beginning look

at survival strategies and the various ways impoverished single mothers attempt to "make ends meet". Generating this type of information from the welfare reform era will be useful for future policy and legislative considerations, and will protect Americans against glib conclusions claiming the success of welfare reform using ideological measures (e.g. number of recipients and amount of spending).

Publication of practice focused research via informal, non-academic pieces is also needed. Newsletters, magazines, and internet web sites provide a plethora of information to both a professional and a general readership. Editors of these types of publications often seek informative materials and human interest stories. Being careful to protect confidentiality, social workers can provide these sources with case examples illustrating both the fortunes and misfortunes that have accompanied welfare reform.

## CONCLUSION

Mannheim suggests that when utopia occurs "it is customary to speak of a forerunner" or pioneers that prompt new views (1936, p. 206). Taking a leadership role in evaluating welfare reform is consistent with social work's long-standing commitment to social and economic justice for the poor and oppressed. In a time that places increasing value on billable hours of service, it is particularly important that the profession strives to move beyond the roles of counselor and psycho-social therapist (Glisson, 1994). It is a responsibility for social workers to apply a broader, visionary view for analyzing the impact of social legislation on societal problems and to seek ways for disseminating practice focused findings to other professionals, policy makers, and the public.

Life on AFDC and welfare for clients, as many remember, provided only rock-bottom support for basic needs (Gross, 1997). Few would argue that change was not needed. However, the extent to which states and local municipalities provide for the needs of the poor and promote human dignity as a result of welfare reform is yet to be determined. Placing political persuasion aside, "the least we owe the consumers of our services is to find ways

to make the new reforms work for them" (Gross, 1997, p. 133) while documenting both the accomplishments and misfortunes experienced as a result of the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996.

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# The Impact of Economic Structural Adjustment Programs [ESAPs] on Women and Children: Implications for Social Welfare in Zimbabwe

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*This study examines the impact of structural adjustment policy (SAP) on the welfare of Zimbabweans, particularly women and children and draws some parallels with economic policy in the US and its effect on social welfare programs and the poor. The paper argues that economic structural adjustment programs (ESAPs), introduced by the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund as major international financial institutions in economic globalization, have been an inappropriate public policy for Zimbabwe. These economic reforms inflate poverty, decrease the country's capability to develop a strong diversified domestic economy, increase the exploitation of workers through deregulation accompanied by environmental degradation. ESAPs' devastation of the poor translates into recurrences of socioeconomic crises that threaten peace and social justice and compounded by natural calamities and the relentlessness of the HIV/AIDS pandemic. Human helping professionals like social workers are left to scramble for diminishing resources to meet the basic needs of more clients with less.*

## INTRODUCTION

Approximately 80 percent of malnourished children in developing countries are found in countries where farmers have been forced by structural adjustment policies (SAPs) to shift their

agricultural production from subsistence to export production for industrialized nations (Global Exchange, 2000). Whereas Africa accounts for one tenth of the world population, it generates almost half of the world's displaced people and refugees most of whom are women and children. The International monetary Fund (IMF) and World Bank (WB) capitalist model of development operationalized through economic structural adjustment programs' (ESAPs) prescriptions to debtor countries and enforced by the World Trade Organization (WTO), prioritize export production over cultivating a diversified domestic economy. Such an approach is in contrast with the route taken by industrialized nations that created these organizations prescribing ESAPs for the South. This economic reform policy, which was designed to strengthen multinational corporations also ensures its operation efficacy by integrating elites from all developing countries through its reward-and-punishment system while alienating the masses of these countries.

Despite the fact that Zimbabwe and Ghana were economic success stories of the 1980s and early 1990s (Boafo-Arthur, 1991), they have both plunged into economic crises with the Zimbabwe's GDP recording far much lower than before the adoption of the SAPs (French, 1998). Thus, problems of Africa are directly linked to ventures of Western exploitation of Africa. The African elites have become closer while alienating the majorities who have sunk into further impoverishment due to the strings attached to ESAPs' policy prescriptions to the debtor governments allowing international corporations to gain easy entry and access into the countries' labor force and resources unabated and at bottom line bargain prices compounded by privatization (selling of publicly owned assets to the private-sector/corporations).

The elitist governments that have historically and steadfastly manipulated the sentiments of the masses in order to gain the initial tacit approval that legitimize their regimes were pressured to adopt ESAPs, an ill-fated decision leading to what looks like the recolonization of Africa as the debtor governments loose the following of their own people, control over land, services and industries. Once independent, broad participation in the formulation and implementation of public policy such as structural adjustment programs (SAPs) dwindles, a major weakness across

Sub Sahara Africa. Additionally, African elites have lost their role in competitive imperialism of the cold war era, in which their role entailed playing off one imperial power against the other, but are now victims of monopolistic imperialism. Instead of propagating self-reliance, the African elites are now adopters and implementers of Western imposed SAPs (Mazrui, 1996).

With Africa's external debt rising from US\$212.2 billion to US\$271 billion between 1986–1990 (Jamal, 1994), it is not surprising even after independence, the post-colonial era mirrors the colonial one. The rising debt trend continues well into the 21<sup>st</sup> century, accompanied by sharp declines in living standards witnessed by increases in absolute poverty from 270 million in the mid-eighties to 335 million people in 1990 (Jamal, 1994; Global Exchange, 2000). The interests of primary beneficiaries, mostly Northern educated Africans and the skillful lobbyist-descendants of colonialists have flourished at the expense of the subordinate large classes of workers and peasants, women and children under the IMF and WB economic development model. Zimbabwe's proclamations of nationalism, indigenization, promotion of popular peace, social and human rights and environmental conservation have rarely been translated into practice. Worse still building sustainable democracy is difficult during periods of national economic difficulties. Also, given the mechanisms by which the WB and IMF used in the imposition of structural adjustment policies (ESAPs) on many African governments prior to the seal of approval to get loans for economic liberalization and globalization, and given the underpinnings of democracy, some policy analysts argue that the two processes are antithetical (Jeong, 1998; Jamal, 1994; Boafo-Arthur 1999).

Zimbabwe's economy had been characterized by weak growth in the productive sector with crises of varying degrees during the 1970s and with much more severity in the late 1980s when export performance declined as reflected in the falling shares of Zimbabwe exports in world trade and an unchanged export structure. Since pre-independence Zimbabwe's industrial base owed much to import-substitution (local production of goods as an alternative to imported ones) and to the incentives provided during its long period of isolation under international sanctions, there had clearly been economic benefits in past



industrial strategies. At independence in 1980, Zimbabwe had the advantage of a sophisticated industrial economy, higher levels of entrepreneurial talent and general human capital, which allowed it to use import substitution to better effect than its neighbors did and was considered a vibrant economy.

By the end of 1980, foreign debt rose sharply and the socio-economic infrastructure deteriorated concurrently with environmental degradation. Debates on the causes of the crises centered on two sets of factors. The first comprised exogenous factors such as bad weather, deteriorating terms of trade, fluctuation of international interest rates, reduced inflows of foreign aid and non-performing state-owned enterprises as constituting a huge drain on government finances. The second emphasized endogenous factors such as inappropriate domestic policies and incentive structures, and the mismanagement of public resources. The crises had important implications for transforming Zimbabwe's economy as envisaged by the WB and IMF who recommended SAPs under the second premises that endogenous policy measures would improve the nation's economic growth. Zimbabwe's adoption of ESAPs in 1991 was a reversal of a previous government's position rejecting the same structural reforms with the same conditionalities in the 1980s, when many sub-Sahara Africa's early birds to SAPs adopted them. Whereas government ministries that deal with education, health, social services and other social spending programs were not included, the process of ESAPs' adoption was dominated by officials of commercial banks and finance ministry (the most conservative western educated and wealthy members of the government), and the experienced white lobbying groups (the economic backbone). All these participants would be the potential primary beneficiaries of ESAPs. Even these collaborators felt pressured by the IMF and WB, because countries that do not comply with these Washington-based institutions, controlled by the Group of Eight (G8) [US, UK, Japan, Germany, France Canada and Italy], would be isolated with their chances of getting loans and international aid thwarted. Thus, Zimbabwe's adoption of economic policy reforms was considered compatible with contemporary style for achieving sustainable national economic development. As will be demonstrated in proceeding sections, the initial Zimbabwean

spurt of import-substituting industrial growth faltered not long after adopting ESAPs, a trend in many African countries.

This study examines the impact of ESAPs on the living standards of Zimbabwe people and draws some parallels between the impact of economic policy on social welfare of particularly impoverished women and children in Zimbabwe and the United States. The paper argues that SAP is an inappropriate public policy for Zimbabwe. The economic reforms that were introduced by the WB and IMF and adopted by the Zimbabwean government spelled mass economic disaster, exacerbated the HIV/AIDS devastation of the most productive population of society compounded by various natural calamities. This study demonstrates that ESAPs have further marginalized the Zimbabwean people particularly women and children more than they were ever before because the mandated budget austerity leads to cutting social spending and squeezing more from the tax payer through increased education costs. This makes it harder for families to subsist forcing them to withdraw their children from school, particularly girls in a patrilineal society devaluing females. Prioritizing export agriculture leads to reduced food production, which forces women to be exploited in the labor force in which labor laws have been loosened through ESAPs' deregulation that undermine labor social rights (Global Exchange, 2000; Danaher, 2000). Alternatively, they turn to indentured servitude or prostitution increasing the women's HIV infection risk and that of their children. Thus, creating an environment that threatens peace and social justice. Social workers and other human helping professions are now left to scramble for diminishing resources to meet the basic needs of more clients with less. Thus, some of the policies implemented after independence by the Zimbabwean government aimed at redistributing resources or alleviating poverty have been unsuccessful, or had perverse effects on the people of the nation, complicated by the absence of democratic procedure in their adoption and implementation.

#### PREMISE OF ECONOMIC STRUCTURAL ADJUSTMENT PROGRAMS

This section addresses the premise of structural adjustment policies in an attempt to explain why such programs might be

inappropriate for developing nations such as Zimbabwe. During the past two decades, sub-Sahara African nations have adopted the WB and IMF prescribed ESAPs, which are based on classical economic theories and whose protocol entails three implementation phases. The initial phase involves the Economic Structural Program Agreement between an African government and the WB and IMF. This phase operationalizes the contract by the stroke of a pen and is the easiest one. The major tenets of the agreement require the debtor governments to apply the following measures: (1) Eliminate price controls; (2) Cut subsidies to prices of basic goods and services; (3) Engage in Free trade; and (4) Devaluation of currencies (Jeong, 1998; French, 1998; Mazrui, 1996). The second stage involves implementation which is followed by the third and final phase of program evaluation of adjustment reforms programs by the debtor government under the supervision of the WB and IMF and the policing of the WTO, which can overrule national policies when deemed violating international corporations' profit rights (Global Exchange, 2000; Danaher, 2000).

The paper, therefore, argues that this classical economics approach to development has six major flaws contributing to ESAPs' failure to become a catalyst for the goals of achieving sustainable development, by eliminating of the balance of payments deficits or reduction in external indebtedness, and mass impoverishment. Firstly, the reform policies do not consider exogenous factors like terms of trade, fluctuating interest rates and reduced inflows of foreign exchange and impact of natural disasters like cyclic droughts and most recent year 2000 floods. Secondly they assume a dogmatic approach which does not take into account any differences in the capabilities of individual economies and require the supply of imports in export-oriented economies like Zimbabwe. Thirdly, they require budget austerity which undermines human capital development and investment and social services resulting in serious negative consequences for the workforce. Fourthly, they inflate unemployment and underemployment, which is presumed to be a temporary condition of the reforms, but in fact wrecks the economy by drying up the consumption. Without consumption, the existence of large populations of potential consumers turns into a burden for a welfare state even in the industrialized countries of the North, but worse still for a Sub-Saharan

country like Zimbabwe with diminishing resources. Fifthly, the combined effects of problems arising from a lack of budget austerity and the negative consequences to the workforce quality and increased unemployment within the context of a wrecked economy potentially lead to political crises, social unrest and violence leading to social disintegration. Sixthly, though not unique to ESAPs is the general tendency of local greedy elite to sabotage the general good for personal gain.

### EXOGENOUS FACTORS

Zimbabwe adopted its structural adjustment programs in 1991. Much of the explanation of the poor structural adjustment policy's performance in Zimbabwe lies with exogenous shocks of various kinds: droughts, internal conflict, political instability, and adverse terms of trade and so forth. Yet this is clearly not the whole story. Poor policies also have to carry much of the blame. A broad range of government policies affected industrial development, from general macroeconomic management, through trade and competition policies and human resource development, to specific industrial development and technology policies (Jamal, 1994; Global Exchange, 2000).

The fundamental macroeconomic problem in Zimbabwe in the early 1990s was that the sum of what the new government wanted and planned to do was greater than the resources available. Such a situation was probably inevitable, but the government's difficulty in discerning the macroeconomic limitations on new initiatives was greatly increased by the unusual circumstances of the first two ESAP years: a commodity boom; promises of more international aid than what was eventually delivered; expectations of a peace dividend which did not come; initial high rates of economic growth; and initial reduction in foreign debt. All of these circumstances created unrealistic expectations, concealing the probability that the government's plans would be impossible to finance. The government was slow to meet adjustment time lines being disappointed by unmet promises of international aid. This created a debt problem. Drought and terms-of-trade shocks made things worse. Drought was bound to occur periodically; only the timing was unpredictable. No allowance was made for

the likelihood of these shocks in ESAP agreements. The severe drought of 1991–1992 in Zimbabwe provided justification for the government's reluctance to engage in cutting expenditure. When, however, the government made no progress with reducing the size of the budget deficit after the agricultural sector recovery in 1993–1994, the IMF began to apply pressure for compliance. This marked a turning point in the ability of the government to maintain autonomy in deciding on economic policy.

Globalization of world markets became one of the greatest challenges facing African countries like Zimbabwe in the 1990s. Globalization enlightened us on the limitations of statehood autonomy particularly after the end of the Cold War when abuse and exploitation of Africa was accompanied by its loss of the geopolitical strategic value. More African countries have become classified as least developed nations and not one African country became classified as a developed nation as a result of efforts by US and Russia or the UN. The adverse effects of trade restrictions and protectionism increased in the 1990s. Marginalization of the masses from political and decision-making processes, declining competitiveness in Southern Africa Development Commission and the global market, excessive state intervention in the economy, militating against investment and productivity, deteriorating social services, and standard of living became the norm.

Social development and progress of the 1980s was clearly being eroded in the early 1990s with falling per capita incomes, unemployment and underemployment, accelerating ecological degradation and hunger. In the mid-1990s, Zimbabwe was confronted with serious internal and external contradictions, which intensified marginalization. The crisis became more pronounced with mounting foreign debts, declining exports, refugee problems, servicing foreign debt, urban strife due to increased food prices and retrenchment. The failure of wage employment to keep up with formal sector wage-employment created unemployment and underemployment. Zimbabwe's crisis reached alarming proportions in the late 1990s (Kadenge, Ndoro & Zizwi, 1992).

When Zimbabwe adopted the structural adjustment policies in 1990, the major features of the policies pursued included labor retrenchment, trade liberalization and currency devaluation, subsidy withdrawal, and an increase in user fees (which rendered

basic services like health and education unaffordable to the average worker). As elsewhere, macroeconomic reforms have had very serious political implications in Zimbabwe. These measures were seen by many as politically risky because of independent Zimbabwe's colonial experience with unfair adjustment policies. Industrial restructuring and the upgrading of industrial competitiveness have been components of these reforms prescribed by the IMF and World Bank. An implicit assumption of SAPs has been that enterprise-level inefficiencies are primarily a reflection of inappropriate macro-economic policies and distortions in resource allocation precipitated by selective industrial policies. Reforms, therefore, are based on the premise that appropriate adjustment at the macro-level, accompanied by the "freeing up" of market forces, liberalization of trade and privatization of parastatals would provide the necessary and sufficient conditions for industrial recovery and growth. Inefficient activities, which exist only because of government induced distortions rather than the presence of learning sequences and market failures will die out, while resources will move to efficient activities that emerge in response to market incentives (Mkandawire 1992; Remmer 1993). As a result, Zimbabwe and other debtor African nations' industry would exhibit the dynamism and competitiveness that characterized East Asian economies between 1980 and 1996.

### UNIQUE NATIONAL ECONOMIC CAPACITY

The theory underlying adjustment and market-friendly policies does not offer a satisfactory explanation for rapid industrialization in the type of economic culture, which prevail in sub-Saharan (SSA) Africa, including Zimbabwe. This is because the theory ignores the capability of development and the need to overcome market failures in its process. This has an important bearing on the general issue of industrial adjustment in SSA: an initial favorable response of manufacturing to adjustment may not lead to sustained growth and diversification if all ESAPs do is "get prices right." (Jeong 1997; Hultman 1993; Gibbon 1992, Nelson 1990). The existence of pervasive market failures raises the costs of adjustment to import competition and holds back the creation of new manufacturing activities and exports. The

design of structural adjustment programs (SAPs), by ignoring capability development (human and economic development to strengthen and diversify local production capacity for sustainable development), places too much stake in free markets that work rapidly and effectively.

The other problem with SAPs is that they prescribe policies in a universal and timeless setting: all markets are equally efficient, and governments inefficient, in all nations, regardless of the stage and level of development. The theory of technological capabilities suggests, on the other hand, that different nations have very different abilities to respond to open competition, depending on the capabilities that they had built up before "opening up" (Jeong 1997; Hultman 1993; Gibbon 1992, Nelson 1990) such as how successful previous import-substitution policies were. But the post independence ESAPs' adjustment and liberalization failed to cultivate the underlying human capabilities and the process of acquiring them, seriously failing to promote future industrial development (Gibbon 1992, Nelson 1990). There are few firms involved in complex industrial activities that can sustain the full force of import competition unless they have natural protection from a strong local resource base or close links with Zimbabwean consumers. The industrial structure remains, moreover, highly concentrated in low-to-medium technology activities. Thus, simply opening up is not the best strategy even for a relatively advanced industrial system. Much has to be done in terms of promoting and upgrading technology and gearing the speed and spread of the liberalization process to the rate at which capabilities can be developed. In other African nations, the industrial structure is much simpler and the ability to cope with free markets much weaker.

It is clear that SAPs policies have also failed in Zimbabwe because once the usual simplifying assumptions on learning are dropped, merely removing government interventions may not catalyze industrial growth and competitiveness. Even in economies with relatively advanced levels of technology capability like the United States, rapid liberalization imposes severe costs if not accompanied by a strategy of upgrading and gearing liberalization to the learning needs of different activities. By contrast, where the pace of opening up and support policies adopted to

help firms upgrade is both guided by a clear strategy, the results are far better (Jamal, 1994; Jeong, 1997). The liberalization policy itself lacks full credibility and was not properly communicated to firms in Zimbabwe, inducing them to remain passive and wait for policies to revert to old, less threatening patterns. What is surprising is that the disappointing reaction to liberalization was not anticipated, even a basic understanding of technological processes would have led to a different design of the liberalization program (Jeong 1997; Gibbon 1992, Nelson 1990). On the contrary, enterprise-level reactions are still not fully appreciated by those who designed and propagate adjustment programs, at least in their pronouncement on policy reform.

#### BUDGET AUSTERITY VS HUMAN CAPITAL DEVELOPMENT

An alternative argument has been that most sun-Sahara Africa, including Zimbabwe is not really suited to industrialization, beyond the elementary level of resources-based and low technology activities that do not compete with imports. Indeed, some classical economists prescribe this while forgetting that the endowments that lead to successful industrialization are not given but made as a result of deliberation policy. For example, would they have said that the Asian Tigers had a natural comparative advantage in industrial activity 30 years ago? The logic of the structural adjustment programs argument leads to the efficiency outcome that very little industry may survive in Zimbabwe, with growth proceeding mainly from primary and service sector activities.

SAPs are conducive to a free market economy with private/individual responsibility for social welfare. These classical macro-economic-type programs overlook concerns of human capital development (Midgley, 1995) and welfare by neglecting many forms of protecting the poor. Neither do they make any good faith effort to consider social objectives (Jeong, 1998; Danaher, 2000; Global Exchange, 2000). Adjustment policy is a reflection of the values and choices of the ruling classes of the world, elites of Africa as well as that of multinational corporations of the world. If governments fail to meet certain measures like retrenchment imposed by the IMF-World Bank, the loans promised them are



withheld and/or canceled. World Bank-IMF force governments to reduce spending of basic human needs and necessities like the elimination of subsidies for food prices, reduction of social welfare and social programs: health, education and so forth. In Zimbabwe as elsewhere, the elimination of price controls on manufactured goods, retrenchment of workers, devaluation of currency and privatization of government industries resulted in a sharp shrinkage of income opportunities for the urban middle and working class while simultaneously marginalizing the poor further, especially women and children. Women's opportunities to work in these patriarchal societies dwindle. Even perceived urban opportunities for rural poor are eroded further. Thus, after the cold war, the former opponents of Western capitalism and champions of Pan-Africanism and self-reliance have succumbed to the Western neocolonialism based on the industrialized nations' economic prowess.

A successful imposition of policy measures through undemocratic tactics is completely different from the overall attainment of the set objectives of such policy measures. The implementation of structural adjustment was without citizen participation or input in the formulation and implementation of the various programs. Further, there existed an anti-liberal and intimidating political climate that made it difficult for various groups opposed to such programs to rise up against their imposition.

It is clear that a structural adjustment policy in practically all the African nations has failed to produce industrial efficiency and dynamism. Mainstream economic thinking has therefore not been in favor of SAPs, particularly in Africa where the history of import-substituting industrialization is marked by distorting and pervasive government interventions, widespread inefficiency, and a failure to become competitive. This disillusionment with past industrial policy has been reinforced by classical economics resurgence, which introduce strong political elements into the argument, suggesting that all governments are inherently and forever inefficient and corruptible. The adoption of these arguments by the two leading economic development institutions (WB and IMF) in what is called democratizing the global economy resulting in many African nations adopting, willingly or otherwise, strong liberalization policies (World Bank, 1994), and to the

benefit of global elites and corporations (Global Exchange, 2000; Danaher, 2000).

It was indicated earlier that Zimbabwe initially had a degree of autonomy in determining the pace of adjustment under ESAP. Some aspects of reform—trade, price, foreign exchange and financial-sector liberalization—were carried out swiftly, but little progress was made on tax and public expenditure reform. Rapid liberalization of prices may not necessarily be evidence of government commitment. It may also be interpreted as being the easy part of structural adjustment programs—easier than structural reforms like privatization or civil service reform. Moreover, price reforms are easily monitored, and the technical difficulty of reform cannot be used as an excuse for delay as far as WB and IMF conditionalities are concerned.

Policy measures have deliberately ignored industrialization and rather have given greater incentives to the production of primary commodities. Recent figures show that Zimbabwe's foreign debt rose from 45 percent of GDP in 1990 to 75 percent in 1994, falling to 67 percent of GDP at the end of 1995 (Jenkins, 1996). Around 95 percent of this are government debt including the parastatals or government-owned business organizations. This increased aid sought and received during the 1992 drought meant that the debt service ratio rose to 30 percent, although it subsequently fell to 22 percent in 1995. The nation is, however, vulnerable to external shocks, which may again force it to raise its external borrowing.

The devastation of the ESAPs is an eye soar in Zimbabwe and similarly situated African countries. Haggard and Kaufman (1989) offer three main reasons for the perceived incompatibility of adjustment and democracy. First, new democratic leaders are confronted with previously repressed demands, heightened social and economic expectation, and strong pressures to reward supporters and incoming groups. Second, as much as possible, newly installed democratic governments will try to avoid difficult economic policies that might generate both economic and political resistance or unrest. Finally, democratization will give vent to heightened social demands which most probably will lead to the pursuit of policies that will meet the expectations of the electorate, reduce social conflict in the short run, and thereby

garner political support. The concern for public support might compel democratic governments to pursue populist policies at the expense of structural adjustment or strict financial discipline. Sirrowy and Inkeles (1990) further contend that because of the political and civil liberties they rest on, democratic regimes only act to inflame social divisions and erode the capacity of the government to act quickly for the expected results to be yielded. The assumption is that government officials may be compelled to shift their allegiances among policies based on short-run political expediency rather than focusing exclusively on policies oriented toward national development in the long run.

In early 1995 the IMF suspended a balance-of-payments support tranche of US\$120 million after the government failed to meet its commitments to reduce the budget deficit, which reached 14 percent of GDP in 1994/5—against a target of 7 percent. The suspension of aid from the IMF resulted in other donors withholding aid; for example, the European Union announced in March 1996 that it would give Zimbabwe US\$32 million for drought relief, health and education, but would block all other disbursement until IMF/World Bank conditions, and specifically fiscal targets were met (Jenkins, 1996). When the Zimbabwean government missed its IMF-world bank conditionality target in 1995, the IMF withdrew its lending obligations. The government nationalized, instead of selling state controlled industries and services, the move stifled the free market economy leading to a reduction in competition, low economic growth and domestic borrowing (Rotberg, 1998) required by the IMF. Investor confidence declined and the stock market declined (Wanmali & Islam, 1997).

A combination of structural adjustment and the rising economic crisis has not lead to public expenditure cuts in Zimbabwe and similarly situated countries worldwide. Many economic problems of Zimbabwe are directly related to deregulation. Since 1996, Zimbabwe has been facing potential collapse (Anonymous, 1998a & 1998b). For the government to get the 176 million dollars from the IMF for crisis management, the government had to give up land reforms and restrict government spending. The civil service with a personnel of 180,000 including social workers eats up one-third of the government's annual budget expenditure, leading to a general inequitable decrease

of incomes. For example, government officials have had their incomes increased by 130 percent, while other workers have received 3–20 percent increases and many have lost employment due to retrenchment and worse still the number of the unemployed swell to a record high of over 50 percent by 1995 (Carnoy, 1995). The introduction of ESAP also had deleterious impacts on some small industries leading to their closure due to high operation costs and interest rates on loans (Kawewe, 1998). The development of grassroots and small companies has been constrained by high interest rates on bank loans and inflation. Because urban populations of sub-Saharan Africa comprise a majority of the urban poor, the decline in their living standards has become massive and devastating over the SAP years. Even the rural dwellers who had previously utilized the urban kin as a safety net in times of hardship, have become more vulnerable, especially within the context of an inherited and distorted colonial land distribution and ownership pattern (Kawewe, 1998; Palmer & Burich, 1992).

#### NATIONAL UNEMPLOYMENT AND SOCIAL WELFARE

Independent Zimbabwe had attempted to structurally adjust before SAPs by compensating for the colonial legacy with heavy investment in social programs by developing one of the most elaborate education and health care systems in sub-Saharan Africa in the 1980's. The social welfare system was beginning to show signs of anguish due to over expenditure and the country had accepted liberalization in 1991 convinced ESAPs would improve the economy and reduce poverty. However, at the behest of ESAPs, Zimbabwe turned one of Africa's best social welfare systems into shambles (Goga, 1996). The situation was exacerbated by a drought of the century which plummeted the economy. In order to improve the economy, those who were previously eligible for free education and health care had to pay fees with those eligible for exemption being discouraged by bureaucratic red tape and poor quality of services. Even the United Nations Economic Commission found that SAP countries in sub-Saharan Africa cut their social programs expenditure by 25 percent on education and 50 percent on health with infant mortality doubling

during the ten previous year period. The United Nations Development Program (UNDP) reports that the gap between the rich and the poor doubled by 200 percent within the same decade (Araghi, 1997).

ESAPS have further led to high unemployment due to massive retrenchment of labor in the public sector. Zimbabwean unemployment has further risen to approximately 60 percent with the budget deficit rising above 25 percent of what it was at independence in 1980. The impact of ESAPs coupled with the inclement natural conditions has slashed the real incomes of the majority of the urban population. Some private companies have adopted the technologies that are state of the art to boost productivity while retrenching workers. In 1995 the official number of retrenched workers stood at about 100,000, while unofficial estimates by trade unions indicate figures between 150,000 and 160,000 lay offs (Jenkins 1996). Those who lose employment naturally lose their purchasing power and are faced with loss of housing (Velempini & Traverse, 1997), quality health care, loss of education opportunities for their children and loss of quality of life and food supply for the whole family (Valempini et al, 1997), especially women and children as they may not be eligible for public assistance available only to the privileged poor. The devastation has not been only with already poor, but even the civil sector workers who had previously been part of the so called 'labor aristocracy' had their incomes reduced to below subsistence and worsened by public sector retrenchment (Potts, 1995). Hence urban social services provision concurrently declined drastically, narrowing the gap between rural and urban incomes. Yet, even among such bleak conditions, social workers that are among the affected are expected to empower their clients and instill an optimistic future in them. It appears that in some cases there has been reverse migration of people leaving the cities to the overcrowded communal lands in rural areas as the urban poor are the most directly and severely affected by ESAPs. Urbanites correspondingly view the rural areas as their safety net in times of hardship.

Higher unemployment leads to declining nutrition, health and education standards, increasing school absences while at the same time increasing the national demand for tertiary and

secondary schooling. These factors combined, lead to a corresponding decline in income (Carnoy, 1995). As food prices rise, some families have cut down on nutrition and food intake. For example some families have stopped buying chicken, beef, bread and fish. They have also cut back on the staple food (corn meal), vegetables and the number of meals per day from the standard three, to two or one in order to make ends meet. Obviously such conditions adversely affect the health of children and women, especially girl children (Kawewe, 1998). Urban families scramble for any available patch of land to grow crops and vegetables for consumption and for hawking. Even professionals' efforts at imparting nutrition knowledge do not translate into better nutrition when clients cannot afford the bare minimum food requirements. Such conditions of food scarcity have serious implications for children, childcare and women's health and welfare. This situation is further complicated by the burden of unevenly distributed extra work mostly shouldered by women, as elsewhere in the world (Kawewe, 1998; Velempini & Traver, 1997).

The Zimbabwe's socioeconomic disparity, particularly the colonial legacy of unequal land distribution by race is directly related to employment and sustainable economic development. Of the 11.5 million population of Zimbabwe, 7 million (75 percent) of them are blacks who live in the overcrowded and underdeveloped rural reservations with some as squatters and landless. There are 100,000 whites that comprise one percent of the Zimbabwean populations and four percent (4,000) of whites control 80 percent of the private enterprise and 50 percent of the country's arable land. Numerically, 4,000 white own the country's best farmland consisting of 11 million hectares and generate forty percent of the country's commercial agricultural-goods export revenue (Wanmali et al, 1997).

It is interesting to note that despite this unequal land privileges in Zimbabwe, the World Bank and IMF recommendation for structural adjustment did not address the land issue. The pre-existing post-independence national corrective measures such as racial reconciliation, nationalization and indigenization in which the government would redistribute land equitably for peasant resettlement were not effectively accomplished as these national policies would undermine corporate rights and the fundamental

economic bases of ESAPs (Bello, 1993; Global Exchange, 2000). For example the IMF and WB finance big rural projects like dams, roads and power plants to facilitate economic development projects under SAPS, but these devastate biodiversity and the environment and lead to social and population dislocation. Additionally, SAPS reduce labor and environmental protection leaving small farmers and businesses to compete with large multinational corporations which leads to workers being paid starvation wages and unable to fend for their families to the point of being forced to live in inhumane conditions or left homeless. Without enough land the urban-retrenched workers have no hope of subsisting in overcrowded rural areas whose inhabitants have historically viewed urban-employed relations as privileged and as their safety net in periods of hardship. Thus, ESAPs have been predictably devastating to the poor, further suffocating them without adequate public welfare, without control of their economy and access to basic services, even more so than in the US because Zimbabwe is a poor country to begin with. The cycle of impoverishment is perpetuated and not eliminated.

Urban unemployment created a surge in the rural areas while the land equation had not been addressed successfully because it faced opposition from a historically powerful white lobbying group, the Commercial Farmers Union (CFU), one of the strong advocates for ESAPs. The CFU has steadfastly opposed land reforms since colonial times, by claiming that changing from large-scale farming to small-scale peasant farming with communal tenure would devastate the economy. Such a stance is inherited from racist colonial assumptions that indigenous African peasants are inefficient and that they would degrade the new land in the same way as the communal lands which were called Tribal Trust Lands during the colonial period. These assumptions have been challenged and refuted by progressive Africanists (Moyo, 1994 & 1995; Biot; Lambert & Perkins, 1992; Palmer & Burich, 1992; Potts, 1998). The fact is that colonialism cultivated the soil erosion of the semi-arid communal lands by packing the peasants and their domestic animals like sardines in these areas and by introducing agricultural methods that were not environmentally friendly. Land reforms also faced opposition from the peasants which included mass protest and public

disturbance when they found out that land was changing hands from the white elite to the black elite for the purpose of satisfying commercial agricultural production for export to meet ESAPs' donor obligations (Kawewe, 1998). The promotion of macroeconomic agricultural policies supported by ESAPs has perpetuated peasant impoverishment.

Even the Social Dimensions Program, WB and IMF social services program and stop-gap measure to alleviate the so called temporary hardships arising out of the ESAPs, benefit a selected minority of former middle-class victims of retrenchment in cities and for only a limited period of time, leaving the rural and urban poor in devastating impoverishment. Additionally, for the past 50 years, there exist an apparent discrepancy between stated objectives of the WB and other multinational institutions of capitalism and free market economy, and implementation goals. Araghi (1997) revealed information from a secret WB document by noting its hidden philosophy and global economic development plans intended to purposefully force four million people from their lands in order to create room for WB projects in the South. It would appear then that the Zimbabwe's indigenization and land repossession programs to resettle peasants would be contrary to this financial donor's thesis or secret plan. Thus, ESAPs erosion of the social welfare of indigenous peoples of Zimbabwe, with much severity on women and children already marginalized seems in line with SAPs goals being primarily driven by economic interests of the industrialized nations.

When these most powerful political, and sociocultural and ideological institutions of the world fashioned after trickle-down economics, now make proclamations to improve women's education and productivity in the emerging economies (World Bank, 1999), they reflect a double standard in that they steadfastly impose SAP policies which require drastic cuts in social spending of which education is a part and then when poverty becomes an eye sore, debtor governments are blamed. These donors then intervene and assume a rescuer/savior role for the poor while at the same time undermining the authority of the state on its people. For example when many rural women and children died during the drought of the early 1990s, the World Bank intervened by forcing the government to drop education and health fees



which had been introduced to meet budget austerity measures under ESAPs.

### BUDGET AUSTERITY AND UNEMPLOYMENT SPELL SOCIAL UNREST

Although there is controversy over the outcomes of ESAP in Zimbabwe as in many sub-Saharan countries, it has been noted that the programs generally lead to retrenchment, skyrocketing of prices of goods, rising inflation to record levels and steep devaluation of local currencies. Unfortunately, the government of Zimbabwe is caught up between the WB and IMF requirements and mass protests due to the devastating impoverishment exacerbated by SAPs. These situations have led to loss of power, instability and /or increased military repression. Many governments have been toppled, but those that have survived have used severe repression and/or manipulation of their masses with rhetoric. In recent years, countries like Zambia and Zimbabwe have witnessed a series of strikes and food riots followed by military intervention that left eight people dead in Harare alone (Schillinger, 1998). Schillinger (1998) notes: "An unprecedented series of mass national protests over deteriorating economic conditions has brought the country-and its first president, Robert Mugabe—to its worst political crisis since independence in 1980. Many once held hope for a model democracy, characterized by competitive politics, free expression, and a vibrant privatized economy. Most now see another Kenya in the making where corruption, repression, and mismanagement stagnate a potentially prosperous state," (1998, p. A1). Consequently, many lives including women and children have been lost.

However, SAP had mixed impacts on economic development and growth. While macroeconomic indicators show positive effects of structural adjustment on development and growth, many Zimbabwe citizens find it difficult to cope with the overall effects of adjustment. The problems posed to many citizens by the high cost of utilities, the withdrawal of subsidies on health, education, transportation and agricultural inputs, the retrenchment of labor and the consequent high unemployment rate, and chronic low salaries for workers, especially in the public sector, continue to engage the attention of many. There has been, therefore, the genuine

fear that democratization and its embedded freedom would lead to a revolt by the masses against further imposition of draconian adjustment policies.

Another negative aspect of adjustment is the heavy reliance on external financial support. Zimbabwe faces a bleak future because of the over-dependence on external financial inflows. The high levels of dependence on foreign aid equally cast a shadow on the impact of structural adjustment. Because of abnormally high levels of assistance from donors there is much difficulty in disentangling the effects of external aid from the effects of adjustment programs on Zimbabwe development (Jenkins 1996). Jenkins (1996) and Kawewe (1998) therefore call into question the resilience of the much-touted economic turnaround. Contrary to the IMF-World Bank recent rush at bailing out the Asian economies with quick loan packages worth tens of billion dollars, in Africa the economic relief efforts have been a never-ending stingy effort in which negotiations can drag on for months. When approved, the allotments reflect more of a life long dependency program for sub-Sahara Africa (French, 1998). Furthermore Asian nations can recover from the meltdown through IMF-WB bailouts to pay creditors and to absorb the immediate severe economic shock arising from credit and banking systems (Rotberg, 1998).

Instead, the IMF and WB resort to blaming the victim by claiming the speedy and size of their response to the Asian economies as indicative of the importance of these economies to the global financial system, and that if Zimbabwe and African countries in like situations had adopted economic liberalization when they were first introduced rather than resist change, Zimbabwe would not have found itself in a marginalized situation it is in today. The validity of the IMF-WB position and approach to the continent of Africa is questionable as shown by the collapse of the early star economic disciples of SAP (Boafo-Arthur, 1991) : Ghana and later Zimbabwe that have plunged into economic shambles. Contrary to the IMF pronouncements of SAPs as bailing out efforts for the continent's economies, in practice ESAPs have had a devastating impacts at the local level. Pragmatically, the transnational corporations and international financial institutions have become richer at the expense of the African nations due to a widening gap between the North and South. Overall, ESAPs have necessitated

dramatic budget cuts in allocations for social programs like health (Melly, 1996), education, housing, water electricity (Araghi, 1997; Anonymous, 1998a), and so forth. ESAPs have eroded further the groups already disadvantaged. The disparity between those that originally were disadvantaged and those that were privileged has increased sharply (Mupedziswa, & Gumbo; Mupedziswa, 1994a, 1994b, 1996; Anonymous, 1996; Araghi, 1997). Social workers, who are mostly government employees, find themselves faced with the challenges of helping clients to scramble for diminishing life-sustaining resources. Even those professionals employed by NGOs have been constrained by the selectivity in focus of the programs. It will be fair to say that an emphasis on equity without sufficient regard for efficiency—and consistency—can have perverse effects on equity and efficiency. The policies pursued by the government of Zimbabwe in compliance with SAPs have created distortions, which pushed the economy towards macroeconomic instability. In Zimbabwe the size of the civil service budget has continued to drain the economy, rather than a facilitator of economic development and yet any cuts so far have translated into further increases in unemployed and impoverishment.

The impact of public policy on the citizens of the United States is parallel somewhat to the situation in Zimbabwe. In the 1960s and 1970s, the number of homeless Americans began to increase gradually in the wake of a series of public policy shifts. Most significant were those affecting the availability of low-income housing and the treatment of the mentally ill. It was the contraction in national social spending during this period, however, which broadened and deepened the problem of homelessness. Beginning with President Reagan's own Omnibus Reconciliation Act of 1981, federal funding for a vast array of social programs was slashed or capped, and a process that soon resonated throughout all levels of government and community. While military spending increased by more than 40 percent in the 1980s, funding for both health and job-training programs were slashed by the same amount, and federal support of housing programs was reduced by almost 80 percent. Included in the cuts were programs that helped low-income families avoid the worst ravages of poverty, such as Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC), where eligibility levels stiffened and benefit levels that already

left families well below the poverty line were sharply lowered. As more Americans were sinking into poverty, billions of dollars were also taken away from the Food Stamp Program, eliminating one million recipients (Reich 1989; da Costa Nunez 1995).

The policies of the 1980s were devastating to the American's poor and, to a large extent, account for the unprecedented rise in poverty and homeless rates, as well as the increased complexity of the problems now facing poor families. Economic trade agreements and liberalization have had a devastating impact on the poor in both developed and developing countries. The North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) for example had adverse effects on middle class and poor Americans through retrenchment without corresponding increases in social spending on human capital development, job creation and training in marketable skills, welfare and social service benefits (Kawewe, 1999). IMF mismanagement in the South creates financial crises, which translate into poverty for both developing and developed countries. For example when the IMF mismanagement led to the financial crises in Indonesia, South Korea, Thailand and others resulting in a deep depression, 200 million newly poor were created in these countries. Worse still the IMF, using conditionalities for noncompliance directed these countries to export their way out of the crises by dumping their steel in the US markets resulting in over 12,000 American steel workers' lay offs (World Exchange, 2000; Danaher, 2000). Free trade agreements have translated into lost jobs as companies folded up, relocated or operated their industries in the South in order to exploit a cheap labor force. Hence, the 1999 Seattle rallies by people from all over the world opposing the WTO's effort to have total control of the world's economy and resources for the benefit of the wealthy and corporations (Global Exchange, 2000; Danaher, 2000). Not only has the total number of homeless Americans increased substantially in the past ten years, but also there has been a marked change in the composition of this group in the 1990s. Even the best designed education and training programs produced only small gains for the poor, especially welfare recipients. Economic feasibility has historically translated into reduction in welfare rolls while compromising the social cost as in the case of workfare and managed care. Welfare reforms of the 1990s have been successful in shrinking the welfare

rolls and reducing cost, but not poverty reduction (Caputo, 1993 & 1994; US Government, 1996; Freedman, 1990).

### IMPLICATIONS FOR PEACE, SOCIAL WELFARE AND JUSTICE

Although social workers are not responsible for the social problems caused by ESAP and ill-fated public policy, social workers can be accountable for methods/approaches in which programs and policies are implemented in their countries. In Zimbabwe, social workers work in both public and parastatal enterprises as social welfare practitioners and personnel officers. By improving the ways in which services are delivered, social workers can match the clients needs with the most effective service and then advocate the need for the unmet needs. Social workers should shift from assuming primarily a implementation (recipient) role in public policy to being major players (pro-actors) in policy formulation and development at local, state and international levels through advocacy. Social workers should utilize their community development expertise to form social networks with grass roots groups from both rural and urban areas in conjunction with others in Africa and elsewhere (Kawewe, 1996, 1998) and engage in innovative initiatives with international and local NGOs to put pressure on the IMF-World Bank to value people more than money. They can promote labor and social rights by advocating for fair trade as opposed to free trade, opposing deregulation and collaborating with grassroots organizations throughout the world (Danaher, 2000). International forums are more effective for addressing the discrepancy in the IMF-World Bank agenda on Africa through interdisciplinary endeavors that advocate democratic and progressive governments with term limits not exceeding a decade for any single presidency and more accountability on the elites for their actions.

Social workers can utilize a variety of change strategies within the continuum of the social action model of community organization, can collaborate with non government organizations (NGOs) and grassroots non government organizations (GNDOs) who have potential in developing critical capacity for advocacy in the region (Lutabingwa & Gray, 1997), where about 811 NGOs with

slightly over three tenths of them having been in existence since the 1980s being found in sub-Sahara. The amount of financial inflow from overseas to Africa through NGOs exceeds the world bank/IMF funds when debt payments and servicing are factored in (Kiondo, 1993) making grassroots village self-help type, regional, national and international endeavors (Kawewe, 1996), a key to democracy in Zimbabwe and Africa in general. Social workers could negotiate and navigate changes through social networking processes with NGOs. There is a need to facilitate the movement toward improving the women's entrepreneurship and development of local economies for the benefit of themselves and their children (Mupedziswa & Gumbo 1993). There is need to develop centers where young children become socialized to the norms of education; where these children can watch their parents begin employment and move off of the burden of ESAP; where parents and children can learn together as a family, and begin the cycle of education and independence. Bold initiatives such as pushing a government program evaluation center will help provide an opportunity to develop effective public policy and potentially make a meaningful difference (Kawewe & Dibie, 2000).

## CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that SAP has further marginalized the Zimbabwean people more than they were ever before, by creating an environment that threatens peace and social justice. While the structural adjustment program, that was suggested by the WB and IMF and adopted by the Zimbabwean government might be good for western industrialized nations, it has created a devastating impact on HIV / AIDS and various natural calamities. Additionally some parallels have been drawn between the impact of economic policies on social welfare of the poor in Zimbabwe and the US. In both cases there is need to integrate social and economic development by addressing issues of human capital development and budget austerity versus consumption.

Once one of Africa's vibrant economies, Zimbabwe has stagnated to the detriment of women and children. There is a possibility of serious instability and unrest in Zimbabwe as a wave of political turmoil sweeps the country (Schillinger, 1998). Social

workers can work collaboratively with various groups including the trade unions to find peaceful and productive life-saving solutions to the country's problems. The general impression held about Africa is filled with mythology, but realistically, there are smart African leaders, women, men, and children as anywhere in the world and the existence of very real problems with people still surviving in sub-Saharan Africa is not deniable (Toler, 1998). Progressive human service professionals are challenged to contribute to effective public policy formulation, implementation and evaluation in pursuit of economic, social and human rights.

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# The Higher Education Option for Poor Women with Children

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*Postsecondary education is the key to exiting from poverty permanently. Yet, the PRWORA allows women only up to 12 months of vocational training while on welfare. This paper focuses on bringing back the importance of investing in the education of poor women, particularly the postsecondary education of poor women with children, to the forefront of the welfare debate. In this paper we review federal and state level welfare policies toward postsecondary education of poor women with children. Some states are interpreting federal welfare policy strictly and allowing only up to 12 months of vocational training while on welfare. Other states allow poor women attending postsecondary education to count class hours and homework hours toward the work participation requirement. Support services—childcare and transportation—to women attending college vary from state to state. Services for welfare mothers who wish to go on to college are severely inadequate. We argue that federal and state policies should be designed to encourage poor women to complete two- and four-year college degrees because education of women is associated with better economic and social returns for women, children, families and society at large. We propose that welfare policies should encourage women's college education by providing support services and by stopping the five-years clock for those attending college. In addition, programs such as Individual Development Accounts (IDAs) and AmeriCorps should be expanded to increase postsecondary education opportunities for poor women.*

## INTRODUCTION

In the past, only a small proportion of women with children have gone on to college while they were on welfare; however

most of those who have done so have exited from poverty for the rest of their lives. More women are likely to take postsecondary education seriously simply because welfare is no longer an entitlement. Yet, the PRWORA allows women only up to 12 months of vocational training while on welfare. With the change in the welfare philosophy and an added emphasis on welfare to work, more poor women need two- or four-year college degrees to find and retain better paying jobs. Yet, in the last few years, more community colleges that have historically attracted poor women are noticing a drop in the enrollment of these women. In this paper we attempt to address the following research questions: What are the benefits of educating women? How does PRWORA address the education of women on welfare? How is PRWORA translated at the state and local level in terms of women's college education? And, where do we go from here? In this paper we argue in support of investing in the education of women, particularly postsecondary education of poor women with children, as a way to improve their social and economic conditions. We propose some amendments in the federal law to encourage postsecondary education of women with children. We also suggest that programs such as the Individual Development Accounts and the AmeriCorps could be expanded to increase college education of poor women with children.

#### HUMAN CAPITAL THEORY AND RETURNS TO EDUCATING WOMEN

According to human capital theory, investment in human capital, mainly through education and/or training, can raise the future returns in the labor market even though it may entail opportunity costs in forgone short-term earnings. Educated individuals tend to attain higher occupational status, and both educational and occupational attainments are associated with higher social and economic status (Becker, 1964; 1993).

There are two primary explanations for the positive relationship between human capital and labor market outcomes. The conventional explanation is that schooling raises labor productivity by increasing cognitive, verbal and mathematical abilities

(Becker, 1964; 1993; Mincer, 1979; 1989; Schultz, 1993). Individuals with these skills are more effective and efficient workers and thus receive higher earnings.

Another explanation of the positive link between education and labor market outcomes proposes that the main function of education is that it stimulates non-cognitive changes, including changes in attitudes, values, and behavior (Blaug, 1985; Taubman & Wales, 1975). At lower occupational levels, educated individuals are perceived as more desirable employees because they have learned punctuality, obedience, and respect for authority; they have developed initiative, self-reliance, and decision-making skills.

Therefore, according to human capital theory, education plays a critical role in well being in part because the well educated are less likely to face unemployment—they have greater access to full-time, high status, and well-paid jobs. As this theory implies, the positive association between education and well being is due to labor market advantages of the well educated. Given the fact that most welfare mothers do not have college degrees, they are more likely to hold unstable and low-paying jobs without such benefits as health insurance, retirement benefits, annual or maternity leave. They are more likely to experience unemployment and economic hardship (Gordon, 1972).

Human capital theory is supported by numerous empirical findings. Higher education is the best predictor of higher wages and higher occupational status (Reform Organization of Welfare, 1998; Thompson, 1993; U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, 1996–97). For example, in 1996, the annual median income of young adults (25 to 34 years old) who were full-time workers with less than high school degrees was \$17,185, compared to \$22,567 for those with high school diplomas or GEDs, \$25,657 for those with some colleges, and \$34,480 for those with bachelor's degrees (U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, 1998). The wage gap between workers with college degrees and those without college degrees has been widening in recent years (Amott, 1994). Labor market outcomes for educated workers have generally improved, while those of less educated workers have declined (Mishel, Bernstein & Schmitt, 1997; Mishel & Burtless, 1995).

The positive link between educational status and labor market outcomes also holds true for women. Data show that in 1990, average annual earnings of women workers with high school degrees was \$11,443, while those with college degrees (or more) was \$22,905 (Bianchi, 1995). A majority of women without post-secondary education work at jobs that pay a lower wage and/or offer fewer hours (Pavetti, 1997a). Low-paying jobs are not likely to lift welfare recipients above the federal poverty line (Strawn, 1998). According to a study by Reform Organization of Welfare, in 1998, at \$5.15 per hour, a full-time year-round worker will earn 81% of the poverty line for a family of three (ROWEL, 1998). In 1979, 12.1% of full-time year round workers earned too little to lift a family of four out of poverty. In 1994, this population had increased to 18 percent (Reform Organization of Welfare, 1998).

Higher education is particularly important for women due to the income gap between men and women. Women earn less than men in each category of education, but the gap between men and women is greater for women without higher education (Institute for Women's Policy Research, 1997). In 1995, men with high school degrees earned \$26,333, while women with the same education earned \$15,970. Women with college degrees were able to earn an annual average of \$26,841, about the same annual earnings of men with high school degrees (Institute for Women's Policy Research, 1997).

Education also links women with jobs. Women with low levels of education are increasingly isolated from jobs. The U.S. Department of Labor predicts that the number of low-skilled jobs will decline from 47% to 27% by the year 2000 and that by the turn of the century, the majority of jobs will require a postsecondary education (Gittell, Gross & Holdaway, 1993). With the shrinking supply of low-skilled jobs, women with low levels of education have less opportunity to enter the primary labor market and earn enough to support a family.

Thus far, we have discussed the link between education and earnings. We now focus on the returns on investing in the education of women. We argue that returns on investing in the education of women should be assessed at three levels: individual, family and societal levels. Private returns of educating women include several forms of direct benefits to women (e.g.,

higher income, self-reliance, self-esteem, confidence, and empowerment) and their families (e.g., healthier and better educated children). There is also the evidence of social returns of educating women, that is, benefits to the society (e.g., lower fertility rates, lower infant mortality rate, lower maternal death, higher GNP growth, and improved use of health care services) (Schultz, 1993).

*Individual returns*

Education has important effects on women's employment status, wages, and fringe benefits. Evidence has shown that a low level of education is single-mothers' biggest barrier to participation in the labor force and retention of jobs (Gittell & Moore, 1989; Pavetti, 1997b). The best indicators of a woman's hourly wage are her human capital and job characteristics, not family-related characteristics (Greenberg, Strawn & Plimpton, 2000; Spalter-Roth & Hartman, 1991). Education is the key to better paying employment and job retention. The advantage of education for women is quite evident in the United States. Pavetti (1997a) finds that a majority of women (61.4%) who have completed some post-secondary education work steadily at a job in their late twenties which pays at least \$8 an hour and offers at least 35 hours a week.

In 1987, the unemployment rate for females with 9–11 years of education was 56.9%, compared to 30.4% for those with high school degrees and 16.9% for those with Bachelor's degrees (U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, 1998). The type of employment a woman has and her resulting income is linked to the amount and type of education she has obtained. A study of occupations and incomes of college graduates in 1982 found that 84 percent of graduates were employed in higher-paying professional, technical, and managerial positions. Within two years of graduation, women holding college degrees surpassed the average earnings of their cohorts who ended their education with a high school diploma (Henderson & Ottinger, 1985). To earn a salary sufficient for supporting a family, many women will require postsecondary education. It is difficult for women with children to obtain economic independence without a college degree.

The AFDC recipients can achieve real independence through higher education. Several studies (Gittell, Schehl, & Fareri, 1990;



Gittell, Gross & Holdaway, 1993; Karier, 1998) followed AFDC recipients obtaining college degrees and looked at the recipients' level of financial independence after graduation. Among the 158 female AFDC college graduates in New York State who were interviewed, 83% were working and 87% were off welfare, about 70% were earning more than \$10,000 annually and above 40% more than \$20,000 (Gittell, Schehl, & Fareri, 1990). In-depth interviews with 39 women revealed that a college degree has changed their lives dramatically. They have moved from the marginal socio-economic status of welfare recipients to the primary market. The women whose lives have improved the most, in terms of welfare status, employment status, and income, are for the most part, those who graduated from high school, attended a four-year college and earned a bachelor's degree (Gittell, Schehl, & Fareri, 1990). Other research further shows that education and training enhance the likelihood of women getting well-paid job and leaving welfare permanently (Kohl-Welles, 1999; Pavetti, 1992).

The benefits of education to poor women are not only economic but also psychological. Economic independence can promote poor women's self-esteem, self-reliance, independence, security, organizational ability and future orientation (Gittell & Moore, 1989; World Bank, 1991). Many AFDC women see being financially independent as the most important way to have control over their lives.

### *Family returns*

Because women tend to pursue more non-market activities than men do, it is important to examine the benefits of their education beyond their employment status and earnings. Moreover, since women usually spend more time with family members and spend more money for food and clothing of children (Agarwal, 1994), education of women influences not only women's health and welfare, but also that of their children. This is especially important since all TANF recipients have dependent children. There is substantial evidence indicating that children of mothers with more education benefit in numerous ways, even when parental income and occupational status are controlled. The schooling of mothers is strongly associated with health and

education of children (Leibowitz, 1975; Sandiford, Cassel, Montenegro, & Sanchez., 1995; Vella, 1994). Children of former welfare recipients attest that seeing their mother go to college changed their attitude towards higher education. Rice (1997) reports that nearly all children of welfare recipients whose mother had completed college had aspirations of higher education. Teenage daughters of educated mothers are less likely to give birth out-of-wedlock (Haveman & Wolfe, 1994).

### *Social returns*

Social returns include benefits of college education of women to society. The most lasting value of the college experience is its socializing function. Empirical studies in every region of the world suggest that a woman's education is negatively associated with number of children and child mortality and is positively associated with the health status of children (Becker, 1993; Blossfeld & Huinink, 1991; Schultz & Rosenzweig, 1982; 1987; World Bank, 1991). Also, there is a positive correlation between economic growth of a nation and education of its labor force, particularly education of women (Dollar & Gatti, 1999; World Bank, 1981; 1991).

There is overwhelming empirical support for investing in the education of women. Yet, the welfare reform legislation of 1996 fell short of acknowledging the importance of investing in the education of poor women with children in the United States.

## PRWORA: SHIFT IN EDUCATION AND TRAINING PHILOSOPHY

The Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act (PRWORA) (Public Law 104-193) was signed into law in August of 1996 (U.S. Congress, 1996). According to the PRWORA, states must replace Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC), Job Opportunities and Basic Skills (JOBS) and Emergency Assistance programs with a Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) block grant by July 1, 1997. This law has transformed the 60-year-old welfare system into a work-based system, which requires states to place increasing percentages of adults in work or work-related activities. Major changes under the PRWORA include the end of welfare as an entitlement to

individuals, the creation of time limits, and the addition of a work requirement.

The first change is that cash assistance to individuals is no longer an entitlement, and states get dramatically increased authority to create and run their own welfare programs. The federal government is giving each state a block grant, and states will not be entitled to additional federal aid to cover shortages. Determination of who is eligible to receive cash assistance has moved from the federal level to the state or local level. If states want to increase the money that they are spending on TANF clients, they must use their own funds. Funding for employment-related services and cash benefits are combined into the same block grant. If states lack funding to cover all of their TANF related expenses, they may cut employment-related services, reduce the number of recipients, or limit the amount of cash assistance given to families. Also, states may redirect up to 25% of the money away from cash support and toward services designed to prevent teen pregnancy, prevent births outside of marriage, promote marriage and encourage labor force participation. With this change, it is up to the states to determine whether a poor woman with children attending college is eligible for any of the benefits.

The second change is the creation of time limits: Recipients are limited to 60 months of benefits (whether or not consecutive). The five-year clock starts ticking on the date that a state begins implementation of a block grant. If a state uses funds to assist families beyond the time limit, its block grant is cut by 5 percent (Lurie, 1997). While the federal law limits assistance to 60 months, states can impose shorter time limits. Again, this change limits options for postsecondary education and forces women to search for quick employment.

The third change is the addition of a work requirement. Federal law requires that adults on public assistance start working after two years of receiving assistance. The law requires that states put 40 percent of all families<sup>1</sup> to work by the end of fiscal year 2000. The rates increase by five percent each subsequent fiscal year to a maximum of 50 percent for fiscal year 2002 and beyond (TANF Block Grants, Title I). These families are required to participate in unsubsidized or subsidized employment, on-the-job training, work experience, community service, up to 12 months of

vocational training, or provide child care services to individuals who are participating in community service. The new law allows up to six weeks of job search (no more than four consecutive weeks) to count toward the work requirement. Work participation may include subsidized and unsubsidized employment, community service, job skills training related to employment, education directly related to employment (for someone without high school or Graduate Equivalency Degree (GED)), and secondary school or GED (for someone without high school or GED). Teen heads of household (up to age 19) may also count secondary school toward the work requirement. However, no more than 20 percent of the caseload can count vocational training toward meeting the work requirement (including teen parents in secondary school).

TANF tightens the definition of work preparation by limiting the fraction of participants who can be in school, and increases the minimum number of weekly hours of work needed to meet the requirement (Lurie, 1997). Work requirements at the state or community level can be more stringent. According to the federal law, any time spent on postsecondary education, other than 12 months of vocational training, may not count toward work. This is a major limitation for poor women who wish to get postsecondary education.

Historically, most work relief programs until the first half of this century did not offer extensive opportunities for training and manpower development of welfare recipients, primarily to avoid opposition from trade unions (Charnow, 1943). Since the 1960s, however, a few training and manpower development programs such as the Manpower Development and Training Act (MDTA) program, the Work Incentive program (WIN), the Comprehensive Employment and Training Act (CETA) program and the Job Training Partnership Act (JTPA) programs were implemented with federal funding. The Job Opportunities and Basic Skills Training (JOBS) program, which was the centerpiece of the Family Support Act (FSA) of 1998, permitted the states to approve postsecondary education, including two and four year college degrees. In contrast, the PRWORA represents a change in the definition of job training from the previous definition of the JOBS training program. Under TANF, most postsecondary education and job training will not count as work. This represents a change in the

policy. Under the PRWORA, states will be penalized unless they put a substantial portion of their adult recipients into narrowly defined work programs (U.S. Congress, 1996). TANF is designed to place recipients directly into jobs—any jobs, making states less likely to provide education or meaningful job training.

Federal work participation requirements are built on the assumption of the effectiveness of the 'Work-first' strategy. This is seen as a cost-effective means of moving welfare recipients into the workforce quickly (Gault, Hartmann, & Hsiao-Ye, 1998). It is based on the assumption that significant opportunities for wage growth exist in the occupations that are most commonly held by low-income women (Gault, Hartmann, & Hsiao-Ye, 1998). The work-first approach to welfare reform assumes that a lack of personal responsibility leads to poverty and unemployment among welfare mothers, while a human capital approach is based on the assumption that a lack of education and skills is the major reason for poverty, unemployment, and underemployment (Rice, 1997). The PRWORA ironically broadens the scope of state autonomy but limits the choices of welfare recipients (Gault, Hartmann, & Hsiao-Ye, 1998). The legislation eliminates college education of low-income women with children due to its narrow definition of work and training and the tight time limit (Kates, 1996). With the passage of the PRWORA, many colleges and universities have already seen a drop in the number of students who receive welfare (Snow, 1998; Spatz, 1997). Kates indicates that the new legislation virtually eliminates poor women's access to postsecondary education, "which has been one of the most promising pathways out of poverty for AFDC recipients" (Kates, 1996, p.549).

Postsecondary education is critical to helping recipients raise their income and get off welfare and out of poverty (Kates, 1996; 1999a). Investing in the education of poor women is a viable public policy to alleviate poverty among low-income women with children and warrants serious consideration. Literature overwhelmingly lends support to the importance of postsecondary education of welfare recipients. Studies of welfare recipients who attended college found that 87%-88% of the recipients were able to leave welfare and become financially independent one to two years after graduation (Gittell, Schehl, & Fareri, 1990, Gittell, Gross & Holdaway, 1993; Karier, 1998).

The time limit for welfare benefits may be detrimental for the long-term recipients with limited education, and it is important to maintain flexibility in time limits so that women can finish their education programs or get college degrees (Hagen & Davis, 1996). Women on welfare may need more time compared to other college students to get their degrees. Mathur (1998) and Naples (1998) found that women on welfare often have difficulty meeting the demands of being full-time students, being mothers, and coping with limited resources.

In addition to the policy barriers to access to education of women with children, TANF also lacks subsidized programs for support services—childcare and transportation. Available, affordable and quality childcare is essential to women receiving TANF for education and employment. Since quality day care is extremely expensive, women have to rely on assistance from welfare to cover day care costs for job training, educational programs, or work. For example, in Boston's Employment and Training (ET) Department, many women relied on this voucher (or the voucher system); without it there was little question that most of them would have no choice but to remain at home (Gittell & Moore, 1989). Welfare recipients often rely on relatives to provide childcare. Contrary to the commonly held notion that this form of child care is free, one study shows that there are costs associated with even such a form of unlicensed child care (Gault, Hartmann, & Hsiao-Ye, 1998). States do not have the obligation under the PRWORA to maintain and provide childcare for mothers trying to complete their college education.

### STATES' INITIATIVES TO WOMEN'S EDUCATION

In order to understand state initiatives with regard to postsecondary education under PRWORA, we contacted 32 states (see Table 1). We reviewed literature, telephone contacted state administrators and checked state information on the internet (Appendix A). The initiatives for postsecondary education under PRWORA vary not only by states but in some states (e.g., Minnesota, California) the authority to rule on such matters is devolved to the county administrators. While some states are following the federal regulation and only allowing up to 12 months of

Table 1  
State regulations on postsecondary education

State	Number of Work Hours Required per week <sup>a</sup>	Postsecondary Education Allowed to Fulfill Work Requirement	Support Services	
			Child care	Transportation
Arizona	30 hours, work/study can fulfill work requirement	Up to two four-month extensions on the time limit are allowed to complete a postsecondary program, 1 course hour = 1 work hour	Yes	Up to \$7 a day
Arkansas	Fulfillment of the work participation requirement is not based on an hourly formula	College is allowed if students are in the last year of their program. If the student is not in her last year, she must do another activity.	Yes	Yes
California	20-32 hours single parent, 35 hours two parents	Class time, lab time, or internship can count toward the work requirement, students can continue a degree program for 18-24 months or be assigned to a degree program (bill was introduced to allow 2 hours study time for every one hour class)	Yes	Yes

Colorado	Fulfillment of the work participation requirement is not based on an hourly formula	12 months of vocational education, work/study, and internships will count	Yes, if decided at the local level	Yes, if decided at the local level
Delaware	20 hours/week of work or class hours. Internships count		Yes	Yes
Georgia	25 hours or the family's grant divided by minimum wage, work/study and internships can count toward the work requirement	Up to 12 months, must be either vocational, or lead to a certificate or degree that will give the recipient marketable skills	Yes	Up to \$3 a day
Hawaii	8-18 hours in 1st year of educational program, 20 hours in 2 <sup>nd</sup> year and after	Yes	Up to \$325 per month	Up to \$150 per month
Idaho	20 hours	Vocational programs allowed, or allowed to attend college if meeting work requirement through other activities	Sliding fee scale	Yes
Illinois	20 hours/week after the first 36 months	Stops the 60-month lifetime clock for up to 36 months; must enroll full-time and maintain 2.5 grade point average.	Yes	

*continued*



Table 1  
Continued

State	Number of Work Hours Required per week <sup>a</sup>	Postsecondary Education Allowed to Fulfill Work Requirement	Support Services	
			Child care	Transportation
Iowa	Fulfillment of the work participation requirement is not based on an hourly formula	Participants can spend 24 out of 36 months in college and must finish with a degree or certificate	Yes	Yes
Kansas	Work/study and internships count	College courses must be job focused and skill specific, TANF recipients are not allowed to work towards a baccalaureate degree	Yes, if while doing an approved work activity	Yes, if using transportation to get to an approved work activity
Kentucky	30 hours per week, work/study and internships can fulfill the work requirement	Full-time postsecondary for up to 24 months, includes required summer hours, part-time attendance is allowed if the student is involved in 20 hrs/week of other work activity, after 24 months students may take courses and be involved in 20 hrs./wk. other work activity (effective 10/1/99 work requirement will increase to 25 hours)	Yes	Yes

Louisiana	25 hours per week, work/study and internships can sometimes be used to fulfill work requirements	Postsecondary education beyond 12 months of vocational education is allowed if the participant is completing another countable work activity, or if the parish is meeting the participation rate and would like to offer a 12-month extension on educational activities to the recipient	Yes	Yes
Maine	20 hours/week, volunteer work, practicums and internships allowed	4 year programs allowed; student parents are exempt from 60-months limit.	Yes	Yes, pays for car repair and mileage reimbursement
Massachusetts	Work-study internships count 20 hours/week	Work requirement not required until children are 6, thus mother may pursue education	No	No
Michigan	25 hours per week, increasing to 30 hours per week on 10/1/99, can count an internship if it is full-time	12 months vocational, last year of a two- or four-year program, one hour of class time is equivalent to one hour of work participation, and postsecondary students must do 10 hours of unsubsidized work participation	Yes	Yes

*continued*

Table 1  
Continued

State	Number of Work Hours Required per week <sup>a</sup>	Postsecondary Education Allowed to Fulfill Work Requirement	Support Services	
			Child care	Transportation
Minnesota	30 hours for single parents, 30 hours each in two parent families	Counties are allowed to approve a postsecondary plan for some individuals receiving TANF		
Missouri	25 hours per week, internships, (changing to 30 hours per week in 10/99), work/study can count, class hours count until 6/30/2000	Until 6/30/2000—1 hour of class can equal 2 hours of participation (1 hour of homework is allowed for each hour of class)	Yes	Yes
Montana	As of 10/1/99, 120 hours/mo. for single parent and 140 hours/mo. for 2-parent home	Counties can approve postsecondary hours to fulfill the work requirement	Yes	Yes
New Jersey	Reduced to 15 hrs./week for post-sec. students & work/study counts	Yes, but study must be in a marketable field	Yes	Yes

New York	Local social service districts can require up to 40 hours, work/study and internships may fulfill requirements	Local social service districts can approve postsecondary education to fulfill the work requirement	Yes	Yes
North Carolina	25 hours, work/study and internships can count	Vocational allowed, must do work requirement in addition to coursework if doing other than 12-month vocational track	Yes, if working	Yes, some local offices are buying vans
North Dakota	25 hours/week	12 months vocational		
Ohio	30 hours/week, the decision to count work/study or internships is made locally	The first 2,080 hours count, after that 5 hours a week may count, after 10/1/99, only the first 12 months will count toward the work requirement	Yes	Usually yes, but the decision is made at the local level

*continued*

Table 1  
Continued

State	Number of Work Hours Required per week <sup>4</sup>	Postsecondary Education Allowed to Fulfill Work Requirement	Support Services	
			Child care	Transportation
Oklahoma	May require a minimum of 25 hours to a maximum of 40 hours of work. Any paid employment including work study fulfills the work requirement. Also, an internship that is justified as work experience, job readiness, or skills training meets the work requirement.	Postsecondary college hours are not countable work activity and cannot be used to fulfill the work requirement. Allows job skills training, which includes vocational training and any specific occupational training up to 12 months.	Yes, TANF recipients receive free child care for work activities and for time spent at classes for post-secondary education but not for education beyond a bachelor's degree.	No, does not pay for transportation to and from school for postsecondary students receiving TANF. But if the work related activity is work study, transportation would be provided to and from their work site.

South Dakota	25 hours, increasing to 30 hours 10/1/99, work/study and internships can count	12 months vocational only	Not beyond 12 months vocational unless doing another activity.	Not beyond 12 months vocational unless doing another activity.
Tennessee	40 hours	Allows class hours for full-time students to count and allows one-hour study time for every one hour of class time. If class plus study hours do not fulfill the full 40 hours, they may supplement with work-study, apprenticeships, internships as well as other work activities.	Yes	Yes
Utah	# of hours required is determined on an individual basis and may be up to 40, internships can fulfill participation requirements	Yes, up to 24 months and the recipient must demonstrate she is mentally and physically capable of completing the program and that the degree will lead to increased earnings	Yes	If needed

*continued*

Table 1  
Continued

State	Number of Work Hours Required per week <sup>a</sup>	Postsecondary Education Allowed to Fulfill Work Requirement	Support Services	
			Child care	Transportation
Vermont	Fulfillment of the work participation requirement is not based on an hourly formula	Yes, allowed under waiver, Full-time postsecondary students have reduced ETL (End-of-time limits) hours-of-work requirement of 6 hours/week, Part-time students have 12 hours/week	Yes	Yes, will also help with car repairs
Washington	20 hours, work/study and paid internships count	Vocational only, can do other postsecondary programs if working 20 hours	Yes	Yes
West Virginia	20 hours, work/study, internships, student teaching, and unpaid experience count	12 months vocational, the state works with colleges and universities and supports postsecondary education through counting related experiences as work participation	May qualify for sliding fee scale	No, except for transportation to work/study
Wyoming	Must work 32 hours/week during summer, work not required during semester	Allows 4-year degree waive time limit		

vocational education to count towards the work requirement (e.g., Oklahoma, North Dakota), other states are being more generous than the federal government and allowing TANF recipients to complete four-year college degrees (e.g., Illinois, Maine, Hawaii, Vermont). Many states are allowing TANF recipients to complete a combination of some college credit hours and some work, work experience, or community service hours (e.g., Kentucky, New Jersey, Ohio).

With regard to support services, childcare and transportation, it appears that 18 out of the 32 states are allowing TANF recipients who are attending two or four-year colleges to receive subsidized or free childcare while in class. For many of these states it is up to either the county level administrator or another government agency (that is responsible for childcare services) to approve childcare services or subsidies. Sometimes it is up to an individual caseworker to make the childcare support decisions. One state (South Dakota) allows TANF recipients who are completing work requirements through other approved activities to receive subsidized childcare during postsecondary classes even though the state does not count postsecondary education as a work activity.

With regards to transportation, 14 states out of 32 are assisting TANF recipients with transportation to their college or university. A few states are experimenting with innovative approaches to providing transportation. For example, local offices in North Carolina have begun purchasing vans, and some counties in this state are using these vans to transport students to and from postsecondary education programs. Another state, Vermont, will subsidize vehicle repairs of individuals who are attending postsecondary education.

It is worth mentioning that some states are experimenting with innovative approaches to providing postsecondary education for welfare recipients. According to a study of 50 states, 24 states allowed some welfare recipients to meet their work requirements by participating in postsecondary education alone, but in some of these states, stand-alone college education was permitted only to students who had begun their studies (Greenberg, Strawn & Plimpton, 2000; Institute for Women's Policy Research, 1999). For example, Maine and Wyoming have programs designed to help some welfare recipients get four-year



degrees. Maine's "Parents as Scholars Program," enacted in 1997, calls for the state to help cover the living expenses of as many as 2,000 welfare recipients enrolled in two- or four-year degree programs (there were about 800 participants in this program in 1998) (Price & Greene, 1999; Schmidt, 1998). Wyoming allows welfare recipients to attend college for up to four years, requiring them to work at least 32 hours a week for ten weeks during summer breaks. It also stipulates that they maintain at least a C average and complete at least 30 credit hours each academic year (Price & Greene, 1999; Schmidt, 1998). Several other states have permitted welfare recipients to complete their college degrees if they are already enrolled in college. For example, North Carolina has a "grandfather" clause that permits students to finish a four-year degree if they have completed at least two years. Students in Massachusetts may be eligible to continue in school if they began before the state's new welfare law took effect. In the state of Washington, welfare recipients must have had a college education included in their plan at the end of the prior year in order to be eligible to continue college next year (Karier, 1998).

In addition to examining federal and state welfare policies and initiatives toward college education of poor women with children, we also examined other options that are available to these women to achieve the same goal. To this end, we examined Individual Development Accounts and the AmeriCorps programs.

### INDIVIDUAL DEVELOPMENT ACCOUNTS

Sherraden (1991) introduced the concept of Individual Development Accounts (IDAs), proposing that policies that encourage families to accumulate assets will result in positive economic, social, and psychological outcomes. IDAs are matched savings accounts set up in the name of an individual or family, and in the name of a sponsoring organization. In a way, IDAs are similar to Individual Retirement Accounts (IRAs) but can serve a broad range of purposes. Generally, these IDAs are designated for the purposes of homeownership, education, training, small business capitalization, or other development purposes.

At the state level, where welfare reform has been underway for some time, asset building and IDAs are already an important

policy theme. IDAs have been included in the PRWORA, allowing states to establish IDA programs using TANF funds and to exclude counting IDAs as assets for the purpose of qualifying for benefits. To explore the status of IDA programs in different states, we analyzed state IDA policy profiles compiled by the Center for Social Development of Washington University in St. Louis (2000). To date, 29 states in the country have passed IDAs or related legislations (see table 2 & 3) allowing TANF recipients and/or low-income residents in their states to participate in savings. IDAs are designed as a statewide policy in most of these states, with only seven states implementing IDAs in selected counties or families for demonstration (Arkansas, Georgia, Michigan, Rhode Island, Tennessee, Texas, Virginia).

The IDAs provide special incentives for the poor: Account deposits are matched. Matching funds are provided by government, corporate, foundation, or private donor sources. Twenty states have established matching funds from government, private and/or public organizations (most of them are non-profit organizations) (See Tables 2 & 3). Nine of these 20 states have direct appropriation for matching funds, meaning state funds are available to match IDA participants' savings. These states are: California, Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Michigan, Minnesota, North Carolina, Oklahoma and Pennsylvania. Also, nine of these 20 states provide tax incentives for these contributors (private/public) of IDA matching funds (see Table 2). Matching funds and earnings will not be released unless the IDA is used for a designated purpose. Matching ratio ranges from .5:1 in Pennsylvania and some families in Oklahoma to a maximum of 5:1 to some families in Oregon. Only 12 of these states, however, allowed allocation of TANF funds for IDAs. These states are Arkansas, California, Colorado, Kentucky, Iowa, Missouri (pilot program), Ohio, Oklahoma, Oregon, Texas, Utah, and Virginia. Another special incentive of the IDAs is that in all 29 states, money saved from the IDAs is not counted as income for state income tax purposes, or as assets or eligible income for the purpose of public assistance.

Until recently the welfare program was consumption based, and recipients were prohibited from saving by limits on assets they could accumulate while on public assistance. The maximum saving in most states has been \$1,000, a restriction that has been

Table 2

*States with IDAs or related programs*

<i>State</i>	<i>Date IDA Legislation Passed</i>	<i>Direct Appropriation for Match/ (State match rate—if specified)</i>	<i>Direct Appropriation of Money for Administration</i>	<i>Tax Credit Given to Contributor of Matching Funds</i>	<i>Income Disregards and State Tax Exemption</i>	<i>TANF Dollars Allocated for IDAs</i>
Arizona	Passed—1997	No	State administers program	NA	Yes	No
Arkansas	Passed—1997	No	State administers program	No	Yes	TANF dollars are eligible—JOBS Program
	New IDA bill passed—1999	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes (3:1)
California	IDA bill pending—1998	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
	Work Pays bill passed—1994	No	State administers program	NA	Yes	No

Colorado	Passed—1997	No	Counties administer programs	No	Yes	TANF dollars are eligible
Georgia	Passed (SRAs)—1998	No	State administers program	No	Yes	No
Hawaii	Passed—1999	No	No	No	Yes	No
Illinois	Passed—1998	Yes (1:1)	Yes, plus technical assistance funds	No	Yes	No
Indiana	Passed—1997	Yes (3:1)	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
Iowa	Passed—1993	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes
Kansas	Passed—1993	No	State administers program	No	Yes	No
Kentucky	Passed—1997	No	No	No	Yes	TANF dollars eligible
Maine	Passed—1997	No	No	Yes	Yes	No

*continued*

Table 2

*Continued*

<i>State</i>	<i>Date IDA Legislation Passed</i>	<i>Direct Appropriation for Match/ (State match rate—if specified)</i>	<i>Direct Appropriation of Money for Administration</i>	<i>Tax Credit Given to Contributor of Matching Funds</i>	<i>Income Disregards and State Tax Exemption</i>	<i>TANF Dollars Allocated for IDAs</i>
Michigan	Passed—1998	Yes	Yes	No, a tax deduction is given	Yes	No
Minnesota	Passed—1998	Yes (3:1)	Yes	No	Yes	No
Missouri	Passed—1999 Pilot IDA Program—1999	No No	No No	Yes No	Yes Yes	No Yes (1:1 match and administration)
Montana	Passed Family Education Savings Account (FESA)—1997	No	State administers program	No	Yes	No

New Mexico	Passed—1996	No	State administers program	No	Yes	No
North Carolina	Passed—1998	Yes (2:1)	Yes	No	Yes	No
Ohio	Passed—1997	No	Yes	No, a tax deduction is given	Yes	Yes
Oklahoma	Passed—1998	Yes	No	No	Yes	Yes
Oregon	JOBSP Plus passed—1994	No	State ad- ministrators program	NA	Yes	Yes
	Passed Children's Development Accounts (CDAs)— 1995	No	No	No	Yes	No
	Passed—1999	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
Pennsylvania	Passed—1997	Yes (.5:1)	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
Rhode Island	Passed—1997	No	No	No	Yes	No

*continued*

Table 2  
Continued

<i>State</i>	<i>Date IDA Legislation Passed</i>	<i>Direct Appropriation for Match/ (State match rate—if specified)</i>	<i>Direct Appropriation of Money for Administration</i>	<i>Tax Credit Given to Contributor of Matching Funds</i>	<i>Income Disregards and State Tax Exemption</i>	<i>TANF Dollars Allocated for IDAs</i>
South Carolina	Passed—1995	No	State administers program	No	Yes	No
Tennessee	Passed—1996	No	Yes	No	Yes	No
Texas	Passed—1996	No	State administers program	No	Yes	Yes
	Passed—1999	No	No	No	Yes	Yes (1:1 match and admin Money)
Utah	Passed—1997	No	No	No	Yes	TANF funds are eligible
Virginia	Passed—1998	No	No	No	Yes	Yes

Wisconsin	Special Resource Accounts (SRAs) bill passed—1995	No	State administers program No	NA	Yes	No
		No	No	No	Yes	No

Source: Constructed from the information posted by the Center for Social Development (2000). Available [Online]: <http://igubweb.wustl.edu/Users/csd/ida/stateIDAprfiles.html/>



Table 3

*Scope and characteristics of IDA programs by state*

<i>State</i>	<i>Scope within each state (e.g., is it statewide or few counties?)</i>	<i>Who is eligible to participate?</i>	<i>Saving ceiling</i>	<i>Source(s) of Matching Funds &amp; formula</i>	<i>Purpose of IDAs: education not included; included as a generic criteria; specifically for postsecondary education of recipients</i>
Arizona	Statewide	Welfare recipients receiving TANF and food stamps	Up to \$12,000; up to \$9,000 of which will be disregarded for the purpose of benefit eligibility	No matching funds	To be used only for educational and training of any family member
Arkansas	Selected communities	TANF recipients or annual income at or below 185% federal poverty guidelines.	A match cap of \$2,000 per account over the life of the program	TANF funds, private funds, Tax credits; Match rate is 3:1	To be used for the <b>postsecondary education</b> of participants or their children, small business, home ownership, retirement, car purchase, repair

California	Statewide ("California Works")	AFDC(now TANF) recipients	\$5,000	No matching funds	To be used for homeownership, small business and educational expenses
	Statewide (IDA)	TANF recipients or individuals or families at or below 100% federal poverty	\$2,000 per year	General state funds	Not mentioned
Colorado	Statewide	TANF recipients		TANF or MOE funds	To be used for home purchase, business capitalization or <b>higher education</b>
Georgia	Demonstrati- on in 2 sites	TANF recipients who are 18 years or older	\$5,000 per participant	No matching funds	To be used to obtain employment, start a business or education

*continued*

Table 3  
Continued

State	Scope within each state (e.g., is it statewide or few counties?)	Who is eligible to participate?	Saving ceiling	Source(s) of Matching Funds & formula	Purpose of IDAs: education not included; included as a generic criteria; specifically for postsecondary education of recipients
Hawaii	Statewide	TANF recipients or those with income up to 80% of the area's household median income	Saving ceiling not specified	State money (if appropriated) at the match rate of 2:1; Match rate may be increased with private funds.	To be used for post-secondary education or job training, homeownership, and business capitalization.

Illinois	Statewide	TANF recipients and working poor (at or below 150% federal poverty); Participants must save \$20 per month	No more than 1,000 accounts per year, for five years	State general funds, private funds, AFI grant; Match rate is 1:1	To be used for first-time home ownership, small business capitalization and education
Indiana	Statewide	TANF recipients and those with annual income at or below 60% of the median income of the county they live in, or at or below 150% federal poverty	Match cap of \$300/year for a maximum of 4 years; Number of accounts limited to 800 per year for 3 years	State general funds (\$6.5 million); tax credits, private funds, AFI grant; Match rate is 3:1	To be used for home ownership, small business capitalization and education or training

*continued*

Table 3  
Continued

<i>State</i>	<i>Scope within each state (e.g., is it statewide or few counties?)</i>	<i>Who is eligible to participate?</i>	<i>Saving ceiling</i>	<i>Source(s) of Matching Funds &amp; formula</i>	<i>Purpose of IDAs: education not included; included as a generic criteria; specifically for postsecondary education of recipients</i>
Iowa	Statewide	TANF recipients, or annual income at or below 200% of the federal poverty level	Up to \$2,000 annually; accounts capped at \$10,000 over 5 years. State will match up to 10,000 accounts over 5 years.	State general funds (\$150,000 for SFY 2000); TANF funds; private funds, AFI grant	Home ownership, small business development, education, job training, home improvement, or a one-time family medical emergency not exceeding 10% of the balance of the account

Kansas	Statewide	Residents in Kansas (should allow for TANF recipients)	\$2,000 for the first year (an additional \$1,000 for each dependent child); increase annually by a percentage equal to the previous year's increase in the consumer price index.	No matching funds	To be used for education expenses of account holders, no limit set on the amount of earned income a dependent child deposits if the IDA pays for the educational expenses of the child
Kentucky	Statewide	TANF recipients	Up to \$5,000 (excluding interest)	Non-profits can apply to the state for matching funds	To be used for first home ownership, small business development, and education

*continued*

Table 3  
Continued

State	Scope within each state (e.g., is it statewide or few counties?)	Who is eligible to participate?	Saving ceiling	Source(s) of Matching Funds & formula	Purpose of IDAs: education not included; included as a generic criteria; specifically for postsecondary education of recipients
Maine	Statewide	TANF recipients, or income level at or below 200% of the federal poverty level	A match cap of \$2,000 per year, up to \$10,000 for match dollars	State tax credits; Match rate is 2:1	To be used for home ownership or home repair, education or job training, start-up or expansion of a business, purchase or repair of a vehicle, approved emergencies, and health care costs exceeding \$500 (not covered by insurance)

Michigan	State chose 18 IDA programs	TANF recipients, or those who are TANF eligible	Saving ceiling not specified	State General Funds, Private Funds; Match rate is 1:1	To be used for home purchase, or construction, or reconstruction
Minnesota	Statewide	TANF recipients, or those who are TANF eligible, or annual income at or below 185% of the federal poverty guidelines	Savings over four project years not to exceed \$5,760; Up to 463 accounts may be funded in the 1 <sup>st</sup> project year	State General Funds, Private Funds; AFI Grant. Match rate is 3:1 (1.5:1 State; 1.5:1 Private)	To be used for homeownership, <b>higher education</b> , and a small business venture

*continued*



Table 3  
Continued

State	Scope within each state (e.g., is it statewide or few counties?)	Who is eligible to participate?	Saving ceiling	Source(s) of Matching Funds & formula	Purpose of IDAs: education not included; included as a generic criteria; specifically for postsecondary education of recipients
Missouri	State level	Missouri residents whose income is at 200% or below the federal poverty level (including TANF recipients)	\$2,000 per year (total savings); Up to \$50,000 over time	Private funds; Match rate is up to 3:1	To be used for home ownership or repair, small business capitalization, and post secondary education or job training

Pilot IDA program (Jan 99)	TANF recipients or TANF eligible individuals participating in specific jobs programs)	A match cap of \$1,000, over two program years	TANF funds; funds from Annie E. Casey Foundation and National Council of Jewish Women; match rate is 1:1	Homeownership, small business development, <b>postsecondary education</b> or job training, Home repair or improvement
Montana	Statewide (Family Education Savings Account)	TANF recipients	Up to \$3,000 annually for the purpose of benefit eligibility	To be used for <b>postsecondary education</b> only
New Mexico	Statewide	TANF recipients	Up to \$1,500 (for first savings account)	To be used for <b>postsecondary education</b> for participants or dependents, first-time home purchase (maximum \$1,500), or business capitalization.

*continued*

Table 3  
Continued

State	Scope within each state (e.g., is it statewide or few counties?)	Who is eligible to participate?	Saving ceiling	Source(s) of Matching Funds & formula	Purpose of IDAs: education not included; included as a generic criteria; specifically for postsecondary education of recipients
North Carolina	Statewide	Annual income at 80% of the area median income or eligible for the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC)	State will match up to 300 accounts per year unless funds become available	State General Funds, CDBG Funds, Private Funds, AFI Grant; Match rate is 2:1	To be used for education or job training, homeownership and small business

Ohio	Statewide	TANF recipients or those eligible for TANF, or annual income at or below 150% of federal poverty guidelines	The total of an IDA may not exceed \$10,000	TANF Funds (by county), Private Funds, State Tax Deductions, AFI Grant; Match rate no higher than 2:1	To be used for homeownership, small business capitalization, or education, or emergencies approved by the implementing organization
Oklahoma	Statewide	TANF recipients or annual income at or below 200% of the federal poverty level	\$500 per year up to \$2,000 for four years; Up to 500 TANF accounts per year	State General Funds, CDBG Funds; Match rates is 1:1 (for those below the poverty line), .75 :1 (for those between 100% and 150% poverty line) and .50:1 (for those between 150% to 200% poverty line)	For non-TANF recipients: home purchase, start a business, education or job training, retirement accounts, or a car.  For TANF recipients: home purchase and improvements, business start-up costs, or <b>post-secondary education</b>

*continued*

Table 3  
Continued

State	Scope within each state (e.g., is it statewide or few counties?)	Who is eligible to participate?	Saving ceiling	Source(s) of Matching Funds & formula	Purpose of IDAs: education not included; included as a generic criteria; specifically for postsecondary education of recipients
Oregon	Statewide	IDA participants who have an income at or below the median household income for the area they live in. Participants may not have a net worth of more than \$20,000.	Matching deposits per IDA account is up to \$2,000 per year; Total deposits and interest over the life of IDA up to \$20,000	Some TANF funds; Match rates range from 1:1 to 5:1	IDA can be used for <b>post-high school education</b> or job training, the purchase of a primary residence, the capitalization of a small business, or an emergency

Statewide Children's Development Accounts (CDAs)	CDAs participants, can be any Oregon children less than 18 years old	CDAs can be used for <b>postsecondary</b> <b>education</b> , job training, first time home purchase, and capitalizing a business
Pennsylvania	Statewide	To be used for education, home ownership, and small business capitalization or entrepreneurial activity or any work-related activity, job training, or childcare based on an approved plan
	TANF recipients, or TANF eligible, or annual income level at or below 200% federal poverty level	State general grants; tax credits; private funds; AFL grant; Match ratio is 5:1
	Savings match is capped at \$600 per year, up to two years	
Rhode Island	Selected 30 families for pilot program	To be used solely for qualified business capitalization expenses

*continued*

Table 3  
Continued

<i>State</i>	<i>Scope within each state (e.g., is it statewide or few counties?)</i>	<i>Who is eligible to participate?</i>	<i>Saving ceiling</i>	<i>Source(s) of Matching Funds &amp; formula</i>	<i>Purpose of IDAs: education not included; included as a generic criteria; specifically for postsecondary education of recipients</i>
South Carolina	Statewide	TANF recipients	Up to \$10,000	No matching fund	To be used for home ownership, small business capitalization, or education
Tennessee	12 counties (6 rural and 6 urban)	TANF recipients or TANF eligible	Up to \$2,000 for TANF recipients; Up to \$7,000 for non-TANF recipients	State general funds (admin only), WtW funds, private funds; Matching ratio is 2:1	To be used for homeownership, small business development, or education or career development

Texas	Eight counties	TANF recipients, or TANF eligible, or annual income at or below 200% of the federal poverty level	No caps specified	Private funds	To be limited to education and medical expenses, housing expenses (including home purchase), a self-employment enterprise, start-up business expenses, and work related expenses
Utah	Statewide	One and two parent families with at least one dependent child or a parent who is in the third trimester of pregnancy	Determined by family size, income and other relevant factors	Matching funds are from not-profit organizations	To be used for <b>postsecondary educational</b> expenses—after leaving cash assistance—including tuition, fees, book supplies, and transportation costs, as part of an employment plan; first-time home purchases; and business capitalization

*continued*



Table 3  
Continued

State	Scope within each state (e.g., is it statewide or few counties?)	Who is eligible to participate?	Saving ceiling	Source(s) of Matching Funds & formula	Purpose of IDAs: education not included; included as a generic criteria; specifically for postsecondary education of recipients
Virginia	Five localities	TANF recipients		(Will be) matched by TANF block grant	To be used for vocational school or college, purchase of a home, or to start a business
Wisconsin	Statewide	One third of all AFDC (TANF) cases randomly selected from the state	Up to \$10,000 per account	No matching funds	To be used for education or job training, children's education from pre-school to college, employability uses, and can withdraw for emergency needs up to \$200 per year

Source: Constructed from the information posted by the Center for Social Development (2000). Available [Online]: <http://igwbweb.twustl.edu/Users/csd/ida/stateIDAprofiles.html>

enormously counterproductive. IDAs provide fundamental policy change in this area. The saving ceiling of IDAs set up by these states ranges from \$1,200 to \$20,000.

Eleven states have appropriation money for IDA demonstration (see Table 2); they may use their state monies to administer and assess the effectiveness of their IDA demonstration projects. To benefit current and future IDA demonstrations, the IDA initiatives in these states are being assessed, and the social and economic effects of assets are being evaluated.

As mentioned above, IDAs may be used for education, first home purchase, or business capitalization (see Table 3). Twenty-seven of the 29 states include education for TANF recipients as a generic criterion, and eleven of them allow use of IDAs for postsecondary education of TANF recipients (see Table 3). These states are Arkansas, Colorado, Hawaii, Minnesota, Missouri, Montana, New Mexico, Oklahoma, Oregon, Utah, and Virginia. Two states use IDAs only for postsecondary education (Montana) or education (Arizona). Literature we presented earlier has shown that postsecondary education is one of the most efficient ways to help welfare recipients out of welfare and poverty. In this sense, IDAs program is an innovative strategy to promote education of welfare recipients.

#### AMERICORPS: OPPORTUNITY FOR WELFARE MOTHERS

AmeriCorps, created in 1993 and started in 1994, is a national network of programs designed to provide for adults an opportunity to volunteer and serve the nation. About 40,000 AmeriCorps members participate each year. National, state, and local organizations sponsor AmeriCorps programs. Congress increased the annual budget of AmeriCorps to \$436 million in 1998 (National Center for Public Analysis, 1998). Anyone who is 18 years or older is eligible to apply for AmeriCorps. Some programs have more specific skills or educational requirements; others require their members to have a high school or a GED (Delta Service Corps, 1999). AmeriCorps service addresses community needs in one of four areas: education, public safety, human services, and the environment. AmeriCorps members receive a living allowance<sup>2</sup> and health care<sup>3</sup>. Some eligible volunteers also receive support for

childcare and housing (AmeriCorps Member Handbook, 1999). After one year of service, members receive an education award—full time members receive \$4,725 and part-time members receive \$2,362. The award may be used to help finance higher education, to pay off existing student loans, or to pay for expenses incurred while participating in an approved school-to-work program. A former welfare recipient who now has a bachelor's degree and is working full-time for a private company indicated that AmeriCorps program opened a door for her college education.

AmeriCorps programs are a good opportunity for welfare mothers to get off welfare and go on to college. About half of all welfare recipients have a high school degree or a GED (Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, 1993), and many are already involved in higher education (Burghardt & Gordon, 1990). AmeriCorps services allow women to change their image from being on public assistance to serving the nation as a volunteer. Funding for AmeriCorps is not from a welfare grant, so there is no stigma associated with being an AmeriCorps member. Benefits that AmeriCorps members receive (living allowance, health insurance, childcare, and housing) are more than what welfare mothers get from welfare grants. All members receive training at the beginning of their service, as well as project-specific training during service. Unlike welfare recipients on community service where they may not be learning any additional employment related skills, AmeriCorps members learn new skills before and during their services and obtain various work experiences. AmeriCorps also provides future educational and/or career support services to its members. For example, AmeriCorps has prepared a handbook that can help its members write a resume and interview effectively, identify jobs in the areas of interest, use the web for job research, apply for college or graduate programs, and stay involved in services. AmeriCorps alumni indicate that their AmeriCorps experience has been helpful to them to succeed as students, as entrepreneurs, and as professionals in the nonprofit field and in the private sector (AmeriCorps News, 1999).

## ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

Recent policy changes limit education and training of poor women with children. Welfare and educational reforms push

short-term program options without regard for long-term costs and benefits. The new policies place the emphasis on immediate jobs for poor women but ignore the importance of postsecondary education to get single mothers off welfare and into the job market. The new policies eliminate access to postsecondary education of women with children, which has been one of the most promising pathways out of poverty for them (Kates, 1996).

The new law is forcing more poor women with children to seek employment in the labor-market within a tight time limit. The probability of women with children finding fruitful employment is uncertain, given the situation created by the PRWORA. Since welfare reform will add one to two million persons to the labor force from 1993 to 2005, it will drastically reduce the real earnings of less-educated women by increasing job seekers at the lower rungs of the economic ladder (Bartik, 1998). Women with low levels of education and young children often find unskilled work. This unskilled work is usually unstable, offering low wages (often \$5—\$7) and low fringe benefits (National Conference of State Legislation, 1998). Women working in such jobs seldom earn enough to lift a family out of poverty. A study from Oregon indicates that while welfare caseloads declined, the poverty rate in that state increased (ECONorthwest, 1998). Similarly, in Wisconsin, in spite of the rapid growth in the economy and a tremendous decline in the welfare rolls, the number of poor declined marginally, and the number of extremely poor (below 50% of the poverty level) increased sharply from 1989 to 1997 (Moore & Selkove, 1999). Another study indicates that in 1996, over 2.7 million children (19 percent of all poor children) came from families whose heads worked full-time year round but earned incomes below the official poverty threshold (Wertheimer, 1999). This clearly indicates that forcing parents directly into work may get their children off welfare, but it does not guarantee that they will escape poverty (FitzPatrick, 1999; Kates, 1999b.; Wertheimer, 1999).

Ironically, while the U.S. economy is booming, more and more poor families, many of whom are employed, are turning to food pantries, soup kitchens and other emergency food services to survive hunger ("Hunger on the rise," 1998; Revkin, 1999a; 1999b). One reason for material hardship is that single mothers' expenses (e.g., childcare, housing, transportation and clothing)

rise sharply when they work (Jencks, 1997). Many advocates argue that if we want to make low-wage work a viable option for women with children, a wide range of government support systems—childcare, health care, housing and a higher minimum wage—is needed (Savner, 1996). Unavailability of such subsidies will defeat the purpose of 'welfare to work'. The most important issue will not be whether a state meets the work participation quotas or not, but whether it is able to create effective systems that assist welfare recipients to prepare for, find, and maintain stable employment and economic independence. While these supports are necessary, helping poor women attain economic independence in the long run demands our investing in their college education, the most important factor in realizing the transition from welfare to work, in securing stable jobs with higher incomes and better benefits. Since investing in the education of women has individual, family and social returns, the federal, state and local governments should provide assistance when they are enrolled in higher education courses both at private and public schools. They should receive full tuition.

New policy measures should be initiated to encourage women with children to gain more education. Under the current policy, single mothers are required to find volunteer or paid work immediately, rather than engaging in education or substantive training programs. Moreover, rigid time limits are imposed on welfare benefits, with no subsequent safety nets, regardless of individual circumstances. We propose a public policy which views education as a valuable activity for recipients of welfare and supports investment in the education of women with children. Mothers on welfare can successfully gain college education with some support and counseling services (Thompson, 1993). Some states have obtained waivers from the federal government to allow women on welfare to continue in two- and four-year postsecondary programs. For example, Vermont is allowing women to count coursework toward a four-year degree as work participation and is offering support services for childcare and transportation. Other states that do not have waivers are not able to allow their TANF recipients to enroll in two- or four-year degree programs (e.g., Georgia, North Dakota, Oklahoma). Some strategies to support postsecondary education of women with children are discussed below:

First, stop the clock while welfare recipients are attending two-year or four-year degree programs. Poor women with children and limited resources will need more than four years to finish a Bachelor's degree (Naples, 1998).

Second, provide TANF money and Food Stamps while mother-only families are participating in education and training including postsecondary education and training. The inconsistencies of student aid and public assistance is one of the biggest barriers for poor women to attend college. One example is the inconsistency between the Reauthorization of the Higher Education Act of 1986 and the Tax Reform Act of 1986. While the Higher Education Act of 1986 does not count tuition as income, the Tax Reform Act of 1986 redefined scholarships and fellowships as taxable income (Kates, 1991). Studies show that poor women viewed financial aid as one of the most important influencing factors for going to school or getting an education (Boldt, 2000; Gittell, Gross, & Holdaway, 1993). While it is understandable that low-income and minority women are often forced to make short-term decisions about investment in their own human capital, social policies that eschew long-term investment in women's education are counterproductive. In order to resolve the inconsistencies between student aid and public assistance, agreements that grants will not be counted as living expenses should be articulated between state financial aid offices and state departments of public welfare. The criterion to avoid having grant money or private scholarships counted as income and deducted from benefits should also be agreed upon (Rosen, 1983).

Third, support services—childcare and transportation—should be subsidized while women are attending school. Some of the money that is being set aside to subsidize childcare and transportation of women on public assistance could be used to subsidize the same services for women who are attending college.

Fourth, Individual Development Accounts are a good idea but more states need to allow women to save for postsecondary education in their IDAs. Currently, only eleven states are allowing TANF recipients to save money for education in their IDAs. It is not clear if and how many poor women are currently participating in this program. Most states have not appropriated funds for state match into IDAs. Many states have not even allocated welfare

monies for IDAs. Incentives (tax credit or tax exemptions) made available thus far are marginal. To make a significant impact in the lives of women in the margins, federal and state governments will have to generously commit to matching funds. Perhaps a portion of the \$4 billion saved from declines in welfare caseloads could be allocated for matching funds ("White House releases glowing data on welfare," 1999). Matching rates and tax incentives to private contributors could be raised. Also the saving ceiling could be raised so the poor women are not penalized for saving.

Fifth, social service providers should be educated about programs such as the AmeriCorps, so that they can inform welfare mothers about these services. Since half of the welfare recipients have a high school degree or a GED (Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, 1993; Kates, 1996), they are eligible to participate in AmeriCorps services, which would also open a door for their postsecondary education.

Sixth, states should create a separate and state-funded public assistance program for welfare students enrolled in postsecondary education. Such programs could allow states to provide benefits to students from state funds so that the students are not subject to federal TANF restrictions and requirements.

Finally, educational institutions must develop policies that improve access to higher education for low-income women. Higher education institutions can impact the actual numbers of welfare recipients who enroll in college degree programs (Gittell & Covington, 1993). A dearth of programs and support services on campuses creates barriers for poor women to attend college (Gittell & Moore, 1989). Educational institutions should create opportunities such as flexible course schedules, supportive services, and campus employment to attract and meet the needs of welfare recipients (Rooney, 1998). While several states (e.g., California, Philadelphia, Kentucky) have created new work-study initiatives designed explicitly to meet the needs of welfare recipients (Cohen, 1998; Greenberg, Strawn & Plimpton, 2000; Johnson & Kaggwa, 1998), more states need to follow suit.

## CONCLUSION

There is a direct link between postsecondary education and a secure financial future. Education provides choices in life. The

high individual, family and societal rewards to investing in the education of women are unquestionable. Moving recipients into work that can support their families without welfare payments should be the primary goal of welfare reform. Education is critical for moving mothers from welfare to work and is the only reliable way for them to sustain a life above the poverty level. Investing in the education of poor women is critical to helping them break the cycle of poverty and for the healthy development of the nation. Yet, the PRWORA allows women only up to 12 months of vocational training while on welfare. Understanding the constraints and resources that are available for low-income women who wish to attend higher education is critical for researchers, policy makers and social service providers. The federal and state initiatives toward postsecondary education of poor women with children are severely inadequate. With commitment from federal, state, local governments, service providers and educational institutions, we can develop (or strengthen) policies and programs that improve low-income women's access to higher education.



## Appendix A

*Literature and information obtained from the following sources were used to construct table 1 (states' regulations on post-secondary education)*

<i>State</i>	<i>Source of Information</i>
Arizona	Department of Economic Security, Phoenix
Arkansas	Arkansas Enterprise Group, Good Faith Fund; Arkansas Department of Human Services
California	Price, C.R. & Greene, J.L. (1999), cited above has some information from 42 states; Cohen (1988) cited above; Urban Research Division, Chief Administrative Office, County of Los Angeles; UCLA Department of Social Welfare; Department of Social Services; Low-Income Families' Empowerment through Education (LIFETIME)
Colorado	Colorado Department of Human Services
Delaware	Senate Bill no 1; Delaware Health and Social Services, Division of Social Services
Georgia	Work First, Georgia Department of Human Resources and the Division of Family and Children Services
Hawaii	Department of Human Services, Hawaii
Idaho	Idaho Department of Health and Welfare
Illinois	Price, C.R. & Greene, J.L. (1999) cited above; Women Employed; National Center on Poverty Law; Illinois Welfare News, July 1999

Iowa	Iowa Department of Human Services
Kansas	Economic and Employment Support Commission
Kentucky	Office of Kentucky Legal Services, Kentucky Domestic Violence Program; Price, C.R. & Greene, J.L. (1999) cited above; Cabinet of Families and Children, Department of Community Based Services; Women in Transition, Women's Center, University of Kentucky; Women's Center, University of Louisville
Louisiana	Department of Social Services, Family Independence Work Program, Louisiana
Maine	Price, C.R. & Greene, J.L. (1999) cited above; Alexander, M. & Clendenning, D. (1999). The state of Maine's parents as scholars program: Executive summary of early findings. Center for Community Inclusion. University of Maine.
Massachusetts	Center for Human Resources, Heller School, Boston University; Welfare Education Training Access Coalition
Michigan	Michigan Family Independence Agency, Office of Communication
Minnesota	The Student Parent HELP Center, University of Minnesota; Minnesota Department of Human Services
Missouri	Division of Family Services, Department of Social Services, Missouri
Montana	Department of Public Health and Human Services, Montana
New Jersey	Work First New Jersey

*continued*

## Appendix A

*Continued*

<i>State</i>	<i>Source of Information</i>
New York	Greene, J (1999). Model College Programs. Howard Samuels State Management and Policy Center, Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance
North Carolina	Work First Program, Department of Health and Human Services, Department of Social Services
North Dakota	Department of Human Services
Ohio	Legislative aide to Senator Eric D. Fingerhut; Ohio Works First Program
Oklahoma	Department of Human Services
South Dakota	Department of Social Services
Tennessee	Department of Human Services; Institute of Women's Studies, Emory University
Utah	Department of Workforce Services, Employment and Development Division
Vermont	Department of Social Welfare
Washington	Department of Social and Health Services
West Virginia	West Virginia Works
Wyoming	Price, C.R. & Greene, J.L. (1999) cited above; Cohen (1998) cited above.

## NOTES

1. To meet work requirements, single parents receiving cash assistance must work at least 30 hours per week, and two-parent families must work at least 35 hours per week.
2. The living allowance provided to AmeriCorps members varies among programs. Most full-time members receive an annual allowance between \$8,340 and \$16,680 (AmeriCorps Member Handbook, 1999).
3. AmeriCorps programs provide health care coverage to all full-time members (family members are not covered) who do not have adequate health care coverage at the time of enrollment. At minimum, member policies cover physician services for illness or injury, hospital room and board, emergency room care, x-ray and laboratory costs, prescription drugs, mental or nervous conditions (may be limited), and substance abuse (may be limited). In addition, member policies include the following: an annual deductible of not more than \$250 per individual; a co-pay requirement of not more than 20 percent or a comparable fixed fee; an out-of-pocket expenditure of not more than \$1,000 per individual; and a lifetime maximum benefit of at least \$50,000 for each occurrence or cause (AmeriCorps Member Handbook, 1999).
4. According to the Fair Labor Standard Act, TANF recipients are not required to work more than the combination of their grant and food stamp allotment divided by the minimum wage.

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# A Descriptive Analysis of Skin Color Bias in Puerto Rico: Ecological Applications to Practice

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*Travel brochures to the island of Puerto Rico aptly profess the rich variation in skin color and other phenotypes among its people. Following acts of domination vis-a-vis the island's cultural mores, invading colonizers evolved a social hierarchy to discourage any notions of merit attributable to racial diversity. According to the data herewith, the presumption of a relationship between skin color and selected values for skin color ideals is plausible. Social work practitioners are then challenged to decipher the maze of racial traditions as pertains to discrimination. Doing so will enable an environment for knowledge based purely upon merit in order to resurrect indigenous knowledge about the biases of otherwise victim populations.*

## INTRODUCTION

Travel brochures to the island of Puerto Rico aptly profess the rich variation in skin color and other phenotypes among its people. Vacationing tourists are impressed by the seeming lack of discrimination and/or racism which residents proudly attest to. Unmentionable, however, is the bias against Puerto Ricans characterized by dark skin. The existence of such bias is invisible to the casual observer but is immune to dispute in the aftermath of racism and European colonization.

Discrimination on some basis is as old as civilization itself (Winston, 1998). However, in a practice context, its manifestation on the basis of skin color is all but oblivious to social workers. Furthermore, among Puerto Ricans, current forms of bias are the direct result of having been militarily "colonized" by Europeans from Spain and socially colonized by Euro-Americans from the

mainland (Delano-Buono, 1991). Following their various acts of domination vis-a-vis the island's cultural mores, invading colonizers evolved a social hierarchy to discourage any notions of merit attributable to racial diversity (Hall, 1992). The uppermost in status became those, whose heritage most approximates that of the light-skinned colonists and the least being an opposite extreme (Hall, 1994). In an effort to comply, Puerto Ricans had been imposed upon by a homogeneous racial system that is in many ways not only alien to Puerto Rico itself but, psychologically debilitating to its citizens. For such a heterogeneous group as they, the effort to maintain doctrines of racial purity did not evolve with the same vigor as was characteristic of the U.S. mainland. While racial discrimination is not totally irrelevant as a social phenomenon in Puerto Rico, by U.S. standards it is much less potent. In the absence of a virulent race tradition, bias has prevailed on the basis of skin color.

### ECOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE

Empirical research and practice methodologies that are grounded in the ecological perspective enable social workers to access the bio-psycho-social forces of the cultural milieu. Said perspective also allows for consideration of the interchange between various systems including familial, community and formal institutions. Such systems are germane to the function and life cycle of Puerto Ricans. Peters (1988) concluded that an ecological theoretical perspective enables the development of culture sensitive methodologies. Such methodologies allow for more relevant conjecture attributed to social phenomena. Enabled by relevant conjecture, said phenomena can then be assessed within its native life space. The outcome facilitates a conduit for more objective analysis of skin color bias. Thus the conceptual and theoretical frameworks suggested herewith are critical to interpretation of the communal milieu of Puerto Rican people.

### REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Much of the scholarly literature pertaining to skin color bias has focused upon African-Americans. Extended from colonization and various forms of domination, African-Americans have

been no less susceptible than Puerto Ricans to color issues within the group (Lakshmanasamy & Madheswaran, 1995). Their darkest skin has evolved a "master status." It differentiates them from the mainstream as an inferior element of the population (Gacia & Swenson, 1992; Herrnstein & Murray, 1994). So potent is this "master status" that it has recently served as grounds for litigation between African-Americans of light and dark skin color belonging to the same ethnic group (*Morrow vs IRS*, 1990; Hiskey, 1990). A resort to legal tactics is an indication that for some, skin color bias has been particularly painful. In the aftermath, African-Americans themselves develop a disdain for dark skin because the disdain is a by-product of colonization (Anderson, 1991; Martinez, 1993).

According to James Baldwin, the root of African-American difficulty is directly related to skin color (in Jones, 1966; Robinson & Ward, 1995). This would contradict much of the rhetoric of the sixties. But as Hall (1995) notes the issue of color bias was never resolved, merely relegated underground. Thus, a well-known phenomenon among dominated groups is a rejection of group membership (Rosenberg, 1979; Banerjee, 1985). Internalizing alien norms is but one manner of expressing such rejection. For example, African-American women characterized by Caucasian features have superior social status in their community regardless of occupational skill or intellect (Okazawa-Rey, Robinson, & Ward, 1987; Neal & Wilson, 1989). The prevailing biases approximate a hierarchy that is characteristic of all people of color including Puerto Ricans.

Skin color bias among Puerto Ricans exists because it is ubiquitous and historical. The longevity of its manifestation preceded the U.S. sovereignty. Hence, the once colonized forefathers of Nicaraguans considered skin color to have an influence upon the manner in which common folk interacted. *Mestizos* (the racially mixed) refer to the darker-skinned *Costenos* (persons of African descent) in derogatory terms (Lancaster, 1991). Among Cubans, the idealization of light skin has existed historically despite the attempts of Castro's Revolution to eliminate it. Status in Cuba is continually based upon gradations of skin color and effects all aspects of Cuban life covertly and overtly (Canizares, 1990).

Perhaps the most dramatic manifestation of skin color bias is referred to as "brown racism." According to Washington (1990), brown racism is perpetrated by Mestizos . . . against persons of African descent. It is a variation of bias that probably occurred as a result of colonization. The behaviors are obvious but seldom addressed given the superfluous characterization of racism as a black/white dichotomy.

Aware of racism in the U.S. Chicano(a)s adamantly reject darker-skinned people (Martinez, 1993). Data collected from Chicano(a)s, Spanish speaking Americans, and Euro-American subjects in recent decades have verified high rejection rates of dark-skinned African-Americans. That rejection is most prominent among Chicano(a)s residing in rural areas.

As expected, intermarriage represented the most dramatic display of bias. Attitude studies of Chicano(a)s in Bakersfield, Los Angeles, and San Antonio further confirm these findings, with all groups overwhelmingly opposing intermarriage (Dyer, Vedlitz & Worchel, 1989). In another study, scholars measured rejection rates of African-Americans in four categories—marriage, as neighbors, co-workers, and becoming citizens via naturalization. Euro-Americans rejected African-Americans for marriage 89%, Spanish speaking 62%, urban Chicano(a)s 59% and rural Chicano(a)s by 78%. As neighbors, African-Americans were rejected by Euro-Americans 50% of the time, by Spanish speaking 45%, by urban Chicano(a)s 43% and 71% of the time by rural Chicano(a)s. As co-workers Euro-Americans rejected African-Americans 21% of the time, Spanish speaking 8% of the time, urban Chicano(a)s 39%, and rural Chicano(a)s 70%. Lastly, African-Americans were rejected for becoming citizens via naturalization by Euro-Americans 5% of the time, by Spanish speaking 4% of the time, by urban Chicano(a)s 41% of the time and by rural Chicano(a)s 74%! Given the lack of any significant historical confrontations between Chicano(a)s and African-Americans, the rejection of African-Americans by Chicano(a)s is arguably bias introduced via European colonization (Stoddard, 1973).

The ignorance applicable to skin color bias is not surprising since the issue is frequently regarded as "taboo" (Russell, Wilson & Hall, 1992). Among Latinos the myth of racial indifference helps preserve "personalismo" (warmth, openness and personal

attentiveness). As a consequence, there is more celebration in social life and courtship among Puerto Ricans than among other Americans aside from a subtle but tenacious idealization of light skin. Despite the fact, research conducted as far back as 1949 suggested that although most Puerto Ricans denied the existence of bias, half felt it was better to have light skin regardless of racial heritage (Montalvo, 1994). No one felt it was better to be dark. The custom of entertaining dark-skinned relatives in the kitchen, much as servants, is a common notion and not unknown to Puerto Ricans who migrate to the U.S. mainland. Such notion implied that some among relatives are less preferred than others precipitating family disjuncture (Levine & Padilla, 1980).

The existence of bias among Puerto Ricans is emphatically validated by litigation. One of the first cases of skin color discrimination brought by Puerto Ricans was that of the dark-skinned Felix—plaintiff—versus the lighter-skinned Marquez—defendant. It was decided in 1981 by the U.S. District Court of the District of Columbia. Both plaintiff and defendant were employees of the Office of the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico in Washington, D.C. (OCPRW). The plaintiff alleges that the defendant did not promote her on the basis of skin color discrimination. At trial, the plaintiff introduced the personnel cards of twenty-eight of her former fellow employees. She testified that among them, only two were as dark or darker in color than she. All of the other employees in the office, according to the plaintiff, were light-skinned. Other highly credible evidence presented to the court suggested, however, that she might have been in error.

As per defendant, the plaintiff was not entitled to a promotion in grade by virtue of her position, her qualifications, her seniority, and/or her length of service. The evidence showed that her employer awarded promotions in grade based upon criteria that were neutral with respect to skin color. Employees whose color was as dark or darker than the plaintiff's were given promotions in grade, while many other employees who were lighter than same were given infrequent promotions, or no promotions at all. Similar neutrality with respect to skin color was evident in the promotions in grade among employees throughout the entire agency. Based upon the rules of legal proceeding, the OCPRW did not discriminate against the plaintiff on account of her color

in failing to recommend her for a promotion in grade. Thus, the court decided that the plaintiff was not promoted in grade for legitimate business reasons having nothing whatever to do with her skin color (*Felix v. Marquez*, 1981).

In a more recent case brought on the island of Puerto Rico, *Felero versus Stryker* was litigated in 1998 by the U.S. District Court of the District of Puerto Rico. Falero, the plaintiff is a dark-skinned male while Rigoberto, the corporation defendant is a light-skinned male. The plaintiff claims he was terminated from his job on the basis of having dark skin. The defendant contends that the plaintiff did not establish that he was replaced by someone not within the protected class. Defendant further stated that the plaintiff's job had not been filled by anyone but admits one of his areas of work was assigned to another employee. Thus, direct evidence of skin color discrimination was lacking.

A loss in litigation should not suggest skin color bias does not exist among Puerto Ricans. Indeed the accusation makes apparent existence of the issue. While the evidence in the aforementioned cases does not rise to the level of legal guilt they fit a pattern of bias little acknowledged in the social work literature. That bias should not be presumed peculiar to Puerto Ricans but is instead an unmentionable dynamic associated with the milieu of all oppressed people of color in America.

## METHODOLOGY

Within their ecological environment permeated by discrimination, Puerto Ricans have been no less susceptible to that which approximates skin color bias. An effort to determine the existence of said bias among residents of Puerto Rico was attempted. Using a sample of college students at one private and two public institutions, the following null hypothesis was formulated to provide a context for investigating the problem: "There is no relationship between skin color and selected values for skin color ideals." The sample consisted of 187 participants conducted on the island nation during the 1997–1998 school year and selected from the registrar's roster. Respondents had a mean age of 20 years. A self-report instrument available in Spanish was utilized for measuring their skin color. Called the *Cutaneo-Chroma-Correlate*,

this instrument was developed and previously pilot tested by the researcher to assess the relationship between skin color and various aspects of bias vis-à-vis sections "A" "B" and "C" (Hall, 1990). Section "B" (of the CCC) was used in this paper to assess the respondent's personal values pertaining to skin color. In differentiating responses, a designation of lightest was noted as 5, light as 4, medium as 3, dark as 2, and darkest as 1 (table 1).

Table 1

Section B	(A)	(B)	(C)	(D)	(E)
	Lightest	Light	Medium	Dark	Darkest
	5	4	3	2	1

Directions: Section "B" consist of 15 items designed to collect data on selected personal values. Using the codes above express your preferences about Puerto Ricans by blackening in on the answer sheet the response which best describes your opinion. (A)-lightest, (B)-light, (C)-medium, (D)-dark, or (E)-darkest.

6. Pretty skin is
7. The skin color of pretty women is
8. The skin color of the man women like is
9. I wish my skin color were
10. The skin color of smart Puerto Ricans is
11. The skin color of Puerto Ricans who are snobs is
12. The skin color of Puerto Ricans who are kind is
13. The skin color of my best friend is
14. I want my child(ren)'s skin color to be
15. My ideal spouse's skin color is
16. The skin color of my family should be
17. The skin color of my race (Puerto Rican) should be
18. The skin color of Puerto Ricans who are physically strong is
19. The skin color of Puerto Ricans who are dumb is
20. The ideal skin color of my projected child(ren)'s spouse is



Table 2

*Results*

<i>Item</i>	<i>Response</i>					<i>N</i>	<i>MN</i>	<i>STD</i>
	<i>1</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>4</i>	<i>5</i>			
6	68.9%	11.3%	6.6%	6.6%	6.6%	187	1.71	1.24
7	14.2%	20.8%	19.8%	20.8%	24.5%	187	3.21	1.39
8	13.2%	22.6%	15.1%	19.8%	29.2%	187	3.29	1.43
9	5.7%	7.5%	5.7%	30.2%	50.9%	187	4.13	1.17
10	5.7%	2.8%	10.4%	34.0%	47.2%	187	4.14	1.09
11	9.4%	8.5%	14.2%	23.6%	44.3%	187	3.85	1.33
12	15.1%	3.8%	14.2%	22.6%	44.3%	187	3.77	1.44
13	2.8%	4.7%	8.5%	31.1%	52.8%	187	4.26	1.00
14	2.8%	8.5%	8.5%	27.4%	52.8%	187	4.19	1.09
15	1.9%	7.5%	8.5%	30.2%	51.9%	187	4.23	1.02
16	3.8%	2.8%	9.4%	31.1%	52.8%	187	4.26	1.01
17	15.1%	21.7%	12.3%	17.9%	33.0%	187	3.32	1.50
18	18.9%	17.9%	8.5%	17.0%	37.7%	187	3.37	1.58
19	40.6%	11.3%	5.7%	17.9%	24.5%	187	2.75	1.69
20	42.5%	10.4%	22.6%	17.9%	6.6%	187	2.36	1.36

## SUMMARY OF RESULTS

As per item 6 most students (68.9%) responded "dark skin" when questioned about pretty skin. This was a contradiction to items 7 through 18. The largest response to said items was overwhelmingly "light skin" (7] 24.5%; 8] 29.2%; 9] 50.9%; 10] 47.2%; 11] 44.3%; 12] 44.3%; 13] 52.8%; 14] 52.8%; 15] 51.9%; 16] 52.8%; 17] 33.0%; 18] 37.7%). When questioned about the skin color of Puerto Ricans who are "dumb" respondents overwhelmingly replied "dark skin" (19] 40.6%). In glaring contrast the same students responded "dark skin" (20] 42.5%) when questioned about the projected ideal skin color of their children's spouse. Referring to the aforementioned descriptive data it would appear with some contradiction that light skin is ideally valued among respondents.

## DISCUSSION

According to these data, the presumption of a relationship between skin color and selected values for skin color ideals is plausible. There is then implications of a bias pertaining to the perception of various skin colors in the milieu of the population questioned. These findings would appear to contradict—or at least challenge—the island presumption of group harmony and racial tolerance. It also implies a reflection of continuing and pervasive racist attitudes toward persons characterized by dark skin. It is a bias that can be described as a variant of racism exhibited by Euro-Americans toward people of color. In a nation where “whiteness” is ideal, light skin invariably represents the standard. The scores of Puerto Rican students, on section “B” of the CCC test, suggested their tendency to appreciate selected ideals in self and others on the basis of color preferences. Such appreciation could be used to assess status and social worth, thereby contributing to the perpetuation of bias in an otherwise tolerant environment.

Individual and group social work methods must reconsider the various cultural criteria of the Puerto Rican milieu. Students—Puerto Ricans and others—will then be better qualified to assess the personal values and sort out negative messages in the social environment that inhibit growth potential. This will enable the development of more conducive coping strategies and adaptational behaviors. Particular attention needs to be given to assisting dark-skinned Puerto Ricans, and all people of color to develop a broader range of ego protection mechanisms. Social work students must acquire the knowledge to construct a psychological safety zone for affected clients as they challenge the internalized color biases and projective identifications, especially those pertaining to the associations of dark skin with less attractiveness. Additionally, family and community projection processes regarding color bias must necessarily be explored as dark-skinned Puerto Ricans may need to mend emotional disconnects that weaken their systems of support. For Puerto Ricans, conjoint family therapy may be particularly effective in resolving skin color issues dependent upon the availability of extended family. If this proves a viable strategy those affected must have had a chance to explore some of the color biases in individual sessions.

An imperative conclusion from the ecological phenomenon of color bias is that in spite of a multitude of sociohistorical obstacles, many dark-skinned Puerto Ricans continue to thrive in a hostile social environment providing support to their children, families and communities. Yet, in spite of the stabilizing, powerful, and constructive influences that many dark-skinned Puerto Ricans have upon the various systems, routine micro and macro practice efforts largely deny and/or ignore the existence of color bias. There can then be little doubt that present social work strategies are unwittingly fueled by public perception that distorts a subtle but complex dynamic in the social milieu of Puerto Rican people.

Social work students and practitioners alike habitually consign error to the ecological significance of the impact of skin color upon families, groups and communities. Succinctly put genograms, sociograms and ecomaps too often reject the emotional consequence of skin color among Puerto Ricans and other people of color. Practitioners must comprehend the "taboo" nature of color bias to enable its consideration in treatment strategies. Seldom acknowledged is the impact of skin color bias upon an emotional system that exerts a powerful, but not always apparent, force upon the systemic or dyadic relationship systems.

With few exceptions, the practitioners' marginalization of skin color issues is, in part, a manifestation of skew and social work tradition, particularly in the most widely read scholarly literature. Contrary to commonly held opinions, not all Puerto Ricans value diversity and adhere to racial tolerance. As the data suggests skin color for Puerto Ricans potentially functions as an impediment to their group cohesion and psychological well-being. The social work student and professional needs to acknowledge this issue in education and practice in order to be more effective in the field. Social work agencies must also reframe their approach to practice with people of color to go beyond racism so that they may facilitate healthy, functional behavior in their clientele population.

## CONCLUSION

The postmodernist movement holds potential for rescuing social workers from the classic rigidity of the social science academy

(Capra, 1988). It will enable the incorporation and validation of new information. To the contrary maintenance of classic theory and canonization of same discourages evolution and new ways of thinking. The traditions of intraprofessional social work organizations, unlike the hard sciences too often defer to individual stature or organizational reference for the validation of theoretical information. As a result, all of social science has incorrectly viewed race as the primary basis of bias not relevant to people of color, including Puerto Ricans, save for victimization. In fact skin color bias is an ecological reality in the social milieu of Puerto Ricans and will become increasingly so in the new millennium. Any professional oversight is especially regrettable for dark-skinned Puerto Ricans and other people of color similarly characterized. What's more in the annals of history exist documentation that suggests social action—a mainstay of the social work ethos—precedes the resurrection of subjugated knowledge i.e. skin color bias (Foucault, 1980). Social work practitioners are then challenged to decipher the maze of tradition and create a suitable environment for knowledge based purely upon merit in order to resurrect indigenous knowledge about the biases of otherwise victim populations.

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# Is Welfare Reform Working? A Study of the Effects of Sanctions on Families Receiving Temporary Assistance to Needy Families

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*This research provides a preliminary descriptive analysis of the impact of new welfare sanctions on recipients living in a southern metropolitan region. The data from this phone survey indicate that many families report considerable hardship no matter why they exited from welfare. Compared to those who left voluntarily, those who were sanctioned off welfare were significantly different in terms of having unmet medical needs, going without food, and having their utilities turned off. Given the high number of problems reported and the low income reported by these respondents, it is not surprising to find that only 10 percent of former recipients who were sanctioned off of welfare feel that they are better off now than when they received cash assistance. These problems can represent a significant disruption in the lives of children and their parents.*

The passage of the 1996 Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Act (PRWORA) was hailed as the "end of welfare as we know it." Federal spending for AID to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) was replaced with block grants given



to the states to create Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) programs. To "end welfare as we know it," the major change from AFDC to TANF was the establishment of time limits whereby a parent may only receive cash assistance for a period of twenty-four consecutive months. Further, a lifetime limit of five years, or sixty total months, was instituted. Other changes enacted by the PRWORA include compulsory participation of the adult recipient in work and job search activities, mandatory provision of information for child support enforcement (i.e., the father's name), and living arrangement and school attendance requirements for teenaged parents. Sanctions for non-compliance were increased so that benefits for the entire family could be ended, not just benefits for the parent or child.

In the year following the passage of PRWORA, welfare rates dropped 20 percent nationally, as reported by the U. S. Department of Health and Human Services (Children's Defense Fund, 1998). As of March, 1999, all states showed a reduction in the number of recipients receiving benefits from the high period of 1993, with an overall average 48 percent reduction reported (U. S. Department of Health and Human Services, 1999). Thirty-five states had declines that were greater than the national average, and of these, thirty-one had declines of 50 percent or more, and nineteen states had declines of 60 percent or more. Table 1 shows the number of recipients served and the percentage change for the four states with the highest declines from January, 1993 through March, 1999.

Table 1

*Welfare Caseload Declines (1993–1999)*

<i>State</i>	<i>Pre-TANF Jan. 1993</i>	<i>Post-TANF March 1999</i>	<i>Percent Change</i>
Wyoming	18,271	1,770	–90%
Wisconsin	241,098	28,863	–88%
Idaho	21,116	2,897	–86%
Mississippi	174,093	38,246	–78%

Source: U. S. Department of Health and Human Services (1999)

Throughout the country, the declining rolls are partly attributed to the robust economy (Children's Defense Fund, 1998). Welfare administrators and politicians have claimed that these reductions are indicators that welfare recipients are obtaining work and no longer relying on federal assistance. Nationally, however, it is estimated that approximately 38 percent of those leaving welfare were terminated because they failed to meet requirements of the new law and were subjected to sanctions and involuntary case closure (Not So Welfare, 1998).

In this complex environment, there is little data post-PRWORA on exactly why families are leaving the welfare rolls, and whether these exits happen voluntarily because of employment or other income gains, or forced through the increased power of sanctioning. Further, what is happening to those families leaving welfare? What is their economic status after exiting welfare? Do they perceive themselves as better off? Are the problems that sanctioned recipients face different from those who leave welfare voluntarily? This paper provides some preliminary descriptive information from a small sample of families who left welfare in the spring of 1998 in an urban area in the South.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

The passage of the PRWORA highlights the tensions found between two competing schools of thought regarding the cause of poverty (Ellwood & Summers, 1986). Individual explanations for poverty concentrate on the personal characteristics of the population of people in poverty and propose causal relationships between what are seen as individual deficits and poverty (Herrnstein & Murrar, 1994; Mead, 1992). Although unproven from a scientific standpoint (Epstein, 1997), individual explanations of poverty are embedded in PRWORA which, according to its preamble, seeks to promote marriage and attachment to the work force as the solutions to poverty (Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Act, 1996). Although individual explanations for poverty dominate the PRWORA, a more structural focus is also found in the law with regards to child care. Proponents of a structural cause of poverty see inadequate access to high quality, affordable child care as one of the impediments to a

parent's ability to enter the work force (Institute for Women's Policy Research, 1997). Other structural explanations for poverty, including the gender stratification of women into low paying jobs (Kemp, 1995; Sidel, 1992), the low level of the minimum wage (Schram, 1997) and the effects of domestic violence on the need for welfare (Brandwein, 1999) are not adequately addressed in the law.

Research on exits from welfare prior to the enactment of PRWORA suggested that those persons with the shortest history of welfare use will be among those who exit quickly through finding employment. One study found those women on welfare most likely to obtain employment were those with high school educations, previous work experience, family resources (such as income from other family members), and no infants or toddlers (Spalter-Roth, Burr, Hartman & Shaw, 1995). In a survey of nearly 3,000 Wisconsin AFDC families (prior to the TANF reforms), Rank (1994) found approximately a third of the families exited welfare because of increased income (primarily from employment), about a third left because of sanctions applied, and the other third left for other reasons. Many in this final third reported being less well off than when on welfare, with some reporting crises because of unmet medical needs or domestic violence.

Only a few studies are available that have examined the impact on families of the changes in welfare since the 1996 reforms, although many are currently in process. Studies undertaken by state agencies, advocacy organizations and policy groups have used mail, phone and personal interviews or analysis of administrative data to determine the reasons recipients have left the welfare rolls and their employment outcomes (Wisconsin Department of Workforce Development, 1999). A summary of the reasons for welfare exit in these studies shows wide discrepancy in the number of people who report leaving welfare for a job, from 11.3% who were working (by administrative report) in the quarter after their welfare exit in Maryland (University of Maryland, 1998) to 67% of respondents who reported to interviewers leaving welfare for a job in Washington State (Washington Department of Social and Human Services, 1999). Outcomes beyond a former recipients' current employment status have not been summarized across studies.

The National Governor's Association (1998) reviewed reports from eleven states in which state agencies evaluated the impact of welfare reform. They found that between 50 to 60 percent of those who left welfare did so because of employment. Employment, however, was not necessarily an exit from poverty. As the report noted, most jobs pay more than minimum wage, but still leave workers with families below the official poverty line. Many families reported continued hardship and deprivation once off of welfare and most continued to need support through other governmental programs such as Food Stamps or Medicaid.

The state of Maryland analyzed approximately 33,000 cases that were closed—families or persons leaving welfare—during the period October, 1996, through June, 1997 (*Life after Welfare: An Interim Report*, 1997). The five major reasons for exiting (in order of frequency) were: receiving other income, not completing the redetermination process, failing to provide requested verification, starting employment, and failure to meet residency requirements. Thirty- nine percent of these recipients were terminated involuntarily for reasons of non-compliance.

Welfare departments have been rewarded for insuring that ineligible recipients are not provided financial assistance, but no penalty has been attached to those instances when welfare administrators have discontinued payments for still eligible families (Schram, 1996). "Churning" is the process of using non-compliance by recipients to deny payments while recipients are still financially eligible (Lipsky, 1984). When recipients do not produce requested paperwork, miss an appointment, or do not follow a rule of the department, assistance can be terminated until compliance occurs. In some cases, recipients report that they don't know why their benefits were ended (Schram, 1996).

PRWORA expanded the capacity of departments to disallow payments in a variety of circumstances, potentially increasing the churning of recipients. The act incorporated many of the experimental reforms established by states prior to 1996, including the use of a full family sanction as a deterrent designed to induce compliance with institutional regulations. A full family sanction allows the welfare agency to terminate benefits to an entire family for non-compliance, whereas previously, benefits for the non-compliant parent were withheld, but the children's

portion of the AFDC grant continued to be paid (Ferber & Storch, 1998). Philosophically, sanctions can be seen as motivational tools whose existence encourages welfare recipients to comply with regulations, or they can be viewed as a punishment for failure to comply with departmental rules (Kaplan, 1999). A recent review of state sanction policies indicates that many states are opting for more severe sanctioning (Gallagher & Gallagher, 1998), and suspending payments to families that are financially eligible, but who are unable or unwilling to comply with new departmental regulations.

Although federal law does not require that states assess the impact of sanctions on families, several governmental and advocacy organizations have begun efforts to do so. The Maryland study notes that a relatively small number (4.7 percent) of persons whose cases were terminated were sanctioned for failure to meet work requirements (*Life After Welfare*, 1997). A study in Montana found that 22.7 percent of cases in the state were terminated because of non-compliance with (unspecified) departmental regulations (*Coping with Block Grants*, 1998). During the first twenty-two months of the Montana TANF program, 36 percent of the caseload was sanctioned at least once. A similar smaller study conducted in Portland, Oregon, found that the majority of welfare recipients exited because they found employment or increased their income; however, 14 percent during the period of the study were terminated for failure to meet work search requirements (Multnomah County Department of Community and Family Services, 1997). Comparison of sanction rates across studies and states is impeded by disparities between reporting practice. While some states report the percentage of cases closed per month, others report the percentage of recipients sanctioned in a given time period (Kaplan, 1999).

A national study looking at the use of sanctions was conducted by the General Accounting Office (GAO, 1997). By analyzing approximately 18,000 cases terminated nationwide, the GAO found that from June to December, 1996, terminations for failure to meet work requirements increased from 34 to 47 percent. Other sanctionable offenses, such as non-compliance with child support enforcement, and teen parent school attendance and living arrangements, remained level at approximately 8 percent of

the terminations. Time limits accounted for less than one percent of the terminations, but the study was conducted before recipients would reach the first twenty-four month time period imposed by the PRWORA.

About 72 percent of the GAO sample came from three states with the highest case closure rates—Iowa, Massachusetts and Wisconsin. Each state had experimented with the use of a full family sanction. According to the GAO, one-third of terminated families in Massachusetts and Wisconsin were reinstated because of subsequent compliance, documentation of exemptions, or because the termination was due to an administrative error. Wisconsin, for example, reversed the termination of 44 percent of their cases because their record-keeping on hours worked in the previous month was in error. Iowa had a six-month waiting period before families could reapply, and about one-third did so and returned to AFDC rolls (GAO, 1997).

This review of recent literature related to reasons for exiting welfare and the outcomes for those who do leave indicates wide variation in the number of the people who actually leave welfare involuntarily because of sanctions, and the number of former recipients who are reported to be working after exiting welfare. Evaluation of other outcomes for families who previously received welfare has been negligible.

## METHODOLOGY

The results of this telephone survey provide a preliminary descriptive analysis of the experiences of those persons living in a southern metropolitan region who left the welfare rolls in the spring of 1998. The study examines the demographic characteristics of these persons, their reasons for leaving the rolls, their work-related characteristics, and some of their current problems. This study was a one-time, cross-sectional telephone survey of former welfare recipients whose names were obtained from the state welfare department.

A survey instrument was designed by drawing on social science literature and by using similar surveys from recent research evaluating outcomes for welfare recipients. The survey asked former recipients about their reasons for leaving welfare, their

current work and income status, and whether they were having any of a list of several problems. The survey was piloted with ten former welfare recipients and given to key informants in the welfare arena who suggested modifications.

The research study was conducted over a one month period with a list provided by the state department overseeing welfare payments. The list consisted of the names and phone numbers of 1400 persons whose welfare benefits ended during a two month period in the spring of 1998, prior to the implementation of time limits on welfare benefits in the state. Of this list, 737 persons could not be contacted by phone because the welfare department had no phone number available, the phone had been disconnected, or the person was unknown at the number provided. Of the 663 persons available by phone, completed interviews were obtained from 347, for a response rate of 52%. Analysis of reasons for non-response by the remaining 316 subjects showed that 21 percent were unavailable because they were out of town, in the hospital or incarcerated. Another 19 percent were at supposedly valid phone numbers where no one answered calls that were placed at three different times during different days and times of the week. A small number of people refused to participate in the survey once they were reached (8%).

While the 347 responses obtained represent all known, reachable participants who were willing to participate in the survey, the sample is not a random sample. Therefore, generalizations to the population of interest are questionable because it is impossible to determine the characteristics of the unreachable portion of the population. Logically, however, one could assume that the population reached represents the most stable of the former welfare recipients, as they were reachable at a number they had previously given the department. All data collected from the interviews with former recipients were self-reported. No other outside sources were used to verify the validity of the data. The usual concerns about the validity of self-reported responses applies to this study.

## FINDINGS

Demographic information on respondents to the survey showed that 91 percent were African-American, 8 percent were

white, and the other 1 percent were other races. All respondents were female, and the average age was 32 years. Ninety-four percent (94%) of the respondents were self-recipients or the identified parent or guardian payee for a child. According to information provided by the department about the typical characteristics of the TANF population, this sample is similar to the overall state statistics which report that 85% of TANF recipients are non-white with an average age of 33 years.

Table 2 reports the recipients' reasons for leaving welfare, which have been separated into two broad categories: voluntary

Table 2

*Frequencies and Percentages for Respondents' Primary Reason (Voluntary and Involuntary) for Discontinuing Welfare Payments*

<i>Primary Reason—Voluntary</i>	<i>Percent (n = 347)</i>
Employed	21.0
Received Other Income	14.9
Other Voluntary Reasons	10.8
Too Much Hassle	9.0
Could Not Do Preferred School Program	3.2
Married and Spouse's Income Counted	1.7
Voluntary Sub-Total	60.6%
<i>Primary Reason—Involuntary</i>	<i>Percent</i>
Did Not Comply with DSS Rules	10.8
Did Not Meet Work Search Requirements	7.9
Recipient Didn't Know Why Terminated	7.6
Rules Changed—No Longer Eligible	7.0
Recipient No Longer Guardian of Child*	4.4
Child Not Meeting School Attendance Requirements	2.3
Did Not Meet Immunization Requirements	0.3
In Voluntary Sub-Total	40.3%
Total	100.0%

\* Child aged out or was removed from parent's custody



leavers (generally, those who have left welfare because they have received some other form of income), and sanctioned leavers (those whose welfare payments were discontinued because the recipient did not meet certain guidelines). Table 2 shows that the most frequent reason for leaving welfare was that the recipient obtained employment (21%). The second most common reason for exiting was the receipt of other income (almost 15%). This category includes income from child support, unemployment insurance, Social Security and SSI (Supplemental Security Income). Altogether, 60 percent of the respondents stopped receiving welfare payments for what might be considered voluntary reasons, while 40 percent were terminated for largely involuntary reasons. Most categories of the involuntary reasons reflect new sanctions implemented under the PRWORA.

Table 3 compares all respondents by the voluntary/sanctioned leaver dichotomy. Mean differences in age, years of education, level of reported income, and the number of problems

Table 3

*Descriptive Statistics and T-Test Results Comparing Sanctioned and Not sanctioned Respondents on Age, Years of Schooling, Total Monthly Income and Number of Problems*

<i>Variable</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>Std. Dev.</i>	<i>t</i>
<b>Age of Respondent</b>				-2.155*
Sanctioned	137	33.82	12.38	
Not Sanctioned	203	31.25	9.57	
<b>Years of Schooling</b>				1.317
Sanctioned	137	11.50	2.36	
Not Sanctioned	199	11.84	2.34	
<b>Total Monthly Income</b>				5.599*
Sanctioned	131	304.22	421.19	
Not Sanctioned	192	691.58	711.14	
<b>Total Number of Problems</b>				-2.480*
Sanctioned	135	2.74	3.06	
Not Sanctioned	195	1.98	2.43	

\* Difference significant at  $p < .05$ .

recipients reported were evaluated. A list of problems such as having difficulty paying bills, having to move, and going without food were presented to respondents who were asked if they had experienced the problem in the previous three months. Any "yes" answer was coded as "1" and then each problem noted by a respondent was summed to create a total. Thirty-two percent of all respondents indicated that they had none of the problems listed; 44.6 percent reported having from one to three problems, and 23.7 percent noted having more than three problems. Table 3 indicates that survey respondents who left welfare voluntarily were more likely to be younger, but they were not significantly different from those who were sanctioned in level of education. As might be anticipated, those who were sanctioned had significantly lower incomes and reported more problems than their counterparts who left welfare voluntarily.

Table 4 lists the specific problems asked of respondents, the percent of the sample that reported that problem, and the means for the voluntary vs. sanctioned leavers for each problem. Respondents who had been sanctioned reported a greater number of problems, and had higher means levels for all problems, except "had others move in to help pay rent". For four problem areas, sanctioned respondents had significantly higher mean differences as noted through the use of a *t* test: they were more likely to have been unable to afford needed medications and/or health care ( $t = -3.317$ ), to have gone without food ( $t = -2.486$ ), and to have other problems ( $t = -3.304$ ) to have their heat or utilities cut off ( $t = -2.525$ ) than were former recipients who had left welfare voluntarily. The mean number of problems for those who were sanctioned and those who left welfare voluntarily were not statistically different within the following categories: having to change their living arrangements, being unable to pay rent, having the phone disconnected, having to go to a food bank or soup kitchen, having their children change schools, having a child live away from the caregiver, being homeless, and having a child spend time in foster care.

Table 5 shows the results of two chi square tests of the relationship between leaving status (voluntary leavers vs. sanctioned) and 1) work status and 2) whether respondents saw themselves as being better off now than when they received welfare payments.

Table 4

*Problems Encountered in Past 3 Months Since Recipient Stopped Receiving Welfare Payments*

<i>Problem (n = 345)</i>	<i>Percent of sample Responding "YES"</i>	<i>Mean</i>	
		<i>Sanctioned</i>	<i>Not Sanctioned</i>
Couldn't Afford Medical Care or Medications	39.3%	.50*	.33
Went without Food	27.4%	.36*	.23
Unable to Pay Rent	22.8%	.26	.21
Phone Disconnected	21.7%	.23	.20
Had to Move in with Others	20.5%	.23	.19
Went to Food Bank or Soup Kitchen	17.6%	.23	.17
Heat or Utilities Disconnected	15.4%	.22*	.12
Family Had Other Problems	14.7%	.23*	.10
Had to Move because Recipient Couldn't Pay Rent	12.5%	.15	.12
Child(ren) had to Change Schools because Recipient Moved	11.6%	.14	.11
Had Others Move in to Help Pay Rent	8.1%	.08	.09
Child(ren) had to Live away from Caregiver	6.7%	.08	.07
Were Homeless during the Past 3 Months	4.1%	.06	.03
Child(ren) Spent Time in Foster Care	1.2%	.03	.009

\* T test significant at  $p < .05$

Those recipients who left welfare voluntarily were more likely to be working (28 percent of respondents) than were those who had been sanctioned (6 percent of respondents) ( $X^2 = 40.766$ ,  $df = 1$ ,  $p < .001$ ). (Thirty-four percent of those in the study were actually working at the time the survey was completed). The lambda test is a Proportion of Variance Explained (PVE) test used to calculate the amount of variance explained by a chi square finding. For the chi square of leaving status by work status, the lambda is .04, indicating that a respondent's leaving status explained only about 4% of the variance in their work status. Respondents were asked whether they felt like they and their children were better off now than when they were receiving welfare. Overall, only 46 percent of the total sample stated that they and their children were better off now than when they were receiving welfare payments. Table 5 shows that those who were sanctioned off of welfare were less likely to feel that they were better off ( $X^2 = 32.281$ ,  $df = 1$ ,  $p < .001$ ). The lambda statistic for this chi square is .22, indicating that 22% of the variance in a respondent's report of whether they were better off was related to their leaver status.

## DISCUSSION

The passage of the PRWORA has ushered in a new era in which the increased ability of the state to end all cash assistance benefits to non-compliant, but otherwise financially eligible families, has become a significant tool used to enforce compliance with departmental regulations. Although many popular press accounts attribute the decrease in welfare rolls to the increased

Table 5

*Chi Square Results of Leaver Status by Work Status and Report of Being Better Off Now*

Variable	df	$X^2$	p value
Work Status by Leaver Status	1	40.77	<.001
Better Off Now by Leaver Status	1	32.28	<.001

employment of impoverished parents (DeParle, 1998), the descriptive data provided by this survey indicate that these accounts may be based on inadequate research. A minority of the respondents in this survey (21 percent) actually left welfare because they had obtained employment. At the time of the survey, only about one third of the respondents were working, regardless of their reason for leaving welfare. Respondents who voluntarily left welfare reported an average yearly income of \$8,299—an amount that is 63% of the poverty threshold of \$13,133 for a parent with two children set by the U. S. Census Bureau for this time period (U.S. Census Bureau, 1998). For families that had been sanctioned off of welfare, their average yearly income was significantly lower—\$3,651, an amount which is 28% of the poverty level. Based on previous research documenting unreported income among welfare recipients (Edin, 1991), these figures must be viewed somewhat skeptically, but still indicate that leaving welfare is no guarantee that a family will escape poverty, regardless of the reason for leaving welfare. These findings also indicate that the use of sanctions as a motivation to increase workforce participation is ineffective. Contrary to the expectation of politicians, sanctioned families are not entering the workforce (only 6% were working after having their welfare payments terminated), but instead are slipping even deeper into poverty.

Prior to the passage of the PRWORA, sanctions could only be applied against a portion of the household, usually the parent, leaving some benefits available for the care of children. With the full family sanction made possible by the PRWORA, attention is needed to the effects of these new policies on impoverished parents and children. The data from this survey indicate that many families report considerable hardship no matter why they exited from welfare. Sanctioned families report an increase in the overall number of problems they are experiencing and an increase in the average number of problems in certain areas. Compared to those who left voluntarily, those who were sanctioned off welfare were significantly different in terms of having unmet medical needs, going without food, and having their utilities turned off. Each of these problems can represent a significant disruption in the lives of children and their parents. If the goal of the full family sanction is to increase the compliance of the adult payee

with welfare department regulations, then it is not clear from this study that this goal is being met. Given the higher number of problems reported and the decrease in income reported by these respondents, it is not surprising to find that only 10 percent of former recipients who were sanctioned off of welfare feel that they are better off now than when they received cash assistance. Sanctioning families for non-compliance may be viewed as a punishment for misbehavior, but is this punishment encouraging changed behavior or is it ensuring that poor children (the primary recipients of TANF dollars) are placed in even greater jeopardy?

This descriptive study provides information about problems that families report after leaving welfare. Further research is needed to ascertain the long-term effects of sanctions on families experiencing poverty. Research is needed to determine the characteristics of those who are most likely to be sanctioned. If sanctions are applied more readily to those people who face the greatest barriers to employment (those with mental illness, substance abuse problems, domestic violence), as some advocates fear (Coping with Block Grants, 1998), then sanctions may actually be ineffective in accomplishing the policy goals they have been designed to support. Sanctions may reduce the welfare rolls, but without reducing poverty and its concomitant difficulties, this represents a hollow victory.

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## Book Reviews

Steven R. Rose, *Group Work with Children and Adolescents: Prevention and Intervention in School and Community Systems*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 1999. \$29.95 papercover.

As a teacher of group work and chair of a Pupil Personnel Services specialization in an MSW program, I consider Steven R. Rose's *Group Work With Children and Adolescents: Prevention and Intervention in School and Community Systems*, something of a personal favor. While the use of groups is growing rapidly in schools, practical knowledge of group work is often missing. As a result of the diminished attention to group methods in schools of social work since the late 60s it is, at times, difficult to locate field instructors who are capable of providing students with appropriate direction and supervision in this area of practice. The models of group practice students experience in schools are often ungrounded in knowledge of group design or development.

In this partial void, books like Rose's are vital. This work is part of the valuable Sage Sourcebook Series Edited by Armand Lauffer and Charles Garvin. Like the other volumes in this series, the book is practitioner-friendly; short, specific and prescriptive. The first part of the book offers a review of key concepts and foundation theories. It cannot, in a few short pages, take the place of a more traditional introductory text. However, it provides a bridge from theory to the specifics of group design, delivery and evaluation.

This section emphasizes such issues as school organization and personnel considerations—i.e. the impact of the school system as a context for group practice. The author reflects his sensitivity to context throughout, featuring problem-solving models and approaches rather than longer term psychotherapeutic designs that fit uneasily in most schools. The message is clearly that group work in schools must connect with the central educational mission of these institutions in order to be supported and effective.

Chapter 3 offers a very useful framework for analyzing the "processes of (group) practice." Rose highlights initial planning

including composition, member assessment, and the selection of activities, techniques and leadership styles. He relates these processes and activities to stages in the life of the group. There is an extremely useful discussion of both formative and summative modes of group evaluation, moving from descriptive to more rigorous designs, but remaining within the capacity of the individual school social worker. The last chapter in Part One is a helpful summary of key research findings about the effectiveness of group intervention.

Taken as a whole, Part One sends a strong message about the need for a goal directed, empirically-based approach to intervention with children in schools, without making such an approach intimidating to the practitioner. A wide array of technique is presented—role play, group activities, art etc., with consideration of their fit with group purpose and the developmental stages of participants. Discussion is seen as one strategy rather than the “default” program it so often becomes when leaders are unaware of other possibilities.

Section II of the book carries the framework into four specific areas of application—parental divorce, peer relationships and social competence, mental health and substance abuse, and school performance. In each area Rose discusses the nature of the problem, the purposes of group work with this problem and context, steps in planning, composition and assessment, models of leadership and specific group activities. Each chapter ends with a full-blown case example of a group intervention, considering the impetus, design, development and individual and group outcomes.

These chapters are gifts to the student practitioner who often completes the reading of introductory texts asking, “So, what do I actually do?” Rose demonstrates how the school social work thinks her/his way from a problem to a group solution. He includes references to specific assessment tools, and successful models, exercises and activities.

The most effective of these chapters is the one on divorce. The chapter on mental health and substance abuse is, perhaps, too broad in scope and does a better job with the later than the former. Certainly, more detailed works are available on each of these areas, however Rose offers the generalist school practitioner

a clear starting point, a way to get grounded and specific guidance for approach the literature.

Such a small book (just 159 pages of text) cannot be expected to cover everything completely and the book has some gaps. Most perplexing is Rose's neglect of evaluation in the applications section. After such a useful introduction to evaluation one wonders why he didn't provide more examples of effective, feasible evaluation designs.

Mention is made of cultural competence and inter-cultural issues are featured in the section on peer relationships. Cultural issues in design are less fully treated in the other chapters.

The growing field of learning disorders may deserve greater attention than it gets here. Perhaps the development of group technologies has not proceeded to the point where a separate chapter could be written. However, this is certainly a problem that would benefit from more experimentation with group interventions for children, parents and teachers.

Nonetheless, Rose's *Group work with Children and Adolescents*, is an effective marriage of theory and practice that will be valuable reading for group work and school social work students and a useful tool for school social workers.

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Neil J. Smelser, *The Social Edges of Psychoanalysis*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1999. \$35.00 hardcover, \$24.00 papercover.

Neil Smelser's book is composed of a series of papers written over an academic career. They all spring from the creative tension inherent in being an academic sociologist while training and practicing as a psychoanalyst. Smelser is one in a long tradition of intellectuals in other fields who have been influenced by psychoanalysis, including anthropologist Alfred Kroeber and Sanskrit scholar (now turned man of letters) Jeffrey Masson. Depending on one's perspective, psychoanalysis is either long dead, or continues to be a central influence in the understanding of human beings. It is arguable that the ongoing presence of intense debate

is itself reflective of the persistent vitality and relevance of psychoanalytic thought. Even for a reader from the camp that is hostile to psychoanalysis, Smelser provides a valuable examination of the salient issues in multidisciplinary discourse that transcends both psychoanalysis and sociology.

The essays in this book were originally published over a span of thirty years. The preface includes a brief and intriguing biographical note. Smelser reflects about being influenced by an older generation of sociologists who were themselves influenced by psychoanalysis, including Talcott Parsons. Later he braved criticism as an academic sociologist in undergoing psychoanalytic training himself. The limited life story information was just enough to create an interest in knowing more about the personal determinants of Smelser's choices of both sociology and psychoanalysis. The biographical information, and lingering questions, added a personal dimension to reading the rest of the essays.

The book is organized not chronologically but by four themes: Disciplinary Articulations, Psychoanalytic Sociology, Ambivalence, and Micro-Macro Connections. The first essay, coauthored by Robert Wallerstein, initiates a theme repeated in several other essays in the book. The authors analyze the way in which disciplines form their boundaries and scopes of inquiry, through the examples of psychoanalysis and sociology. Disciplines identify certain variables as having primary interest and make assumptions about other related variables. For example, psychoanalysis assumes social influences to be constant in highlighting the importance of the intrapsychic. Through several examples the strengths and perils of a transdisciplinary analysis are articulated. The analysis of the "edges" of academic disciplines, and the challenges inherent in multidisciplinary inquiry, is clear and brilliant. This paper would be a welcome addition to any social science seminar.

In the section headed "Ambivalence," Smelser devotes two papers to a social and psychoanalytic analysis of the dynamics of Affirmative Action in research universities. In the first, he carefully constructs the ambivalence for all parties affected by Affirmative Action: for example, for liberal academics the value conflicts of a meritocracy on one hand and the appeal of social justice on the other hand. The second paper on Affirmative Action

analyzes the processes and politics of implementing policies on the Berkeley campus. Smelser portrays how value based ambivalence becomes enacted in ambiguous and at times contradictory policies. These papers are of great interest to any one interested in issues of multicultural communities, in particular in academic settings. There are certain areas left unexplored in these papers, however. An assumption is made that academia is a meritocracy where academic ability and achievement are rewarded. This assumption neglects the power wielded by academics to define what constitutes "merit" in scholarship.

The essays in this book are not all serious conceptual papers like those that examine theoretical issues in interdisciplinary inquiry, or that take on weighty social issues such as those on diversity and affirmative action. One essay in particular, "The myth of the good life in California," is playful while providing a compelling analysis of the social and psychological dimensions of the California mythology. Smelser points out that the California myth is not only a utopian vision of a place of plenty and guilt-free pleasures, but has also an apocalyptic dimension in the threat of earthquake and a strong presence of what Smelser terms "pessimistic futurists."

It is interesting that an academic book on the synthesis of the psychoanalytic and the social perspectives would have no mention of social work. Since the 1920s social work has worked and reworked bringing available psychological theory to assist those suffering from social problems. The absence of an awareness of social work reflects that Smelser's perspective centers in academia, and not in the world of professional practice. Although he practiced briefly as an analyst, there is little case material or other reflection of clinical experience that comes through in these papers. This book might more aptly be titled the "psychoanalytic edges of sociology," as the author uses sociology as a foundational perspective. The criticisms and limitations noted do not point out serious flaws in this book, but suggest the types of reflection that these papers inspire. This is an engaging volume with much to offer to those with interests in the academic dimensions of sociology and psychoanalysis.

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Adrienne Chambon, Allan Irving and Laura Epstein (Eds.), *Reading Foucault for Social Work*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1999. \$49.50 hardcover, \$19.50 papercover.

Since Hartman (1992) published a collection of her selected editorials from *Social Work*, the idea that social workers need to heed the many ways of knowing in a variegated world has achieved greater credence. Even though unsettling to many practitioners and to most researchers, who were trained to look at scientific empiricism as the model to emulate, the challenge that social work must look and search beyond the parameters of the conventional or the approved has been persistently repeated. Yet, few social workers have been willing, at least publicly, to proclaim the value of what might not be the dogma of the powerful or to celebrate contradiction.

Reading Foucault is a collection of essays focusing on Foucault's contribution to social work as a profession. By its very nature, the collection proclaims the merits of complexity and contradiction. The essays are of varying length and style and focus on different aspects of that contribution. Perforce, I cannot review all of them but will try to show the scope of the collection by focusing on some examples. Some of the essays are outstanding and, for what might appear to be a dry subject, not only readable but enjoyable. For example, Allan Irving's presentation in "Waiting for Foucault: Social work and the Multitudinous Truth (s) of Life" is definitely worth perusal by researchers and practitioners. Irving presents Foucault's unsettling ways of inquiry as significantly relevant to social work. He suggests that

Since early in the 20<sup>th</sup> century social work has located itself within the Enlightenment/scientific paradigm, based on a Cartesian interpretation of the world and knowledge. Nietzsche, Beckett, and Foucault provoke us to think differently, outside the usual social science/positivistic framework and to move away from the empiricist mess, into the postmodern world of disrupted rational grids. (p. 45).

Irving introduces a very important point, which is one of the major contributions of this book. The preoccupation with the mechanics of theory, method and technique will not take social

work to new levels of understanding or even help it reflect on its historical past (p. 46). Irving proposes that the humanities, literature, philosophy, language, and the imaginative arts, enlighten moral life and constitute the very essence of practice. He summarizes a great deal of his reflections on the contributions of Foucault reaffirming that the imagination is an essential ingredient of social work practice and, with Nussbaum, agrees that the literary imagination is fundamental to a democratic society.

Another interesting essay by Adrienne Chambon, "Foucault's Approach: Making the Familiar Visible", states once again what scholars who have critiqued modern research practices have stated repeatedly: that what we study and scrutinize is a political act with fundamental consequences. Chambon asks, "Do we scrutinize our own practice to the same extent that we scrutinize clients?" (p. 61). She further discusses the meaning and implications of paying attention to detail in social work practice. "The point . . . is that details are not mere illustrations. Attended to at a close range, the fine level of detail or microscopic aspect of description encapsulates the very mechanisms we are trying to understand." (p. 63)

In an essay on "Foucault and Therapy: The Disciplining of Grief", Catherine Foote and Arthur Frank offer an excellent review of Foucault's critique of therapy. Their point is not "to render therapy impossible but to extend therapists' sense of how problematic their work is." (p. 157) Given the current tendency to medicalize the most basic human emotions, to diagnose instead of understanding, to label instead of analyzing, this essay should be "must" reading for therapists. Foote and Frank put therapy within the field of power relations and more importantly squarely within the discourse of *true and false*.

The therapeutic is such a discourse in at least two senses. First, it claims truth for its "findings": consider Rado's references to statistical rates of prevalence and "exhaustive" searches of "the literature". Such a discourse presents not only its own truth but claims to be a kind of truth of truths, a metatruth. Second, just as the categories of true and false divide the world into a hierarchy, so do the categories of normal and pathological. (pp. 59-60)



In summary, the book offers a multitude of possibilities for explorations and critique not only of what we do but of the very fiber of our age. Social work readers will find it truly educative and those who question our "rational" practices will find it most rewarding.

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Katherine van Wormer, Joel Wells and Mary Boes, *Social Work with Lesbians, Gays and Bisexuals: A Strengths Perspective*. Needham Heights, MA: Allyn and Bacon, 1999. \$26.76 papercover. [December 1, 1999].

There is a seeming explosion of scholarship on gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgendered issues—cultural criticism, social sciences, the humanities, and the biological sciences have demonstrated an expanding interest and expertise which the social work literature is also reflecting. As scholarship and popular culture now give voice to the "love that dare not speak its name," hidden contradictions are unmasked as we see the profession's struggle to come to terms with the meaning of diversity. Social work education, in an effort to contribute to professional development, has taken a stand, timid and faltering as it is, to confront the challenges faced by diversity in a culture rife with the pain of addressing the needs of special populations. Social work educational groups would like to exert the "option for the oppressed" if only the voices of cultural hegemony would allow. At this time, the scholarship produced about lesbian and gay arenas are consumed in general by those inclined to share in its philosophical orientations. Social workers who are uncomfortable and/or unknowledgeable about issues facing lesbian women and gay men rest comfortably in defiance or passivity.

The van Wormer, Wells and Boes text is an excellent endeavor to reach those who have not addressed the issues facing the sexually oppressed. This text is a scholarly and impassioned presentation of a model for practice with lesbian women and gay men which can be adapted to the range of demands facing social work curricula. A range of facts and scenarios can readily

be integrated into generalist practice, giving voice to lesbian and gay experiences in this area which is often a barren terrain in the social work curricula. The authors suggest using this book as a specialized course text or as a supplemental practice text.

A generalist practice perspective is developed in the text which covers the biopsychosocial aspects of gayness from a dynamic person-in-environment perspective. The strengths perspective is noted as a guide to discussion of problems throughout the text. The goals of the text are to provide essential practice knowledge for working with lesbians and gays, a la cultural competency approaches, and secondarily, to provide dynamic, multidimensional understanding of the complexities and nuances of sexual orientations. The authors' analyses rest on a variety of assumptions about the etiology of gayness, homophobia, heterosexism, sexuality development, community, and what constitutes common experiences among gay people. The themes of the text are organized around an ecological theoretical approach, the dynamics of homophobia, a hidden and maligned culture, and an understanding of developmental aspects related to youth, the work/love continuum of maturity, and aging. It concludes with practice focused discussions of counseling, health/mental health, and family issues.

At its very core, the strengths perspective moves the authors to break with prior conventional professional practice models which have pathologized differences in sexual orientation in the search for a scientific practice and which contributed to a history of abhorrent practices. The strengths perspective does break with the prior conventional professionalism model. The authors clearly direct their focus on the "option for the oppressed" as core to their philosophy. This scholarship breaks with tradition, and the salient question is "how clean is the break?". The arguments are clearly written, consistent with the stated assumptions, and continue to link the discussion of problems with the assumption of strengths. There are frequent references to popular cultural and professional practice literature. Where empirical investigations exist, they are evaluated from a strengths perspective. The authors boldly state their philosophy, and at times assert a barrage of facts to support their position. Advocacy is central to this text, and conscionable readers will not be disappointed.

An inherent contradiction exists in such a needed book as van Wormer, Wells and Boes have written. Professionalism has contributed significantly to the oppression of lesbian women and gay men. The authors write a text from a strengths perspective which is counter to those professional traditions. Yet, the authors espouse as a response to oppression, hatred, and ignorance, the further promotion of "professionalism." While the beliefs of a strengths perspective and a pathology approach are fundamentally different, the authors use of "professional involvement" is not markedly different from the path taken by the pathology approach used to respond to oppression. Again the oppressed are asked to trust that the past oppression by professionalism will be challenged by a new model of professionalism. While this approach may offer hope, it does so with an inherent contradiction. In reading the richly described "problem focused" approach, it seemed almost mordantly ironic that a strengths perspective would focus so strongly on "problems." This may well be a requisite feature of professional practice, but this poses a challenge to truly view strengths.

Expectations are deservedly high for this book because it provides an important contribution to the understanding of issues related to oppression of lesbian women and gay men. Caring readers will ask why social work literature is so constrained by a lack of quality empirical and theoretical literature on a topic which deserves this attention. What makes this book worth using in the classroom and in practice is that via professional literature, it gives voice to those experiencing oppression. Perhaps it is the strengths perspective which gives professionalism another chance to express its humanness.

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James J. Chriss (Ed.), *Counseling and the Therapeutic State*. Hawthorne, NY: Aldine de Gruyter, 1999. \$48.95 hardcover, \$24.95 papercover.

Pakistani army topples the government, a current headline proclaims. A military coup has captured the Prime Minister,

seized the media, closed major airports, and overtaken the nation. Could that happen here too?

It's the thrust of this book that social workers and their allies have indeed mounted a coup. Although we never closed airports or surrounded the White House, our methods were just as effective. Eschewing raw force, we've used infiltration and stealth to campaign. With the media in our pocket, we've captured popular thinking and brainwashed the state. The bootprints of social work are all over the place. Here's how Chriss (1999, p. 1) found us out.

*One of the most exasperating experiences of my recent marriage was dealing with the church requirements for premarital counseling . . . We contacted a number of churches of various denominations and were surprised to find that all of them required marriage counseling before they would conduct the wedding ceremony. I made it clear to each of the priests with whom we met that we expected to receive, and even welcomed, traditional rounds of pastoral counseling. Here, the emphasis would be on the awesome obligation that a man and a woman accept when they enter into marriage, and the acknowledgment of the sanctity of such a union as it takes place under the watchful presence of the Lord. What we did not expect, however, and what we strongly objected to, was the requirement that we receive our counseling from an on-staff therapist, typically a social worker or marriage and family therapist. This amounted to a standard six-week counseling session with fees ranging anywhere from \$125 on up. These so-called "licensed" therapists usually had only a masters degree or less, and it seemed odd to entrust the sustenance and care of our mental and spiritual lives to such a person, especially considering that I hold a Ph.D. and two masters degrees in sociology. What was this person going to tell me about marriage, family, relationships, caring, forgiveness, or spirituality that I did not already know? . . . If anything, I would be teaching our "therapist" a thing or two . . .*

As a treatise on *therapeutocracy*, this book has an arcane flavor and scatter-gun focus that put me to sleep. In *Children and the civic state: A covenant model of welfare*, for example, John O'Neill argues: (1) The political subject is an intersubject whose intrasubjectivity is social before it is asocial; (2) The political subject is familiarized and gendered; (3) The gendered political subject is both intrasubject (with child) and intersubject (with family and community); and (4) The

*spatio-temporal environment of the subject (1–3) is the intergenerational community into which the child is inscribed before birth and which it enters not simply as a subject of desire but as a subject of care, already indebted, enabled/disabled prior to all other life contracts.* Maybe I'm stupid, but I don't understand what O'Neill said.

Not all of the eight chapters that follow are quite so opaque, but many are, and their titles are often misleading. Sibeon's *Power and social action beyond the state* is an epistemological exercise in post-modern thought. Tucker's *Therapy, organizations, and the state: A Blackian perspective* examines counseling as a form of social control. The fifth chapter, by Manning, contrasts Erving Goffman's methodological errors with his brilliance and spirit in exposing what once went on in mental asylums, and may still. Sixth, Nolan examines the systematic infusion of therapeutic sensibilities in public-school class room, beginning the best chapter in the book with an inventory of student-counselor ratios required in 21 states. The final four chapters diddle with recovered memory, the concept of the healthy person (misreading Vygotsky), the sociology of counseling, and, returning to Chriss, the "expert" assault on the family. All said and done, this fragmented book is a light-weight (Nolan's chapter excepted), touched here and there with Thomas-Szasz vigor. What's missing is the fresh cogency Thomas-Szasz thinking. Too much invention, too little data.

But Chriss does have a point. The United States Bureau of Labor Statistics describes the social work profession as having 600,000 members, a "therapeutic state" with more residents than Wyoming. And if that's not enough for a coup to be mounted, with 41,000 undergraduates and 35,000 graduate students preparing for social work practice each year, reinforcements are coming. Moreover, with a combined annual income of \$17 billion, according to CIA estimates our earned revenues equal the gross domestic product of Afghanistan, or those of Botswana, Iceland, and Haiti combined. Our therapeutic state has numbers and resources.

On the other hand, if the Bureau of Labor Statistics can be trusted, we can't be accused of looting Fort Knox as usurpers. The median annual social-work income, between \$25,000 and \$35,000, is barely enough to retire a small mortgage and put

food on the table. And if three-quarters of the clients receiving our services truly do better than those who do not, as a recent meta-analysis reported, it appears that we're earning our wages, not commandeering the soul of nation. It's too bad that Chriss became angry and bolted.

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## Book Notes

Paula S. Fass, *Kidnapped: Child Abduction in America*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999. \$15.95 paperback.

While the problem of child abduction may appear to many to be a straightforward affair, requiring little more than a resolute public response, this book shows just how complicated the problem has become. Like many contemporary analyses of social issues, Paula Fass demonstrates that child abduction is permeated by cultural, social and attitudinal factors of great complexity.

Although Fass is a historian, she implicitly draws on well established traditions of sociological inquiry that have dissected ostensibly uncomplicated social problems and revealed just how culturally laden they are. The notion of 'moral panics' and 'folk devils' which characterize interactionist analysis in the sociological study of social problems and deviance applies equally well to the study of child abduction. This is not to minimize the tragic reality of children who go missing, or to detract from the suffering of parents and loved ones who are not infrequently left with no explanations or traces of the abducted child. But Fass's work also shows how quickly a case of a missing child can develop into a media circus, the application of popular stereotypes and a rush to erroneous conclusions. In a series of fascinating case studies, she shows how the problem of child abduction evolved during this century into a complex phenomenon which reflected changing sexual mores, cultural fears and the role of mass communications. The chapters of her book dealing with the sexualization of child abduction and kidnapping by parents will be of particular interest to those working in the field of child welfare. With great insight, she shows how the re-formulation of this interpretation was influenced both by feminist and radical right thinking and how, in the political arena, efforts to gain political advantage resulted in wildly inaccurate accounts of the incidence of the problem and the transformation of interpretations (inspired by the work of Kinsey and his associates) which emphasized the commonplace nature of sexual experiences into an interpretation which emphasized its predatory and morbid character.



This is an extremely interesting and readable book. It will stimulate critical reflection not only among sociologists and social workers but among anyone interested in the way tragic social problems are interpreted in the public domain.

Rita Laws and Tim O'Hanlon, *Adoption and Financial Assistance: Tools for Navigating the Bureaucracy*. Westport, CT: Bergin & Garvey, 1999. \$35.00 hardcover.

Permanency for children is a major goal of child welfare policy. However, finding permanent homes for 'special needs' children is difficult. These children often languish in the foster care system resulting in burdensome medical and other costs. Laws, the adoptive mother of eight, and O'Hanlon, a former adoption assistance policy specialist, contend that the biggest obstacle the average family faces when adopting a special needs child is money. Although the Title IV-E adoption provisions allow for state and federal financial assistance for the costs of adoption and for maintenance, not many parents know what to ask for. Furthermore, financial problems often do not surface until the child reaches school age long after the adoption is finalized.

In four well-defined and carefully written parts, this book serves as a guide for prospective parents who are considering adopting special needs children. The first part of the book describes how the intent of PL 96-272 is often deflected by bureaucracy. Part two briefly discusses parental support groups and community capacity building, and then proceeds to show how families can obtain financial assistance to adopt special needs children. The advocacy skills described in this part can be used by parents not only to secure financial assistance but help with medical and educational needs. It also shows how parents can use fair hearings to their advantage. The authors caution that sometimes even hearing officers don't know everything about the law. The third part of the book contains legal documents, including Policy Interpretation Questions (PIQs) which are relevant to parents seeking adoption financial assistance retroactively. The sections of the *Adoption and Safe Families Act* relating to adoption assistance are also covered. The final section of the book offers readers information and resources available at various internet sites for on-line support and advice.

While written for parents who are thinking of adopting a special needs child, this book is an excellent reference for professionals who are responsible for adoptions, or for anyone interested in adoption policy. O'Hanlon and Laws are careful to point out that the book does not substitute for consultation with a knowledgeable attorney. Nevertheless, they have made the process user friendly by citing examples of parents who have overcome problems with adoption financial assistance through persistence and the application of knowledge and advocacy skills described in this book.

Morton Keller and R. Shep Melnick (Eds.), *Taking Stock: American Government in the Twentieth Century*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1999. \$54.95 hardcover, \$17.95 papercover.

As the new century begins, is appropriate to consider what government intervention has achieved over the last hundred years. During the 20th century, governments around the world have become involved in economic, social, cultural activities to a historically unprecedented extent. However, the expansion of state intervention has become highly controversial. While many point to the positive achievements of government intervention, others believe that it has been disastrous. They claim that government 'interference' in economic and social affairs has been costly, wasteful, intrusive and oppressive. These criticisms have been widely accepted and today, government programs are often vilified by politicians, academics and the media.

This edited book by Morton Keller and Shep Melnick contains an interesting collection of papers designed to address the question of how state intervention has changed over the last century. The book focuses on five major spheres of government activity, namely trade and tariff policy, immigration, the environment, civil rights and social welfare. The authors show that there are interesting similarities between public policy issues at the beginning of the the 20th century and its end, but that there are also significant differences. These differences are perhaps most noticeable in the fields of environmental protection and civil rights where the role of government has been significantly extended and where the types of programs adopted have had a major influence.

The chapter on social welfare by Theda Skocpol will be of particular interest to those in social policy and social work. While Skocpol also identifies continuities and changes, unlike many historical accounts of the evolution of government social services, she avoids an optimistic linear interpretation and instead stresses the cyclical and equivocal nature of political support for the welfare state. She points out that the gains of the Progressive Era were challenged in the years following the First World War and required the Great Depression to stimulate the interventionism of the New Deal. She speculates on whether similar events will rekindle the flame of welfarism in the indeterminate social and political climate of the early years of the 21st century. The book is permeated with interesting questions of this kind. It is thought provoking and informative. Although a more systematic assessment of the achievements of government over the last century would have strengthened the book, it deserves to be widely read.

Chris Crowther, *Policing Urban Poverty*. New York: St. Martin's Press, 2000. \$65.00 hardcover.

For most of this century, academic debates about the nature and causes of poverty have taken place within sociology, social policy and social work, and policy proposals for dealing with the problem have focused on a variety of social service interventions from the provision of income support and other social services to skills training and job creation. But, as Chris Crowther shows in his study of poverty and policing in Britain and America, the preoccupation with the social dimensions of poverty is changing. Today, poverty is increasingly linked with criminal activity, and its containment and cure is increasingly regarded as the proper purview of law enforcement.

Urban poverty has become closely associated with drug dealing, violence and other negative behavioral traits associated with what is now widely but ambiguously referred to as the 'underclass'. This idea is not a new one. Indeed, as Crowther reminds us, it is rooted in 19th century images of what was known as the 'dangerous and perishing class', the 'residuum' or 'lumpenproletariat'. The revival of the notion of an underclass has created an image of the urban poor which draws on spatial and racist stereotypes. It has generated a moral panic among middle class and

fostered the idea that containment, confinement and repression through the agency of law enforcement is the best way of dealing with the problem. As a result, the prison population has soared, young men of color are disproportionately incarcerated, and the life chances of poor children in urban ghettos have deteriorated. In addition, pressures on the police have increased significantly. Zero tolerance policies have taken their toll not only on the poor but on law enforcement as well.

Crowther's work shows that social policy cannot ignore the link between poverty and policing. Although much neglected by social policy scholars, an understanding of criminal justice and law enforcement programs directed at the urban poor must become an integral component of poverty research. In making this important point, the author draws extensively on comparative material, showing how British policies are increasingly influenced by American ideas. The book is well written and permeated with a sophisticated use of theory. It makes a major contribution to the study of poverty.

Michael J. Graetz and Jerry L. Mashaw, *True Security: Rethinking American Social Insurance*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1999. \$40.00 hardcover, \$16.95 papercover.

Debates over the long term fiscal viability of social security and medicare have long been dominated by calls for their privatization. As in so many other fields of social policy, the belief that commercially motivated providers can offer an effective alternative to public provisions has proved to be popular. However, in recent years the case for maintaining public ownership of these programs has been made with increasing effectiveness. Encouraged by the Clinton administration's commitment to social security and medicare, several persuasive proposals for remedying the weaknesses of these programs have been made, and these seem to have gathered media and public support. Generally, those advocating the preservation of social security and medicare have shown that the fiscal and other difficulties facing both programs can be corrected without the radical changes proposed by the abolitionists and privatizers. As more proposals for the incremental modification of these programs are formulated, there is hope that they may indeed survive.

In this wide ranging book, Graetz and Mashaw make an important contribution to the case for preserving social security, medicare and other government social programs that, as they put it, reduce risk and provide true security for all citizens. They reject abolition and privatization as viable options, arguing that social insurance is a necessity in a successful democratic, market based society. Indeed, they content that the market can only function effectively if people are adequately insured against the contingencies which threaten their well-being. Defining social insurance broadly to cover a range of income transfers and related programs, the authors proceed to define the basic principles of an effective social insurance system and identify the major defects of current programs. The book concludes with a carefully formulated set of proposals for remedying these problems.

This book is comprehensive and thoughtful. Although it deals with complex issues, the authors succeed in presenting the material in a readable and interesting way. Covering diverse aspects of the nation's income maintenance and support system, they present a carefully reasoned set of policy proposals for its preservation and improvement which successfully combines the different contributions of government, the market and individual effort. The book is essential reading for policy makers, academics, researchers and indeed, anyone concerned about the future of social welfare in the United States today.

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*Anonymous Review.* To facilitate anonymous review, please keep identifying information out of the manuscript. *Only the title* should appear on the first page. Attach cover pages that contain the title, authors, affiliations, date of submission, mailing address, telephone number and any statements of credit or research support.

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*Gender and Disability Stereotypes.* Please use gender neutral phrasing. Use plural pronouns and truly generic nouns ("labor force" instead of "manpower"). When dealing with disabilities, avoid making people synonymous with the disability they have ("employees with visual impairments" rather than "the blind"). Don't magnify the disabling condition ("wheelchair user" rather than "confined to a wheelchair"). For further suggestions see the *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association* or *Guide to Non-Sexist Language and Visuals*, University of Wisconsin-Extension.

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